



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PILGRIMS GATHERED IN ROME
FOR THE CANONIZATION OF FIVE NEW SAINTS**

Monday, 17 May 2004

1. After yesterday's solemn celebration, at which I had the joy of proclaiming six new Saints, I am happy to meet with you, joined as you are by special ties of spiritual affection to five of them: Hannibal Mary Di Francia, José Manyanet y Vives, Nimatullah Kassab Al-Hardini, Paola Elisabetta Cerioli and Gianna Beretta Molla.

As I address to you my heartfelt greeting, I would now like to pause together with you to reflect briefly on the Marian devotion of these Saints.

2. Hannibal Mary Di Francia was honoured from Baptism with the name of "Mary", who he loved to call "my Mother". He cultivated a most tender and ardent devotion to her, and called upon her as "Mother of the Church" and "Mother of Vocations". He wished that the Immaculate be considered as the "absolute, immediate and actual Superior" of the Daughters of Divine Zeal and of the Rogationist Fathers, both founded by him, recommending such devotion as the secret to holiness and the special glory for both Institutes.

3. I now greet with affection the Spanish-speaking pilgrims who have come to take part in the canonization of St José Manyanet, a Spanish priest who was a chosen instrument in the 19th century to promote the good of the family together with the education of children and youth.

He placed his heart in the Holy Family. The "Gospel of the family", lived by Jesus of Nazareth together with Mary and Joseph, was the motor behind Fr Manyanet's pastoral charity and the inspiration of his teaching. Furthermore, he worked so that the Holy Family would be known, venerated and imitated within families. This is his heritage and with his words, in his Catalonian language, I say to you today, the Religious founded by him, to the fathers and mothers of families

and to the alumni and ex-alumni of his centres: "Make of your homes a Nazareth, of your families a Holy Family". May St José Manyanet intercede for you!

4. The recitation of the Rosary marked the days of *St Nimatullah Al-Hardini* from his childhood. Throughout his life, he discovered in the Mother of God, the Immaculate Conception, the very model of faithfulness to Christ, after whom he aspired. Following the example of Mary of Nazareth who kept watch over the Divine Infant, he lived his monastic vows in patience and hiddenness, giving himself over completely to the divine will.

May his witness stir up in all of us a sincere and filial love for Mary, our Mother and protectress!

5. *Paola Elisabetta Cerioli*, wife and mother, in short time deprived of her children and husband, united herself to the mystery of Our Lady of Sorrows and to her spiritual maternity. At that time, she began to dedicate herself to taking in orphans and the poor, drawing inspiration from the Holy Family of Nazareth. At the school of Mary, she knew how to transform natural love into supernatural love, allowing God to widen her maternal heart.

May her example continue to speak to many hearts: wives, mothers, consecrated souls!

6. *Gianna Beretta Molla* also nurtured a deep devotion to Our Lady. Reference to the Holy Virgin is frequent in the letters to her fiancé, Pietro, and in the successive years of her life, especially when she was hospitalized for the removal of a tumour, without endangering the child she was carrying in her womb. It was precisely Mary who sustained her during the extreme sacrifice of death, to confirm what she herself always loved to repeat: "Without the help of Our Lady, you cannot make it to Heaven".

7. Dear friends, may these new Saints help you to treasure their lesson of Gospel living. Follow in their footsteps and imitate them, especially their filial devotion to the Virgin Mary, in order to make continual progress at her school on the path of holiness.

With this wish, joined by prayer, I once again impart to you and your loved ones the Apostolic Blessing.