

Dear Brothers,

How blessed we are to come together, *ad limina*, to the threshold of the Apostolic See, as a visible and outward sign of our unity, our communion, our oneness with our Holy Father, the Pope. I know these days have been busy days with many meetings and much business to attend to for our dioceses. Of course, we have also spent many months with our staffs preparing documents and reviewing our particular needs. Meanwhile, the normal life of the Church in each of our dioceses and universally continues without a break! So, it is good for us to be here, to gather here, and to come to this most ancient and miraculous of Basilica's, named after the Holy Mother of God, St. Mary Major.

When I come here, I am always struck by its beauty and its history. How many generations of Christians have passed through these walls? How many have worshipped and celebrated the Holy Eucharist here? How many have confessed their sins and sought God's mercy in this place? How many poor have stood outside her doors begging for bread and clothing? All that can be known in life has been known in this place. Life's greatest sweetness, as well as its deepest sorrows.

Bothers, I am reminded from our readings for today how important our unity is. The scriptures offer us an example of the dangers of rivalry and mistrust. Saul and David have scored a great victory for Israel together, but Saul cannot seem to prevent himself from having a jealous heart. Worse, he cannot keep it to himself! He mutters about David behind his back. Saul plots against David, even with

David's own friends! And because of Saul's sense of rivalry and jealousy nothing will go well for him. We know how this ends, in tragedy for Saul, who is forever remembered as the failed King of Israel, and in triumph for David, who will have his own failings, but will be forever remembered as the King from whom the Messiah would come.

Brothers, there is a lesson for us in this. Our communion is not simply a personal matter or a preference. Our faithfulness to the Holy Father is not something to take for granted. Rather, this communion is our obligation for the good of the faith! Let there be no rivalries among us! Instead, let there be hope, communion, love, and brotherly peace – always!

As we have gathered here let us remember that we are not simply in the house of God, but truly, a place that is home for God's People. In Spanish we make a distinction between *casa*, which is a house, and *hogar*, which is more like home-sweet-home! To be here in St. Mary Major, to be here in Rome, to be with our Holy Father, and to be with one another is to be at home-sweet-home! May it ever be so among us.