

CANONIZATION OF SIX NEW SAINTS

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

Sixth Sunday of Easter, 16 May 2004

1. "Peace I leave with you" (Jn 14: 27). During the Easter season, we frequently hear this promise of Jesus to his disciples. True peace is the fruit of Christ's victory over the power of evil, sin and death. Those who follow him faithfully become witnesses and builders of his peace.

It is in this light that I wish to contemplate the six new Saints, offered to us today by the Church for universal veneration: Luigi Orione, Hannibal Mary Di Francia, José Manyanet y Vives, Nimatullah Kassab Al-Hardini, Paola Elisabetta Cerioli, Gianna Beretta Molla.

2. "Men who have risked their lives for the sake of Our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 15: 26). These words taken from the Acts of the Apostles can be well-applied to St Luigi Orione, a man who gave himself entirely for the cause of Christ and his Kingdom. Physical and moral sufferings, fatigue, difficulty, misunderstandings and all kinds of obstacles characterized his apostolic ministry. "Christ, the Church, souls", he would say, "are loved and served on the cross and through crucifixion or they are not loved and served at all" (Writings, 68, 81).

The heart of this strategy of charity was "without limits because it was opened wide by the charity of Christ" (ibid., 102, 32). Passion for Christ was the soul of his bold life, the interior thrust of an altruism without reservations, the always fresh source of an indestructible hope.

This humble son of a man who repaired roads proclaimed that "only charity will save the world" (ibid., 62, 13), and to everyone he would often say that "perfect joy can only be found in perfect dedication of oneself to God and man, and to all mankind" (ibid.).

3. "Whoever loves me will keep my word" (Jn 14: 23). In these words of the Gospel we see illustrated the spiritual profile of Hannibal Mary Di Francia, whose love for the Lord moved him to dedicate his entire life to the spiritual well-being of others. In this perspective, he felt above all the urgency to carry out the Gospel command: "Rogate ergo... Pray then to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest!" (Mt 9: 38).

He left to the Rogationist Fathers and the Daughters of Divine Zeal the task to do their utmost with all their strength so that prayer for vocations would be "unceasing and universal". This same call of Fr Hannibal Mary Di Francia is directed to the young people of our times, summed up in his usual exhortation: "Fall in love with Jesus Christ".

From this providential intuition, a great movement of prayer for vocations rose up within the Church. I hope with all my heart that the example of Fr Hannibal Mary Di Francia will guide and sustain such pastoral work even in our times.

4. "The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you" (Jn 14: 26). From the beginning, the Holy Spirit has brought forth men and women who have remembered and spread the truth revealed by Jesus. One of these was St José Manyanet, a true apostle of the family. Inspired by the school of Nazareth, he carried out his plan of personal sanctity and heroically devoted himself to the mission that the Spirit entrusted to him. He founded two religious congregations. A visible symbol of his apostolic zeal is also the temple of the Holy Family of Barcelona.

May St José Manyanet bless all families and help them follow the example of the Holy Family in their homes!

5. A man of prayer, in love with the Eucharist which he adored for long periods, St Nimatullah Kassab Al-Hardini is an example for the monks of the Order of Lebanese Maronites as he is for his Lebanese brothers and sisters and all Christians of the world. He gave himself completely to the Lord in a life full of great sacrifices, showing that God's love is the only true source of joy and happiness for man. He committed himself to searching for and following Christ, his Master and Lord.

Welcoming his brothers, he reassured and healed many wounds in the hearts of his contemporaries, witnessing to God's mercy. May his example enlighten our journey and bring forth, especially in young people, a true desire for God and for holiness to proclaim to our world the light of the Gospel!

6. "The Angel... showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven" (Rv 21: 10). This marvellous image in the Apocalypse of John exalts the beauty and spiritual fruitfulness of the Church, the new Jerusalem. A unique witness to this spiritual fruitfulness is Paola Elisabetta Cerioli, whose life was full of good fruits.

Contemplating the Holy Family, Paola Elisabetta understood that families remain strong when the bonds among their members are sustained and kept together by sharing the values of faith and a Christian way of life. To spread these values, the new Saint founded the Institute of the Holy Family. She was convinced that in order for children to grow up sure of themselves and strong, they needed a family that was healthy and united, generous and stable. May God help Christian families to welcome and witness in every situation to the love of the merciful God.

7. Gianna Beretta Molla was a simple, but more than ever, significant messenger of divine love. In a letter to her future husband a few days before their marriage, she wrote: "Love is the most beautiful sentiment the Lord has put into the soul of men and women".

Following the example of Christ, who "having loved his own... loved them to the end" (Jn 13: 1), this holy mother of a family remained heroically faithful to the commitment she made on the day of her marriage. The extreme sacrifice she sealed with her life testifies that only those who have the courage to give of themselves totally to God and to others are able to fulfil themselves.

Through the example of Gianna Beretta Molla, may our age rediscover the pure, chaste and fruitful beauty of conjugal love, lived as a response to the divine call!

8. "Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid" (Jn 14: 28). The earthly events of these six new Saints spur us to persevere on our own journey, confiding in the help of God and the maternal protection of Mary. From Heaven, may they now watch over us and support us with their powerful intercession.

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