



The Holy See

HOLY MASS FOR THE IMPOSITION OF THE PALLIUM
ON METROPOLITAN ARCHBISHOPS
ON THE SOLEMNITY OF THE HOLY APOSTLES PETER AND PAUL

HOMILIES OF HIS HOLINESS BARTHOLOMEW I
ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH OF CONSTANTINOPLE
AND HIS HOLINESS POPE BENEDICT XVI

Vatican Basilica
Sunday, 29 June 2008

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS BARTHOLOMEW I

Your Holiness,

We still feel the joy and emotion of Your Holiness' personal and blessed participation in the Patronal Feast of Constantinople on the memorial of the Apostle St Andrew, the First Called, in November 2006, we have come "with exultant steps" from the Phanar of the New Rome to visit you and share in your joy on the Patronal Feast of ancient Rome. And we come to you "in the fullness of the blessing of Christ's Gospel" (cf. Rm 15: 29), reciprocating honour and love, celebrating together with our beloved Brother in the land of the West, "the sure and inspired heralds, the Coriphaei of the Lord's Disciples", the Holy Apostles, Peter, the brother of Andrew, and Paul - these two immense central pillars of the entire Church, towering to Heaven, who made their last luminous profession of Christ in this historic city. Sanctifying it in the process, it was here that they gave up their souls to the Lord in martyrdom, one on the Cross and the other by the sword.

We therefore greet you, Your Holiness, our esteemed Brother, whom we have been looking forward to seeing, with very deep and devoted love on behalf of the Most Holy Church of Constantinople and her children scattered across the world. We wholeheartedly wish "all God's beloved in Rome" (Rm 1: 7) the enjoyment of good health, peace and prosperity, and hope that

they may progress day and night towards salvation and be "aglow with the Spirit, to serve the Lord. Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer" (Rm 12: 11-12).

In both our Churches, Your Holiness, we duly honour and most deeply venerate the one who gave a saving confession of the divinity of Christ, Peter, as well as the chosen vessel, Paul, who proclaimed this confession and faith to the ends of the earth, amidst the most unimaginable difficulties and dangers. We have celebrated their memory on 29 June, since the Year of Salvation 258, in the West and in the East. During the days that precede this Feast, we in the East prepare for it observing a fast in their honour, in accordance with the tradition of the ancient church. In order to greater emphasize their equal value but also because of their importance in the Church and in her regenerating and saving work throughout the centuries, the East traditionally honours them with a common icon, in which they are either holding in their holy hands a small sailing ship which symbolizes the Church, or embracing one another, exchanging the kiss in Christ.

We have come to exchange this same kiss with you, Your Holiness, emphasizing the ardent desire in Christ and love for these things that affect us both closely.

Theological dialogue between our Churches "in faith, truth and love", thanks to divine assistance, is moving forward, beyond the considerable difficulties that exist and the known problems. We truly desire and pray for this: that these challenges may be overcome and that the issues may be resolved as quickly as possible so that we may reach the ultimate goal desired for the glory of God.

We know well that this is also your desire, as we are also certain that Your Holiness will never tire of working personally, together with your distinguished collaborators, smoothing the way perfectly, please God, to a positive completion of the work of the dialogue.

Your Holiness, we have proclaimed the year 2008 "The Year of the Apostle Paul", just as you have from today up to next year on completing the 2,000th anniversary of the Great Apostle. In the context of the respective events for the anniversary, in which we have also venerated the precise site of his martyrdom, we have planned, among other things, a sacred pilgrimage to several monuments to the Apostle's evangelical activities in the East, such as Ephesus, Perga, and other cities in Asia Minor, but also to Rhodes and Crete, to the port known as "Fair Havens". You may be sure, Your Holiness, that on this sacred journey, you too will be present, accompanying us in spirit, and that in each place we will offer a fervent prayer for you and for our brethren of the venerable Roman Catholic Church, addressing to the Lord through the divine Paul a powerful supplication and intercession for you.

And now, venerating the suffering and cross of Peter and embracing the chain and stigmata of Paul, as we honour the confession and martyrdom and venerable death of both in the Name of the Lord who truly leads to Life, let us glorify the Thrice Holy God and implore him, through the

intercession of his Proto-Coryphaei Apostles, to grant to us and to all the children of the Orthodox Church and of the Roman Catholic Church throughout the world "union of faith and communion of the Holy Spirit" in the "bond of peace" here on earth, and in Heaven above, instead, eternal life and great mercy.

Amen.

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HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER

Your Holiness and Fraternal Delegates,

Your Eminences,

Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Since the most ancient times the Church of Rome has celebrated the Solemnity of the Great Apostles Peter and Paul as a single Feast on the same day, 29 June. It was through their martyrdom, that they became brothers; together they founded the new Christian Rome. As such they are praised in the hymn for Second Vespers that dates back to Paulinus of Aquileia ([c. 750-]806): "*O Roma felix* - fortunate Rome, consecrated by the glorious blood of the two Princes of the Apostles; dyed red in their blood, you shine more resplendently than all the glory of the world, not by your merit, but by the merits of the saints that you have killed, drawing blood with the sword". The blood of martyrs does not invoke revenge but reconciliation. It is not presented as an accusation but rather as the "fairer light", in the words of the hymn for First Vespers: it is presented as the force of love that overcomes hatred and violence, thus founding a new city, a new community. Through their martyrdom they - Peter and Paul - now belong to Rome: through their martyrdom, Peter also became a Roman citizen for ever. Through their martyrdom, through their faith and love, both Apostles point to where true hope lies; they are founders of a new sort of city that must be constantly rebuilt in the midst of the old human city that is threatened by the opposing forces of human sin and selfishness.

By virtue of their martyrdom, Peter and Paul are in a reciprocal relationship for ever. A favourite image in Christian iconography shows the embrace of the two Apostles on their way to martyrdom. We can say: their martyrdom itself is the realization of a fraternal embrace in the deepest sense. They died for the one Christ and in their witness for which they gave their lives, they are one. In the New Testament writings we can, so to speak, follow the development of their embrace, this creation of unity in witness and mission. Everything begins when Paul, three years after his conversion, goes to Jerusalem "to visit Cephas" (Gal 1: 18). Fourteen years later he went up to Jerusalem again to lay "before those who were of repute" the Gospel he was preaching in order to avoid the risk of "running or [having] run in vain" (Gal 2: 1f.). At the end of this encounter, James,

Cephas and John shake hands with him, thus confirming the communion that links them in the one Gospel of Jesus Christ (cf. Gal 2: 9). I find the fact that the collaborators mentioned at the end of the First Letter of Peter - Silvanus and Mark - were likewise close collaborators of St Paul is a beautiful sign of the growth of this inner embrace which developed despite the diversity of their temperaments and tasks. The communion of the one Church, is clearly demonstrated by the embrace of the great Apostles, in their cooperation.

Peter and Paul met in Jerusalem at least twice; the paths of both were ultimately to converge in Rome. Why? Might this be something more than pure chance? Might this contain a lasting message? Paul arrived in Rome as a prisoner but, at the same time, as a Roman citizen who, precisely as such, after his arrest in Jerusalem had appealed to the Emperor to whose tribunal he was taken. However, in a deeper sense Paul came to Rome of his own free will. Through some of his most important Letters he had already become inwardly close to this city: he had addressed to the Church in Rome the writing that sums up the whole of his proclamation and his faith better than any other. In the initial greeting of this Letter he says that the faith of the Christians of Rome is being talked about in all the world and is, therefore, reputed everywhere to be exemplary (cf. Rm 1: 8). He then writes: "I want you to know, brethren, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented)" (1: 13). At the end of the Letter he returns to this topic now speaking of his project of a journey to Spain. "I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be sped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a little" (15: 24). "And I know that when I come to you I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ" (15: 29). These are two things that become obvious: for Paul, Rome was a stopping place on the way to Spain, in other words - according to his conception of the world - on his way to the extreme edge of the earth. He considers his mission to be the fulfilment of the task assigned to him by Christ, to take the Gospel to the very ends of the world. Rome lay on his route. Whereas Paul usually went to places where the Gospel had not yet been proclaimed, Rome was an exception. He found there a Church whose faith was being talked about across the world. Going to Rome was part of the universality of his mission as an envoy to all peoples. The way that led to Rome, which already prior to his external voyage he had travelled inwardly with his Letter, was an integral part of his duty to take the Gospel to all the peoples - to found the catholic or universal Church. For him, going to Rome was an expression of the catholicity of his mission. Rome had to make the faith visible to the whole world, it had to be the meeting place of the one faith.

But why did Peter go to Rome? The New Testament says nothing about this directly. Yet it gives us some hints. The Gospel according to St Mark, which we may consider a reflection of St Peter's preaching, focuses closely on the moment when the Roman centurion, who, in the light of Jesus Christ's death on the Cross, said: "Truly this man was the Son of God!" (15: 39). By the Cross the mystery of Jesus Christ was revealed. Beneath the Cross the Church of the peoples was born: the centurion of the Roman platoon in charge of his execution recognized Christ as the Son of God. The Acts of the Apostles describe the episode of Cornelius, a centurion of the Italic cohort, as a crucial stage for the entry of the Gospel into the Gentile world. On a command from God,

Cornelius sent someone to fetch Peter and Peter, also following a divine command, went to the centurion's house and preached there. While he was speaking the Holy Spirit descended on the domestic community that had gathered and Peter said: "Can any one forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" (Acts 10: 47). Thus at the Council of the Jerusalem, Peter became the intercessor for the Church of the Gentiles who had no need of the Law because God had "cleansed their hearts by faith" (Acts 15: 9). Of course, in the Letter to the Galatians Paul says God empowered Peter for the apostolic ministry among the circumcised, and instead empowered him, Paul, for the ministry to the Gentiles (2: 8). This assignment however could only be in force while Peter remained with the Twelve in Jerusalem in the hope that all Israel would adhere to Christ. As they faced the further development, the Twelve recognized when it was time for them too to set out for the whole world to proclaim the Gospel. Peter who, complying with God's order, had been the first to open the door to pagans, now left the leadership of the Christian-Jewish Church to James the Lesser in order to dedicate himself to his true mission: the ministry for the unity of the one Church of God formed by Jews and pagans. Among the Church's characteristics, St Paul's desire to go to Rome places emphasis - as we have seen - on the word "*catholic*". St Peter's journey to Rome, as representative of the world's peoples, comes especially under the word "*one*": his task was to create the *unity* of the *catholica*, the Church formed by Jews and pagans, the Church of all the peoples. And this is Peter's ongoing mission: to ensure that the Church is never identified with a single nation, with a single culture or with a single State but is always the Church of all; to ensure that she reunites humanity over and above every boundary and, in the midst of the divisions of this world, makes God's peace present, the reconciling power of his love. Thanks to technology that is the same everywhere, thanks to the world information network and also thanks to the connection of common interests, in the world today new forms of unity exist; yet they spark new disputes and give a new impetus to the old ones. In the midst of this external unity, based on material things, our need for the inner unity which comes from God's peace is all the greater - the unity of all those who have become brothers and sisters through Jesus Christ. This is Peter's permanent mission and also the specific task entrusted to the Church of Rome.

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate, I would now like to address you who have come to Rome to receive the pallium as a symbol of your dignity and responsibility as Archbishops in the Church of Jesus Christ. The pallium is woven with wool from sheep that the Bishop of Rome blesses every year on the Feast of the Chair of Peter, setting them aside as it were, so that they may become a symbol of the flock of Christ over which you preside. When we place the pallium on our shoulders, our gesture reminds us of the Shepherd who takes upon his shoulders the lost sheep that cannot find its way home alone and brings it back to the fold. The Fathers of the Church saw this little lost lamb as the image of all humanity, of the whole of human nature which strays and can no longer find the way home. The Shepherd who brings it back home can only be the *Logos*, the eternal Word of God himself. In the Incarnation he took all of us - "human" sheep - on his shoulders. He, the eternal word, the true Shepherd of humanity carries us; in his humanity he carries each one of us on his shoulders. On the way of the Cross he took us home, he takes us home. But he also

wants to have men to "carry" it with him. Being a Pastor of Christ's Church means participating in this task which is commemorated by the pallium. When we wear it, he asks us, "Are you too helping me to carry me those who belong to me? Are you bringing them to me, to Jesus Christ?". And then we recall the account of the sending of Peter by the Risen One. The Risen Christ connects the order: "Tend my sheep" inseparably with the question: "Do you love me, do you love me more than these?". Every time we put on the pallium, as a Pastor of Christ's flock we must listen to this question: "Do you love me?", and ourselves be questioned about the extra love that he expects from the Pastor.

Thus the Pallium becomes the symbol of our love for Christ the Good Shepherd and of our loving together with him - it becomes the symbol of the vocation to love people as he does, together with him; those who are seeking, those who have questions, those who are sure of themselves and the humble, the simple and the great; he becomes a symbol of the call to love all of them with the power of Christ and in view of Christ, so that they may find him and in him find themselves. However, the pallium, which you received "from the" tomb of St Peter has another, second meaning, inseparably connected to the first. In order to understand it, some words from the First Letter of St Peter may be a help to us. In his exhortation to priests to tend the flock properly he - St Peter - describes himself as a *synpresbyteros* - fellow elder (5: 1). This formula contains implicitly an affirmation of the principle of Apostolic Succession: Pastors who succeed one another are Pastors like him, they are together with him, they belong to the common ministry of the Pastors of the Church of Jesus Christ, a ministry that continues in them. But this word "fellow" also has two more meanings. It also expresses the reality we define today with the term "collegiality" of the Bishops. We are all fellow-priests. No one is a Pastor on his own. We are in the succession of the Apostles also thanks to being in communion as a college, which finds its continuity in the college of the Apostles. "Our" communion as Pastors is part of being a Pastor, because the flock is one alone, the one Church of Jesus Christ. And lastly this word "fellow" refers to communion with Peter and his Successor as a guarantee of unity. Thus the pallium speaks to us of the catholicity of the Church, of the universal communion of the Pastor and flock and refers us to apostolicity: to communion with the faith of the Apostles on which the Church is founded. It speaks to us of the *ecclesia una, catholica, apostolica* and naturally, binding us to Christ, it speaks to us precisely of the fact that the Church is *sancta* and that our work is a service to her holiness.

Lastly, this brings me back once again to St Paul and his mission. He expressed the essential of his mission as well as the deepest reason for his desire to go to Rome in chapter 15 of the Letter to the Romans in an extraordinarily beautiful sentence. He knows he is called "to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the Gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit" (15: 16). In this verse alone does Paul use the word "*hierourgein*" - to administer as a priest - together with "*leitourgos*" - liturgy: he speaks of the cosmic liturgy in which the human world itself must become worship of God, an oblation in the Holy Spirit. When the world in all its parts has become a liturgy of God, when, in its reality, it has become adoration, then it will have reached its goal and will be safe and sound. This

is the ultimate goal of St Paul's apostolic mission as well as of our own mission. The Lord calls us to this ministry. Let us pray at this time that he may help us to carry it out properly, to become true liturgists of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

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