



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II
FOR THE BEATIFICATION
OF FIVE SERVANTS OF GOD**

Monday, 4 September 2000

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

1. With deep joy I meet you once again, the day after the solemn beatification of Popes Pius IX and John XXIII, Bishop Tommaso Reggio, the priest William Joseph Chaminade, and the Benedictine Columba Marmion.

I extend a cordial greeting to all of you who are joined by special affection and devotion to the new blessed, and I thank you for your presence and active participation. In particular, I greet Cardinal Angelo Sodano, my Secretary of State, who has just celebrated Holy Mass in honour of the new blessed. I also greet the Cardinals and Bishops present, with the other civil and religious authorities.

2. Yesterday two Popes who marked the history of the last two centuries were proposed for the veneration of all the faithful: Pius IX, who steered the bark of Peter through violent storms for almost 32 years; John XXIII who, in his brief pontificate, convoked an Ecumenical Council of extraordinary importance in the Church's history.

Pius IX was loved by the people for his fatherly kindness: he liked to preach as a simple priest, to administer the sacraments in the churches and hospitals, to meet the Roman people on the city streets. The world did not always understand him: the "hosannas" at the beginning were soon followed by accusations, attacks and calumnies. However, he was always lenient even to his enemies. A spirit of poverty, faith in God and trust in Providence, as well as a strong sense of humour, helped him to overcome even the most difficult moments. "My policy", he used to say, "is: Our Father who art in heaven", thereby showing that his guide in the decisions of life and the

governance of the Church was God, in whom he placed total trust. He also had a sense of filial abandonment to the Virgin Mary, the dogma of whose Immaculate Conception he defined.

I am also pleased to recall that Pius IX was particularly attentive to the Holy Land, where he re-established the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. For its maintenance he refounded the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. As I affectionately recall the holy places and the people I met during my recent pilgrimage to the Holy Land, I greet the delegation led by the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Michel Sabbah, and again express my sentiments of spiritual closeness to all. I would particularly like to greet the Bishops and faithful who have come from the Marches and, in a special way, from Senigallia and Imola.

3. Prominent among those devoted to the newly blessed Pius IX, is one of his successors, Pope John XXIII, who would have liked - as he himself wrote - to see him raised to the honours of the altar. Pope John combined Christian virtues with a deep knowledge of humanity in lights and shadows. His long-cultivated enthusiasm for history was a help to him in this.

Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli acquired the basic features of his personality from his family background. "The few things I learned from you at home", he wrote to his parents, "are still the most precious and important, and they support and give life and warmth to the many things I learned later". The more progress he made in life and holiness, the more he captivated everyone with his wise simplicity.

In his famous Encyclical *Pacem in terris* he presents the Gospel to believers and non-believers as the way to achieve the fundamental good of peace: indeed, he was convinced that the Spirit of God makes his voice heard in some way by every person of good will. He was not troubled by his trials, but could always look optimistically at life's various events. "It is enough to take care of the present: there is no need to employ imagination or anxiety in building the future". Thus he wrote in his *Journal of a Soul* in 1961.

As I offer my greeting to all who have come especially from Bergamo and Venice with Cardinal Cé and Bishop Amadei, I hope that Pope John's example will encourage everyone always to trust in the Lord, who guides his children on the paths of history.

4. I now address you, faithful of Genoa, Ventimiglia and the whole of Liguria, and you, Sisters of St Martha, to recall the shining figure of Bishop Tommaso Reggio. In the second half of the last century he taught at the seminaries of Genoa and Chiavari, and was a journalist who promoted the first Genoese Catholic newspaper. But Providence wanted him to be a Pastor, and he was called to govern the Diocese of Ventimiglia; later, precisely when he asked to be relieved of office for reasons of age, the Pope entrusted him with the Archdiocese of Genoa.

His life was very busy, but the secret of so much activity was always his profound communion with

God: "I am an ecclesiastic", he wrote, "I must be holy ... therefore let all the means to become so be put into practice. Whatever the cost, it is necessary to succeed...". He proposed this ideal of holiness to all ranks of the faithful: to lay people, priests and consecrated persons; in a particular way to his sisters. Today, as a blessed, he proposes it again to everyone, offering his intercession from heaven.

5. I cordially greet you who have come to Rome for the beatification of Fr William Joseph Chaminade, especially those of you from the South-West of France where he was formed and where he began his pastoral and missionary life. I extend a particular greeting to the members of the Marianist Congregations and to the whole Marianist Family. Dear young people, with Fr Chaminade you have an example of Christian life which leads to a good life and the happiness promised by the Lord. May all of you, priests, religious and lay people who live the charism of Fr Chaminade, bring your dynamism to the Church and be the leaven of the kingdom in the world!

The personality and activity of the new blessed, who wanted to do God's work in all things, invites all the faithful to receive serious catechetical formation in order to develop and strengthen their spiritual life and to enter more deeply into their relationship with Christ, particularly through the sacramental life in their Christian community. Like the new blessed, may you turn ceaselessly to Mary, Mother of Christians and Mother of her Son's disciples!

6. I extend my cordial greeting to you who came to Rome for the beatification of Dom Columba Marmion, particularly the members and friends of the great Benedictine family who have come from Ireland, Belgium and other countries. My thoughts also turn to the religious of the Abbey of Maredsous, where Fr Columba was Abbot and zealously carried out his ministry as a spiritual guide at the service of his community and, especially through his writings, at the service of many priests, religious and lay people.

I extend a cordial welcome to the English-speaking pilgrims who have come for the beatification of Dom Columba Marmion. This beatification calls attention to the special place of monastic life in the Church, of which Marmion's native Ireland has a long and rich tradition. In the great Benedictine spirit, Bl. Columba, contemplative and apostle, was an outstanding teacher of the interior life, based on meditation of the word of God, the celebration of the liturgy and personal prayer. May Bl. Columba Marmion help us all to live the Christian life ever more intensely and to have an ever deeper understanding of our membership in the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ! God bless you all!

7. Dear brothers and sisters, the Jubilee Year invites us all to make a pilgrimage to Christ: a pilgrimage that the new blessed made with commitment and effort, passing through the "narrow gate" which is Christ. For this very reason they now share in his glory. Spurred by their example and helped by their intercession, let us too hasten our steps towards the heavenly homeland. To this end, I invoke upon everyone the motherly protection of Mary Most Holy and of the new

blesseds, as I cordially impart my blessing to you all.

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