



The Holy See

MASS WITH THE COMMUNITIES FROM FOUR ROMAN PARISHES:

St Bridget of Sweden

St Hilary of Poitiers

St Maximus, Bishop

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Paul VI Audience Hall

Saturday, 6 March 2004

1. "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" (Lk 9: 35). Today's Gospel reading makes us protagonists of the moving scene of Jesus' Transfiguration on Mount Tabor. Christ reveals his glory as the Son of God to Peter, James and John. Luke the Evangelist highlights this extraordinary fact, enabling us to contemplate the face of the Lord that changed in appearance *while he was praying* (cf. Lk 9: 29). In him, shining with glory, we recognize the Chosen One, the Messiah, "the light of the world" (Jn 8: 12), who gives meaning to our life. The mysterious voice from on high also invites us to follow him with docility: "This is my Son... listen to him!".

2. Listen to Christ and follow him! At the beginning of Lent, 25 years ago, I felt the need to encourage the entire People of God to "touch upon" this fundamental experience. "Jesus Christ is the chief way for the Church" (n. 13), I wrote in my first Encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*. This evening I would like to symbolically entrust it to you again, dear brothers and sisters of the Parish communities of St Bridget of Sweden, St Hilary of Poitiers and of St Maximus, Bishop. I welcome and embrace you all with affection. I greet especially the Cardinal Vicar and thank him for explaining to me the realities of your parishes. I greet the Auxiliary Bishop of the Western Sector and your Parish Priests: Fr Jean-Jacques Boeglin, Fr Romano Matrone and Fr Romano Maria Deb, together with their parochial vicars. My profound thanks go to the Religious and lay people who, in various sectors, cooperate in the pastoral action of your communities.

3. The district of Palmarola, relatively less spread out than other sectors of the Diocese, is made up of three parishes. It is my cordial hope that, also thanks to this gathering, the desire for communion will be strengthened in all the parishioners so that the proclamation of the Gospel to those who live in the district will be more effective. Unfortunately, in the area where you live the modern phenomenon of "sects" is also widespread. They seek to attract especially those who are in a difficult situation or who are lonely. In this setting, it is necessary to set forth on a strong, new and courageous work of evangelization. Jesus, centre of the universe and of history, must meet every man and woman, since in the mystery of the Redemption, "the question of man is inscribed with a special vigour of truth and love" (*Redemptor Hominis*, n. 18). To proclaim Christ is to give everyone, especially those who suffer spiritual and

material poverty, the possibility to experience divine tenderness and mercy.⁴ Each one of your communities, under the generous and enlightened guidance of their respective pastors, becomes a place of welcome and of solidarity. The parishes must be schools of education in authentic faith, aware that they are guardians of a great treasure which they must not waste but must continually increase (cf. *ibid.*, n. 18). The Eucharist must be at the centre of every pastoral project, building the Church as the authentic community of the People of God and always regenerating it on the basis of the sacrifice of Christ himself (cf. *ibid.*, n. 20). I invite especially you, dear families, to make the Eucharist your reference point. You are called to walk together with your children on the itinerary of preparation for the sacraments of Christian initiation and to accompany them throughout adolescence and beyond, so that as they grow up, they may faithfully fulfil the mission God has in store for them.⁵ Dear Brothers and Sisters, I know that your parishes still do not have adequate facilities for their pastoral and social activities; however, this must not prevent you from proclaiming with vigour in every corner of Palmarola the Good News that "Jesus Christ meets the man of every age, including our own, with the same words: *"You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free"*" (*Redemptor Hominis*, n. 12). May the Virgin Mary, sublime model of faith and love of God, help you to recognize in Jesus the Son of God and Lord of our lives. To her I entrust all of you here present, together with your apostolic programmes and the Lenten journey we began a short while ago. May she help you to become familiar "with the profundity of the Redemption taking place in Jesus Christ" (*ibid.*, n. 10). Amen! © Copyright 2004 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana