



# The Holy See

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EUCCHARISTIC CELEBRATION FOR THE BEATIFICATION OF:

Fr ELÍAS DEL SOCORRO NIEVES,

Fr GIOVANNI BATTISTA PIAMARTA,

Fr DOMENICO LENTINI,

MOTHER MARY OF JESUS AND

Sr MARIA TERESA FASCE

## ***HOMILY OF POPE JOHN PAUL II***

*Sunday, 12 October 1997*

### 1. *"Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Mk 10:17).*

This question, which in today's Gospel text, was asked by a young man, has been put to Christ by countless generations of men and women, young and old, clerics and lay people. "What must I do to have eternal life?". It is a fundamental question for every Christian. We know Christ's answer very well. He reminds his interlocutor above all to observe the commandments: "Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honour your father and mother" (Mk 10:19); cf. Ex 20:12-16). The young man replies enthusiastically: "Teacher, all these I have observed from my youth" (Mk 10:20). At this point, the Gospel emphasizes, the Lord looks lovingly at him and adds: "You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me". However, the account tells us that "At that saying his countenance fell, and he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions" (Mk 10:21-22).

2. Instead, the new blesseds raised to the glory of the altars today, promptly and enthusiastically accepted Christ's invitation: "Come, follow me!" and they followed him to the end. Thus the power of God's grace is revealed in them, and in their earthly life they even succeeded in doing what seemed humanly impossible. Having placed all their trust in God, everything became possible for them. That is why I am pleased to present them today as examples of faithfully following Christ.

They are: Elías del Socorro Nieves, martyr, a professed priest of the Order of St Augustine; Giovanni Battista Piamarta, a priest of the Diocese of Brescia; Domenico Lentini, a priest of the Diocese of Tursi-Lagonegro; Mary of Jesus, in the world, Emilie d'Hooghvorst, foundress of the Society of the Sisters of Mary Reparatrix; Maria Teresa Fasce, a professed nun of the Order of St Augustine.

3. *"And Jesus looking upon him loved him"* (*Mk 10:21*). These words of the Gospel text call to mind the spiritual and apostolic experience of Fr Giovanni Piamarta, founder of the Congregation of the *Holy Family of Nazareth*, whom we contemplate today in heavenly glory. Following Christ's example, he, too, was able to bring a great many boys and young men to meet the Lord's loving and demanding gaze. How many, thanks to his pastoral activities, were able to start out joyfully in life, having learned a skill and, above all, having encountered Jesus and his message of salvation! The new blessed's apostolic work has many facets and embraces many areas of social life: from the world of work to that of agriculture, from education to the publishing sector. He has left a great mark on the Diocese of Brescia and on the entire Church.

Where did this extraordinary man of God find the energy for all his numerous activities? The answer is clear: assiduous and fervent prayer was the source of his tireless apostolic zeal and beneficial influence which he exercised on everyone he approached. He himself said, as the accounts of his contemporaries recall: "With prayer one is strengthened by the strength of God himself ... *Omnia possum*". Everything is possible with God, for him and with him.

4. *"Let the favour of the Lord our God be upon us"* (responsorial psalm). The deep awareness of the Lord's favour motivated Bl. *Domenico Lentini*, who in his itinerant preaching never tired of inviting to conversion and return to God. For this reason his apostolic activity was accompanied by the *diligent ministry of the confessional*. Indeed he well knew that in celebrating the sacrament of Penance, the priest becomes the dispenser of divine mercy and a witness of the new life that is born through the penitent's repentance and the Lord's forgiveness.

A priest with an undivided heart, he could combine *fidelity to God with fidelity to man*. He addressed his ardent charity in particular *to youth*, whom he taught to be firm in the faith, and *to the poor*, to whom he offered everything he had with absolute trust in divine Providence. His total dedication to his ministry made him, in the words of my venerable Predecessor, Pope Pius XI, "a priest rich only in his priesthood".

5. In the second reading of the liturgy we heard: "The word of God is living and active ... piercing to division of soul and spirit" (*Heb 4:12*). Emilie d'Hooghvorst accepted this word in her inmost depths. By learning to submit to God's will, she first fulfilled the mission of all Christian married couples: she made her home "a sanctuary of family life" (cf. *Apostolicam actuositatem*, n. 11). Widowed and motivated by the desire to participate in the paschal mystery, Mother Mary of Jesus founded the *Society of Mary Reparatrix*. By her life of prayer she reminds us that in Eucharistic

adoration where we draw from the source of life that is Christ, we find the strength for our daily mission. May each one of us, whatever our state of life, be able "to listen to Christ's voice", "which must govern our lives", as she liked to say!

Her beatification is therefore an encouragement for the Sisters of Mary Reparatrix to continue their apostolate through renewed attention to the people of this age. The sisters will respond to their mission according to their charism: to awaken the faith of our contemporaries and help them in their spiritual growth, thereby actively participating in building the Church.

6. To his disciples, amazed at how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God, Jesus said: "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God" (Mk 10:27). This message was received by Fr Elías del Socorro Nieves, an Augustinian priest, who is raised to the glory of the altars today as a martyr of the faith. His total trust in God and in Our Lady, Help of Christians to whom he was deeply devoted, characterized his whole life and priestly ministry, which he exercised with self-denial and a spirit of service, without letting himself be overcome by obstacles, sacrifices or danger. This faithful Augustinian religious knew how to transmit hope in Christ and in divine Providence.

The life and martyrdom of Fr Nieves, who did not want to abandon his faithful despite the risks he was taking, are in themselves an invitation to renew faith in God who can do everything. He faced death with fortitude, blessing his executioners and witnessing to his faith in Christ. The Church in Mexico today has a new and a powerful intercessor who will help her to renew her Christian life; his Augustinian brothers have one more example to imitate in their constant search for God in fraternity and in service to the People of God; for the whole Church he is an eloquent example of the fruits of holiness which the power of God's grace produced in him.

7. The first reading, from the Book of Wisdom, reminds us that wisdom and prudence flow from prayer: "*I prayed; and understanding was given me; I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came to me*" (Wis 7:7). These words closely apply to the earthly life of another new blessed, María Teresa Fasce, who lived in the constant contemplation of the mystery of Christ. The Church holds her up today as a radiant example of the living synthesis between contemplative life and a humble witness of solidarity to men and women, especially to the poorest, the humble, the abandoned and suffering.

The Augustinian family is living an extraordinary day today, because it sees united in the glory of the altars the representatives of two branches of the Order, the apostolic, with Bl. Elías del Socorro Nieves, and the contemplative, with Bl. María Teresa Fasce. For Augustinian religious, their example is a cause of joy and legitimate satisfaction. May this day continue to be a providential opportunity for a renewed commitment, in total and faithful consecration to God and in generous service to their brothers and sisters.

8. "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone" (Mk 10:18). Each one of these new blesseds heard Christ's essential definition and understood where to seek the original source of holiness. God is the fullness of good that is selfdiffusive. "*Bonum est diffusivum sui*" (St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theol.*, I, 9.5, a.4. ad 2). The supreme Good wants to give himself and to make all who seek him with a sincere heart resemble him. He desires to sanctify everyone who is prepared to leave everything to follow his Incarnate Son.

The primary aim of this celebration is therefore to praise God, source of all holiness. We glorify the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, because the new blesseds, baptized in the name of the Blessed Trinity, collaborated with God's grace with persevering heroism. Fully participating in divine life, they now contemplate the glory of the Lord, face to face, enjoying the fruits of blessedness proclaimed by Jesus in the "*Sermon on the Mount*": "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:3). Yes, the kingdom of heaven belongs to these faithful servants of God, who followed Christ to the end, fixing their gaze on him. With their lives they witnessed to him who died on the Cross and was raised for them and for all people.

The whole Church, mother of saints and blesseds, the great spiritual family of mankind called to participate in divine life rejoices.

Together with Mary, Mother of Christ and Queen of saints, together with the new blesseds, let us proclaim God's holiness: "Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest".

Amen!

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