



The Holy See

MASS FOR THE CARDINALS, ARCHBISHOPS AND BISHOPS
WHO DIED DURING THE PAST YEAR

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

Thursday, 11 November 2004

1. *"I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever"* (Jn 6: 51). Jesus speaks these words to the crowd following the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves. He presents himself as the true manna, given by the heavenly Father so that man may have eternal life (cf. Jn 6: 26-58). In some way, his words foreshadow the great gift of the Eucharist, the sacrament that he will institute in the Upper Room during the Last Supper. The mystery of his death and Resurrection are fulfilled in the Paschal event; it is a mystery unceasingly kept alive in the Eucharist, the mystical banquet. Here, the Messiah offers himself as food for the guests, uniting them to himself in a bond of love and life stronger than death.

2. Your Eminences, Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood, dear brothers and sisters, the theme of the messianic banquet guides our reflection throughout this celebration, held in memory of our recently-deceased brother Cardinals and Bishops. Each time that we celebrate the Eucharist, we participate in the Lord's Supper, foretaste of the banquet of heavenly glory. In the first reading we have just heard, the prophet Isaiah invites us to look upon this glorious banquet. It will be held on the holy mountain of Jerusalem and will swallow up death and mourning for ever (cf. Is 25: 6, 8). Psalm 23[22] also evokes this banquet in the comforting vision of the man of prayer who receives hospitality from God himself, who prepares the table for him and anoints his head with oil (cf. Ps 23[22]: 5).

3. How much light the Word of God casts upon today's liturgy as we offer the Eucharistic Sacrifice, united in prayer around the altar, in suffrage for the venerable Cardinals and Bishops who have passed from this world to the Father during this year. It is with affection that I recall in a particular way their Eminences: Paulos Tzadua, Opilio Rossi, Franz König, Hyacinthe Thiandoum, Marcelo González Martín, Juan Francisco Fresno Larraín, James Aloysius Hickey and Gustaaf Joos. Let us pray for them and the deceased Archbishops and Bishops, who we entrust with filial trust to divine mercy.

4. Remembering them and calling to mind their generous service to the Church, it is as if to hear them repeating with the Apostle: *"Hope does not disappoint"* (Rom 5: 5)! Yes, dear brothers and sisters, God is faithful and our hope in him is not vain. We thank the Lord for all of the benefits the Church has received through the priestly ministry of these late Pastors. For them, let us call upon the maternal intercession of Mary Most Holy, so that they may participate in the eternal banquet, that same banquet which, with faith and love, they had a foretaste of during their

