

Pope Benedict XVI. in Bavaria

**Saturday, September 09, 2006,
Welcome at Marienplatz, Munich**

Address of the Holy Father

Note: Mistakes in the text are transmission errors and could not be corrected because of the nature of the file.

Madam Chancellor and Mr Prime Minister,
My Brother Cardinals, Bishops and Priests,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Brothers and Sisters!

It is very moving for me to stand once more in this beautiful square at the foot of the *Mariensäule* – in a place which already witnessed two other decisive turning-points in my life. Here, almost thirty years ago, the faithful welcomed me with joy as their new Archbishop: I then began my ministry with a prayer to the Mother of God. Here too, five years later, after being called to Rome by the Pope, I bade farewell to my Diocese and once more addressed a prayer to the *Patrona Bavariae*, entrusting “my” city and homeland to her protection. Today I am here again – this time as the Successor of Saint Peter.

I thank the Prime Minister, Dr Edmund Stoiber, for his cordial words of welcome in the name of the Bavarian regional government. I also thank my successor as Pastor of the Archdiocese of Munich and Freising, Cardinal Friedrich Wetter, for his warm welcome on behalf of the faithful of the Archdiocese. I greet the Chancellor, Dr Angela Merkel, and all the political, civil and military authorities taking part in this brief ceremony of welcome and prayer. I would like to offer a special greeting to the priests, especially those whom I worked with in my home Diocese of Munich and Freising. Finally I greet all of you with great love, my dear compatriots and friends, who have gathered in this square to demonstrate your affection! I thank you for your warm welcome, and I think in particular of all those who have worked to prepare for this meeting and the whole of my journey.

I hope you will allow me to recall on this occasion a few thoughts which I set down in brief memoirs with regard to my appointment as Archbishop of Munich and Freising. I became the successor of Saint Corbinian. From my childhood I was very much taken with the story that a bear had attacked and killed the horse which the saint was riding on a journey to Rome. According to the legend, the saint punished the bear by putting on his back the load that the horse had been carrying. So the bear had to carry this load across the Alps all the way to Rome, and only there did the saint set him free. In 1977, when I had to face the difficult choice whether or not to accept my appointment as Archbishop of Munich and Freising, knowing that it would take me away from my beloved work at the university, this bear with its heavy burden reminded me of Saint Augustine’s interpretation of verses 22 and 23 of Psalm 73. The Psalmist, asking why God’s friends suffer, says: “I was foolish and did not understand, standing before you like a dumb animal. Nevertheless I am continually with you.” Augustine, seeing in the word “animal” a reference to the beasts of burden used by farmers to work the land, saw here an image of himself, burdened by his episcopal ministry, the *sarcina episcopalis*. He had chosen the life of scholarship, and God had called him to become a “beast of burden”, a pack animal, a good ox drawing the plough in God’s field, this world ... But at this point the Psalm gave him enlightenment and consolation: for just as the beast of burden is closest to the farmer and, under his direction, carries out the burdensome work entrusted to him, so the Bishop is very close to God, because he carries out an important service for his Kingdom.

With these words of the Bishop of Hippo in mind, I have found in Saint Corbinian’s bear a constant encouragement to carry out my ministry with confidence and joy – thirty years ago, and again now in my new task – and to say my daily “yes” to God: I have become for you a beast of burden, but as such “I am always with you” (*Ps* 73:23). Saint Corbinian’s bear was set free in Rome. In my case, the Lord decided otherwise. And so I find myself

once more at the foot of the *Mariensäule*, imploring the intercession and blessing of the Mother of God, this time not only for the city of Munich and for Bavaria, but for the universal Church and for all people of good will.