



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PILGRIMS WHO HAD COME
FOR THE CANONIZATION OF**

MARIA DE MATTIAS

and

VIRGINIA CENTURIONE BRACELLI

Monday 19 May 2003

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. Yesterday morning we shared the joy of canonizing four shining witnesses of Christ: St Joseph Sebastian Pelczar, St Ursula Ledóchowska, St Maria De Mattias and St Virginia Centurione Bracelli. One Bishop and three Women Religious; all four founded institutes of consecrated life. Today we have the opportunity of meeting to continue to admire in each one a reflection of the face of Christ, and to thank God for them together.

With great joy I welcome and greet you who have come to honour St Maria De Mattias and St Virginia Centurione Bracelli. I greet the Pastors of the Dioceses in which these two new saints were born: Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone of Genoa and Bishop Salvatore Boccaccio of Frosinone-Veroli-Ferentino. I also greet the other Bishops, the Authorities, the Priests and the faithful who have come from various regions of Italy, and in particular the Women Religious who have inherited the charisms and spirituality of these new saints.

2. The canonization of Maria De Mattias is a favourable opportunity to gain a deeper knowledge of her lesson of life and to draw from her example useful guidelines for our own lives. I am thinking first and foremost of you, dear Sisters Adorers of the Blood of Christ, who are rejoicing to see your Foundress glorified, and of all of you, the faithful who are devoted to her and make up her spiritual family.

The message of Mother De Mattia is for all Christians, for she points to a priority and an essential commitment: to "*keep our eyes fixed on Jesus*" (Heb 12: 2) in every event of life, never forgetting

that he redeemed us at the price of his blood: "He gave everything", she would repeat, "he gave it for everyone".

My hope is that many will follow the example of the new saint. Throughout her life she strove to spread the Christian commandment of love, healing wounds and smoothing out the difficult situations and contradictions in the society of her time. It is easy to see the timeliness of such a message.

3. With warm affection I now greet you, dear Sisters of Our Lady of Refuge on Mount Calvary and Daughters of Our Lady on Mount Calvary, and all of you who are rejoicing in the canonization of St *Virginia Centurione Bracelli*.

The precious heritage that this saint has left to the Church, and particularly to her spiritual daughters, consists in charity, not meant as mere material aid but as a commitment of authentic solidarity, aiming at the full human and spiritual liberation and advancement of those in need. St Virginia knew how to transform charitable activity into contemplation of the face of God in human beings, uniting docility to the inner promptings of the Holy Spirit with prudent and enlightened daring, constantly embarking on new beneficial projects.

Genuine charity flows from constant communion with God and is nourished in prayer. May the example of this new saint be for all an encouragement and an incentive to live, today too, the Gospel precept of love, as full adherence to the divine will and as concrete service to your neighbours, especially those in more difficult situations.

4. Dear brothers and sisters, may the heavenly Queen of the Saints, the Virgin Mary, guide you on the path taken by these two saints. I renew to you the expression of my gratitude for your presence and wholeheartedly bless you all.