



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II TO CROATIA

BEATIFICATION OF SISTER MARIJA PROPETOĞA ISUSA PETKOVIĆ

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

Harbour Square in Dubrovnik

Friday, 6 June 2003

1. "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Mk 10:17). This was the question asked by the young man who met Jesus that day and knelt down before him.

Today, dear brothers and sisters, gathered in this liturgical assembly as disciples of the "Good Teacher", we too put this question to Jesus, for we wish to know *the path which leads to undying life*.

Jesus' response is simple and immediate: "Keep the commandments!". It comes from the One who is the true source of truth and life. Gathered for this joyous celebration, *the people of Dubrovnik*, together with the pilgrims who have come from the rest of Croatia, from Bosnia-Herzegovina, from Montenegro and from other countries, accept with trepidation the invitation of the Good Teacher, and they implore his help and grace in order to be able to respond with generosity and conviction.

2. With affection I greet you, dear brothers and sisters, together with your Bishops and the priests and religious who accompany you on the path of your witness to Christ. I cordially greet the Bishop of Dubrovnik, the Most Reverend *Zelimir Puljić*, whom I thank for his kind words of welcome, and in a special way the *Daughters of Mercy* founded by the new Blessed. My respectful greetings also go to the *civil and military authorities*; I thank them and all those who have helped to

make my visit possible.

In the footsteps of my predecessor Pius IV who was Archbishop here, I have come with joy to this ancient and glorious city of Dubrovnik, a city proud of its history and its traditions of freedom, justice and the *advancement of the common good*. This is seen in the lapidary phrase inscribed on the fortress of Saint Lawrence: *Non bene pro toto libertas venditur auro* ("Freedom cannot be sold for all the money in the world") and above the door of the Council Hall in the Governor's Palace: *Obliti privatorum, publica curate* ("Forget all private interests, and tend to public concerns").

It is my hope that the patrimony of human and Christian values, accumulated down the centuries, will continue, with the help of God and of your Patron Saint Blase, to be the most precious treasure of the people of this country.

3. "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Mk 10:17). This is the question that *Sister Marija of Jesus Crucified* asked her Lord from the time of her youth in Blato on the island of Korcula, when she took active part in the life of her parish and devoted herself generously to others in the Association of the Good Shepherd, in the Association of Catholic Mothers, and in the people's Kitchen.

The response echoed clearly in her heart: "Come and follow me!" Overwhelmed by the love of God, she chose to consecrate herself to him for ever and to fulfil her aspiration to total devotion to the spiritual and material well-being of those most in need. Later she founded the *Congregation of the Daughters of Mercy of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis*, with the specific task of "spreading knowledge of God's love through the spiritual and corporal works of mercy." Difficulties were not lacking, but Sister Marija persevered with indomitable courage, *offering up her sufferings as so many acts of worship* and supporting her Sisters by her words and her example.

For forty years she guided her Institute with maternal wisdom, opening it to missionary commitment in various countries of Latin America.

4. The figure of *Blessed Marija Propetoga Isusa* reminds me of *all the women of Croatia*, those who are wives and mothers, those whose lives were for ever changed by the grief of losing a family member in the cruel war of the 1990s or by other bitter troubles which they have endured.

I think of you, dear women, because by your sensitivity, generosity and strength, "you enrich the world's understanding and help to make human relations more honest and authentic" (*Letter to Women*, 2). In a special way God has entrusted children to your care, and thus you are called to become *an important support in the life of every person*, especially within the context of the family.

The frenetic pace of modern life can lead to an obscuring or even a loss of what is truly human. Perhaps more than in other periods of history, our time is in need of "that 'genius' which belongs to

women, and which can ensure sensitivity for human beings in every circumstance" (*Mulieris Dignitatem*, 30).

Women of Croatia, conscious of your lofty vocation as "wives" and "mothers", *continue to see every person with the eyes of the heart*. Continue to reach out to them and to stand beside them with the sensitivity born of your maternal instinct. Your presence is indispensable in the family, in society, and in the ecclesial community.

5. In a particular way, I think of you, *consecrated* women, who, like *Marija Petković*, who have accepted the invitation to follow with undivided heart Jesus Christ, chaste, poor and obedient.

Be tireless in responding faithfully to the one Love of your life. For the consecrated life is not only a generous commitment on the part of a human being; it is first and foremost *a response to a gift from on high* which cries out to be accepted in complete openness. May the daily experience of God's freely-given love inspire you to give your lives unreservedly to the service of the Church and of your brothers and sisters commending all things, present and future, to his hands.

6. "Jesus looking upon him loved him" (Mk 10:21). God turns a loving gaze upon all those who desire to do his will and to walk in his ways (cf. Ps 1:1-3). All people, each according to his or her specific vocation, are called to *bring about within themselves and all about them the plan of God*. That is why the Spirit of the Lord fills God's faithful ones with "compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness and patience" (Col 3:12). Only thus can the earthly city be built in the image of the heavenly city.

May your Christian community grow and be strengthened in mutual forgiveness, charity and peace: this is the prayer that the Pope today raises to the Lord for all of you.

"And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Col 3:17).

To Christ be glory for ever and ever!

At the end of the Beatification Mass, the Holy Father added a few words to the faithful present.

I have always wanted to visit Dubrovnik. Today, this has happened. Thanks be to God! And I thank you for this wonderful welcome, for this Liturgy, for these natural beauties. I bless you all. I bless your families. I bless the young people and say to them: "Take courage!". I bless the children and the sick. May God bless the birth place of the new Blessed, the city of Dubrovnik and all of Croatia!
