



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE POSTULATORS
OF THE CONGREGATION FOR THE CAUSES OF SAINTS***

Clementine Hall

Monday, 17 December 2007

*Your Eminence,
Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

I am pleased to greet and welcome you, dear men and women postulants accredited to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, and I willingly take this opportunity to express to you my esteem and gratitude for the praiseworthy work you carry out in dealing with the causes of beatification and canonization. I greet Cardinal José Saraiva Martins, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, and thank him for his courteous words expressing your common sentiments. With him, I greet Mons. Michele Di Ruberto, Secretary, and the Undersecretary and officials of this Dicastery, called to offer an indispensable and highly qualified collaboration to the Successor of Peter in a context of great ecclesial importance.

Today's meeting is taking place almost on the eve of the 25th anniversary of the promulgation of the Apostolic Constitution *Divinus Perfectionis Magister*. With this Document, published on 25 January 1983 and still in force, my beloved Predecessor, the Servant of God John Paul II, desired to review the process for the Causes of Saints, and at the same time to provide for an internal reordering of the Congregation that would meet the needs of scholars and satisfy the desires of pastors who on several occasions had requested an easier procedure for causes of beatification and canonization which would nevertheless always preserve sound research in this field that is so important for the life of the Church. Indeed, through beatifications and canonizations, the Church gives thanks to God for the gift of her children who have known how to respond generously to divine grace, honours them and invokes them as intercessors. At the same time, she presents these shining examples for the imitation of all the faithful called by Baptism to holiness, which is a

goal proposed to every state of life. In professing Christ, his Person and his doctrine with their lives and in remaining closely united to him, the Saints and Blesseds are as it were a living picture of both aspects of the divine Teacher's perfection.

At the same time, looking at our many brothers and sisters who in every age have made themselves a total offering to God for his Kingdom, Ecclesial Communities are prompted to take note of the need, also in our time, for witnesses who can incarnate the perennial truth of the Gospel in the concrete circumstances of life, making them a means of salvation for the whole world. I also wished to refer to this in my recent Encyclical, *Spe Salvi*, by writing that "our behaviour is not indifferent before God and therefore is not indifferent for the unfolding of history. We can open ourselves and the world and allow God to enter: we can open ourselves to truth, to love, to what is good. This is what the Saints did, those who, as 'God's fellow workers', contributed to the world's salvation" (n. 35). In recent decades there has been an increase in religious and cultural interest in the champions of Christian holiness who show the true face of the Church, bride of Christ "without spot or wrinkle" (cf. Eph 5: 27). If they are properly presented with their spiritual dynamism and their historical reality, Saints help to make the word of the Gospel and the mission of the Church more credible and attractive. Contact with them paves the way to true spiritual resurrection, to lasting conversions and to the blossoming of new Saints. Saints normally bring forth other Saints and closeness to them, or even only to their footsteps, is always salutary: it cleanses and raises the mind and opens the heart to love for God and for the brethren. Holiness sows joy and hope, and responds to the thirst for happiness that people also feel today.

Therefore, the ecclesial and social importance of constantly presenting new models of holiness renders particularly precious the work of those who collaborate in the treatment of causes for beatification and canonization. All those who work for the Causes of Saints, although with different roles, are called to place themselves exclusively at the service of the truth. For this reason, in the course of the *Diocesan Inquiry*, the testimonial and documentary proof must be gathered both when it is favourable and when it is contrary to the holiness and fame of holiness or martyrdom of Servants of God. Objectivity and completeness in the proof collected in this first, and in some respects fundamental, phase of the canonical process carried out under the responsibility of the diocesan Bishops must obviously be followed up with the objectivity and completeness of the *Positiones* prepared by the relators of the Congregation, with the collaboration of the Postulation. Thus, the task of the postulators is fundamental in both the diocesan and apostolic phases of the process. This task must be carried out in a way that is irreproachable, inspired by rectitude and impressed with absolute probity. Professional competence is required of postulators together with a capacity for discernment and honesty in helping the diocesan Bishops open full, objective inquiries which are valid, both from the formal viewpoint and from that of their substance. Equally delicate and important is the help that Bishops offer to the Dicastery of the Causes of Saints in the process of the search for the truth, to be attained through an appropriate discussion which takes into account the moral certainty to be acquired and the means of proof that are realistically available.

Dear brothers and sisters, may the Holy Spirit, the source and creator of Christian holiness, enlighten you in your work and may the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, the Saints, Blesseds and Servants of God whose Causes you are following, obtain for you from the Lord the ability always to do so with fidelity and love for the truth. I willingly include in my prayers for you the hope that you yourselves may follow in the Saints' footsteps, as have various postulators whose Causes for beatification are under way. Lastly, with Holy Christmas at hand, I express my fervent good wishes to you for yourselves, your families and your loved ones, while I warmly bless you all.

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