



The Holy See

EUCCHARISTIC CELEBRATION FOR THE BEATIFICATION
OF THREE NEW BLESSEDS:

VILMOS APOR,
JOHN BAPTIST SCALABRINI AND
MARÍA VINCENTA OF ST DOROTHY CHÁVEZ OROZCO

HOMILY OF POPE JOHN PAUL II

Sunday, 9 November 1997

1. *"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (Jn 2:19).*

Christ's words, proclaimed a few moments ago in the Gospel, bring us to the very heart of the paschal mystery. Having entered the temple in Jerusalem, Christ shows his indignation that his Father's house has been turned into a huge market. In response to this reaction the Jews protest: "What sign have you to show us for doing this?" (Jn 2:18). Jesus answers them by indicating one very great sign, a definitive sign: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up".

He is not speaking, of course, of the temple in Jerusalem, but of his own body. After being given up to death, on the third day he will reveal the power of the Resurrection. The Evangelist adds: "When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken" (Jn 2:22).

2. On this Sunday the Church in Rome and all Christian people celebrate the feast of the dedication of the Lateran Basilica, considered by very ancient tradition to be the mother of all churches. The liturgy speaks to us of the temple: the temple which is first of all Christ's body, but which through Christ is also every individual. The Apostle Paul asks: "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" (1 Cor 3:16). This temple is built on the foundation laid by God himself. "No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which

is Christ Jesus" (1 Cor 3:11). He is the cornerstone of the divine building.

On Christ, the Church's firm foundation, the three servants of God whom I have the joy today of raising to the glory of the altars built the temple of their lives: *Vilmos Apor*, Bishop and martyr, *John Baptist Scalabrini*, Bishop and founder of the Missionaries and Missionary Sisters of St Charles, and *María Vicenta of St Dorothy Chávez Orozco*, foundress of the Institute of the Servants of the Holy Trinity and the Poor.

3. The intimate sharing in the mystery of Christ, the new and perfect Temple in whom full communion between God and man is realized (cf. Jn 2:21), shines forth in the pastoral service of Bl. *Vilmos Apor*, whose life was crowned with martyrdom. He was the "parish priest of the poor", a ministry which he continued as a Bishop during the dark years of the Second World War, working as a generous benefactor of the needy and the defender of the persecuted. He was not afraid to raise his voice to censure, on the basis of Gospel principles, the injustices and abuses of power towards minorities, especially towards the Jewish community.

In the image of the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep (cf. Jn 10:11), the new blessed *lived his fidelity to the paschal mystery*, ultimately making the supreme sacrifice of his own life. His murder occurred precisely on Good Friday: he was shot to death while defending his flock. Through his martyrdom he thus experienced *his own Passover*, passing from the heroic witness of love for Christ and of solidarity with his brothers and sisters to the crown of glory promised to faithful servants. The heroic witness of Bishop Vilmos Apor honours the history of the noble Hungarian nation and is held up today for the admiration of the whole Church. May it encourage believers to follow Christ in their lives without hesitation. This is the holiness to which all the baptized are called!

4. "*God's temple is holy, and that temple you are*" (1 Cor 3:17). The universal call to holiness was constantly felt and personally lived by *John Baptist Scalabrini*. He loved to say over and over: "Would that I could sanctify myself and all the souls entrusted to me!". Striving for holiness and proposing it to everyone he met was always his first concern.

Deeply in love with God and extraordinarily devoted to the Eucharist, he knew how *to translate the contemplation of God and his mystery into intense apostolic and missionary activity*, making himself all things to all men in order to proclaim the Gospel. This ardent passion of his for the kingdom of God made him zealous in catechesis, pastoral activities and charitable work, especially for those most in need. Pope Pius IX called him the "*Apostle of the Catechism*" because of his efforts to promote the systematic teaching of the Church's doctrine to children and adults in every parish. Out of his love for the poor, particularly for emigrants, he became the *apostle of his many compatriots compelled to leave their country*, often under difficult conditions and in concrete danger of losing their faith: for them he was a father and sure guide. We can say that Bl. John Baptist Scalabrini intensely lived the paschal mystery, not through martyrdom, but *by serving the*

poor and crucified Christ in the many needy and suffering people whom he loved with the heart of a true Shepherd in solidarity with his flock.

5. A precious temple of the Holy Trinity was the strong and humble soul of the new Mexican blessed, *María Vicenta of St Dorothy Chávez Orozco*. Impelled by the love of Christ always living and present in his Church, she dedicated herself to his service in the person of the "pobrecitos enfermos", as she called them with maternal affection. Countless difficulties and setbacks forged her energetic character, since God wanted her to be simple, gentle and obedient in order to make her the cornerstone of the Institute of the Servants of the Holy Trinity and the Poor, established by the new blessed in the city of Guadalajara for the care of the sick and the elderly.

A wise and prudent virgin, she built her work on the foundation of the suffering Christ, caring with the balm of charity and the medicine of comfort for the wounded bodies and afflicted souls of Christ's favourite ones: the destitute, the poor and the needy.

Her shining example, interwoven with prayer, service to neighbour and apostolic work, is continued today in the witness of her daughters and the many good-hearted people who bravely work to bring the Good News of the Gospel to hospitals and clinics.

6. The first reading, taken from the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, speaks of the symbol of water. For us, water is associated with the sacrament of Baptism and signifies the rebirth to new life in Christ. Today, as we proclaim Vilmos Apor, John Baptist Scalabrini and *María Vicenta of St Dorothy Chávez Orozco* blessed, we wish to thank God for the grace of their Baptism and for all that he accomplished in their lives: "... unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (Jn 3:5).

See, these blessed, reborn by the Holy Spirit, have entered the kingdom of God, and today the Church proclaims it and solemnly confirms it. Built on the foundation which is Christ, the Christian community rejoices over the exaltation of these her children and raises a song of thanksgiving to heaven for the good fruits produced by their total fidelity to God's will.

Supported by their witness and their intercession, together with the Virgin Mary, Queen of Apostles and Martyrs, she looks to the future with confidence and enthusiastically prepares to cross the threshold of the new millennium, proclaiming that Christ is the one Redeemer of humanity: yesterday, today and forever. Amen!

