



The Holy See

BEATIFICATION OF 7 SERVANTS OF GOD

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

Sunday 7 October 2001

1. "The just man shall live by faith" (Hb 2,4): with these words full of confidence and hope the prophet Habakkuk spoke to the people of Israel at a particularly troubled moment of its history. Reread in the light of the mystery of Christ by the Apostle Paul, the Church can use the same words to express a universal principle: it is by faith that man is open to the salvation that comes to him from God.

Today we have the joy of contemplating this great mystery of salvation actualized in the new Blesseds. They are the just who by their faith live close to God in eternity: [Ignatius Maloyan](#), bishop and martyr; [Nikolaus Gross](#), father of a family and martyr; [Alfonso Maria Fusco](#), priest; [Tommaso Maria Fusco](#), priest; [Emilie Tavernier Gamelin](#), religious woman; [Eugenia Picco](#), virgin; [Maria Euthymia Üffing](#), virgin. These illustrious brothers and sisters, now elevated to the glory of the altars, knew how to translate their invincible faith in Christ into an extraordinary experience of love for God and service to their neighbour.

2. *Archbishop Ignatius Maloyan*, who died a martyr when he was 46, reminds us of every Christian's spiritual combat, whose faith is exposed to the attacks of evil. It is in the Eucharist that he drew, day by day, the force necessary to accomplish his priestly ministry with generosity and passion, dedicating himself to preaching, to a pastoral life connected with the celebration of the sacraments and to the service of the neediest. Throughout his existence, he fully lived the words of St Paul: "God has not given us a spirit of fear but a spirit of courage, of love and self control" (II Tim 1,14. 7). Before the dangers of persecution, Bl. Ignatius did not accept any compromise, declaring to those who were putting pressure on him, "It does not please God that I should deny Jesus my Saviour. To shed my blood for my faith is the strongest desire of my heart". May his example enlighten all those who today wish to be witnesses of the Gospel for the glory of God and

for the salvation of their neighbour.

3. In her life as mother of a family and religious foundress of the Sisters of Providence, *Emilie Tavernier Gamelin* was the model of a courageous abandonment to divine Providence. Her attention to persons and to situations led her to invent new forms of charity. She had a heart open to every kind of trouble, and she was especially the servant of the poor and the little ones, whom she wished to treat like kings. She remembered that she had received everything from the Lord and she wanted to give without counting the cost. This was the secret of her deep joy, even in adversity.

In a spirit of total confidence in God and with an acute sense of obedience, like the anonymous servant in the Gospel of today, she accomplished her duty which she considered a divine commandment, wishing above all to do the will of God in everything. May the new Blessed be a model of contemplation and action for the sisters of her institute and for the persons who work with them.

4. Both of the new Blesseds from Germany lead us into the dark time of the twentieth century. Let us focus on *Bl. Nikolaus Gross*, journalist and father of a family. With the clear insight that the Nazi ideology was incompatible with Christian faith, he courageously took up his pen to plead for the dignity of human beings. Nikolaus loved his wife and children very much. However, the inner bond with his own family never allowed him to pull back from confessing Christ and his Church. It was clear to him, "If we do not risk our life today, how then do we want to justify ourselves one day before God and our people?". For this conviction he submitted to being hanged so that heaven itself might be opened to him. In the Blessed Martyr Nikolaus Gross was accomplished what the prophet foretold "The just man will live on account of his faith" (Hb 1,4).

5. The *Blessed Sr Euthymia* offered another kind of witness. The Clemens Sister dedicated herself tirelessly to the care of the sick, particularly, of the prisoners of war and of foreign workers. For this reason she was nicknamed "Mamma Euthymia". After the war, she was put in charge of the laundry room rather than of the sick. She would have preferred to serve human beings rather than machines. However, she remained a dedicated sister who had a friendly smile and a kind word for everyone. She had a way of describing her mission: "The Lord can use me like a ray of sun to brighten the day". This Sister lived the word of the Gospel: whatever we do, we are only unworthy servants. We have only done our duty" (Lk 17,10). In her faith in small things lies her greatness.

6. "If you had faith like a mustard seed", Jesus exclaimed speaking with his disciples (Lk 17,6). It was a genuine and tenacious faith that guided the work and life of *Bl. Alfonso Maria Fusco*, founder of the Sisters of St John the Baptist. From when he was a young man, the Lord put into his heart the passionate desire to dedicate his life to the service of the neediest, especially of children and young people, who were plentiful in his native city of Angri in Campania. For this he undertook the path of the priesthood and, in a certain way, become the "Don Bosco of Southern

Italy". From the beginning he wanted to involve in his work some young women who shared his ideal and he offered them the words of St John the Baptist, "Prepare the way of the Lord" (Lk 3,4). Trusting in divine Providence, Bl. Alfonso and the Sisters of John the Baptist set up a work that was superior to their own expectations. From a simple house for the welcome of the young, there arose a whole Congregation which today is present in 16 countries and on 4 continents working alongside those who are "little" ones and "last".

7. The outstanding vitality of faith, extolled in the Gospel for today, emerges in the life and activity of *Tommaso Maria Fusco*, founder of the Institute of the Daughters of Charity of the Precious Blood. By virtue of the faith he knew how to live in the world the reality of the Kingdom of God in a very special way. Among his aspirations, there was one which was his favourite: "I believe in you, my God, increase my faith". It is this prayer that the Apostles direct to the Lord in the Gospel reading today (cf. Lk 17,6). Bl. Tommaso understood that faith is first of all a gift and a grace. No one can conquer it or obtain it by himself. One can only ask for it, implore it from on high. For that reason, enlightened by the teaching of the new Blessed, we never tire of asking the gift of faith, because "the just man will live by faith" (Hb 1,4).

8. The vital synthesis between contemplation and action, assimilated in the daily participation in the Eucharist, was the foundation of the spiritual experience and the burning charity of *Bl. Eugenia Picco*. In her life she made every effort to listen to the word of the Lord following the invitation of the Liturgy today (refrain for the responsorial psalm), never drawing back from the service which love of neighbour required. At Parma she took upon herself the poverty of the people responding to the needs of the young and of needy families and assisting the victims of the war that in this period made Europe suffer. Even in the face of suffering, with the inevitable moments of difficulty and bewilderment that it entails, Bl. Eugenia Picco knew how to transform the experience of suffering into an occasion of purification and inner growth. From Bl. Eugenia we can learn the art of listening to the voice of the Lord in order to be credible witnesses of the Gospel of charity in the opening years of the millennium.

9. "God is wonderful in his saints!". With the communities in which the Blessed lived and for which they spent their best human and spiritual energies, we want to thank God, who is "wonderful in his saints". At the same time, we ask Him through their intercession, to help us respond with renewed eagerness to the universal call to holiness. Amen.