"The Great Virtue of Humility Belongs to a Successful Life"

VIENNA, Austria, JULY 24, 2011 (Zenit.org).- Here is a translation of the homily delivered July 16 by Cardinal Christoph Schönborn at the funeral Mass of Otto von Habsburg Otto von Habsburg, the last crown prince of Austria, Hungary, Croatia and Bohemia, who died earlier this month in Pöcking, Germany, at the age of 98.

Also known as Archduke Otto of Austria, Otto was the eldest son of Blessed Charles I of Austria, the last emperor of Austria-Hungary. His funeral Mass took place at St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna.

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Dear Family, mourning and hoping with confidence in faith!

Dear all who are mourning, celebrating and praying with us! Dear brothers and sisters in the Lord -- here in the Cathedral of St. Stephen, outside at the square of St. Stephen und to all who are joining us through the media!

Within the last days many honourable words have been spoken about the life of the deceased. Today, at the end of his pilgrimage, the last questions are raised, which are valid for all of us in view of the death. Today I forward the question to him and to us, as we are commemorating him: How can we bid farewell to Otto von Habsburg in gratitude and respect and to interpret his life and death to inspire many (people) to reflect also about their own life and also about their inevitable death, and to understand and to form life in the light of the faith of the Church.

It is our principle conviction as Christians that every person is intended by God, uniquely created with an own, distinctive vocation. To find it and to reply to it, is finally decisive for a successful life -- in front of God, not always in front of the people.

People are often called to remain faithful toward their vocation, although the environment has changed completely, everything became different. The life of the deceased is an example hereto. The readings of the Holy Bible, which we heard, are indicating in this direction.

1. Abraham -- fidelity in alteration

"The Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country ... to the land that I will show you ... you will be a blessing ... in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'"

Abraham, whom we venerate as Father of the Faithful, will be on a pilgrimage during his whole life, on ways which were totally unexpected for him, (on ways) that he accepted in trust and faith towards God. He findshisvocation in the new situations into which God is leading him and which rooted him out of his familiar world.

In his life Otto von Habsburg was confronted with a new situation due to the tremendous political turmoil, which was certainly not predestined for him as crown prince and successor to the throne.

The tangent picture of the four-year-old child in white dress between his parents at the funeral of Emperor Franz Joseph passed all media during these days. When he was six years old, the Monarchy expired, and therewith the world, in which he should have had such a big task.

There are two attitudes which I admire and which he set -- since the breakdown of the old imperial world -- an example of it in his long lasting life: On the one hand the ability to let oneself in for completely new situations with alertness and without dread, on the other hand the courage and the decisiveness to adhere to that what he considered as his heritage and mission according to his birth. This explains partly the discrepancy of the judgements about him: too modern for the one side, too unconventional, too conservative for the other side, yes reactionary. According to my point of view, in reality he is a brilliant example of an unwavering fidelity, for the whole life, of his own unique vocation.

Otto von Habsburg has accepted his vocation in Christian faith, which he found exemplary in the life of his parents. He understood the heritage of his family as mission and vocation. He did not regret bygone times and he was not uninhibited by people who wanted to disgrace him or to see only the negative side effects. With his life he showed us, how we can take heart from "yesterday" for "tomorrow." We may also learn from him in matters related to the proper handling with the history in Austria. Learning has never been a shame.

It belongs to political correctness to categorise the idea of the Divine right of Kings as an old-fashioned one. Otto von Habsburg understood it primarily as responsibility according to the original sense. We cannot resign or delegate the responsibility in front of God how we treat that what is entrusted to us.

In 1971, Otto von Habsburg wrote about that what now, 40 years later, became reality for him: "When you are standing in front of your Creator, face-to-face, only the performance of obligation and good will is valid. God does not command from the person to present to Him a report of victories. He gives the success. He expects from us only that we do our best."

2. The Beatitudes -- Charta of a valuable life

The Gospel from the eight Beatitudes is containing the heart of the annunciation of Jesus. It may be right, whatever is told repeatedly, that with the Beatitudes one cannot build a state. They are not applicable to the law of a state, however, applicable as charter for a successful life, which was worth while, and God grants His reward. I mention three of if: "Blessed are the poor in the spirit."

First and foremost the great virtue of humility belongs to a successful life, the talent of the real great personalities who do not look down on somebody, but knowing themselves as little in front of God. Innumerable people noticed this attitude of Otto von Habsburg: No pride of place and a "frugal self-consciousness" (Pope Benedict XVI), to be the heir of House of Habsburg.

How important would it be for us, without being a natural-born Habsburg, to be aware of the fact of the royal dignity of every Christian, of every human being, from which the Jewish-Christian tradition gives a powerful testimony. Based on this conviction and in connection with his deep and dynamic belief Otto von Habsburg had encounters with persons of various origins and philosophies of life "at eye level." He says: "The religious person sees in him-/herself and in his neighbour an image of God, whom the Creator gave rights, which cannot be withdrawn from him/her neither by a single person nor by a state, neither by a tyrant nor by a fluctuating will of a majority."

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness"

To aspire to the justice was another basic attitude in his life. In the external Castle Gate, through which the conduct will lead, the motto of Emperor Franz I. (his grandfather in 3rdgeneration) is written: "Justitia regnorum fundamentum." -- justice is the basic of all sovereignty. Otto von Habsburg saw in his long life how states degenerated to robber bands, if justice is no longer its basic, if single or national interests suppress the common good, if brutal power suppresses the justice.

"Blessed are the peacemakers"

This particular one of the Beatitudes had its central place in the life of the deceased. "One day of war costs much more than one year of keeping peace", he said. Finally, you may allow me to talk -- in view of this Beatitude -- about the following thought, which I am carrying in my heart:

I remember the disaster of the World War I . In the long, formative and blessed reign of the Emperor Franz Joseph there was no most serious error than to agree to this war und to declare it. This war led to the most senseless bloodshedding. All efforts the father of our deceased, blessed Emperor Karl I, tried to undertake in order to avoid this remained without success. Both most terrible mass murdering ideologies, which were known, were the toxic fruits also of this war.

Are we not allowed to understand this lifework of this great deceased as an unrestless approach to repair again the disaster from the World War I, which came across Europe? With all his passion in his heart, with his enormous intelligence und his courage he served the peace-project for Europe.

Of course, even a well-done European integration cannot create a paradise on earth. This is not the task of politics! However, a well-going and peaceful coexistence between the nations and cultures, to promote the languages and religions, was the issue to which Otto von Habsburg felt to be obliged to, his mission, his vocation, in fidelity to his heritage of his House, in the spirit of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, beatifying the peacemakers.

On May 22, 2004 in Mariazell the "Mitteleuropäische Katholikentag" took place. More than 100,000 pilgrims from eight countries came, Polish and Czechs, Slovaks and Hungarians, Croatians and Slovenes, Bosnians and Austrians. It was freezing and rainy. Otto von Habsburg und his dear wife Regina -- she remained steadfastly at his side, inseparable and helpful -- were present. After the Holy Mass I asked Otto von Habsburg, he was 92 years old, if he did not terrible freeze. He replied with an unforgettable sentence and his face shined full of joy: "No, for that we lived."

To have lived for that, I thank today:
May God bless you, highly honoured Lord!
May God bless you, you big repatriate!
May God bless you, you faithful servant!
Enter into the joy of your Lord. -- Amen.