



The Holy See

CAPPELLA PAPAIE FOR THE DECEASED POPES

PAUL VI AND JOHN PAUL I

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

Thursday, 28 September 2000

1. "*Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning*" (Lk 12: 35).

So often in the Gospel Christ invites the disciples to be *vigilant*. Indeed, this is *a true command*: Watch! Be ready! It resounds for us today, venerable Brothers, during this celebration which sees us gathered round the Lord's altar to offer his sacrifice for the chosen souls of the Supreme Pontiffs Paul VI and John Paul I. And at this moment it is moving to think of them, and almost to see them both, "with their loins girded and their lamps burning", ready, thanks to their personal virtue and their ministry, for the definitive encounter with Christ the Lord.

For Pope Luciani, in particular, the blessedness of those whom the master found watching "at midnight" (Lk 12: 38) proved true to the letter. And that he was vigilant in his concern for the whole Church is attested by the deep impression he made on the hearts of the faithful, despite the brief days of his Pontificate.

2. This year, the traditional celebration offered in suffrage for my venerable Predecessors Paul VI and John Paul I receives a special significance and further spiritual effectiveness from the time of Jubilee grace.

This effectiveness, seen clearly, does not only redound for the benefit of the souls of these our deceased Brothers, but also for the benefit of all of us, gathered here in prayer. Indeed, if we are granted to offer prayers for their repose, from beyond the threshold of death they invite us to meditate on the ultimate goal of our earthly *pilgrimage*.

3. *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Rom 8: 35).* It is the Apostle Paul who asks himself this question. We know the answer: sin separates man from God, but the mystery of Christ's incarnation, passion, death and resurrection has re-established the lost covenant. Nothing and no one will ever be able to separate us from the love of God the Father, revealed and fulfilled in Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Death itself, deprived of the poison of sin, is no longer frightening: for those who believe, it has become a dream which is the prelude to eternal repose in the promised land.

The Book of Wisdom has reminded us that "the righteous man, though he die early, will be at rest", because he "pleased God and was loved by him" (Wis 4: 7, 10). What great love the Father had for the venerable Pontiffs Paul VI and John Paul II! He called them to the faith, to the priesthood, to the episcopate, to the Petrine ministry. He richly endowed them with countless gifts of wisdom and virtue. And while we pray God for them, confident that "grace and mercy are with his elect" (Wis 4: 15), we thank him for having given them to the Church which was and continues to be edified by their witness and their service.

4. *"My soul thirsts for God, for the living God" (Ps 42: 36).* This thirst, which Pope Montini and Pope Luciani felt intensely, will be quenched when "[we] come and behold the face of God" (cf. Ps 42: 3b).

Two Roman Pontiffs have recently been enrolled among the blessed spirits who already contemplate the divine glory: Pius IX and John XXIII. Today let us entrust our prayers of suffrage to their special *intercession* so that, in the heavenly liturgy, Paul VI and John Paul I may advance "to the house of God, with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival" (Ps 42: 4).

May they be welcomed at the throne of the Most High by the Blessed Virgin Mary, in whose immaculate beauty they will be able to admire, perfect at last, that of the Church which they loved and served on earth.

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