



The Holy See

FUNERAL MASS FOR CARDINAL VINCENZO FAGIOLO

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

Tuesday, 26 September 2000

1. *"Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake" (Dn 12: 2).*

Daniel's words, which we heard in the first reading, go beyond the historical horizon and extend to the final age, announcing the resurrection of the dead with words that Christ himself will take up in the Gospel. Speaking of the last judgement, Jesus says: "The hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgement" (*Jn 5: 28-29*).

Your Eminences, venerable Brothers in the episcopate and the priesthood, dear faithful, in the light of faith in Christ, our life and resurrection (cf. *Jn 11: 25*), today we are celebrating the funeral rites of dear and venerable Cardinal Vincenzo Fagiolo, who last Friday, at the age of 82, ended his earthly pilgrimage. We believe that he belongs to the ranks of those who "did good" and we are therefore confident that he is now waiting to be called by the voice of Christ to "the resurrection of life".

2. *"Those who lead the many to justice shall be like the stars forever" (Dn 12: 3).*

I am pleased, at this moment, to remember the late Cardinal as a "teacher of justice". The study and teaching of canon law were always a constant in his life. His priestly vocation and then his call to the episcopate transformed this interest according to the Gospel perspective. To teach true justice, the justice of Christ: this is the ministry that Cardinal Fagiolo carried out in the entire span of his life. In the different situations in which obedience placed him at one time or another, this was his constant aim: from the university lecture halls to the episcopal magisterium in the Archdiocese of Chieti-Vasto, from the offices of the Italian Episcopal Conference to those of the Roman Curia.

On the occasion of his episcopal appointment, Mons. Fagiolo chose the Pauline phrase, *"Plenitudo legis dilectio"* (Rom 13: 10) as his motto. It sums up wonderfully the entire life of this "man of the Church", who knew how to recognize and seek the fulfilment of every law in the love of Christ, and spent his life testifying to this truth with his teaching and his works. In a recent interview, he had said: "Everything in the Church proceeds by love, everything must aim for the growth of love".

3. *"God, who is rich in mercy ... made us alive together with Christ"* (Eph 2: 4-5).

With Paul, fixing our gaze on the mystery of the incarnation, passion, death and resurrection of Christ, we acknowledge that our authentic justice is a gift of divine mercy. In fact, the grace of God poured out on us in abundance through the blood of the crucified Christ frees us from sin and from the "second death" (cf. Rv 20: 14), and opens the door of eternal life for us. The Great Jubilee we are living invites believers to renew their faith in this mystery of love, proclaiming to everyone: "by grace you have been saved" (Eph 2: 5).

Cardinal Vincenzo Fagiolo fell asleep in the Lord precisely during the Jubilee Year, after having been able to live a considerable part of it. This will have certainly been a comfort to him in the last stage of his journey to the encounter with Christ. He knew that he could appear before the tribunal of God bringing the freshest fruits, so to say, of the Jubilee indulgence.

4. *"Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am"* (Jn 17: 24).

The saving will of Christ, a perfect reflection of that of the eternal Father, shines with its full brightness in the Gospel of John. The Father wants the Son to give eternal life to those who believe in him, that he may raise them up on the last day (cf. Jn 6: 39-40). In obedience to this merciful will, the Word became flesh; he came on earth and gave himself so that men might have life and have it in abundance (cf. Jn 10: 10).

May this shining evangelical truth comfort us every time that we give our final farewell to a deceased brother. Christ must certainly recognize Cardinal Vincenzo Fagiolo as one of those whom "the Father gave to him, that they might be with him". It consoles us to think that Christ, in whom the Cardinal believed and hoped, now wants him to be with him in heaven.

Truly our hope of peace without end is founded on this will of Christ, more solid than a rock.

5. *Laetatus sum in eo quod dixerunt mihi: In domum Domini laetantes ibimus"* (Responsorial Psalm).

Dear friends, our venerable Brother is now at the gates of the holy Jerusalem. About 30 years ago,

foreseeing this event, he had already written a spiritual testament, confirmed with a subsequent marginal note. In it we read: "If the thought of having to die disturbs me, I am consoled by the hope that the Lord Jesus Christ, through the merits of his passion and death, in his great mercy will kindly open the gates of his eternal and blessed home". And after giving thanks for the gifts of life, faith and priesthood, the Cardinal added: "My most heartfelt, deepest gratitude goes to the Blessed Virgin Mary, sweet Mother of Trust: ... to her, the last kiss of a life that is ebbing". In this perspective, he expressed the desire that the Marian antiphon *Salve Regina* should be sung at his funeral.

In this celebration imbued with hope, let us wholeheartedly entrust our dear brother Cardinal Vincenzo Fagiolo to the Mother of Jesus and our Mother. We are certain that she will receive him, to take him into the house of the Lord where he will be able to enjoy the fullness of peace forever.

Amen.

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