



The Holy See

EUCCHARISTIC CELEBRATION FOR THE BEATIFICATION OF FIVE NEW BLESSEDS:

FLORENTINO ASENSIO BARROSO,
CEFERINO GIMÉNEZ MALLA,
GAETANO CATANOSO,
ENRICO RUBUSCHINI AND
MARIA ENCARNACIÓN ROSAL

HOMILY OF POPE JOHN PAUL II

Sunday, 4 May 1997

1. *“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you”* (Jn 15:12).

The liturgy of this Sixth Sunday of Easter invites us to reflect on the great commandment of love in the light of the paschal mystery. Precisely the meditation on the *new commandment*, the heart and synthesis of Christ’s moral teaching, introduces us into today’s celebration, made particularly solemn and evocative by the proclamation of *five new blessed*s.

In the second reading and in the Gospel passage, *the law of love* is presented to us as the testament of Jesus on the eve of his Passion. “These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full” (Jn 15:11): thus he concluded his discourse to the Apostles at the Last Supper.

Love of God then is *the source of true joy*. This is what our brothers and sister in the faith personally experienced. They are presented to the Church today as models of generous adherence to the Lord’s commandment. They are “blessed”. In their earthly lives, they lived the love of God in a very special way and for this reason, they were able to delight *in the fullness of joy* promised by Christ.

Today they are held up for our veneration as privileged witnesses to the love of God. By their example and intercession they show the way to that complete happiness which is the profound aspiration of the human soul.

2. As we have just repeated in the responsorial psalm, the whole world is invited to rejoice for the great works of the Lord: "Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises!" (Ps 98 [97]:4). Today from different parts of the world, especially from the places where the new blessed lived and worked, a deep hymn of praise and thanksgiving rises to the Lord, for the beatification of *Florentino Asensio Barroso*, Bishop and martyr, *Ceferino Giménez Malla*, martyr, *Gaetano Catanoso*, priest and founder of the Congregation of the "Daughters of St Veronica," Missionaries of the Holy Face, *Enrico Rebuschini*, priest, a member of the Order of the Clerics Regular, Servants of the Sick, and *María Encarnación Rosal*, religious, reformer of the Institute of the Bethlehemite Sisters.

3. "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love" (Jn 15:9). *Bishop Florentino Asensio Barroso* remained in the love of Christ. Like him, he gave himself to serving his brothers and sisters, especially in his priestly ministry for many years, in Valladolid first, and later in his brief period as Bishop and Apostolic Administrator of Barbastro, a see to which he had been appointed a few months prior to the outbreak of the deplorable Civil War in 1936. For a minister of the Lord, love is lived in pastoral charity and this is why, as he faced the dangers which he saw coming, he did not abandon his flock but like the Good Shepherd, he laid down his life for his sheep.

The Bishop, as *his people's teacher and guide in the faith*, is called to profess it with his words and actions. Bishop Asensio carried his pastoral responsibilities to their extreme consequences by *dying for the faith he lived and preached*. At the last moments of his life, after having suffered lacerating humiliations and tortures, in answer to one of his torturers as to whether he knew the destiny that awaited him, he replied serenely and firmly: "I am going to heaven". Thus he proclaimed his staunch faith in Christ, conqueror of death and giver of eternal life. Raised today to the glories of the altar, *Bl. Florentino Asensio Barroso* by his example continues to encourage the faith of the people of this beloved Aragonian Diocese, and watches over it with his intercession.

4. "I have called you friends" (Jn 15:15) Also in Barbastro, the Gypsy *Ceferino Giménez Malla*, known as "El Pelé" *died for the faith in which he had lived*. His life shows how Christ is present in the various peoples and races, and that all are called to holiness which is attained by keeping his commandments and remaining in his love (cf. Jn 15:11). *El Pelé* was *generous and welcoming to the poor*, despite his own poverty; honest in his activities, faithful to his people and his Gypsy race, endowed with an extraordinary natural intelligence and the gift of counsel. He was above all *a man of deep religious beliefs*.

His frequent participation at Mass, devotion to the Blessed Virgin with the recitation of the rosary, and his membership in various Catholic associations helped him to firmly love God and his

neighbour. Thus even at the risk of his own life, he did not hesitate to defend a priest who was about to be arrested, and for doing so he was put in prison where he never ceased to pray and was later shot, as he clutched his Rosary in his hands. *Bl. Ceferino Giménez Malla knew how to sow peace and solidarity among his own*, often mediating in the conflicts that relations between Gypsies and farmers sometimes involve, showing that Christ's love is not limited by race or culture. Today "El Pelé" intercedes for all before our common Father, and the Church proposes him as a model to follow and a significant example of the universal vocation to holiness, especially for Gypsies, who have close cultural and ethnic ties with him.

5. Fr *Gaetano Catanoso* followed Christ on the way of the Cross, becoming with him a victim of expiation for sins. He often repeated that he wanted to be the Cyrenaeen who helped Christ carry the Cross, heavy more for sin than for the weight of its wood.

A true image of the Good Shepherd, he worked tirelessly for the good of the flock entrusted to him by the Lord, in parish life and in assistance to orphans and the sick, in spiritual support to seminarians and young priests and in directing the sisters Veronicas of the Holy Face, which he had founded.

He fostered and spread a great *devotion to the bloodstained and disfigured face of Christ*, which he saw reflected in the face of every suffering person. All those who met him recognized in his person *the good fragrance of Christ*, and for this reason they loved to call him "father" and this they really felt he was, since he was an eloquent sign of the fatherhood of God.

6. Throughout his life, *Bl. Enrico Rebuschini* walked resolutely towards that "*perfection of charity*" which is the dominant theme of this Sunday's Liturgy of the Word. In the footsteps of the founder, St Camillus de Lellis, he witnessed to merciful love, practising it wherever he worked. His firm resolution "to commit his own life *to giving God to his neighbour*, seeing in him the Lord's own face", involved him in a demanding ascetic and mystical journey, marked by an intense life of prayer, extraordinary love for the Eucharist and constant dedication to the sick and the suffering.

He became a sure reference point both for the Clerics Regular, Servants of the Sick, as well as for the Christian community of Cremona. His example is a pressing invitation to all believers to be attentive to the suffering and the sick in body and in spirit.

7. "I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide" (Jn 15:16). *Mother María Encarnación Rosal, the first woman from Guatemala to be beatified*, was chosen to continue the charism of *Bl. Pedro de San José Betancourt*, founder of the Order of Bethlehemites, the first Latin American order. Today its fruit endures in the Bethlehemite Sisters who, together with all the members of the great family of the Lay Association, strive to put his evangelizing charism into practice in their service to the Church.

A constant and tenacious woman motivated above all by charity, her life was fidelity to Christ her assiduous confidant through prayer and the spirituality of Bethlehem. He brought her many sacrifices and troubles, having to wander from one place to another to establish her work. Giving up many things did not matter to her, as long as the essential was saved, as she said: "May all be lost, except charity".

Basing herself on the lessons learned in the school of Bethlehem, that is, love, humility, poverty, the generous gift of self and austerity, *she lived a splendid synthesis of contemplation and action*, uniting to her educational activities the spirit of penance, adoration and reparation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. May her example continue among her daughters, and may her intercession accompany the Church's life on the American continent, which is preparing with hope to cross the threshold of the third millennium of the Christian era.

8. God calls everyone to holiness, but without forcing anyone's hand. God asks and waits for man's free acceptance. In the context of this universal call to holiness, Christ then chooses a specific task for each person and if he finds a response, he himself provides for bringing the work he has begun to completion, ensuring that the fruit remains.

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you You are my friends" (Jn 15:9, 14), the Lord continues to repeat and he waits for our answer, as he did with the new blessed. Their example reminds us that, each in a different way, we are all committed to bearing fruit, not only for our own good, but for the whole community.

We rejoice today in the gift of these new blessed. Let us thank God for what they achieved and for the good works they left during their earthly pilgrimage. Let us pray that their example may be followed by many and increase the number of workers in the Lord's vineyard.

May the face of the earth be renewed (cf. Ps 104[103]:30) by the power of the Holy Spirit, and may the canticle of joy and the proclamation of divine love resound in all the corners of the earth.

God is love: he has loved us first. Our task now is to love one another as he has loved us. By this we will be recognized as his disciples. Our responsibility: *to be credible witnesses*, stems from this. This is what the new blessed were. May they obtain for us that we may be the same, so that this world which we love may recognize Christ as the one true Saviour!