



The Holy See

EUCCHARISTIC CONCELEBRATION
FOR THE CANONIZATION OF FOUR BLESSEDS:

GEORGE PRECA,
SIMON OF LIPNICA,
CHARLES OF ST. ANDREW HOUBEN,
MARIE EUGENIE OF JESUS MILLERET

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

St Peter's Square
Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity
Sunday, 3 June 2007

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today, we are celebrating the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity. After the Easter Season, after reliving the event of Pentecost which renews the Baptism of the Church in the Holy Spirit, we turn our gaze, so to speak, towards "the open Heavens", to enter with the eyes of faith into the depths of the mystery of God, one in substance and three in Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

While we allow this supreme mystery to envelop us, let us admire God's glory which is reflected in the lives of the saints. Let us contemplate it above all in those whom I have just presented for the veneration of the universal Church: George Preca, Simon of Lipnica, Charles of St Andrew Houben and Marie Eugenie of Jesus Milleret.

I address my cordial greeting to all the pilgrims gathered here to pay homage to these exemplary Gospel witnesses.

In particular, I greet the Cardinals, the Presidents of the Philippines, of Ireland, of Malta and of

Poland, my venerable Brothers in the Episcopate, the Government Delegations and other Civil Authorities who are taking part in this celebration.

In the First Reading from the *Book of Proverbs*, *Wisdom* comes on the scene and stands beside God as his assistant, his "architect" (cf. 8: 30). The "panoramic view" of the cosmos, seen through the eyes of *Wisdom*, is stupendous.

Wisdom herself admits: "[I was] playing on the surface of his earth; and I found delight in the sons of men" (8: 31).

Wisdom likes to dwell in the midst of human beings, because in them she recognizes the image and likeness of the Creator. This preferential relationship of *Wisdom* with human beings calls to mind a famous passage from another of the wisdom books, the *Book of Wisdom*: *We read: Wisdom "is a breath of the power of God.... Though she is but one, she can do all things, and while remaining in herself, she renews all things; in every generation she passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God, and prophets"* (Wis 7: 25-27).

The last evocative expression is an invitation to consider the multiform and inexhaustible *manifestation of holiness* in the People of God down the centuries. God's *Wisdom* is manifest in the cosmos in the variety and beauty of its elements, but *his masterpieces*, where his beauty and his greatness truly appear much more, *are the saints*.

In the passage of the Apostle Paul's *Letter to the Romans* we find a similar image: that of *God's love "poured out into [the] hearts" of saints*, that is, of the baptized, "through the Holy Spirit" who has been given to them (cf. Rom 5: 5).

The gift of the Spirit, "Person-Love" and "Person-Gift", as the Servant of God John Paul II described him, passes through Christ (cf. Encyclical *Dominum et Vivificantem*, n. 10). The Spirit of God reaches us through Christ as the beginning of new and "holy" life. The Spirit instils God's love in believers' hearts in the concrete form it had in the man Jesus of Nazareth.

Thus, what St Paul said in his *Letter to the Colossians* came to pass: "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (1: 27). "Affliction" is not in contrast to this hope; rather, it helps bring it about through "endurance" and "proven character" (cf. Rom 5: 3-4): it is the way of Jesus, the way of the Cross. In the same perspective, from the *Wisdom of God* incarnate in Christ and communicated by the Holy Spirit, the Gospel has suggested to us that God the Father *continues to manifest his plan of love through the saints*.

What we have already observed about *Wisdom* occurs here too: the Spirit of truth reveals God's design in the multiplicity of cosmic elements - we are grateful for this visibility of God's beauty and goodness in the elements of the cosmos -, and he does so above all through human people and

especially through the saints where his light, his truth, his love appear with great power.

Indeed, "the image of the invisible God" (Col 1: 15) is, properly speaking, Jesus Christ alone, "the Holy and Righteous One" (Acts 3: 14).

He is Wisdom incarnate, the Creator *Logos*, who finds his joy in dwelling among the sons of man and pitches his tent in their midst (cf. Jn 1: 14).

God was pleased to place in him "all fullness" (cf. Col 1: 19); that is, as he himself says in today's Gospel passage, "all that the Father has is mine" (Jn 16: 15). Every individual saint shares in the riches of Christ taken by the Father and communicated in due time.

Jesus' holiness is always the same; it is always he, the "Holy One", whom the Spirit models in "holy souls", thereby forming friends of Jesus and witnesses of his holiness. And Jesus also wants to make us his friends.

Let us open our hearts precisely on this day so that friendship with Jesus also grows in our lives, thus enabling us to witness to his holiness, goodness and truth.

George Preca, born in La Valletta on the Island of Malta, was a friend of Jesus and a witness to the holiness that derives from him. He was a priest totally dedicated to evangelization: by his preaching, his writings, his spiritual direction and the administration of the sacraments and, first and foremost, by the example of his life.

The Johannine expression, "*Verbum caro factum est*" always directed his soul and his work and thus the Lord could make use of him to give life to a praiseworthy institution, the "Society of Christian Doctrine", whose purpose is to guarantee parishes the qualified service of properly trained and generous catechists.

As a profoundly priestly and mystical soul, he poured himself out in effusions of love for God, Jesus, the Virgin Mary and the saints. He liked to repeat: "Lord God, how obliged to you I am! Thank you, Lord God, and forgive me, Lord God!". This is a prayer that we can also repeat and make our own.

May St George Preca help the Church, in Malta and throughout the world, to be always a faithful echo of the voice of Christ, the Incarnate Word.

The new Saint, Simon of Lipnica, a great son of Poland, a witness of Christ and a follower of the spirituality of St Francis of Assisi, lived in a distant age but precisely today is held up to the Church as a timely model of a Christian who - enlivened by the spirit of the Gospel - was ready to dedicate his life to his brethren.

Thus, filled with the mercy he drew from the Eucharist, he did not hesitate to help the sick who were struck by the plague, and he himself contracted this disease which led to his death.

Today in particular, let us entrust to his protection those who are suffering from poverty, illness, loneliness and social injustice. Let us ask through his intercession for the grace of persevering and active love, for Christ and for our brothers and sisters.

"The love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given us". Truly, in the case of the Passionist priest, *Charles of Saint Andrew Houben*, we see how that love overflowed in a life totally dedicated to the care of souls.

During his many years of priestly ministry in England and Ireland, the people flocked to him to seek out his wise counsel, his compassionate care and his healing touch.

In the sick and the suffering he recognized the face of the Crucified Christ, to whom he had a lifelong devotion. He drank deeply from the rivers of living water that poured forth from the side of the Pierced One, and in the power of the Spirit he bore witness before the world to the Father's love.

At the funeral of this much-loved priest, affectionately known as Fr Charles of Mount Argus, his superior was moved to observe: "The people have already declared him a saint".

Marie Eugenie Milleret reminds us first of all of the importance of the Eucharist in the Christian life and in spiritual growth. In fact, as she herself emphasizes, her First Holy Communion was an important moment, even if she was unaware of it at the time.

Christ, present in the depths of her heart, was working within her, giving her time to follow her own pace and to pursue her inner quest, which was to lead her to the point of giving herself totally to the Lord in the Religious life in response to the needs of her time.

In particular, she realized how important it was to pass on to the young generations, especially young girls, an intellectual, moral and spiritual training that would make them adults capable of taking charge of their family life and of making their contribution to the Church and society. Throughout her life she drew the strength for her mission from her life of prayer, ceaselessly combining contemplation and action.

May the example of St Marie Eugenie invite men and women today to pass on to young people values that will help them to become strong adults and joyful witnesses of the Risen One. May young people never be afraid to welcome these moral and spiritual values, living them patiently and faithfully. In this way, they will build their personality and prepare for their future.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us thank God for the wonders he has worked in the saints, in whom his glory shines. Let us be attracted by their example and allow ourselves to be guided by their teaching, so that the whole of our life may become, like theirs, a hymn of praise to the glory of the Most Holy Trinity.

May Mary, Queen of the Saints, and the intercession of these four new "older Brothers and Sister" whom we joyfully venerate today, obtain this for us. Amen.

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