



The Holy See

MASS FOR DECEASED CARDINALS AND BISHOPS

**HOMILY OF CARDINAL GANTIN
(ON BEHALF OF POPE JOHN PAUL II)**

Tuesday, 11 November 1997

1. *"I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to behold my glory"* (Jn 17:24). With these words Jesus entrusts the Apostles to the Father, as his departure approaches. He is about to leave, while they will remain to continue his saving mission, announcing the Gospel, guarding the deposit of faith and guiding the people of the New Covenant. They will first do this personally and then through the work of their successors, to whom they will pass on their task.

Jesus' thoughts are also extended to these future ministers of salvation at the final hour of his life: the hour of his Passover of Death and Resurrection. *"I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am..."*. The intimate communion of love that unites Christ to the Apostles and to the band of those who will receive their mandate will find its fulfilment when they will be gathered together with him in the Father's presence, to contemplate his glory, that glory that was his since "before the foundation of the world" (cf. *ibid.*).

2. In the atmosphere so typical of November, marked by the memory of the faithful departed, we are gathered today around the altar to recall the Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops who returned to the Father's house during the last year. While we offer the Eucharistic sacrifice in suffrage for them, let us ask the Lord to grant them the heavenly reward promised to good and faithful servants.

In this celebration we wish to remember especially the late and venerable Brother Cardinals Joseph Louis Bernardin, Jean Jérôme Hamer, Narciso Jubany Arnau, Juan Landázuri Ricketts, Mikel Koliqi, Ugo Poletti and Bernard Yago, who entered the Father's house over the last 12

months.

We extend our affectionate thoughts to the Archbishops and Bishops who in this same period departed from this world. They have fallen asleep in the Lord, trusting in his merciful love, in the well-founded hope of being able to share in the eternal banquet of heaven (cf. Is 25:6).

3. When they were here below, these brothers of ours proclaimed and testified to their belief in the Resurrection with their words and their lives. How many times did they have occasion to repeat St Paul's words that were proclaimed a few moments ago: "Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Cor 15:20)! Called to be dispensers of divine life in the Church, they rest now in expectation of the final resurrection, when death will be conquered for ever (cf. Is 25:8; 1 Cor 15:26) and God will be everything to everyone (cf. 1 Cor 15:28).

We remember them with affection and gratitude for the generous pastoral service that they gave, sometimes even at the cost of serious hardship and suffering: the entire Christian community benefited from their apostolic labours. At the same time we raise our fervent prayer that the Lord will take them to himself in glory (cf. Jn 17:24). For them and with them we express our desire for the definitive meeting with God: "As the hind longs for the running waters, so my soul longs for you, O God" (Ps 41:2).

4. To Our Lady of Sorrows, whom we contemplate in the traditional image of the *Pietà*, as she holds in her arms her divine Son who had died and has been taken down from the cross, we now entrust the souls of these our brothers in faith and the priesthood. May they, who during their earthly life loved and venerated Mary with the affection of sons, be brought by her into the Father's eternal kingdom.

With her loving gaze, may Mary watch over them who now sleep the sleep of peace while awaiting the blessed resurrection! We offer our prayer for them to God, sustained by the hope that one day we will all be united forever in paradise.

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine on them. May they rest in peace. Amen!