



The Holy See

PAPAL MASS FOR THE REPOSE OF THE SOULS OF THE CARDINALS AND BISHOPS WHO HAVE DIED IN THE PAST YEAR

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

*Vatican Basilica, Altar of the Chair
Saturday, 3 November 2012*

[\[Video\]](#)

[Photo Gallery](#)

*Venerable Brothers,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

The atmosphere of the Communion of Saints and the Commemoration of the Faithful Departed is present and alive in our hearts. The liturgy has enabled us to live it intensely in the celebrations of the past few days. In particular, visiting cemeteries has allowed us to renew our bond with those loved ones who have left us; death, paradoxically, preserves what life cannot retain. We discover how our deceased lived, what they loved, feared and hoped, what they rejected, in a singular way from their tombs, that have remained almost as a mirror of their existence, of their world — challenging us and inducing us to reestablish a dialogue that death has put in jeopardy. Thus, the burial places are a kind of assembly, in which the living meet their dead and reaffirm the bonds of communion that death was unable to stop. And here in Rome, in these singular cemeteries, namely the catacombs, we see, as in no other place, the deep links to early Christianity, that we feel so close. When we step into the corridors of the catacombs in Rome — as in those cemeteries in our cities and in our towns — it is as though we were crossing an immaterial threshold and entering into communication with those who guard their past, made of joy and sorrow, of loss and of hope there. This happens because death concerns man today just as it did then; and even if many things of the past have become estranged to us, death remains the same.

In the face of this reality, the human being of every age searches for a glimmer of light that brings hope, that still speaks of life, and visiting graves also expresses this desire. But how should we Christians respond to the question of death? We respond with faith in God, with a gaze of firm hope founded on the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. So, death opens to life, to eternal life, which is not an infinite duplicate of the present time, but something completely new. Faith tells us that the true immortality for which we hope is not an idea, a concept, but a relationship of full communion with the living God: it is resting in his hands, in his love, and becoming in him one with all the brothers and sisters that he has created and redeemed, with all Creation. Our hope, then, lies in the love of God that shines resplendent from the Cross of Christ who lets Jesus' words to the good thief: "Today you will be with me in Paradise" (Lk 23:43) resound in our heart. This is life in its fullness: life in God; a life of which we now have only a glimpse as one sees blue sky through fog.

In this atmosphere of faith and prayer, dear Brothers, we are gathered around the altar to offer this Eucharistic Sacrifice in suffrage for the Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops who, during the course of this past year, have ended their earthly existence. In a special way, we recall our beloved Brother Cardinals: John Patrick Foley, Anthony Bevilacqua, José Sánchez, Ignace Moussa Daoud, Luis Aponte Martínez, Rodolfo Quezada Toruño, Eugênio de Araújo Sales, Paul Shan Kuo-hsi, Carlo Maria Martini, Fortunato Baldelli. We extend our affectionate memory to all the late Archbishops and Bishops, asking the Lord, who is righteous, merciful and just (cf. Ps 116[114]:5), to grant them the eternal reward promised to the faithful servants of the Gospel.

Thinking of the witness of these our venerated Brothers, we acknowledge them as "mild", "merciful", "pure of heart", "peacemakers" disciples of whom the Lord spoke in the Gospel passage (Mt 5:1-12): friends of the Lord who, trusting in his promise, in times of struggle and persecution, kept the joy of the faith, and now dwell for ever in the house of the Father and enjoy the heavenly reward, filled with happiness and grace. The Pastors we remember today served the Church with fidelity and love, at times facing burdensome trials, in order to reassure the flock entrusted to their care and attention. In the variety of their gifts and tasks, they gave an example of diligent supervision, of wise and zealous dedication to the Kingdom of God, offering a precious contribution to the post-conciliar period, a time of renewal for the whole Church.

The Eucharistic table, to which they drew near, first as faithful and then, daily, as ministers, anticipates in a most eloquent way what the Lord promised in his "Sermon on the Mount": possession of the Kingdom of Heaven, participation in the meal of the heavenly Jerusalem. Let us pray that this be done for all. Our prayer is nourished by this firm hope that "does not disappoint" (Rom 5:5), for it is guaranteed by Christ who wanted to live in the flesh the experience of death in order to triumph over it with the miraculous event of the Resurrection. "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen" (Lk 24:5-6). This announcement proclaimed by the Angels on Easter morning before the empty tomb, has reached us down the centuries and it offers us, in this liturgical celebration too, the essential reason for our hope. In fact, "if we have died with

Christ”, says St Paul alluding to what occurs at Baptism, “we believe that we shall also live with him” (Rom 6:8). It is the same Holy Spirit, through whom the love of God was poured into our hearts, who ensures us that our hope is not in vain (cf. Rom 5:5). God the Father, rich in mercy, who gave his only Son up unto death when we were still sinners — how will he fail to grant us salvation now that we are justified by his blood (cf. Rom 5:6-11)? Our justice is based on faith in Christ. He is the “just man”, foretold in all the Scriptures; it is thanks to his Pascal Mystery that, by crossing the threshold of death, our eyes will behold God, contemplate his face (cf. Job 19:27a).

The singular human existence of the Son of God is accompanied by his Most Holy Mother, who, alone among all creatures, we venerate as Immaculate and full of grace. Our Brother Cardinals and Bishops, whom we remember today, were loved with preference by the Virgin Mary and reciprocated her love with filial devotion. To her motherly intercession today we wish to entrust their souls, that by her they may be led to the eternal Kingdom of the Father, surrounded by so many of their faithful for whom they offered their lives. May Mary, with her loving gaze, watch over them watch over them who now sleep in peace awaiting the blessed resurrection. And we lift up our prayers to God for them, sustained by the hope of meeting again one day, united forever in Paradise. Amen.

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