



The Holy See

HOLY MASS FOR THE CANONIZATION OF FIVE NEW SAINTS Arcangelo Tadini (1846-1912)

Bernardo Tolomei (1272-1348)

Nuno de Santa Maria Alvares Pereira (1360-1431)

Gertrude Comensoli (1847-1903)

Caterina Volpicelli (1839-1894) **HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI**

St Peter's Square

Third Sunday of Easter, 26 April 2009

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On this Third Sunday in the Easter Season, the liturgy once again focuses our attention on the mystery of the Risen Christ. Victorious over evil and over death, the Author of life who sacrificed himself as a victim of expiation for our sins, "is still our priest, our advocate who always pleads our cause. Christ is the victim who dies no more, the Lamb, once slain, who lives for ever" (Easter Preface III). Let us allow ourselves to be bathed in the radiance of Easter that shines from this great mystery and with the Responsorial Psalm let us pray: "O Lord, let the light of your countenance shine upon us".

The light of the face of the Risen Christ shines upon us today especially through the Gospel features of the five Blessed who during this celebration are enrolled in the Roll of Saints: Arcangelo Tadini, Bernardo Tolomei, Nuno de Santa Maria Álvares Pereira, Gertrude Comensoli and Caterina Volpicelli. I willingly join in the homage that the pilgrims are paying to them, gathered here from various nations and to whom I address a cordial greeting with great affection. The various human and spiritual experiences of these new Saints show us the profound renewal that the mystery of Christ's Resurrection brings about in the human heart; it is a fundamental mystery that orients and guides the entire history of salvation. The Church therefore, especially in this Easter Season, rightly invites us to direct our gaze to the Risen Christ, who is really present in the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

In the Gospel passage, St Luke mentions one of the appearances of the Risen Jesus (24: 35-48).

At the very beginning of the passage the Evangelist notes that the two disciples of Emmaus, who hurried back to Jerusalem, had told the Eleven how they recognized him in "the breaking of the bread" (v. 35). And while they were recounting the extraordinary experience of their encounter with the Lord, he "himself stood among them" (v. 36). His sudden appearance frightened the Apostles. They were fearful to the point that Jesus, in order to reassure them and to overcome every hesitation and doubt, asked them to touch him he was not a ghost but a man of flesh and bone and then asked them for something to eat. Once again, as had happened for the two at Emmaus, it is at table while eating with his own that the Risen Christ reveals himself to the disciples, helping them to understand the Scriptures and to reinterpret the events of salvation in the light of Easter. "Everything written about me", he says, "in the law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled" (v. 44). And he invites them to look to the future: "repentance and forgiveness of sins [shall] be preached in his name to all nations" (cf. v. 47).

This very experience of repentance and forgiveness is relived in every community in the Eucharistic celebration, especially on Sundays. The Eucharist, the privileged place in which the Church recognizes "the Author of life" (Acts 3: 15) is "the breaking of the bread", as it is called in the Acts of the Apostles. In it, through faith, we enter into communion with Christ, who is "the priest, the altar, and the lamb of sacrifice" (cf. Preface for Easter, 5) and is among us. Let us gather round him to cherish the memory of his words and of the events contained in Scripture; let us relive his Passion, death and Resurrection. In celebrating the Eucharist we communicate with Christ, the victim of expiation, and from him we draw forgiveness and life. What would our lives as Christians be without the Eucharist? The Eucharist is the perpetual, living inheritance which the Lord has bequeathed to us in the Sacrament of his Body and his Blood and which we must constantly rethink and deepen so that, as venerable Pope Paul vi said, it may "impress its inexhaustible effectiveness on all the days of our earthly life" (*Insegnamenti*, V [1967], p. 779). Nourished with the Eucharistic Bread, the Saints we are venerating today brought their mission of evangelical love to completion with their own special charisms in the various areas in which they worked.

St Arcangelo Tadini spent long hours in prayer before the Eucharist. Always focusing his pastoral ministry on the totality of the human person, he encouraged the human and spiritual growth of his parishioners. This holy priest, this holy parish priest, a man who belonged entirely to God ready in every circumstance to let himself be guided by the Holy Spirit, was at the same time prepared to face the urgent needs of the moment and find a remedy for them. For this reason he undertook on many practical and courageous initiatives such as the organization of the "Catholic Workers Mutual Aid Association", the construction of a spinning mill and a residence for the workers and, in 1900, the foundation of the "Congregation of Worker Sisters of the Holy House of Nazareth" to evangelize the working world by sharing in the common efforts after the example of the Holy Family of Nazareth. How prophetic the charismatic intuition of Fr Tadini was and how timely his example remains today in an epoch of serious financial crisis! He reminds us that only by cultivating a constant and profound relationship with the Lord, especially in the Sacrament of the

Eucharist, can we bring the Gospel leaven to the various fields of work and to every area of our society.

Love for prayer and for manual labour also distinguished St Bernardo Tolomei, the initiator of a unique Benedictine monastic movement. His was a Eucharistic life, entirely dedicated to contemplation, expressed in humble service to neighbour. Because of his rare spirit of humility and brotherly acceptance, he was re-elected abbot for 27 years, until his death. Moreover, in order to guarantee the future of his foundation, on 21 January 1344 he obtained from Clement vi papal approval of the new Benedictine Congregation called "Our Lady of Monte Oliveto". During the epidemic of the Black Death in 1348, he left the solitude of Monte Oliveto for the monastery of S. Benedetto at Porta Tufi, Siena, to attend to his monks stricken with the plague, and died, himself a victim, as an authentic martyr of love. The example of this Saint invites us to express our faith in a life dedicated to God in prayer and spent at the service of our neighbour, impelled by a love that is also ready to make the supreme sacrifice.

"Know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself; the Lord hears when I call to him" (Ps 4: 3). These words of the Responsorial Psalm express the secret of the life of Bl. Nuno de Santa Maria, a hero and saint of Portugal. The 70 years of his life belong to the second half of the 14th century and the first half of the 15th, which saw this nation consolidate its independence from Castille and expand beyond the ocean not without a special plan of God opening new routes that were to favour the transit of Christ's Gospel to the ends of the earth. St Nuno felt he was an instrument of this lofty design and enrolled in the *militia Christi*, that is, in the service of witness that every Christian is called to bear in the world. He was characterized by an intense life of prayer and absolute trust in divine help. Although he was an excellent soldier and a great leader, he never permitted these personal talents to prevail over the supreme action that comes from God. St Nuno allowed no obstacle to come in the way of God's action in his life, imitating Our Lady, to whom he was deeply devoted and to whom he publicly attributed his victories. At the end of his life, he retired to the Carmelite convent whose building he had commissioned. I am glad to point this exemplary figure out to the whole Church particularly because he exercised his life of faith and prayer in contexts apparently unfavourable to it, as proof that in any situation, even military or in war time, it is possible to act and to put into practice the values and principles of Christian life, especially if they are placed at the service of the common good and the glory of God.

Since childhood, [Geltrude Comensoli](#) felt a special attraction for Jesus present in the Eucharist. Adoration of Christ in the Eucharist became the principal aim of her life, we could almost say the habitual condition of her existence. Indeed, it was in the presence of the Eucharist that St Geltrude realized what her vocation and mission in the Church was to be: to dedicate herself without reserve to apostolic and missionary action, especially for youth. Thus, in obedience to [Pope Leo XIII](#), her Institute came into being which endeavoured to translate the "charity contemplated" in the Eucharistic Christ, into "charity lived", in dedication to one's needy neighbour. In a bewildered and all too often wounded society like ours, to a youth, like that of our day in search of values and a

meaning for their lives, as a sound reference point St Geltrude points to God who, in the Eucharist, has made himself our travelling companion. She reminds us that "adoration must prevail over all the other charitable works", for it is from love for Christ who died and rose and who is really present in the Eucharistic Sacrament, that Gospel charity flows which impels us to see all human beings as our brothers and sisters.

St Caterina Volpicelli was also a witness of divine love. She strove "to belong to Christ in order to bring to Christ" those whom she met in Naples at the end of the 19th century, in a period of spiritual and social crisis. For her too the secret was the Eucharist. She recommended that her first collaborators cultivate an intense spiritual life in prayer and, especially, in vital contact with Jesus in the Eucharist. Today this is still the condition for continuing the work and mission which she began and which she bequeathed as a legacy to the "Servants of the Sacred Heart". In order to be authentic teachers of faith, desirous of passing on to the new generations the values of Christian culture, it is indispensable, as she liked to repeat, to release God from the prisons in which human beings have confined him. In fact, only in the Heart of Christ can humanity find its "permanent dwelling place". St Caterina shows to her spiritual daughters and to all of us the demanding journey of a conversion that radically changes the heart, and is expressed in actions consistent with the Gospel. It is thus possible to lay the foundations for building a society open to justice and solidarity, overcoming that economic and cultural imbalance which continues to exist in a large part of our planet.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us thank the Lord for the gift of holiness that shines out in the Church with rare beauty today in Arcangelo Tadini, Bernardo Tolomei, Nuno de Santa Maria Álvares Pereira, Geltrude Comensoli and Caterina Volpicelli. Let us be attracted by their examples, let us be guided by their teachings, so that our existence too may become a hymn of praise to God, in the footsteps of Jesus, worshipped with faith in the mystery of the Eucharist and served generously in our neighbour. May the maternal intercession of Mary, Queen of Saints and of these five new luminous examples of holiness whom we venerate joyfully today, obtain for us that we may carry out this evangelical mission. Amen!