



The Holy See

PAPAL MASS ON THE SOLEMNITY OF SAINTS PETER AND PAUL

IMPOSITION OF THE SACRED PALLIUM ON METROPOLITAN ARCHBISHOPS

HOMILY OF POPE FRANCIS

*Vatican Basilica
Saturday, 29 June 2013*

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*Your Eminences,
Your Eminence, Metropolitan Ioannis,
My Brother Bishops and Priests,
Dear Brothers and Sisters*

We are celebrating the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, Apostles, principal patrons of the Church of Rome: a celebration made all the more joyful by the presence of bishops from throughout the world. A great wealth, which makes us in some sense relive the event of Pentecost. Today, as then, the faith of the Church speaks in every tongue and desire to unite all peoples in one family.

I offer a heartfelt and grateful greeting to the Delegation of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, led by Metropolitan Ioannis. I thank Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomaios I for this renewed gesture of fraternity. I greet the distinguished ambassadors and civil authorities. And in a special way I thank the Choir of the Thomaskirche of Leipzig – Bach's own church – which is contributing to today's liturgical celebration and represents an additional ecumenical presence.

I would like to offer three thoughts on the Petrine ministry, guided by the word “confirm”. What has the Bishop of Rome been called to confirm?

1. First, *to confirm in faith*. The Gospel speaks of the confession of Peter: “You are Christ, the Son of the living God” (*Mt* 16:16), a confession which does not come from him but from our Father in heaven. Because of this confession, Jesus replies: “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church” (v. 18). The role, the ecclesial service of Peter, is founded upon his confession of faith in Jesus, the Son of the living God, made possible by a grace granted from on high. In the second part of today’s Gospel we see the peril of thinking in worldly terms. When Jesus speaks of his death and resurrection, of the path of God which does not correspond to the human path of power, flesh and blood re-emerge in Peter: “He took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him ... This must never happen to you” (16:22). Jesus’ response is harsh: “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me” (v. 23). Whenever we let our thoughts, our feelings or the logic of human power prevail, and we do not let ourselves be taught and guided by faith, by God, we become stumbling blocks. Faith in Christ is the light of our life as Christians and as ministers in the Church!

2. *To confirm in love*. In the second reading we heard the moving words of Saint Paul: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (*2 Tm* 4:7). But what is this fight? It is not one of those fights fought with human weapons which sadly continue to cause bloodshed throughout the world; rather, it is the fight of martyrdom. Saint Paul has but one weapon: the message of Christ and the gift of his entire life for Christ and for others. It is precisely this readiness to lay himself open, personally, to be consumed for the sake of the Gospel, to make himself all things to all people, unstintingly, that gives him credibility and builds up the Church. The Bishop of Rome is called himself to live and to confirm his brothers and sisters in this love for Christ and for all others, without distinction, limits or barriers. And not only the Bishop of Rome: each of you, new archbishops and bishops, have the same task: to let yourselves be consumed by the Gospel, to become all things to everyone. It is your task to hold nothing back, to go outside of yourselves in the service of the faithful and holy people of God.

3. *To confirm in unity*. Here I would like to reflect for a moment on the rite which we have carried out. The pallium is a symbol of communion with the Successor of Peter, “the lasting and visible source and foundation of the unity both of faith and of communion” (*Lumen Gentium*, 18). And your presence today, dear brothers, is the sign that the Church’s communion does not mean uniformity. The Second Vatican Council, in speaking of the hierarchical structure of the Church, states that the Lord “established the apostles as college or permanent assembly, at the head of which he placed Peter, chosen from their number” (*ibid.*, 19). To confirm in unity: the Synod of Bishops, in harmony with the primate. Let us go forward on the path of synodality, and grow in harmony with the service of the primacy. And the Council continues, “this college, in so far as it is composed of many members, is the expression of the variety and universality of the people of God” (*ibid.*, 22). In the Church, variety, which is itself a great treasure, is always grounded in the harmony of unity, like a great mosaic in which every small piece joins with others as part of God’s

one great plan. This should inspire us to work always to overcome every conflict which wounds the body of the Church. United in our differences: there is no other Catholic way to be united. This is the Catholic spirit, the Christian spirit: to be united in our differences. This is the way of Jesus! The pallium, while being a sign of communion with the Bishop of Rome and with the universal church, with the Synod of Bishops, also commits each of you to being a servant of communion.

To confess the Lord by letting oneself be taught by God; to be consumed by love for Christ and his Gospel; to be servants of unity. These, dear brother bishops, are the tasks which the holy apostles Peter and Paul entrust to each of us, so that they can be lived by every Christian. May the holy Mother of God guide us and accompany us always with her intercession. *Queen of Apostles, pray for us! Amen.*