



The Holy See

CANONIZATION OF 5 BLESSEDS

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

Feast of the Blessed Trinity

10 June 2001

1. *"Blessed be God the Father and his only-begotten Son and the Holy Spirit: for great is his love for us" (Entrance Antiphon).*

The entire liturgy is focused on the Trinitarian mystery, source of life for every believer, but especially today, on the feast of the Blessed Trinity.

"Glory to the Father, glory to the Son, glory to the Holy Spirit": every time we proclaim these words, the synthesis of our faith, we adore the only true God in three Persons. With amazement we contemplate the mystery that completely surrounds us. Mystery of love, mystery of ineffable holiness.

"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of sabaoth" we will sing in a little while, entering into the heart of the Eucharistic prayer. The Father created everything with his wisdom and loving providence; the Son redeemed us with his death and resurrection; the Holy Spirit sanctifies with the fullness of his gifts of grace and mercy.

We can correctly define today's solemnity as the *feast of holiness*. It is a perfect day for the ceremony of the canonization of the five blessed: Luigi Scrosoppi, Agostino Roscelli, Bernardo da Corleone, Teresa Eustochio Verzeri, Rafqua Pietra Choboq Ar-Rayès.

2. *"Justified ... by faith, we are in peace with God by means of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Rom 5,1).

For the apostle Paul, as we have heard in the *second reading*, holiness is a gift which the Father

communicates to us through Jesus Christ. Faith in him is the principle of sanctification. By faith man enters the order of grace; by faith he hopes to take part in the glory of God. This hope is not a vain illusion, but the sure fruit of an ascetic path through many trials, that are faced with patience and proven virtue.

This was the experience of *St Luigi Scrosoppi*, during a life entirely spent for the love of Christ and his neighbour, especially, the weaker and the defenceless.

"Charity, charity": this exclamation burst from his heart at the moment of leaving the world for heaven. He exercised charity in an exemplary way, above all, in the service of abandoned orphan girls, involving a group of teachers, with whom he was able to start the Congregation of the "Sisters of Divine Providence".

Charity was the secret of his long and untiring apostolate, nourished by a constant contact with Christ, contemplated and imitated in the humility and poverty of his birth at Bethlehem, in the simplicity of his life of hard work at Nazareth, in the complete immolation on Calvary, and in the astonishing silence of the Eucharist. Consequently, the Church holds him up to priests and to the faithful as a model of a deep and effective union of communion with God and the service of his neighbour. In other words, he is a model of a life lived in intense communion with the Holy Trinity.

3. "*Great is his love for us*". The love of God for men is revealed with special emphasis in the life of *St Agostino Roscelli*, whom we contemplate today in the splendour of holiness. His existence, entirely permeated by deep faith, can be considered a gift offered for the glory of God and the good of souls. Faith made him ever obedient to the Church and her teachings, in docile adherence to the Pope and to his own bishop. From faith he knew how to draw comfort in bleak times, in bitter difficulties and in painful events. Faith was the solid rock to which he held on tightly in order to avoid yielding to discouragement.

He felt the duty to communicate the same faith to others, above all, to those whom he approached in the ministry of confession. He became a master of the spiritual life, especially for the congregation of sisters founded by him. The sisters always found him serene even in the the most trying situations. St Agostino Roscelli exhorts us always to trust in God, immersing ourselves in the mystery of his love.

4. "*Glory to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit*".

The evangelical witness of *St Bernard of Corleone*, elevated to the honour of the altars today, observed within the mystery of the Trinity gains a particular effectiveness. All wondered and asked how a simple lay brother could discourse so well about the mystery of the Trinity. In fact, his life was entirely directed toward God, by a constant ascetical exertion joined with prayer and penance. Those who knew him agreed in testifying that "he was always at prayer", "never ceased to pray", "prayed constantly" (*Summ.*, 35). From such an uninterrupted conversation with God, which found

in the Eucharist its ongoing impulse, he drew the lifeblood for his courageous apostolate, responding to the social challenges of the time, with all their tensions and disquiet.

Even today the world needs saints like Brother Bernard immersed in God and for that very reason able to hand on God's truth and love. The humble example of the Capuchin saint offers an encouragement never to tire of prayer, since prayer and listening to God are the soul of authentic holiness.

St Teresa Eustochio Verzeri: faith in providence and abandonment to direction of Spirit

5. "*The Spirit of truth will lead you into all truth*" (*Communion antiphon*). Teresa Eustochio Verzeri, whom today we contemplate in the glory of God, in her brief but intense life knew how to be led with docility by the Holy Spirit. God revealed himself to her as a mysterious presence before whom we must bow with profound humility. Her joy was to be considered under constant divine protection, feeling herself in the hands of the heavenly Father, whom she learned to trust in forever.

Abandoning herself to the action of the Spirit, Teresa lived the particular mystical experience of the "absence of God". Only an unshakable faith kept her from losing her confidence in the provident and merciful Father, who put her to the test: "It is right, she wrote, that the spouse after having followed the bridegroom in all the pain that marked his life, should share in the most terrible" (*Book of Duties*, III, 130).

This was the teaching that St Teresa left to her Institute of the "Daughters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus" founded by her. This is the teaching that she left us all. In the midst of contradictions and inner and exterior sufferings one must keep alive faith in God Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

6. By canonizing Blessed *Rafqa Choboq Ar-Rayès*, the Church sheds a very particular light on the mystery of love given and received for the glory of God and the salvation of the world.

This nun of the Lebanese Maronite Order desired to love and to give her life for her people. In the sufferings which never left her for 29 years of her life, St Rafqa always showed a passionate and generous love for the salvation of her brothers, drawing from her union with Christ, who died on the cross, the force to accept voluntarily and to love suffering, the authentic way of holiness.

May St Rafqa watch over those who know suffering, particularly over the peoples of the Middle East who must face a destructive and sterile spiral of violence. Through her intercession, let us ask the Lord to open hearts to the patient quest for new ways to peace and so hasten the advent of reconciliation and harmony.

7. "*O Lord our God, how great is your name through all the earth*" (Ps 8,2.10). Contemplating these outstanding examples of holiness, the psalmist's exclamation comes spontaneously to mind.

The Lord does not stop giving to the Church and to the world wonderful examples of men and

women who are reflections of the glory of the Trinity. Their witness incites us to raise our eyes to heaven and to seek without pause the kingdom of God and his justice.

May Mary the Queen of all saints, who first heard the call of the Most High, uphold us in our service of God and neighbor. And may you go with us saints Luigi Scrosoppi, Agostino Roscelli, Bernardo da Corleone, Teresa Eustocchio Verzeri, Rafqa Pietra Choboq Ar-Rayès, so that our lives like yours may give praise to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen