

Pope to new cardinals: 'Forget power and glory'

John L. Allen Jr. | Feb. 18, 2012 NCR Today

Italian paper calls Dolan a papal candidate

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Rome

Pope Benedict XVI legendarily thinks in centuries, so it's almost always a category mistake to read his public oratory as a commentary on current events. Yet it was hard to listen to him this morning without at least flashing on the recent Vatican leaks scandal, which has created widespread impressions of power struggles and senior churchmen stabbing one another in the back.

In comments today to 22 new cardinals taking part in Benedict's fourth consistory, with most of the Vatican's senior leadership looking on, the pope issued a strong plea for a spirit of service.

"Serving God and others, self-giving: this is the logic which authentic faith imparts and develops in our daily lives," the pope said, "and which is not the type of power and glory which belongs to this world."

Benedict noted that from the very beginning, not everyone in leadership positions among Christ's followers has been up to that challenge.

Reflecting on the New Testament story of James and John, two disciples who requested positions of honor when Christ returns, Benedict said "it is not easy to enter into the logic of the Gospel and to let go of power and glory."

The pope quoted two fathers of the church along the same lines.

"Saint John Chrysostom affirms that all of the apostles were imperfect, whether it was the two who wished to lift themselves above the other ten, or whether it was the ten who were jealous of them," the pope said.

He then quoted St. Cyril of Alexandria: "The disciples had fallen into human weakness and were discussing among themselves which one would be the leader and superior to the others? This happened and is recounted for our advantage? What happened to the holy Apostles can be understood by us as an incentive to humility."

Benedict said the temptation to pursue self-interest and power is eternal.

"Dominion and service, egoism and altruism, possession and gift, self-interest and gratuitousness: these profoundly contrasting approaches confront each other in every age and place," he said.

The Biblical reminders, the pope said, "represent an invitation and a reminder, a commission and an encouragement especially for you, dear and venerable brothers who are about to be enrolled in the College of Cardinals."

Benedict created 22 new cardinals this morning, including Timothy Dolan and Edwin O'Brien of the United States. This afternoon, the new cardinals will hold receptions in various rooms of the Apostolic Palace, one of the few times it's open to the general public, and the Paul VI audience hall.

Yesterday, Benedict XVI presided over a "day of reflection and prayer" in which 133 cardinals took part, as well as the 22 new inductees in the church's most exclusive club.

The main act of the day was a speech on the new evangelization by Dolan, who delivered a vintage performance emphasizing the need to present the Christian message in a positive light, and to avoid demonizing the secular world.

At one point Dolan even allowed his sense of humor to surface, jokingly asking Benedict if he could be exempted from the part of the new cardinals' oath in which they promise to defend the faith "up to the shedding of blood."

Video feeds showed the pope smiled at the quip. A Vatican statement issued later in the day said Benedict found the speech "exciting, joyous and profound."

There was also more evidence of a boomlet around Dolan this morning in the Italian media. *Il Messaggero's* Vatican writer, Franca Giansoldati, published a piece on the consistory under the headline, "Among the 22 new cardinals, a new *papabile* breaks out: the American Dolan."

Papabile is the Italian word for a candidate to be pope.

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