



The Holy See

ORDINARY PUBLIC CONSISTORY FOR THE CREATION OF NEW CARDINALS

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

*Saint Peter's Basilica
Saturday, 7 December 2024*

[Multimedia]

Let us reflect a bit on the Gospel account: Jesus goes up to Jerusalem. Yet his is not an ascent to worldly glory but to the glory of God, which entails his descent into the abyss of death. In the Holy City, he will die on the cross to restore us to life. James and John, on the other hand, imagine a different destiny for their Master, and so they ask him for two places of honour: “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory” (*Mk 10:37*).

The Gospel highlights this dramatic contrast: Jesus is taking a difficult uphill path that will lead him to Calvary, while the disciples are thinking of the smooth downhill path of the triumphant Messiah. We should not be scandalized by this, but note with humility that – to say together with Manzoni – “such is the inconsistency of the human heart” (*The Betrothed*, Ch. 10). This is how it is done.

The same thing can happen with us: our hearts can go astray, allowing us to be dazzled by the allure of prestige, the seduction of power, by an overly human zeal for the Lord. That is why we need to look within, to stand before God in humility and before ourselves in sincerity, and ask: Where is my heart going? Where is my heart going today? Where is it directed? Have I perhaps taken the wrong road? As Saint Augustine warns us: “Why follow empty paths that only lead you astray? Return to the Lord. He is waiting. Yet first, return to your own heart, for there is found God’s image. Christ dwells in the inner man, and in the inner man you are renewed in the image of God” (*Commentary on the Gospel of John*, XVIII, 10).

To return to same path as Jesus, then, we need to return to the heart. Today, in a particular way, I

would like to say to you, dear brothers who are being made Cardinals: Make every effort *to walk in the path of Jesus*. What does this mean?

To walk in the path of Jesus means above all *to return to him and to put him back at the centre of everything*. At times, in our spiritual lives and our pastoral activity, we risk focusing on what is incidental and forgetting what is essential. Too often, secondary things replace what is necessary, external appearances overshadow what truly counts. We dive into activities that we consider urgent, without getting to the heart of the matter. Instead, we should constantly be returning to the centre, to what is basic, and divest ourselves of all that is superfluous, in order to clothe ourselves in Christ. (cf. *Rom 13:14*). The very word “Cardinal” reminds us of this, as it refers to the hinge inserted in order to secure, support and reinforce a door. Dear brothers: Jesus is our true support, the “centre of gravity” of our service, the “cardinal point” which gives direction to our entire life.

To walk in the path of Jesus also means *to cultivate a passion for encounter*. Jesus never walked alone; his relationship with the Father did not isolate him from the situations and sufferings that he encountered in this world. On the contrary, he came precisely to heal our wounded humanity, to lighten the burdens of our hearts, to cleanse the stain of sin and to shatter the bonds of enslavement. On his path the Lord encountered the faces of those who were suffering and those who had lost hope; he raised up the fallen and healed the sick. The path that Jesus followed was full of different faces and stories. As he passed, he dried the tears of those who mourned, “healed the brokenhearted, and bound up their wounds” (cf. *Ps 147:3*).

Adventures on the way, the joy of meeting others, care for those most in need: these things should inspire your service as Cardinals. Adventures on the way, the joy of meeting others, care for those most in need. Don Primo Mazzolari, a great figure among the Italian clergy, once said: “The Church began by walking, the Church continues by walking. There is no need to knock at her door or to wait to be admitted. Walk and you will find her; walk and she will be there at your side; keep walking and you will be in the Church” (*Tempo di credere*, Bologna 2010, 80-81). Let us not forget that staying still ruins the heart just as stagnant water is the first to be contaminated.

To walk in the path of Jesus means, in the end, *to be builders of communion and unity*. Among the disciples, the worm of competition was destroying unity, while the path that Jesus walked was leading him to Calvary. On the cross, he fulfilled the mission entrusted to him, that none be lost (cf. *Jn 6:39*), that the dividing wall of hostility (cf. *Eph 2:14*) be finally broken down, and that all might see themselves as children of the same Father and as brothers and sisters of one another. For this reason, the Lord is looking to you, who come from different backgrounds and cultures, and represent the catholicity of the Church. He is calling you to be witnesses of fraternity, artisans of communion and builders of unity. This is your mission!

The great [Saint Paul VI](#), addressing a group of new Cardinals, noted that, like the disciples, we can sometimes yield to the temptation of creating division, whereas “zeal for the pursuit of unity is

the mark of Christ's true disciples". The saintly Pope then added: "It is our desire that everyone feel at home in the ecclesial family, that there will be no exclusion or isolation, which proves so harmful to our unity in charity, or efforts to make some prevail to the detriment of others... We must work, pray, suffer and struggle to bear witness to the Risen Christ" (*Address on the Occasion of the Consistory, 27 June 1977*).

In this same spirit, dear brothers, you will make a difference, in accordance with Jesus' warning to the disciples about the corrosive competition of this world: "But it must not be so among you" (*Mk 10:43*). It is as if he said: Come, follow me on my path, and you will be different. Come, follow me and you will be a radiant sign in the midst of a society obsessed with appearances and power. Once again, he tells us: "But it must not be so among you". Love one another with fraternal love and be servants to one another, servants of the Gospel.

Dear brothers, let us walk in the way of Jesus, together; let us walk with humility; let us walk with wonder and let us walk with joy.