



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC VISIT TO TORONTO,
TO CIUDAD DE GUATEMALA AND TO CIUDAD DE MÉXICO

BEATIFICATION OF JUAN BATTISTA AND JACINTO DE LOS ÁNGELES

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II

Mexico City, Thursday August 1, 2002

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. *"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness's sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"* (Mt 5:10). In the Gospel Beatitudes, we find this final exhortation not to be discouraged at the persecutions which the Church has faced from the very beginning. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus promises true happiness to those who are poor in spirit, who mourn or who are meek; and also to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, who act with mercy or are pure of heart.

Faced with the human suffering that accompanies the journey of faith, Saint Peter urges: *"Rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed"* (1 Pt 4:13). With this conviction, Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles faced martyrdom, remaining faithful to their devotion to the true, living God and rejecting idols.

As they were being tortured, they were invited to renounce their Catholic faith and save themselves. But they answered bravely: *"Once we have professed Baptism, we shall always follow the true religion"*: a beautiful example of how nothing, not even our life, should be put before our baptismal commitment. This is the same example given by the early Christians, who, born to new life through Baptism, abandoned all forms of idolatry (cf. Tertullian, *De baptismo*, 12,15).

2. I greet with affection the Cardinals and Bishops who have gathered in this Basilica, and in

particular Archbishop Héctor González Martínez of Oaxaca, and the priests, religious and lay faithful, especially those who have come from Oaxaca, the birthplace of the new "Blesseds" where their memory is still very much alive.

Your land is a rich mixture of cultures. The Gospel arrived there in 1529 with the Dominican Fathers who used the native languages and the manners and customs of the local communities. Thus your land came to know God in the local languages. These two great martyrs stand out among the fruit of this Christian seed.

3. In the second reading, St Peter has reminded us that if someone "*suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but under that name let him glorify God*" (1 Pt 4:16). Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles, who shed their blood for Christ, are true martyrs of the faith. Like the Apostle Paul, they could have asked themselves: "*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*" (Rom 8:35).

These two indigenous Christians, whose personal and family life was irreproachable, suffered martyrdom for their fidelity to the Catholic faith, happy to have been baptized. They are an example to the lay faithful, who are called to sanctify themselves in the ordinary circumstances of everyday life.

4. With this beatification, the Church emphasizes the mission to proclaim the Gospel to all peoples. The new "Blesseds", fruit of the holiness of the First Evangelization among the Zapotec Indians, encourage indigenous people today to appreciate their cultures and languages, and above all their dignity as children of God. This dignity must be respected by others in the context of the Mexican nation, made up of peoples of many different origins but willing to build a common family in solidarity and justice.

The two "Blesseds" are an example of how, without regarding one's ancestral customs as myths, one can reach God without renouncing one's own culture but letting oneself be enlightened by the light of Christ, which renews the religious spirit of the best popular traditions.

5. "*The Lord has done great things for us; we are glad*" (Ps 125:3). With the Psalmist's words, our hearts are filled with joy, for God has blessed the Church of Oaxaca and the Mexican people with two of their children who today are raised to the glory of the altar. Exemplary in carrying out their public duties, they are a model for everyone, in the little villages or in the large social structures, whose duty it is to promote the common good with great care and selflessness.

Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles, husbands and fathers of families, and men whose conduct - as their fellow citizens recognized at the time - was blameless, remind Mexican families today of the greatness of their vocation, the value of fidelity and love, and the generous acceptance of life.

May the Church therefore rejoice, for with these new "Blesseds" she has received clear proof of God's love for us (cf. *Preface II of the Saints*). May the Christian community of Oaxaca and the whole of Mexico also rejoice, for the Almighty has looked upon two of their sons.

6. Before the sweet face of Our Lady of Guadalupe, who has been a constant support of the faith of her Mexican children, let us renew the commitment to evangelization which also distinguished Juan Bautista and Jacinto de los Ángeles. Let us enable all the Christian communities to share in this task, so that they may proclaim their faith with enthusiasm and pass it on in its entirety to future generations. Evangelize by strengthening the bonds of fraternal communion and by witnessing to your faith by an exemplary life, in the family, at work and in social relations! Seek the Kingdom of God and his justice here on earth through effective, brotherly solidarity with the neediest and the marginalized (cf. *Mt 25:34-35*)! Be the builders of hope for all society!

Let us express to our Mother in heaven the joy we feel at seeing two children of hers raised to the altar, asking her at the same time to bless, console and help the beloved Mexican people and all America, as she always has from this Shrine of Tepeyac.

At the end of the Celebration, before the final blessing, the Pope commented.

Here I have felt your veneration and the chance to return has been the cause of great spiritual happiness for me, for which I thank God and Mary. Thanks also to all of you who have prepared my visit, taking care of all the details. Thanks to all of you who with great affection have welcomed me in the streets of the city, to those who have come from far away, to those who listened and welcomed the message I leave you, to those who pray so much for my ministry as successor of St Peter. As I get ready to leave this blessed land, what comes from the heart is what the popular song says in Spanish: "I go but I do not leave. I go but I will be absent, then, even if I go, in my heart I stay". Mexico! Mexico! beautiful Mexico, God bless you!