



The Holy See

HOLY MASS FOR THE CONCLUSION OF THE RESTORATION OF THE "REDEMPTORIS MATER" CHAPEL

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II

Sunday 14 November 1999

1. The angel "showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God" (Rv 21: 10-11). The passage from the Book of Revelation, which we have just heard, invites us to lift our gaze to the heavenly Jerusalem, filled with light and shining like a precious jewel, as if it were jasper clear as crystal. The images depicted in this chapel, which we are dedicating today, reflect the visions that John had on the island of Patmos, where he found himself "on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (Rv 1: 9). On the opposite wall we see the Holy City, which "had a great, high wall, with twelve gates" (Rv 21: 12). It radiates the glory of the Trinity, which is poured out onto the multitude of the blessed, placed lower down, three by three, like living icons of the great Mystery. Looking, then, at the other walls, the eye can follow through images and symbols a grand synthesis of the whole "economy" of salvation.

2. The image of the *Redemptoris Mater*, standing out on the central wall, unveils to our eyes the mystery of the love of God, who became man in order to give us human beings the ability to become God's children (cf. St Augustine, *Serm.* 128: *PL* 39, 1997). Now on the threshold of the third millennium, I would like to emphasize this message of salvation and the joy which Christ, born of Mary, brought to humanity. As we contemplate the image of the Virgin Mother, we hear echoing in our hearts the invitation proclaimed in the first reading taken from the Book of Nehemiah: "Do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength" (8: 10).

3. I am pleased to dedicate the altar and to inaugurate the renovated chapel, whose mosaics bring to life the wealth of the Eastern tradition, reinterpreted with the knowledge of one who also knows the Western heritage. Here East and West, far from being in opposition, exchange their gifts in order to give greater expression to the unfathomable riches of Christ. I thank everyone who has worked with dedication and love to complete this work, which is offered as an expression of that theology with two lungs from which the Church of the third millennium can draw new vitality. I particularly thank the Cardinals who wanted to commemorate the 50th anniversary of my priesthood with this gift: it is a joy for me that the event should be linked with the *Redemptoris Mater*, under whose protection I have given my service to the Church all these years, and to whose intercession I entrust whatever time the Lord may further grant me.

4. The Gospel passage we have heard took us to the region of Caesarea Philippi, where Christ asked his disciples the crucial question: "Who do you say that I am?" (Mt 16: 15). Looking at the message depicted

in the mosaics on these walls, we can discern the answer which the Church today continues to give to the Lord's question. It is the same answer which Peter gave that day: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (*Mt* 16: 16). With humble trust let us make our own that profession of faith, knowing that it does not come "from flesh or blood", but from the Father "who is in heaven" (cf. *Mt* 16: 17). "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"; the same "yesterday, and today and for ever".

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