

**The Homily given by Pope Benedict XVI at the celebration of the Eucharist
with the participants of the 'New Evangelisation Event'
hosted by the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization
in which the Holy Father announced the YEAR OF FAITH.**

16 Oct. 2011

Venerable Brothers, dear Brothers and Sisters!

With joy I celebrate today this Mass for you who are committed in many parts of the world on the frontiers of the New Evangelization. This liturgy is the conclusion of the meeting that gathered you yesterday to address the realms of that mission and to listen to some significant testimonies. I myself wish to present some thoughts to you, while I break for you today the Bread of the Word and of the Eucharist, in the certainty -- shared by all of us -- that without Christ, Word and Bread of life, we can do nothing (cf. John 15:5). I am content because this conference is situated in the context of the month of October, in fact one week before World Mission Sunday: this puts the New Evangelization in its specific dimension, in harmony with that of the mission ad gentes.

I address a cordial greeting to all of you who accepted the invitation of the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization. In particular I greet and thank the president of this recently established dicastery, Archbishop Salvatore Fisichella, and his collaborators.

Let us turn now to the biblical readings in which the Lord speaks to us today. The first, taken from the Book of Isaiah, tells us that God is one, He is unique; there are no other gods besides the Lord, and even the powerful Cyrus, emperor of the Persians, forms part of a greater plan, which only God knows and carries forward. This reading gives us the theological meaning of history: the changes of epochs, the succession of great powers, are under the supreme dominion of God; no earthly power can put itself in His place. The theology of history is an important, essential aspect of the New Evangelization, because the men of our time, after the terrible period of the totalitarian empires of the 20th century, need to rediscover a global vision of the world and of time, a truly free, peaceful vision, the vision that the Second Vatican Council transmitted in its documents, and that my Predecessors, the Servant of God Paul VI and Blessed John Paul II, illustrated with their Magisterium.

The second reading is the beginning of the First Letter to the Thessalonians, and this is already very thought provoking, because it is the oldest letter that has come down to us from the greatest evangelizer of all times, the Apostle Paul. He says to us first of all that one does not evangelize in an isolated way: In fact he also had Silvanus and Timothy as collaborators (cf. 1 Thessalonians 1:1), and many others. And he immediately adds another very important thing: that the proclamation must

always be preceded, accompanied and followed by prayer. He writes, in fact: "We give thanks to God always for you all, constantly mentioning you in our prayers" (v. 2). The Apostle says he is very conscious of the fact that he has not chosen the members of the community, but God has: "They were chosen by Him," he states (v. 4). Every missionary of the Gospel must have this truth always present: It is the Lord who touches hearts with his Word and his Spirit, calling persons to faith and to communion in the Church. Finally, Paul leaves us a very beautiful teaching, taken from his experience. He writes: "for our Gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction" (v. 5). To be effective, evangelization needs the strength of the Spirit, to animate the proclamation and infuse in the one who bears it that "full conviction" of which the Apostle speaks. This term "conviction," "full conviction" in the Greek original is *pleroforia*: a term that does not express so much the subjective, psychological aspect, but rather the plenitude, the fidelity, the completeness, in this case of the proclamation of Christ. A proclamation that, to be complete and faithful, must be accompanied by signs, by gestures, as the preaching of Jesus. Word, Spirit and conviction -- thus understood -- are, hence, inseparable and thus concur to make the evangelical message spread efficaciously.

We now pause on the passage of the Gospel. It is the text on the legitimacy of the tribute that must be paid to Caesar, which contains Jesus' famous answer: "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21). But before coming to this point, this is a passage that can refer to all those who have the mission to evangelize. In fact, Jesus' interlocutors -- disciples of the Pharisees and Herodians -- address Him with an expression of appreciation: "We know that you are true, and teach the way of God truthfully, and care for no man; for you do not regard the position of men" (v. 16). And it is in fact this affirmation, though arising from hypocrisy, which must call our attention. The disciples of the Pharisees and the Herodians do not believe what they say. They affirm it with a *captatio benevolentiae* so that they will be listened to, but their heart is very far from that truth; rather they want to lay a snare for Jesus to be able to accuse him. For us, instead, that expression is beautiful and true: Jesus, in fact, is true and he teaches the way of God according to the truth and he is not subject to anyone. He himself is this "way of God," which we are called to follow.

We can recall Jesus' words in John's Gospel: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" (14:6). In this regard, St. Augustine's commentary is enlightening: "It was necessary for Jesus to say: I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" because once the Way was known, the end had to be known. The Way led to the Truth, it led to the Life ... and we, where are we going if not to Him? And by what Way do we go if not by Him?" (In Ioh 69:2). The new evangelizers are called to walk first on this Way that is Christ, to bring others to know the beauty of the Gospel that gives Life. And on this Way, one never walks alone but in company: an experience of communion and fraternity that is offered to all those we meet, to make others participants of our experience of Christ and of his Church. Thus, witness, together with

proclamation, can open the heart of those who are seeking the truth, so that they can discover the meaning of their lives.

A brief reflection also on the central question of the tribute to Caesar. Jesus answers with astonishing political realism, linked to the Theo-centrism of the prophetic tradition. The tribute to Caesar is paid, because the image on the coin is his; but man, every man, bears in himself another image, that of God, and hence he is His, to whom each one owes his existence. The Fathers of the Church, inspired in the fact that Jesus refers to the image of the Emperor coined on the coin of tribute, interpreted this step in the light of the fundamental concept of man as image of God, contained in the first chapter of the Book of Genesis.

An anonymous author writes: "The image of God is not imprinted on gold but on the human race. Caesar's coin is gold, God's is humanity ... hence, give your wealth to Caesar, but keep for God the unique innocence of your conscience where God is contemplated ... Caesar, in fact, has engraved his image on each coin, but God has chosen man, whom He has created, to reflect his glory" (Anonymous, Incomplete Work on Matthew, Homily 42). And St. Augustine used this reference many times in his homilies: "If Caesar claims his own image engraved on the coin," he affirms, "will God not exact from man the divine image sculpted in him? (En. In Ps., Psalm 94:2). And still: "As the coin is returned to Caesar, so the illumined soul is returned to God imprinted by the light of his face ... Christ in fact dwells in man's interior" (Ivi, Psalm 4:8).

This word of Jesus is rich in anthropological content, and it cannot be reduced solely to the political realm. The Church, therefore, does not limit herself to remind men of the correct distinction between the sphere of Caesar's authority and God's, between the political and the religious realm. The mission of the Church, as Christ's, is essentially to speak of God, to remind of his sovereignty, to remind everyone, especially Christians who have lost their identity, of God's right over what belongs to Him, that is, our life.

Precisely to give renewed impulse to the mission of the whole Church to lead men out of the desert in which they are often found to the place of life, friendship with Christ who gives us his life in plenitude, I would like to announce in this Eucharistic Celebration that I have decided to declare a "Year of Faith," which I will illustrate with a special Apostolic Letter. This "Year of Faith" will begin on Oct. 11, 2012, on the 50th anniversary of the opening of Vatican II, and will end on Nov. 24, 2013, Solemnity of Christ the King of the Universe. It will be a time of grace and commitment to an ever fuller conversion to God, to reinforce our faith in Him and to proclaim Him with joy to the men of our time.

Dear brothers and sisters, you are among the protagonists of the New Evangelization, which the Church has undertaken and carries forward, not without difficulty, but with the same enthusiasm of the early Christians.

In conclusion, I make my own the expressions of the Apostle Paul that we have heard: I thank God for all of you. And I assure you that I keep you in my prayers, conscious of your commitment in faith, your diligence in charity, and your constant hope in Jesus Christ our Lord.

May the Virgin Mary, who was not afraid to answer "yes" to the Word of the Lord, and, after having conceived Him in her womb, went out full of joy and hope, always be your model and your guide. Learn from the Mother of the Lord and our Mother to be humble and at the same time brave, simple and prudent; balanced and strong, not with the force of the world, but with that of truth. Amen.

POPE BENEDICT XVI - WEEKLY WEDNESDAY AUDIENCE

**'YEAR OF FAITH'
16 OCT. 2011**

The address given by Pope Benedict XVI which accompanied the praying of the midday Angelus in St. Peter's Square.

Dear brothers and sisters,

Yesterday and today there was an important event here at the Vatican regarding the new evangelization, an event that concluded this morning with a Eucharistic celebration over which I presided in St. Peter's Basilica. The initiative, organized by the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization, had the main objective of going deeper into the issues surrounding a renewed proclamation of the Gospel in nations with an ancient Christian tradition, and at the same time, it presented various testimonies and significant experiences. Numerous people from around the world have responded to this invitation, people committed to this mission, which Blessed John Paul II already clearly indicated to the Church as an urgent and gripping challenge.

[John Paul II] -- in the footsteps of the Second Vatican Council, and those of Paul VI, the one who put the council's implementation into motion -- was, in fact, a tireless defender of the mission ad gentes, that is, to the peoples and territories where the Gospel has not yet put down roots, as well as a herald of the new evangelization.

These are aspects of the one mission of the Church, and it is therefore meaningful to consider them together in this month of October, marked by the celebration of World Mission Day, precisely next Sunday.

Just as I did a few minutes ago in the homily of the Mass, I happily take advantage of this opportunity to announce that I have decided to convoke a special **"Year of Faith," which will begin Oct. 11, 2012 -- the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council -- and will conclude Nov. 24, 2013, Solemnity of Christ, King of the Universe.**

I have explained the motives, goals and guidelines of this year in an apostolic letter that will be published soon. The Servant of God Paul VI convoked a similar "Year of Faith" in 1967, on the occasion of the 19th centenary of the martyrdom of the Apostles Peter and Paul, during a period of great cultural changes. I believe that, now that a half century has passed since the opening of the Council, and linked to the happy memory of Blessed John XXIII, it would be opportune to remember the beauty and the centrality of the faith, the need to strengthen and deepen it, both at the personal and the community level, and to do this in a perspective that is not so much celebratory, but rather, missionary -- precisely in the perspective of the mission ad gentes and the new evangelization.

Dear friends, in the liturgy of this Sunday, we read what St. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians: "For our gospel did not come to you in word alone, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with much conviction." May this word from the Apostle of the Gentiles be the promise and the program for the missionaries of today -- priests, religious and laity -- committed to proclaim Christ to those who do not know him, or those who have reduced him to a mere historical figure. May the Virgin Mary help each Christian to be an effective witness of the Gospel.

After praying the Angelus, the Pope greeted the crowds in several languages. In English, he said:

I extend heartfelt greetings to the English-speaking visitors here today. Jesus reminds us in today's Gospel that over and above our duties to one another and to the civil authorities, we have obligations to Almighty God. We pray for the wisdom always to recognize where our duty lies, and in all things to give due praise and honour to our Creator and Redeemer. May God bless all of you!