



The Holy See

HOLY MASS WITH THE NEW CARDINALS AND THE COLLEGE OF CARDINALS

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

St Peter's Basilica

Tuesday, 30 August 2022

[Multimedia]

The readings of this celebration – taken from the Votive Mass “for the Church” – set before us *two instances of wonder*: the wonder of Paul before God’s saving plan (cf. *Eph* 1:3-14) and the wonder of the disciples, including Matthew himself, at meeting the risen Jesus, who then commissioned them (cf. *Mt* 28:16-20). A twofold wonder. Let us enter more deeply into these two “territories” where the wind of the Holy Spirit blows strongly, so that we can set out from this celebration, and this assembly of Cardinals, ever more ready to “proclaim to all the peoples the wonders of the Lord” (cf. Responsorial Psalm).

The hymn that opens the Letter to the Ephesians is born of the contemplation of God’s saving plan in history. Just as we marvel at the sight of the universe all around us, so we are full of wonder as we consider the history of salvation. And if, in the cosmos, everything moves or stands still according to the invisible force of gravity, in God’s plan, down the ages all things find their origin, existence, end and purpose *in Christ*.

In the Pauline hymn, that expression – “in Christ” or “in him” – is the foundation supporting every stage of salvation history. In Christ we were blessed even before the world was created; in him we were called and redeemed; in him all creation is restored to unity, and all, near and far, first and last, are destined, by the working of the Holy Spirit, to the praise of God’s glory.

As we contemplate this plan, “praise is due” to God (Responsory, Lauds, Monday Week IV): praise, blessing, adoration and the gratitude that acknowledges all that God has done. Praise born

of wonder, praise that will never become force of habit, as long as it remains rooted in wonder and nourished by that fundamental attitude of the heart and spirit. I would like to ask each of us, you dear brother Cardinals, Bishops, priests, consecrated persons, people of God: how is your wonder? Do you sense wonder at times? Or have you forgotten what it means?

This is the atmosphere of wonder with which we can now enter into the “territory” of the Pauline hymn.

If we enter into the brief but profound account found in the Gospel, if together with the disciples, we answer the Lord’s call and go to Galilee – and we all have our own Galilee within our particular histories, that Galilee where we sensed the Lord’s call, the gaze of the Lord who called us; go back to that Galilee – if we go back to that Galilee on the mountain that he pointed out we will experience *a new wonder*. This time, we will marvel not at the plan of salvation itself, but at the even more amazing fact that God calls us to share in this plan. Here we see the *mission of the apostles with the risen Christ*. We can scarcely imagine the emotion with which the “eleven disciples” heard those words of the Lord: “Go... make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you” (Mt 28:19-20). And then, his final promise that inspires hope and consolation – indeed today we spoke about hope [in this morning’s meeting]: “I am with you always, to the end of the age” (v. 20). These words, spoken by the risen Lord, still have the power, even after two thousand years, to thrill our hearts. We continue to marvel at the unfathomable divine decision to evangelize the whole world starting with that ragtag group of disciples, some of whom – as the evangelist tells us – still doubted (cf. v. 17). Yet, if we think about it, we should marvel no less if we look at ourselves, gathered here today, to whom the Lord has spoken those same words, given that same mandate! Each of us, as a community, as a College.

Brothers and sisters, this kind of wonder is a way to salvation! May God keep it ever alive in our hearts, for it sets us free from the temptation of thinking that we can “manage things”, that we are “most eminent”. Or from the false security of thinking that today is somehow different, no longer like the origins; today the Church is big, solid, and we occupy eminent positions in its hierarchy – indeed they address us as “Your Eminence”... There is some truth in this, but there is also much deception, whereby the Father of Lies always seeks to make Christ’s followers first worldly, then innocuous. This can lead you to the temptation of worldliness, which step by step takes away your strength, takes away your hope; it prevents you from seeing the gaze of Jesus who calls us by name and sends us out. Those are the seeds of spiritual worldliness.

Today, truly, the word of God awakens in us *wonder at being in the Church, of being Church!* Let us return to our initial baptismal wonder. That is what makes the community of believers attractive, first to themselves and then to others: the double mystery of our being *blessed in Christ* and of *going forth with Christ into the world*. This wonder does not diminish with the passing of the years; it does not weaken with our increasing responsibilities in the Church. No, thanks be to God. It

grows stronger and deeper. I am certain that this is also the case with you, dear brothers, who have now become members of the College of Cardinals.

We rejoice too that this sense of gratitude is shared by all of us, all the baptized. We should be immensely grateful to Saint Paul VI, who passed on to us this love for the Church, a love which is first and foremost gratitude, grateful wonder at her mystery and at the gift of our being not only members of the Church, but involved in her life, sharing in and, indeed, jointly responsible for her. At the beginning of his programmatic encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*, written during the Council, the first thought that came to the Pope's mind was that "the Church needs to cultivate a deeper awareness of her identity... her origin and her mission". In this regard, he made explicit reference to the Letter to the Ephesians, to "the providential plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God... so that through the Church... it may be made known" (*Eph* 3:9-10).

This, dear brothers and sisters, is what it is to be a minister of the Church. One who experiences wonder before God's plan and, in that spirit, passionately loves the Church and stands at the service of her mission wherever and however the Holy Spirit may choose. This was the case with the Apostle Paul, as we see from his letters. His apostolic zeal and the concern for the community was always accompanied, and indeed preceded, by *words of blessing filled with wonder and gratitude*: "Blessed be God...", and full of wonder. This is perhaps the measure, the thermometer of our spiritual life. I repeat the question, dear brother, dear sister, all of here together: how is your ability to be amazed? Or are you used to it, so used to it that you have lost it? Are you able once again to be amazed?

May it be the case with us! May it be the case with each of you, dear brother Cardinals! May the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary – who looked and carried everything in her heart with wonder – may the Mother of the Church obtain this grace for each of us. Amen!