



The Holy See

MASS WITH THE BISHOP AND PRIESTS OF THE DIOCESE OF AOSTA

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Saturday, 22 July 2000

1. Dear priests of the Diocese of Aosta, I am particularly pleased to celebrate this Holy Mass with you at the end of my stay among your mountains. I greet you all with great affection and, in a special way, I greet your Bishop, whom I cordially thank for all his kindnesses in these days to me and my collaborators. We are celebrating the feast of St Mary Magdalen and the liturgy today is marked by a kind of movement, a "race" of the heart and the spirit, motivated by the love of Christ. The words of St Paul, "*caritas Christi urget nos*" (2 Cor 5: 14), which we will shortly hear in the first reading, can and must inspire the life of every priest, as they characterized that of Mary of Magdala. Mary Magdalen followed to Calvary the One who had healed her. She was present at Jesus' crucifixion, death and burial. Together with Mary Most Holy and the beloved disciple, she witnessed his last breath and the silent testimony of his pierced side: she understood that her salvation lay in *that* death, in *that* sacrifice. And the Risen One, as today's Gospel recounts, wished to manifest his glorious body first to the one who had wept profusely at his death. To her he "first entrusted ... the joyful news of his resurrection" (*Collect*), as if to remind us that the shining glory of his resurrection is revealed precisely to those who look with faith and love on the mystery of the Lord's passion and death.

2. Mary Magdalen thus teaches us that our vocation as apostles is rooted in the personal experience of Christ. Encountering him leads to a new way of living no longer for ourselves, but for him who died and rose for us (cf. 2 Cor 5: 15), by leaving behind the old man to be conformed ever more completely to Christ, the new Man. This teaching of life applies with special eloquence to us *pastors* of the Church, called to guide the People of God with the word, but above all with our witness of life. Therefore we are called to a greater intimacy with Christ, who chose us as his friends: "*Vos autem dixi amicos*" (Jn 15: 15). Dear brothers in the priesthood, I hope that each of you will always deeply live your communion with Christ. *May his love spur you on in your apostolate*, not only on the great occasions, but especially on the ordinary ones, in everyday events. Intimate union with God, nourished at Holy Mass, in the Liturgy of the Hours and in personal prayer, moves a priest to carry out his pastoral ministry with faith and love. The secret of his mission lies precisely in this intimacy with Jesus. Let us pray, during this Eucharistic celebration, that the Lord will make us worthy ministers of his grace. Let us call upon him, through the intercession of St Mary Magdalen, that, through you, dear priests, the death and resurrection of Christ may be continually proclaimed to the residents and holidaymakers of this region. May God, who enriched Valle d'Aosta with stupendous natural beauty, nourish with his Spirit the faith of those who live here. And may the Virgin Mary maternally watch over you and the apostolic service you are called to render with constant generosity, making it rich in abundant good

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