



# The Holy See

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FUNERAL MASS FOR CARDINAL PAUL AUGUSTIN MAYER, O.S.B.

**HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI**

Altar of the Chair, St Peter's Basilica

Monday, 3 May 2010

(Video)

[Images of the celebration](#)

*Venerable Brothers,  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

The time has also come for our beloved Brother Cardinal Paul Augustin Mayer to depart from this world. He was born almost a century ago in my own native land and precisely at Altötting, the site of the famous Marian Shrine to which we Bavarians are bound by so many affectionate memories. The destiny of human life is like this: it flourishes on earth in a precise point in the world and it is summoned to Heaven, the Homeland from which it mysteriously comes. "*Desiderat anima mea ad te, Deus*" (Ps 42[41]: 2). This word, "*desiderat*" contains the whole man, his being flesh and spirit, earth and Heaven. It is the original mystery of God's image in the human being. The young Paul who as a monk took the name Augustin Mayer studied this subject in the writings of Clement of Alexandria for his doctorate in theology. It is the mystery of eternal life that is sown within us like a seed at the moment of Baptism and asks to be accepted on our journey through life until the day on which we give back our spirit to God the Father.

*"Pater, in manus tuas commendo spiritum meum"* (Lk 23: 46). May Jesus' last words on the Cross guide us in prayer and meditation while we are gathered round the altar to say the last farewell to our late Brother. Every funeral we celebrate is placed under the sign of hope: in Jesus' last breath on the Cross God gave himself entirely to humanity, filling the void opened by sin and re-establishing the victory of life over death (cf. Lk 23: 46; Jn 19: 30). This is why every human being

who dies in the Lord takes part through faith in this act of infinite love and, in a certain manner, gives up his spirit, together with Christ, in the unfailing hope that the Father's hand will raise him from the dead and bring him into the Kingdom of life.

"Hope does not disappoint us" the Apostle Paul said, writing to the Christians of Rome, "because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom 5: 5). The great and indefectible hope, founded on the solid rock of God's love, assures us that the life of those who die in Christ "is changed, not ended"; and that "when the body of our earthly dwelling lies in death, we gain an everlasting dwelling place in heaven" (*Preface for Christian Death*, I). In an epoch like ours, in which the fear of death throws many into desperation and a search for deceptive comforts, Christians are distinguished by their reliance on God, in a Love so great as to be able to renew the whole world. "Behold, I make all things new" (Rev 21: 5), the One who is seated on the throne declares at the end of the Book of Revelation. The vision of the new Jerusalem expresses the realization of humanity's deepest desire: to live together in peace, no longer with the threat of death but enjoying full communion with God and among ourselves. The Church, and in particular, the monastic community, are a prefiguration on earth of this final destination. It is an imperfect anticipation, marked by limitations and sins, hence ever in need of conversion and purification; yet, there is in the Eucharistic community a foretaste of the victory of Christ's love over what divides and mortifies. "*Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor*" "*Christ's love has gathered us in unity*": this was the episcopal motto of our venerable Brother who has left us. As a son of St Benedict, he experienced the Lord's promise: "He who conquers shall have this heritage, and I will be his God and he shall be my son" (Rev 21: 7).

After being educated at the Benedictine Fathers' school at the Abbey of San Michele, Metten, he made his monastic profession in 1931. Throughout his life he endeavoured to carry out what St Benedict says in his *Rule*: "Let nothing be preferred to the love of Christ". After his studies in Salzburg and Rome he embarked on a long and appreciated activity, teaching at the Pontifical Athenaeum of Sant'Anselmo, of which, from 1949, he was rector for 17 years. The Pontifical Liturgical Institute was founded in this very period and became a fundamental reference point for training those in charge of formation in the field of liturgy. After the Council, he was elected Abbot of his beloved Abbey of Metten. He held this office for five years, but in 1972, the Servant of God [Pope Paul VI](#) appointed him Secretary of the [Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes](#), and desired to ordain him a Bishop personally, on 13 February 1972.

During his years of service in this Dicastery, he promoted the gradual implementation of the [Second Vatican Council](#)'s deliberations. In this particular area he was able, in his capacity as a religious, to demonstrate his outstanding ecclesial and human sensibility. In 1984, Venerable [John Paul II](#) entrusted to him the office of Prefect of the [Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments](#) and created him a Cardinal at the Consistory on 25 May 1985, assigning him the Title of *Sant'Anselmo all'Aventino*. Subsequently the Pope named him first President of the [Pontifical Commission "Ecclesia Dei"](#); and in this new and delicate office Cardinal

Mayer also proved a zealous and faithful servant, seeking to apply the content of his motto: "The love of Christ has gathered us in unity".

Dear Brothers, our life is in the Lord's hands at every moment, especially in the moment of death. Let us therefore accompany our Brother Paul Augustine on his journey from this world to the Father with Jesus' trusting invocation on the Cross: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit". At this moment I cannot but recall the Shrine of the Mother of Grace in Altötting. Turning in spirit to that place of pilgrimage, let us entrust to the Blessed Virgin our prayers of suffrage for the late Cardinal Mayer. He was born near that Shrine, he conformed his life to Christ in accordance with the Benedictine Rule and he died in the shadow of this Vatican Basilica. May Our Lady, St Peter and St Benedict accompany this faithful disciple of the Lord to his Kingdom of light and peace. Amen.

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