



The Holy See

JOHN PAUL I

ANGELUS

Sunday, 24 September 1978

Yesterday afternoon I went to St. John Lateran. Thanks to the Romans, to the kindness of the Mayor and some authorities of the Italian Government, it was a joyful moment for me.

On the contrary, it was not joyful but painful to learn from the newspapers a few days ago that a Roman student had been killed for a trivial reason, in cold blood. It is one of the many cases of violence which are continually afflicting this poor and restless society of ours.

The case of Luca Locci, a seven-year-old boy kidnapped three months ago, has come up again in the last few days. People sometimes say: "we are in a society that is all rotten, all dishonest." That is not true. There are still so many good people, so many honest people. Rather, what can be done to improve society? I would say: let each of us try to be good and to infect others with a goodness imbued with the meekness and love taught by Christ. Christ's golden rule was: "do not do to others what you do not want done to yourself. Do to others what you want done to yourself." 'And he always gave. Put on the cross, not only did he forgive those who crucified him, but he excused them. He said: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." This is Christianity, these are sentiments which, if put into practice would help society so much.

This year is the thirtieth anniversary of the death of Georges Bernanos, a great Catholic writer. One of his best-known works is "Dialogues of the Carmelites". It was published year after his death. He had prepared it working on a story of the German authoress, Gertrud von Le Fort. He had prepared it for the theatre.

It went on the stage. It was set to music and then shown on the screens of the whole world. It became extremely well known. The fact, however, was a historical one. Pius X, in 1906, right here

in Rome, had beatified the sixteen Carmelites of Compiègne, martyrs during the French revolution. During the trial they were condemned "to death for fanaticism". And one of them asked in her simplicity: "Your Honour, what does fanaticism mean?" And the judge: "It is your foolish membership of religion." "Oh, Sisters, she then said, did you hear, we are condemned for our attachment to faith. What happiness to die for Jesus Christ!"

They were brought out of the prison of the Conciergerie, and made to climb into the fatal cart. On the way they sang hymns; when they reached the guillotine, one after the other knelt before the Prioress and renewed the vow of obedience. Then they struck up "Veni Creator"; the song, however, became weaker and weaker, as the heads of the poor Sisters fell, one by one, under the guillotine. The Prioress, Sister Theresa of St Augustine, was the last, and her last words were the following: "Love will always be victorious, love can do everything." That was the right word, not violence, but love, can do everything. Let us ask the Lord for the grace that a new wave of love for our neighbour may sweep over this poor world.