



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
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Audience with the “Joseph Ratzinger – Benedict XVI Vatican Foundation” for the conferral of the Ratzinger Prize 2018

At 12.10 today, in the Clementine Hall of the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the members of the “Joseph Ratzinger – Benedict XVI Vatican Foundation” for the conferral of the Ratzinger Prize 2018, now in its eighth edition.

After the greeting from Fr. Federico Lombardi, S.J., president of the Foundation, his Eminence Cardinal Angelo Amato, S.D.B., prefect emeritus of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints and president of the Scientific Committee of the same Foundation, presented the profile of the two prize winners of this edition. Pope Francis then awarded the Prize.

The winners this year are Marianne Schlosser, German Catholic theologian, specialist the Late Middle Ages and in Saint Bonaventure, professor of theology of spirituality in the Faculty of Catholic Theology of the University of Vienna since 2004; and Mario Botta, Swiss architect, who has built many religious buildings and several Churches.

The following is the text of the Holy Father’s address to those attending the ceremony:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters,

I am pleased to be taking part once again this year, at the award ceremony for the eminent personalities presented to me by the Vatican Foundation Joseph Ratzinger – Benedict XVI, upon the proposal of the Foundation’s Scientific Committee. I greet the two Prize-winners: Professor Marianne Schlosser and Architect Mario Botta, as well as the members and friends of the Foundation present here, and I thank Cardinal Angelo Amato and Fr. Federico Lombardi, SJ, who outlined the significance of this event and the profiles of the Prize

winners.

This is a lovely occasion on which to offer our affectionate and grateful thought to the Pope-emeritus, Benedict XVI. As admirers of his cultural and spiritual legacy, you have received the mission to cultivate it and continue to make it bear fruit, with that strongly ecclesial spirit that has distinguished Joseph Ratzinger, ever since the days of his richly fertile theological activity in his youth, when already he gave precious fruits in the Vatican Council II, and then in an increasingly demanding manner in the successive stages of his long life of service, as a professor, Archbishop, Head of the Dicastery, and finally as Pastor of the Universal Church. His is a spirit that views the problems of our time with awareness and courage, and knows how to draw, from attention to Scripture in the living tradition of the Church, the wisdom necessary for a constructive dialogue with today's culture. In this line, I encourage you to continue to study his writings, but also to face the new themes on which faith is called to dialogue, like those that have been evoked by you and which I consider very current, of the care for creation as our common home and the defense of the dignity of the human person.

Today, however, I would like to express my particular appreciation for the two personalities awarded the Prize. I am very pleased that the award for research and teaching in theology is attributed to a woman, Professor Marianne Schlosser. It is not the first time — Prof. Anne-Marie Pelletier has already received it — but it is very important that the contribution of women to the scientific field of theological research and that of the teaching of theology — for so long considered almost exclusive territories of the clergy — be recognized more and more. It is necessary that this contribution be encouraged, and that it find a wider space, in keeping with the growing presence of women in the various fields of responsibility of the Church, in particular, though not only, in the cultural field. Since Paul VI proclaimed Teresa of Avila and Catherine of Siena Doctors of the Church, no doubt may be permitted regarding the fact that women can reach the highest peaks in the understanding of the faith. John Paul II and Benedict XVI also confirmed this by including the names of other women in the series of Doctors: St. Therese of Lisieux and St. Hildegard of Bingen.

In addition to theology, the Ratzinger Prizes have since last year been appropriately conferred also in the field of Christian-inspired arts. I therefore congratulate the architect, Mario Botta. Throughout the history of the Church, sacred buildings have been a concrete call to God and to the dimensions of the spirit wherever the Christian proclamation has spread throughout the world. They expressed the faith of the believing community, they welcomed that community, helping to give form and inspiration to the prayer of that community. The commitment of the architect, creator of sacred space in the city of men, is therefore of highest value, and must be recognized and encouraged by the Church, especially when we risk the oblivion of the spiritual dimension and the dehumanization of urban spaces.

Against the backdrop and in the context of the great problems of our time, theology and art must therefore continue to be animated and elevated by the power of the Spirit, which is the source of strength, joy and hope. So, allow me to conclude by recalling the words with which our Pope-emeritus invited us to hope, by evoking the spiritual elevation of a great theologian and saint particularly dear to him, and well known by our Prize-winner, Professor Schlosser. On the occasion of his visit to Bagnoregio, home of St. Bonaventure, Benedict XVI expressed himself thus: «We find a beautiful image of hope in one of his sermons for Advent, in which he compares the movement of hope with the flight of a bird that spreads its wings to their maximum capacity and draws on all its strength to flap them. In a certain sense it makes its whole self-movement, to soar upwards and fly. Hoping is flying, St Bonaventure says. But hope requires that all our limbs become movement, projected to the true height of our being, towards the promises of God. Whoever hopes, he affirms, “must lift his head, turning his thoughts aloft, to the heights of our existence, namely to God.” (*Sermo XVI, Dominica I Adv., Opera omnia*, IX, 40a)» (*Address in Bagnoregio*, 6 september 2009).

I thank the theologians and the architects who help us to lift our heads and turn our thoughts to God. My very best wishes to all of you for your noble work. Let it always be addressed to this end.
