



The Holy See

BENEDICT XVI

GENERAL AUDIENCE

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Wednesday, 20 August 2008

Reflection on several Saints

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Every day the Church offers for our consideration one or more Saints and Blesseds to invoke and imitate. This week, for example, we are commemorating several who are very dear to popular devotion. Yesterday it was St John Eudes, who, beset by Jansenist rigorism - we are in the 17th century - fostered a tender devotion whose inexhaustible sources he pointed out in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Today we are commemorating Bernard of Clairvaux who was called "*Doctor mellifluus*" by Pope Pius VIII because he excelled "in distilling from biblical texts their hidden meaning". Desirous of living immersed in the "luminous valley" of contemplation, events lead this mystic to travel throughout Europe serving the Church's needs of the time and defending the Christian faith. He was also described as a "Marian Doctor". This was not because he wrote so much on Our Lady but because he knew how to grasp her essential role in the Church, presenting her as the perfect model of monastic life and of every other form of Christian life.

Tomorrow we shall be remembering St Pius X, who lived in a turbulent period of history. John Paul II said of him on visiting the town of his birth in 1985: "He fought and suffered for the Church's freedom, and for this freedom he proved to be ready to sacrifice privileges and honours, to face misunderstanding and ridicule, since he considered this freedom as the ultimate guarantee for the integrity and coherence of the faith" (*Address to diocesan clergy in the Parish Church of Sts Matthew and Sylvester, Riese, Treviso, Saturday, 15 June 1985, n. 2; L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 29 July 1985, p. 8).

Next Friday will be dedicated to the Queenship of Mary, a Memorial established by the Servant of God [Pius XII](#) in 1954. The liturgical renewal desired by the Second Vatican Council placed it as a complement to the Solemnity of the Assumption, so that the two privileges might form a single mystery. Lastly, on Saturday, we shall invoke St Rose of Lima, the first canonized Saint of the Latin American continent, of which she is the principal Patroness. St Rose loved to repeat: "If human beings knew what it is to live in grace, no suffering would frighten them and they would gladly suffer any hardship, for grace is the fruit of patience". She died at the age of 31 in 1617, after a short life full of deprivations and suffering, on the feast of the Apostle St Bartholomew, to whom she was deeply devoted because he had suffered a particularly painful martyrdom.

Dear brothers and sisters, so it is that day after day the Church offers us the possibility of walking in the company of Saints. Hans Urs von Balthasar wrote that the Saints constitute the most important message of the Gospel, its actualization in daily life, and therefore represent for us a real means of access to Jesus. The French writer Jean Guitton described them "as the colours of the spectrum in relation to light", because with their own tones and accentuations each one of them reflects the light of God's holiness. How important and useful, therefore, is the commitment to cultivate knowledge of and devotion to the Saints, alongside daily meditation on the Word of God and filial love for Our Lady!

The holiday period is without a doubt a practical time for taking up the biography and writings of a particular Saint but every day of the year affords us an opportunity to familiarize ourselves with our heavenly Patrons. Their human and spiritual experience shows that holiness is not a luxury, it is not a privilege for the few, an impossible goal for an ordinary person; it is actually the common destiny of all men called to be children of God, the universal vocation of all the baptized. Holiness is offered to all; naturally, not all the Saints are equal: in fact, as I said, they are the spectrum of divine light. Moreover, a Saint who possesses extraordinary charisms is not necessarily a great Saint. Indeed, there are a great many whose names are known only to God, because on earth they led an apparently perfectly normal life. And precisely these "normal" saints are those habitually desired by God. Their example testifies that only when we are in touch with the Lord can we be filled with his peace and his joy and be able to spread serenity, hope and optimism everywhere. Bernanos, a great French writer who was always fascinated by the idea of the Saints, - he mentions many in his novels - considering the variety of their charisms, notes that "every Saint's life is like a new blossom in spring". May this also happen for us! Let us therefore permit ourselves to be attracted by the supernatural fascination of holiness! May Mary, Queen of all Saints, Mother and Refuge of sinners, obtain this grace for us!

To special groups

I cordially greet all the English-speaking pilgrims present at today's audience. I particularly welcome the altar servers from Malta - along with their families - who have been assisting at St

Peter's Basilica. I also greet a group of university students from Ireland. This week, the liturgical calendar celebrates several remarkable examples of holiness: St John Eudes, St Bernard of Clairvaux, St Pius X and St Rose of Lima. The summer months provide an opportunity for us to read about the lives of these and all the saints, who show us that holiness is not the privilege of a few, but the vocation of all the baptized. Through their intercession and inspiration, may you learn to love and serve the Lord more ardently in your daily lives. God bless you all!

Lastly, I address a greeting to the *young people*, the *sick* and the *newlyweds*. I ask everyone to dedicate ever more time to Christian formation in order to be faithful disciples of Christ, the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Good morning to you all. This week we celebrate the feasts of many Saints. Today St Bernard of Clairvaux, a great Doctor of the Church and a great teacher, especially of the veneration of Our Lady. He is a man who created peace and therefore shows us how to live the Gospel. Then tomorrow we celebrate St Pius X, who guided the Church in a difficult period, renewed the liturgy and thus renewed the Church from within.

And thus all the Saints show us how to live the Gospel. They are a free interpretation of the Gospel and guide us on our way. I wish you all once again a good holiday and a good week. Thank you for your presence. My Blessing to you all. My best wishes and goodbye until next time!

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