



The Holy See

CONCLUSION OF THE 11th ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS AND YEAR OF THE EUCHARIST

CANONIZATION OF THE BLESSEDS:

JÓZEF BILCZEWSKI
GAETANO CATANOSO
ZYGMUNT GORAZDOWSKI
ALBERTO HURTADO CRUCHAGA
FELIX OF NICOSIA

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

Saint Peter's Square
World Mission Sunday, 23 October 2005

Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On this 30th Sunday of Ordinary Time, our Eucharistic celebration is enriched for various reasons that impel us to give thanks to God.

The Year of the Eucharist and the Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, dedicated precisely to the mystery of the Eucharist in the life and mission of the Church, have concurrently come to an end. And in a short while, five Blesseds will be canonized: Archbishop Jozef Bilczewski; Gaetano Catanoso, Zygmunt Gorazdowski and Alberto Hurtado Cruchaga, priests; and Felix of Nicosia, a Religious Capuchin Friar.

Furthermore, today is "World Mission Sunday", a yearly appointment that reawakens missionary ardour in the Ecclesial Community.

With joy I greet all who are present; first, the Synod Fathers, and then, the pilgrims who have come from various nations, together with their Pastors, to celebrate the new Saints.

Today's liturgy invites us to contemplate the Eucharist as the source of holiness and spiritual nourishment for our mission in the world: this supreme "gift and mystery" manifests and communicates to us the fullness of God's love.

The Word of the Lord, just proclaimed in the Gospel, has reminded us that all of divine law is summed up in love. The dual commandment to love God and neighbour contains the two aspects of a single dynamism of the heart and of life. Jesus thus brings to completion the ancient revelation, not by adding an unheard-of commandment, but by realizing in himself and in his work of salvation the living synthesis of the two great commands of the Old Covenant: "You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart..." and "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (cf. Dt 6: 5; Lv 19: 18).

In the Eucharist we contemplate the Sacrament of this living synthesis of the law: Christ offers to us, in himself, the complete fulfilment of love for God and love for our brothers and sisters. He communicates his love to us when we are nourished by his Body and Blood.

In this way, St Paul's words to the Thessalonians in today's Second Reading are brought to completion in us: "You turned to God from idols, to serve him who is the living and true God" (I Thes 1: 9). This conversion is the beginning of the walk of holiness that the Christian is called to achieve in his own life.

The saint is the person who is so fascinated by the beauty of God and by his perfect truth as to be progressively transformed by it. Because of this beauty and truth, he is ready to renounce everything, even himself. Love of God is enough for him, experienced in humble and disinterested service to one's neighbour, especially towards those who cannot give back in return.

In this perspective, how providential it is today that the Church points out to all her members five new saints who, nourished by Christ, the Living Bread, were converted to love; this marked their entire life!

In different situations and with different charisms, they loved the Lord with all their heart and their neighbour as themselves, so as to become "a model for all believers" (I Thes 1: 6-7).

St Jozef Bilczewski was a man of prayer. The Holy Mass, the Liturgy of the Hours, meditation, the Rosary and other pious practices formed part of his daily life. A particularly long time was dedicated to Eucharistic adoration.

St Zygmunt Gorazdowski also became famous for his devotion founded on the celebration and

adoration of the Eucharist. Living Christ's offering urged him toward the sick, the poor and the needy.

The deep knowledge of theology, faith and Eucharistic devotion of Jozef Bilczewski made him an example for priests and a witness for all the faithful.

In founding the Association of Priests, the Congregation of the Sisters of St Joseph and many other charitable institutions, Zygmunt Gorazdowski always allowed himself to be guided by the spirit of communion, fully revealed in the Eucharist.

"You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart.... You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Mt 22: 37, 39). This was the programme of life of St Alberto Hurtado, who wished to identify himself with the Lord and to love the poor with this same love. The formation received in the Society of Jesus, strengthened by prayer and adoration of the Eucharist, allowed him to be won over by Christ, being a true contemplative in action. In love and in the total gift of self to God's will, he found strength for the apostolate.

He founded *El Hogar de Cristo* for the most needy and the homeless, offering them a family atmosphere full of human warmth. In his priestly ministry he was distinguished for his simplicity and availability towards others, being a living image of the Teacher, "meek and humble of heart". In his last days, amid the strong pains caused by illness, he still had the strength to repeat: "I am content, Lord", thus expressing the joy with which he always lived.

St Gaetano Catanoso was a lover and apostle of the Holy Face of Jesus. "The Holy Face", he affirmed, "is my life. He is my strength". With joyful intuition he joined this devotion to Eucharistic piety.

He would say: "If we wish to adore the real Face of Jesus..., we can find it in the divine Eucharist, where with the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, the Face of Our Lord is hidden under the white veil of the Host".

Daily Mass and frequent adoration of the Sacrament of the Altar were the soul of his priesthood: with ardent and untiring pastoral charity he dedicated himself to preaching, catechesis, the ministry of confession, and to the poor, the sick and the care of priestly vocations. To the Congregation of the Daughters of St Veronica, Missionaries of the Holy Face, which he founded, he transmitted the spirit of charity, humility and sacrifice which enlivened his entire life.

St Felix of Nicosia loved to repeat in all situations, joyful or sad: "So be it, for the love of God". In this way we can well understand how intense and concrete his experience was of the love of God, revealed to humankind in Christ.

This humble Capuchin Friar, illustrious son of the land of Sicily, austere and penitent, faithful to the most genuine expressions of the Franciscan tradition, was gradually shaped and transformed by God's love, lived and carried out in love of neighbour.

Bro. Felix helps us to discover the value of the little things that make our lives more precious, and teaches us to understand the meaning of family and of service to our brothers and sisters, showing us that true and lasting joy, for which every human heart yearns, is the fruit of love.

Dear and venerable Synod Fathers, for three weeks we have lived together an atmosphere of renewed Eucharistic fervour. Now I would like, with you and in the name of the entire Episcopacy, to extend a fraternal greeting to the Bishops of the Church in China.

With deep sorrow we felt the absence of their representatives. Nevertheless, I want to assure all of the Chinese Bishops that, in prayer, we are close to them and to their priests and faithful. The painful journey of the communities entrusted to their pastoral care is present in our heart: it does not remain fruitless, because it is a participation in the Paschal Mystery, to the glory of the Father.

The work of the Synod enabled us to deepen the important aspects of this mystery, given to the Church from the beginning. Contemplation of the Eucharist must urge all the members of the Church, priests in the first place, ministers of the Eucharist, to revive their commitment of faithfulness. The celibacy that priests have received as a precious gift and the sign of undivided love towards God and neighbour is founded upon the mystery of the Eucharist, celebrated and adored.

For lay persons too, Eucharistic spirituality must be the interior motor of every activity, and no dichotomy is acceptable between faith and life in their mission of spreading the spirit of Christianity in the world.

With the closing of the Year of the Eucharist, how can we not give thanks to God for the many gifts granted to the Church during this time? And how can we not take up once again the invitation of our beloved Pope John Paul II to "start afresh from Christ"?

Like the disciples of Emmaus, whose hearts were kindled by the words of the Risen One and enlightened by his living presence recognized in the breaking of the bread, who hurriedly returned to Jerusalem and became messengers of Christ's Resurrection, we too must take up the path again, enlivened by the fervent desire to witness to the mystery of this love that gives hope to the world.

It is in this Eucharistic perspective that today's World Mission Sunday is well situated, to which the venerated Servant of God John Paul II gave as the theme for reflection: *Mission: bread broken for the life of the world.*

When the Ecclesial Community celebrates the Eucharist, especially on Sunday, the Day of the Lord, it better understands that Christ's sacrifice is "for all" (Mt 26: 28), and that the Eucharist urges Christians to be "bread broken" for others, to commit themselves to a more just and fraternal world.

Even today, faced with the crowds, Christ continues to exhort his disciples: "Give them something to eat yourselves" (Mt 14: 16), and in his Name, missionaries proclaim and witness to the Gospel, sometimes with the sacrifice of their lives.

Dear friends, we must all start afresh from the Eucharist. Mary, Woman of the Eucharist, will help us to "fall in love" with it, she will help us to "remain" in Christ's love, to be deeply renewed by him.

Docile to the Spirit's action and attentive to the needs of others, the Church will be evermore a beacon of light, of true joy and hope, fully achieving its mission as "sign and instrument... of unity among all men" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 1).

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