



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE GERMAN PILGRIMS WHO HAD COME TO ROME
FOR THE INAUGURATION CEREMONY OF THE PONTIFICATE**

Monday, 25 April 2005

Dear German fellow citizens,

First of all, I apologize for being late. Germans are known for their punctuality, and this is a sign that I have become quite Italianized. However, we were at an ecumenical meeting with representatives of ecumenism from across the world, of all the Churches and Ecclesial Communities and with the representatives of other religions. It was a most cordial meeting, and so it was rather long. But now, finally, I cordially welcome you!

I warmly thank you for your good wishes, the words and signs of affection and of friendship that I have received overwhelmingly from every part of Germany. At the beginning of my journey in a ministry that I never even imagined and for which I felt inadequate, all of this gives me great strength and assistance. May God reward you for this!

When, little by little, the trend of the voting led me to understand that, to say it simply, the axe was going to fall on me, my head began to spin. I was convinced that I had already carried out my life's work and could look forward to ending my days peacefully. With profound conviction I said to the Lord: Do not do this to me! You have younger and better people at your disposal, who can face this great responsibility with greater dynamism and greater strength.

I was then very touched by a brief note written to me by a brother Cardinal. He reminded me that on the occasion of the [Mass for John Paul II](#), I had based my homily, starting from the Gospel, on the Lord's words to Peter by the Lake of Gennesaret: "Follow me!". I spoke of how again and again, Karol Wojtyła received this call from the Lord, and how each time he had to renounce much and to simply say: Yes, I will follow you, even if you lead me where I never wanted to go.

This brother Cardinal wrote to me: Were the Lord to say to you now, "Follow me", then remember

what you preached. Do not refuse! Be obedient in the same way that you described the great Pope, who has returned to the house of the Father. This deeply moved me. The ways of the Lord are not easy, but we were not created for an easy life, but for great things, for goodness.

Thus, in the end I had to say "yes". I trust in the Lord and I trust in you, dear friends. A Christian is never alone, as I said yesterday in [my Homily](#). In this way, I expressed the marvellous experience that we all lived through in the past four extraordinary weeks. Following the Pope's death and all the sorrow that it brought, the living Church emerged. It was clear that the Church is a unifying force, a sign for humanity.

When the great radio and television broadcasting stations gave 24-hour coverage on the Pope's return to the house of the Father, of people's grief, of the accomplishments of this great man, they were responding to a participation that exceeded every expectation. The Pope appeared to them as a father who offered them security and trust, who in some way united everyone.

It became obvious that the Church is not closed in on herself and does not exist only for herself, but is a shining point for humanity. Indeed, it was seen that the Church is not old and immobile. No, she is young.

If we look at these young people who were gathered around the late Pope, and as a result, around Christ, whose cause the Pope espoused, something just as comforting could be seen: it is not true that young people think only of consumerism and pleasure. It is not true that they are materialistic and self-centred. Just the opposite is true: young people want great things. They want an end to injustice. They want inequalities to be overcome and all peoples to have their share in the earth's goods. They want freedom for the oppressed. They want great things, good things.

This is why young people are - you are - once again fully open to Christ. Christ did not promise an easy life. Those who desire comforts have dialled the wrong number. Rather, he shows us the way to great things, the good, towards an authentic human life.

When he speaks of the cross that we ourselves have to carry, it has nothing to do with a taste for torture or of pedantic moralism. It is the impulse of love, which has its own momentum and does not seek itself but opens the person to the service of truth, justice and the good. Christ shows God to us, and thus the true greatness of man.

I am greatly pleased to see here the delegations and pilgrims from my Bavarian Homeland. Already on previous occasions, I have been able to tell you how much your faithful affection means to me, which has lasted since I left my beloved Archdiocese of Munich and Freising to go to the Vatican, responding to the call of my Venerable Predecessor Pope John Paul II, who appointed me as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith more than 23 years ago.

Since then, I have always been aware that Bavaria and Rome are not far apart, and not only from a geographical standpoint; rather, they have always been two poles between which a reciprocal, fruitful relationship has existed. From Rome, by means of tradesmen, officials and soldiers, the Gospel reached the Danube and the Lech.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, Bavaria offered one of the most beautiful witnesses of fidelity to the Catholic Church. This can be seen in the fruitful exchange of culture and devotion between baroque Bavaria and the See of the Successor of Peter. In modern times, it was Bavaria that gave the universal Church that lovable Capuchin porter, St Konrad von Parzham.

Dear friends, let us keep up this generosity, this pilgrimage towards Christ. I joyfully look forward to Cologne, where the youth of the world will meet; or rather, where the youth of the world will hold their meeting with Christ.

Let us walk together, let us be united. I trust in your help. I ask for your understanding if I make mistakes, as happens to any man, or if something that the Pope has to say or do according to his own conscience or the conscience of the Church is not understood. I ask for your trust. If we stay united, then we will discover the right path. And let us pray to Mary, Mother of the Lord, so that she will enable us to feel her love as a woman and a mother, in which we can understand all of the depth of Christ's mystery.

The Lord bless you all!

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