



The Holy See

PAPAL MASS IN COMMEMORATION OF THE CARDINALS AND BISHOPS DECEASED DURING THE COURSE OF THIS PAST YEAR

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

*Vatican Basilica, Altar of the Chair of Saint Peter
Friday, 3 November 2017*

[Multimedia]

Today's celebration once more sets before us the reality of death. It renews our sorrow for the loss of those who were dear and good to us. Yet, more importantly, the liturgy increases our *hope* for them and for ourselves.

The first reading expresses a *powerful hope* in the resurrection of the just: "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (*Dan* 12:2). Those who sleep in the dust of the earth are obviously the dead. Yet awakening from death is not in itself a return to life: some will awake for eternal life, others for everlasting shame. Death makes definitive the "crossroads" which even now, in this world, stands before us: the way of life, with God, or the way of death, far from him. The "many" who will rise for eternal life are to be understood as the "many" for whom the blood of Christ was shed. They are the multitude that, thanks to the goodness and mercy of God, can experience the life that does not pass away, the complete victory over death brought by the resurrection.

In the Gospel, Jesus *strengthens our hope* by saying: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever" (*Jn* 6:51). These words evoke Christ's sacrifice on the cross. He accepted death in order to save those whom the Father had given him, who were dead in the slavery of sin. Jesus became our brother and shared our human condition even unto death. By his love, he shattered the yoke of death and opened to us the doors of life. By partaking of his body and blood, we are united to his faithful love, which embraces his

definitive victory of good over evil, suffering and death. By virtue of this divine bond of Christ's charity, we know that our fellowship with the dead is not merely a desire or an illusion, but a reality.

The faith we profess in the resurrection makes us *men and women of hope*, not despair, men and women of life, not death, for we are comforted by the promise of eternal life, grounded in our union with the risen Christ.

This *hope*, rekindled in us by the word of God, helps us to be trusting in the face of death. Jesus has shown us that death is not the last word; rather, the merciful love of the Father transfigures us and makes us live in eternal communion with him. A fundamental mark of the Christian is a sense of anxious expectation of our final encounter with God. We reaffirmed it just now in the responsorial psalm: "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God?" (*Ps 42:2*). These poetic words poignantly convey our watchful and expectant yearning for God's love, beauty, happiness, and wisdom.

These same words of the psalm were impressed on the souls of our brother cardinals and bishops whom we remember today. They left us after having served the Church and the people entrusted to them in the prospect of eternity. As we now give thanks for their generous service to the Gospel and the Church, we seem to hear them repeat with the apostle: "Hope does not disappoint" (*Rom 5:5*). Truly, it does not disappoint! God is faithful and our hope in him is not vain. Let us invoke for them the maternal intercession of Mary Most Holy, that they may share in the eternal banquet of which, with faith and love, they had a foretaste in the course of their earthly pilgrimage.