



The Holy See

FUNERAL MASS FOR CARDINAL LUIGI POGGI

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

Altar of the Chair, St Peter's Basilica

Friday, 7 May 2010

Venerable Brothers,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

You are gathered round the Lord's altar to accompany with the celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice, in which the Paschal Mystery is actualized, the last journey of beloved Cardinal Luigi Poggi, whom the Lord has called to himself. In addressing my cordial greeting to each one of you, I thank in particular Cardinal Sodano who, as Dean of the College of Cardinals, has presided at his funeral Mass.

The Gospel that has been proclaimed at this celebration helps us to live more intensely the sad moment of our Brother's departure from earthly life. Our sorrow at losing him is mitigated by hope in the Resurrection, based on the very words of Jesus: "For this is the will of my Father, that every one who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day" (Jn 6: 40). In the face of the mystery of death, for the person who has no faith everything would seem to be irreparably lost. It is then Christ's word that lights up life's journey and gives every moment of it value. Jesus Christ is the Lord of life, he came to raise on the last day all that the Father gave him (cf. Jn 6: 39). This is also the message that Peter proclaims very forcefully on the Day of Pentecost (cf. Acts 2: 14, 22b-28). He shows that death could not hold Jesus back. God freed him from anguish because it was not possible for him to be held in its power. On the Cross Christ won the victory that was to be made manifest with his triumph over death, namely, his Resurrection.

Our late Brother lived his entire life in this perspective of faith, dedicated to God and to the service of the brothers and sisters, thus becoming a witness of courageous faith that can trust in God. We can say that the whole of Cardinal Luigi Poggi's priestly mission was devoted to the direct service

of the Holy See. Born in Piacenza on 25 November 1917, after ecclesiastical studies at the Collegio Alberoni and his ordination to the priesthood on 28 July 1940, he continued his studies in Rome, earning a degree *in utroque iuris* and carrying out his priestly ministry in several Roman parishes. He entered the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy and in 1945 began his work with the then First Section of the Secretariat of State. These were difficult years during which he spared no effort to serve the Church. After a first assignment with the Government of the Tunisian Republic in the spring of 1963 in order to reach a *modus vivendi* between the Holy See and that country's Government on the Catholic Church's legal status in Tunisia, in April 1945 he was appointed Apostolic Delegate for Central Africa, with the dignity of Archbishop and jurisdiction over Cameroon, Chad, Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon and the Central African Republic. In May 1969, he was promoted to the rank of Apostolic Nuncio in Peru, where he remained until August 1973. In this year he was recalled to Rome to take up the office of Apostolic Nuncio with special duties, to be in contact specifically with the Governments of Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Bulgaria, for the purpose of improving the situation of the Catholic Church in those countries.

In July 1974, relations between the Holy See and the Polish Government were institutionalized and Archbishop Poggi was appointed Head of the Holy See Delegation for ongoing work contacts with the Government of Poland. In that period he made frequent journeys to Poland, meeting many famous political and ecclesiastical figures and, at the school of Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, his superior, becoming a protagonist of the Vatican's *ostpolitik* in the countries of the Communist bloc. On 19 April 1986 he was appointed Apostolic Nuncio in Italy; from this time the Nunciature was charged to study the procedures for Bishops' appointments in the country. Again, in that period it was he, as Papal Representative, who handled a delicate phase in the reordering of the Italian dioceses. Venerable John Paul II created and publicly proclaimed Archbishop Poggi a Cardinal at the Consistory on 26 November 1994 and appointed him Archivist and Librarian of Holy Roman Church. The Cardinal continued in this office until March 1998.

Dear brothers and sisters, the Apostle Paul's words: "If we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him" (Rom 6: 8) have just been proclaimed. This passage of the Letter to the Romans is one of the fundamental texts of the Liturgical Lectionary. Indeed, it is presented to us every year in the course of the Easter Vigil. Let us think of St Paul's illuminating words as we offer beloved Cardinal Luigi Poggi a heartfelt last farewell. How often must he himself have read, meditated and commented on them! What the Apostle writes concerning the mystical union of the baptized with the dead and Risen Christ, the late Cardinal is now living in the reality beyond this earth, freed from the conditioning imposed on human nature by sin. "For", as St Paul says in the same passage, "he who has died is freed from sin" (Rom 6: 7). The sacramental but real union with the Paschal Mystery of Christ opens to the baptized person the perspective of sharing in his very glory, and this already has a consequence for life here below, because, by virtue of Baptism, we already participate in Christ's Resurrection. Now, therefore "we too [may] walk in newness of life" (Rom 6: 4). This is why the devout death of a brother in Christ, especially if it is marked by the priestly character, is always a cause of intimate and grateful wonder at the plan of the divine

fatherhood which delivers us from the dominion of darkness and transfers us to the Kingdom of his Beloved Son (cf. Col 1: 13).

As we invoke the maternal intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of the Apostles and Mother of the Church for this Brother of ours, let us entrust his chosen soul to the Father of life, so that he may welcome him to the place prepared for his friends, faithful servants of the Gospel and of the Church.

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