



The Holy See

MASS WITH BEATIFICATIONS

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

"Granaries" of Floriana, 9 May 2001

"Let us give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds" (Ps 107: 15).

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. With great joy I have returned to this island dear to Saint Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, and always dear to the Successor of Peter. This visit concludes my Jubilee Pilgrimage following in spirit the history of salvation, from the homeland of Abraham, to Sinai where God gave the Ten Commandments, to the Holy Land where the great events of our redemption took place. And now *in the footsteps of Saint Paul, I have come back to you, dear people of Malta.*

The Apostle's arrival on your shores was dramatic. Saint Luke has told us of the stormy voyage and the helplessness of the crew and passengers as the ship went aground and began to break up (cf. *Acts 27:39-44*). And we have heard of their deliverance: "Once we had come safely through, we discovered that the island was called Malta" (*Acts 28:1*). *In God's providence, Malta was to receive the Gospel in the earliest days of Christianity.* "Let us give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds" (*Ps 107: 15*).

2. Gathered at the Floriana Granaries, around the Altar of the Lord's Sacrifice, the Bishop of Rome joins you in praising the Most Holy Trinity for your witness to the Gospel down the centuries. True to your father in faith, the Apostle Paul, you are known throughout the Church for your devotion and missionary zeal. Malta has a magnificent Christian heritage of which you are rightly proud, but that heritage is also *a gift which implies great responsibility* (cf. *Lk 12:48*).

In his Second Letter to Timothy, Saint Paul reminds his co-worker to "remember Jesus Christ,

raised from the dead . . . if we endure with him we shall reign with him" (2 Tim 2:8,12). These words were taken to heart by *the two sons and the adopted daughter of Malta whom I have beatified today*. The whole Church rejoices with you that, among the host of holy men and women from all walks of life in Maltese history, these three have been chosen for special veneration and imitation. From heaven they accompany us on our pilgrim way on earth, and through their prayers before the throne of God they help us to scale the heights of holiness which they attained by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

3. Since his death in 1962, shortly before the opening of the Second Vatican Council, *Blessed George Preca* has been renowned for his holiness both in Malta and wherever the Maltese have settled. Dun Gorg was a pioneer in the field of catechetics and in promoting the role of the laity in the apostolate, which the Council was to stress in a particular way. Thus he became as it were *Malta's second father in faith*. Embracing meekness and humility, and using to the full his God-given talents of mind and heart, Dun Gorg made his own the words of Paul to Timothy: "You have heard everything that I teach in public; hand it on to reliable people so that they in turn will be able to teach others" (2 Tim 2: 2). The *Society of Christian Doctrine* which he founded continues his work of witness and evangelization in these islands and elsewhere.

Not far from here the young seminarian Gorg Preca heard the prophetic words of a priestly mentor: "Gorg, when you grow up many who fear God will gather around you. You will be a blessing for them and they for you". Today the Church in Malta calls Gorg Preca "Blessed", for she knows that he is for her a native source of light and strength. In his writings on meekness – his book *L-Iskola tal-Manswetudni* and his *Letter* – Dun Gorg urges his fellow Christians to follow the example of the Crucified Lord in forgiving every offence (cf. Lk 23:34). *Is not this message of mutual respect and forgiveness especially needed today in Malta and in the world?* Yes indeed, the meekness of the Beatitudes has the power to transform the family, the workplace and schools, the towns and villages, politics and culture. *It can change the world!* "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Mt 5:5).

Magister, utinam sequatur evangelium universus mundus (Divine Teacher, may the whole world follow the Gospel): the prayer of Blessed Dun Gorg perfectly mirrors the missionary mandate of the Lord: "Go therefore and make disciples ... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Mt 28:19-20). During the year of the Great Jubilee the whole Church experienced anew *the eternal freshness of the loving mercy of the Father* who sent his only Son for our salvation. Was it not Dun Gorg's ability to communicate the *freshness* of the Christian message that made him the great apostle that he was? Is this not what Malta needs today: clergy, religious, catechists, teachers who passionately proclaim the Good News of what the Father has done for us in Christ? At the dawn of a new millennium, *the Church looks to you, Malta, to be still more ardent in living your apostolic and missionary vocation!* The whole Church looks to you!

4. The Servant of God *Ignatius Falzon* also had a great passion for preaching the Gospel and

teaching the Catholic faith. He too put his many talents and his intellectual training at the service of catechetical work. The Apostle Paul wrote that "each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor 9:7). *Blessed Nazju was one who gave abundantly and cheerfully*; and people saw in him not only boundless energy but also deep peace and joy. He renounced the worldly success for which his background had prepared him, *in order to serve the spiritual good of others*, including the many British soldiers and sailors stationed in Malta at the time. In his approach to them, few of whom were Catholic, he anticipated the ecumenical spirit of respect and dialogue, which is familiar to us today but which was not always prevalent at that time.

Ignatius Falzon drew his strength and inspiration from *the Eucharist, prayer before the Tabernacle, devotion to Mary and the Rosary, and imitation of Saint Joseph*. These are fountains of grace from which all Christians may drink. Holiness and zeal for God's Kingdom flourish especially where parishes and communities encourage prayer and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. I urge you therefore to cherish your Maltese traditions of piety, purifying them where necessary and strengthening them with sound instruction and catechesis. There would be no better way of honouring the memory of Blessed Nazju Falzon.

5. Born in Italy of a Maltese father, *Sister Maria Adeodata Pisani* came here at the age of nineteen, and spent most of her life as a splendid figure of Benedictine religious consecration in the Monastery of Saint Peter. I know that some of the Sisters of the Monastery were not able to come here, but are following this ceremony on television. To you, dear Sisters, I send a very special blessing on this happy day.

Prayer, obedience, service of her Sisters and maturity in performing her assigned tasks: these were the elements of Maria Adeodata's silent, holy life. Hidden in the heart of the Church, *she sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching* (cf. Lk 10:39), savouring the things that last for ever (cf. Col 3:2). Through her prayer, work and love, she became a well-spring of that spiritual and missionary fruitfulness without which the Church cannot preach the Gospel as Christ commands, *for mission and contemplation require each other absolutely* (cf. *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 16).

Sister Adeodata's holy example certainly helped to promote the renewal of religious life in her own Monastery. I therefore wish to commend to her intercession a special intention of my heart. Much has been done in recent times to adapt religious life to the changed circumstances of today, and the benefit of this can be seen in the lives of very many men and women religious. But there is need for *a renewed appreciation of the deeper theological reasons for this special form of consecration*. We still await a full flowering of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council on the transcendent value of that special love of God and others which leads to the vowed life of poverty, chastity and obedience. I commend to all consecrated men and women the example of personal maturity and responsibility which was wonderfully evident in the life of Blessed Adeodata.

6. On the Vigil of Pentecost the Archdiocese of Malta will inaugurate its Synod Assembly and in Gozo Bishop Cauchi has begun a new pastoral visitation. It is my fervent hope that these and other initiatives will help to foster the Second Vatican Council's vision of the Church as *a communion of the whole People of God*, a vision which the "new evangelization" demands of Maltese Catholics. Within this communion there are different roles and ministries, but all are called to work together to advance Christ's reign of justice, peace and love. Through the intercession of the new *Beati*, may the Church in Malta move confidently into *a new era of unity and shared responsibility between clergy, religious and laity*. This will give Maltese Catholics *the fresh start which will enable them confidently to enter the new millennium, harvesting the rich spiritual fruits of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000*.

Malta, Malta! You have received so much through the ministry of Saint Paul and the witness of Blessed Dun Gorg, Blessed Nazju Falzon and Blessed Adeodata. As you move into the future, be faithful to the legacy they have left! Follow Christ with undivided heart, and never be afraid to speak up for the truth that saves and the values that lead to life! May the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Word Incarnate, accompany and protect you always, so that you will never fail to "give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds" (*Ps 107:15*).

Viva I-Beatu Gorg Preca!

Viva I-Beatu Nazju Falzon!

Viva I-Beata Adeodata Pisani!

Amen.

Remarks at the end of the Eucharistic Celebration:

Dear President De Marco,

Archbishop Mercieca,

Bishop Cauchi, Bishop Depasquale,

Dear People of Malta and Gozo,

May the Lord reward you for your kindness and love!

I wish to thank you for your devoted participation in this liturgy. With prayer and song we have shared in the great joy of the Church in declaring Blessed two sons of these Islands and a nun who spent the major part of her life here in exemplary consecration.

When you return home, take the Pope's blessing to your relatives and neighbours who have not been able to be here.

In particular, I wish to mention with affection and solidarity some categories of people who are not

present here physically but who have certainly been united with us in spirit.

A cordial remembrance of the inhabitants of the Island of Gozo, which I have not been able to visit this time.

I send a special greeting to the Nuns belonging to the six cloistered religious communities. I know that they pray for the Pope every day. Dear Sisters, I thank you and ask you to continue to be the spiritual pillars of the Church.

I remember and feel very close to the elderly. To the sick I say: have hope and be strong! You can contribute so much to Christ's work of redemption, by uniting your sufferings to those of the Crucified Lord.

Now, with particular warmth I greet the inmates of the Corradino Corrective Facility. I know that it was your great desire to have, together with your relatives and friends, a visit by the Pope in memory of Saint Paul, the prisoner Apostle. But this has not been possible. I embrace you all, spiritually, and I invoke upon you abundant divine graces. God bless you all!

Again today, we hear sad news from the Holy Land of terrible violence even against innocent young people. We must all intensify our prayers for peace in the land of Jesus.

Ikun imfahhar Gesù Kristu! [Praised be Jesus Christ!]