



The Holy See

FUNERAL MASS FOR CARDINAL PIETRO PALAZZINI

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

Friday 13 October 2000

1. *"Jesus went up on the mountain.... And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: "Blessed ...' " (Mt 5: 1-2).*

Just as he did one day on that mountain in Galilee, today too the Lord Jesus continues to teach his disciples with the fundamental sermon on the "*Beatitudes*". Beloved and venerable Cardinal Pietro Palazzini, whom we are accompanying at this moment on his way from this world to the Father's house, certainly reflected often on this Gospel text. Indeed, the Beatitudes are *the paradigm of Christian holiness* and, especially in the last years of his service as Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, he was able to marvel at the wonders of holiness in so many servants of God, blessed and saints. He is now called to contemplate the glorious face of the Thrice-Holy God in the fullness of light.

With their powerful *eschatological force*, Christ's words sustain our hope in the kingdom of heaven, promised to those who strive to follow the Teacher's way and to *conform themselves to him*. The bonds of affection and priestly brotherhood which join us to the late Cardinal Palazzini, to whom we are offering our last farewell, spur us to pray that he will be perfectly conformed to Christ. We pray that he will be able *fully to enjoy the happiness* of the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers and those persecuted for righteousness' sake.

2. *"My soul thirsts for God, for the living God" (Ps 41: 2)*, we sang in the Responsorial Psalm. Man is the creature who *longs for God*; he is made for God. That "immortal spirit", which - as the first reading recalls - "is in all things" (*Wis 12: 1*), nourishes man's desire to know the Creator and to

live in communion with him.

This spiritual dynamism is revealed in a very special way in the believer's life: he trustfully waits and prepares for the encounter with his Lord. In the second reading, the Apostle Paul says he is convinced that Christ will be honoured in his body, whether *by life* or *by death* (cf. *Phil* 1: 20). This is precisely why he says with deep emotion: "For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (*Phil* 1: 21).

However, we know that this deep conviction did not deter the Apostle from his uninterrupted ministry; on the contrary, although he longed to be united with Christ for ever, he said that he was ready to continue his service to his faithful for the progress and joy of their faith (cf. *Phil* 1: 23-25).

3. It is in this perspective that *we recall the late Cardinal Pietro Palazzini*. He devoted his life to the diligent service of God and the Church, especially through study, teaching and the defence of truth. Indeed, he spent his best energies, dedicating himself to the study of moral theology and canon law.

After taking theology courses at the Pontifical Lateran University and being ordained a priest, he earned a doctorate in theology and in *utroque iure*. He was vice-rector of the Roman Major Seminary; later appointed professor of moral theology on the Theological Faculty of the Lateran University, he continued to study the ethical, moral and juridical implications of modern human and social problems.

In 1962 Pope John XXIII appointed him Archbishop and called him to be a member of the Preparatory Commission of the Second Vatican Council. During the Ecumenical Council, he was a member of the Commission for the Discipline of the Clergy and the Christian People. He continued his zealous service at the Congregation "of the Council", which over the years became the "Congregation for the Clergy"; he was later called to direct the Congregation for the Causes of Saints as Prefect.

He published many valued works of moral theology and law, collaborated on others and made an important contribution of doctrine and pastoral wisdom to them all.

4. His last post in the Church's service as *Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints* seems especially significant today. After knowing and studying so many lives of saints and blessed, our venerable Brother is now called to enter their dwelling-place, through the door by which the just enter (cf. *Ps* 117: 20), that door which is Christ the Lord, the Holy One of God.

"*Aperite mihi portas iustitiae, et ingressus in eas confitebor Domino*" (*Ps* 117: 20). How many times did our Brother repeat this verse as he prayed the Divine Office! Now, having ended his earthly pilgrimage, he is preparing to enter the house of the Lord: "*In domo Domini*", as his

episcopal motto says. There he will take part in the liturgy of heaven.

In domo Domini! May the saints, whose causes he prepared, lead him into this dwelling-place of peace and joy; may the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose devoted son he always declared himself to be, welcome him.

May we who remain pilgrims on this earth be consoled by the sweet bond of the communion of saints and the sure hope that one day we will be able to take part for ever in the solemn, eternal liturgy of divine love. So be it!

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