



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PILGRIMS
WHO HAD COME FOR THE CANONIZATIONS**

Monday, 11 June 2001

*Eminent Cardinals,
Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,
Brothers and Sisters in Christ.*

1. Yesterday we celebrated the first ceremony of canonization after the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. To all of you, gathered for this happy occasion, I am happy to greet you again in the more familiar climate of today's visit, which gives us a chance to dwell upon the personalities of the new saints.

2. Thinking of *St Luigi Scrosoppi*, I greet with affection the priests and faithful of the Diocese of Udine present with Bishop Pietro Brollo. I want to express a particular greeting to the "Sisters of Providence of St Cajetan of Thiene" founded by him in 1837. Beloved sisters, you are born of a group of women full of faith and apostolic generosity, who collaborated with Fr Luigi in the loving care of the girls abandoned and without family of Udine and the surrounding area. The canonization of your Founder shows that the design of Providence, to which he entrusted himself entirely, continues in the Church and in the world. Even today there is a need for hearts and hands who are available to serve persons in difficulty, to reveal to them the breadth of divine mercy.

The legacy of St Luigi Scrosoppi, carefully maintained by his spiritual daughters, is rich and precious for the entire People of God, above all, for priests. In fact, he was a model of priestly life lived in the constant search for God. St Francis of Assisi and St Philip Neri were the guides whom he followed with enthusiasm in order to be conformed in everything to Christ our Savior. Humility, poverty, simplicity; prayer, contemplation, intimate union with Christ: these were the inexhaustible sources of his charity. May his luminous example attract not just his spiritual daughters and the

devout, but all those who come into contact with the work he began.

3. With affection I turn now to you, pilgrims from various regions to participate in the canonization of *St Agostino Roscelli*, founder of the "Sisters of the Immaculate". I greet the Archbishop of Genova, Cardinal Dionigi Tettamanzi, Cardinal Giovanni Canestri, the Bishop of Chiavari, the clergy, men and women religious, and the faithful. The new saint exercised his priesthood with great dedication, carrying out an apostolate that was productive of good. He followed the model of an austere evangelical life, in which he was outstanding in the love of God and neighbour. The indivisible love of God and neighbour constitutes the fundamental and distinguishing characteristic of his spirituality, in which action and contemplation feed each other. He loved to repeat: "Prayer helps to act well, and action, done as it should be done, helps to pray well".

I am happy to remember the words of my venerated Predecessor John Paul I, when he was Bishop of Vittorio Veneto, caught the ascetical features of St Agostino Roscelli: "He knew how to join together in the best way the business of modern life with a deep interior life" (cf. *Litt. Post.*, p. 16, n. 14). The spiritual stature of the "poor priest", as he liked to call himself, released a prophetic force capable of arousing and charming even today. In a simple way, he re-presented the Gospel values that one must recover and live with conviction at the start of the third millennium: the value of humility and sobriety, of silence and the sense of the presence of God which directs history, of prayer and of a charity which never says, that's enough, because it is as immense as is the God from whom it comes.

St Agostino Roscelli reminds his spiritual daughters and all believers that the results of pastoral action do not depend mostly on our own strength, but on the help of God, to whom we must always turn in prayer.

4. I greet those who have come to Rome for the canonization of *Bernard of Corleone*, humble Capuchin brother in whom we find shining forth the power of the Franciscan charism: austerity, focus on what is necessary, and charitable journeying for the Gospel. I want to greet above all Cardinal Salvatore De Giorgi, Archbishop of Palermo, the bishops and faithful of Sicily, the native land of the new saint. He, though he was illiterate, knew how to write bright pages of history with his life, soaked with the love of the Crucified One, of humble and silent service, of solidarity towards the people.

Even though he belonged to the 17th century, Brother Bernard, configured as an authentic disciple of the divine Master, participated in the perennial newness of the Gospel. The model of holiness that he proposed is always up to date. Moreover, with his personal history marked by great civil and religious passions, with a refined sense of justice and truth amidst so many situations of suffering and of misery, in a certain way, he incarnated the image of a contemporary saint: someone who is open to the fire of supernatural love and who lets him be put on fire with it, reflecting its fire upon the souls of his brothers and sisters. As he showed to his contemporaries,

he indicates to us today that holiness, the gift of God produces such a deep transformation of the person as to make them the living witness of God's comforting presence in the world.

5. Another significant example of holiness for our time is *Teresa Eustochio Verzeri*. She was a woman of great personality, born in Bergamo at the beginning of the 19th century. I greet the clergy, men and women religious, and the faithful with Bishop Roberto Amadei. St Teresa Verzeri, formed to a burning and solid piety, after a long and painful quest, began, with Canon Giuseppe Benaglio her spiritual director and important member of the clergy of Bergamo, the congregation of the "Daughters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus" for the education and assistance of poor girls. After her work was transferred to Brescia, she was worn out in an unending activity which led to her ending her life at only 51 years of age.

In her spiritual path she was particularly attracted by the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which she offered to the devotion of her sisters exhorting them to an obedient, generous and gentle religious life. The soul who wants to follow Jesus, she loved to repeat, should imitate him in everything, especially participating in his redemptive passion, after the example of Mary. To a spiritual daughter, she wrote: "You would also like to be with Christ on Tabor, but look at the Virgin Mary, she is not on Tabor, she is only at the foot of the cross: believe, my dear, that the greatest grace that God can give you is that of suffering with him and for his love" (*Lettere*, part IV, vol. VII, n. 49).

To learn from the Heart of Jesus, to let oneself be directed by the feelings of that heart and to pour them out in the service of our brothers and sisters: that is the message Teresa transmits to us, at the dawn of the third millennium, inviting each of us to cooperate actively in the evangelizing action of the Church.

6. I greet His Beatitude, Cardinal Sfeir, the bishops, priests, men and women religious, particularly, the members of the Maronite religious order, the representatives of the authorities as well as the faithful from Lebanon, who have come to participate in the canonization of *Sister Rafqa*, who is a reason for deep joy for the Church, and for Lebanese Christians. In the Middle East, ravaged by so many murderous conflicts and unjust sufferings, the witness of this Lebanese sister remains a source of confidence for those who are being tried. Because she lived in close union with Jesus, she was capable like him of never giving up on a human being. She became the discreet and effective sign that the Easter Mystery of Christ continues to transform the world to make grow the hope of a new life offered to all men and women of good will.

By accepting suffering as a means for loving Christ and neighbour better, she lived to an eminent degree the missionary dimension of her consecrated life, drawing from the Trinity the force to offer her life for the world and completing in her own flesh whatever "was lacking to the sufferings of Christ" (Col 1,24). May sick people, the afflicted, refugees of war and all the victims of hatred yesterday and today, find in St Rafqa a life companion, so that by her intercession, they can continue to search for the reasons to hope still and to build peace.

7. Brothers and sisters in Christ. Spurred on by these shining witnesses of the Gospel, and sustained by their heavenly intercession, let us continue with perseverance on the way of holiness holding our gaze fixed on Christ (cf. Heb 12,1-2).

Each of the new saints confirms, in a different way, what I reminded you of in the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio ineunte*, that the concrete occupation of the believer draws its inspiration and effectiveness from the contemplation of the face of Christ.

So even in our distinctive states of life and in the different situations in which Providence has placed us are called to be contemplatives in action. May the saints Luigi Scrosoppi, Agostino Roscelli, Bernardo da Corleone, Teresa Eustochio Verzeri, Rafqa Pietro Choboq Ar-Rayès help us in this demanding way of life. May the Virgin Mary, perfect disciple of her Son, help us in a special way. On my part, with great affection, I impart a special blessing to all here present and to all your loved ones.