



The Holy See

CANONIZATION OF THREE BLESSEDS

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

Sunday, 5 October 2003

1. "*Preach the Gospel to the whole creation*" (Mk 16:15). With these words before the Ascension the Risen One entrusted the universal missionary mandate to the Apostles. Immediately afterwards, he assured them that in this demanding mission they would always be able to count on his help (cf. Mk 16: 20).

These same words rang out eloquently at today's solemn celebration. They constitute the message that these three new Saints renew for us: Daniel Comboni, Bishop, founder of the Congregation of the Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus and of the Comboni Missionary Sisters; Arnold Janssen, priest, founder of the Society of the Divine Word and of the Congregation of Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit and the Sister Servants of the Holy Spirit of Perpetual Adoration; Joseph Freinademetz, priest, of the Society of the Divine Word.

Their lives show clearly that the proclamation of the Gospel "is the primary service which the Church can render to every individual and to all humanity" (Redemptoris Missio, n. 2). These new Saints teach us that evangelization always involves *an explicit proclamation of Christ* in addition to contributing to human advancement that has sometimes even proven dangerous, as the experience of so many missionaries shows. This is the example, the precious heritage that the three Saints, raised today to the glory of the altars, have bequeathed, especially to their religious families. *The priority of missionary institutes is the mission "ad gentes"*, which must come before any other social or humanitarian commitment, however necessary.

2. "*All the peoples will see the glory of the Lord*". The Responsorial Psalm, which we have just sung, emphasizes *the urgency of the mission "ad gentes"*, even in our time. We need evangelizers with the enthusiasm and apostolic outreach of Bishop Daniel Comboni, an apostle of Christ among

the Africans. He relied on the resources of his rich personality and solid spirituality to make Christ known and welcomed in Africa, a continent he loved deeply.

How could we fail, also today, to turn our gaze with affection and concern to those beloved peoples? Africa, a land rich in human and spiritual resources, continues to be scarred by many difficulties and problems. May the international community actively help it *build a future of hope*. I entrust my appeal to the intercession of St [Daniel Comboni](#), an outstanding evangelizer and protector of the "Black Continent".

3. "*Nations shall come to your light*" (Is 60: 3). The prophetic image of the new Jerusalem that spreads divine light on all the peoples clearly illustrates the life and tireless apostolate of St [Arnold Janssen](#). He zealously carried out his priestly work, spreading the Word of God by means of the new mass media, especially the press.

Obstacles did not dismay him. He liked to repeat: "Proclamation of the Good News is the first and most significant expression of love for one's neighbour". He now helps his religious family from Heaven, to continue faithfully along the tracks he marked out that witness to the permanent value of the Church's evangelizing mission.

4. "*And they went forth and preached everywhere*" (Mk 16: 20). The Evangelist Mark ends his Gospel with these words. He then adds that the Lord never ceases to accompany the activity of the Apostles with the power of his miracles. Echoing these words of Jesus, the words of St [Joseph Freinademetz](#) are filled with faith: "*I do not consider missionary life as a sacrifice I offer to God, but as the greatest grace that God could ever have lavished upon me*". With the tenacity typical of mountain people, this generous "witness of love" *made a gift of himself to the Chinese peoples* of southern Shandong. For love and with love he embraced their living conditions, in accordance with his own advice to his missionaries: "Missionary work is useless if one does not love and is not loved". *An exemplary model of Gospel inculturation*, this Saint imitated Jesus, who saved men and women by sharing their existence to the very end.

5. "*Go into all the world*". The three Saints whom we joyfully honour today remind us of the missionary vocation of every baptized person. All Christians are sent on mission, but to be authentic witnesses of Christ, *one must strive constantly for holiness* (cf. [Redemptoris Missio](#), n. 90).

Dear Brothers and Sisters, let us accept this invitation that comes to us from today's evocative celebration. May the Queen of the Saints, the Star of the New Evangelization, shine upon us from Heaven. We turn to her with trust, especially in this month of October, dedicated to the Rosary and to the missions. Mary Most Holy, Queen of Missions, pray for us!

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