



The Holy See

EUCCHARISTIC CELEBRATION IN THE LATIN RITE AND BEATIFICATIONS

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER

Tuesday 26 June 2001

Lviv (Racecourse)

1. *"Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5).*

The Gospel passage just proclaimed tells of Mary's first intervention in the public life of Jesus and brings to light *her cooperation in the mission of her Son*. During a wedding feast at Cana attended by Mary and Jesus and his disciples, the wine runs out. Showing faith in her Son and coming to the help of the embarrassed bride and groom, Mary encourages the Saviour to respond to their need and so he performs his first miracle.

"Woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come" (Jn 2:4), says Jesus in reply. But Mary is not put off by these words, and turning to the servants she says: *"Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5)*. She shows fresh confidence in her Son and sees her plea rewarded by the miracle.

The Gospel episode invites us today to contemplate Mary as "Help of Christians" in our every need. It would be instructive to retrace the history of a people that has been faithful in order to recognize *the signs of the maternal protection of Mary*, who is always concerned for the well-being of her children. We would be able to gather so many testimonies of Mary's interventions on behalf of individuals and communities. But the most beautiful testimonies we find *in the lives of your saints*.

Let our gaze rest upon two sons of this land whose devotion to the Blessed Virgin inspired them to follow a path of perfection, as today we are solemnly recognizing. They are Archbishop Józef Bilczewski and Father Zygmunt Gorzdzowski, both of whom had nurtured a deep love for the Mother of the Lord. Their lives and their pastoral service were an unceasing response to her summons: *"Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5)*. Heroically obedient to the Lord's teaching, they travelled the narrow path of holiness. Both lived here in Lviv, at almost the same time. Today their names are inscribed together in the book of the Blessed.

2. In remembering them, I am happy to greet all of you here present. I greet especially Cardinal Marian Jaworski and Cardinal Lubomyr Husar, the Bishops of the Ukrainian Episcopal Conference and those of the Synod of Bishops of the Greek Catholic Ukrainian Church. I greet as well the priests, the men and women religious, the seminarians and all of you who are actively engaged in different pastoral activities. I send an affectionate greeting to the young people, the families, the sick and the entire community gathered here in spirit to welcome the spiritual message of the newly Beatified.

I am pleased that the Archdiocese of Lviv now has a second Archbishop beatified. The year 1790 saw the beatification of Jakub Strzemi", who was the leader of this Church from 1391-1409, and now another Pastor of the Archdiocese, *Józef Bilczewski*, is raised to the honours of the altar. Does this not testify to the continuity of the faith of this people and to the blessing of God, who sends them Pastors worthy of their calling? How can we fail to give thanks to God for this gift to the Church in Lviv?

Archbishop *Józef Bilczewski* invites us to be generous in living *the love of God and neighbour*. This was his supreme rule of life. From the early years of his priesthood he cultivated a burning passion for revealed Truth, and this led him to make theological research an original way of translating the command to love God into practical behaviour. In his priestly life, as in the various important positions he held at the Jan Casimir University in Lviv and at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, he always gave example of his great love of neighbour as well as his love of God. He was especially concerned for the poor, and developed warm and respectful relations with his colleagues and students, who invariably reciprocated with esteem and affection.

His appointment as Archbishop gave him the chance to widen and expand the range of his charity. In the especially difficult period of the First World War, Blessed *Józef Bilczewski* was like *a living icon of the Good Shepherd*, ready to encourage and support his people with inspired words full of kindness. He came to the aid of the needy, for whom he nurtured such a love that even beyond death he wanted to be with them, choosing to be laid to rest in the Janow cemetery in Lviv, where paupers were buried. A good and faithful servant of the Lord, motivated by deep spirituality and unceasing charity, he was loved and esteemed by all his fellow citizens, regardless of their religious convictions, rite or nationality.

Today his testimony shines among us as a source of encouragement and inspiration, so that our apostolic activity too, nourished by deep prayer and tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin, will be wholly dedicated to the glory of God and to the service of Holy Mother Church for the good of souls.

3. For me personally, this beatification is a special cause for rejoicing. The Blessed Archbishop Bilczewski is part of the line of my own apostolic succession. He in fact consecrated Archbishop Bolesław Twardowski, who in turn ordained Bishop Eugeniusz Baziak, from whose hands I received episcopal ordination. Today, therefore, I too am receiving a new patron. I thank God for this marvellous gift.

There is also another detail which should not be overlooked on this occasion. Blessed Archbishop Bilczewski was consecrated by Cardinal Jan Puzyna, Bishop of Kraków. With him as co-consecrators were Blessed *Józef Sebastian Pelczar*, Bishop of Przemyśl, and the Servant of God *Andrzej Szeptycki*, the Greek Catholic Archbishop. Was this not an

amazing event? At that moment, the Holy Spirit brought together three great Pastors, two of whom have been beatified and the third will be with God's help. Truly this land deserved to see them together at the solemn ordination of a successor of the Apostles. It deserved to see them united. Their union remains a sign and a call for the faithful of their respective flocks, summoned by their example to build the communion which remains threatened by the memory of past experiences and by the prejudices stirred up by nationalism.

Today, in praising God for the indomitable fidelity to the Gospel of these his Servants, let us feel ourselves gently nudged to recognize the infidelities to the Gospel of not a few Christians of both Polish and Ukrainian origin living in these parts. It is time to leave behind the sorrowful past. The Christians of the two nations must walk together in the name of the one Christ, towards the one Father, guided by the same Holy Spirit, the source and principle of unity. May pardon given and received spread like a healing balm in every heart. May the purification of historical memories lead everyone to work for the triumph of what unites over what divides, in order to build together a future of mutual respect, fraternal cooperation and true solidarity. Today Archbishop Józef Bilczewski and his companions Pelczar and Szeptycki exhort you: be united!

4. During the years of Archbishop Bilczewski's episcopal ministry, Father *Zygmunt Gorazdowski*, a true pearl of the Latin clergy of this Archdiocese, lived in Lviv the last part of his life. His extraordinary charity led him *to dedicate himself unstintingly to the poor*, despite his precarious health. The figure of the young priest who, disregarding the grave risk of infection, moved among the sick people of Wojnilow and personally prepared for burial the bodies of those who had died of cholera, remained in the memory of his contemporaries as a living sign of the merciful love of the Saviour.

He had *a burning passion for the Gospel*, which led him into schools, into the field of publishing and various catechetical undertakings, especially on behalf of young people. His apostolic activity was bolstered by *a commitment to charity which knew no pause*. In the memory of the faithful of Lviv, he remains "the father of the poor" and "the priest of the homeless". His creativity and dedication in this area were almost boundless. As secretary of the "Institute of Poor Christians", he was present wherever he heard the anguished cry of the people, to which he strove to respond with many charitable institutions right here in Lviv.

Because of his total fidelity to the poor, chaste and obedient Christ, he was acknowledged when he died as "a true religious, even if he had no special vows", and he remains for everyone *a privileged witness to God's mercy*. For you in particular he is a witness, dear Sisters of Saint Joseph, as you seek to follow him faithfully in spreading love for Christ and for our brothers and sisters through your educational and charitable work. From Blessed Zygmunt Gorazdowski, you have learnt to nourish your apostolic activity with an intense life of prayer. It is my hope that you will be able, like him, to combine action and contemplation, strengthening your piety with an ardent devotion to the Passion of Christ, a tender love of Mary Immaculate and a very special veneration for Saint Joseph, whose faith, humility, prudence and courage Father Zygmunt strove to imitate.

5. May the example of Blessed Józef Bilczewski and Blessed Zygmunt Gorazdowski be an encouragement for you, dear *priests, consecrated men and women, seminarians, catechists and theological students*. You are especially in my mind at this time, and I invite you to learn the spiritual and apostolic lesson of these two Blessed Pastors of the Church. Imitate them! In various ways you offer a special service to the Gospel, and like them you must do everything possible so that, by means of your witness, people of every age, background, education and social status will experience the love of God

in the depth of their hearts. This is your mission.

Let your prime commitment be to love everyone and to be available to everyone, never flagging in your faithfulness to Christ and the Church. This is certainly a path strewn with difficulties and misunderstandings, which can sometimes lead even to persecution.

The oldest among you are well aware of this. In your midst there are many who, in the second half of the last century, suffered greatly for their attachment to Christ and the Church. I wish to pay homage to all of you, dear priests and consecrated men and women who remained faithful to this People of God. And to you, who now stand with these generous servants of the Gospel seeking to carry on their mission, I say: do not be afraid! Christ does not promise an easy life, but always gives the assurance of his help.

6. *Duc in altum!* Cast your nets into the deep, Church of Lviv of the Latins! The Lord is with you! Do not be afraid when you face the difficulties which even today threaten your journey. With Christ you will be victorious. Bravely choose holiness: therein lies the sure foundation of true peace and lasting progress.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, I entrust you to the protection of Mary, the loving Mother of God, who for centuries you have venerated in the image which it will be my joy to crown today. I am happy to be able to bow before this image which recalls the vows of King Jan Casimir. May the "Gracious Star of Lviv" be your support and bring you the fullness of grace.

Church of Lviv of the Latins, may all the saints who have enriched your history intercede for you. May Blessed Archbishop Jakub Strzemi" and Blessed Józef Bilczewski, with Father Zygmunt Gorazdowski, protect you in a special way. Go forward trusting in the name of Christ, the Redeemer of man! Amen.

The Pope proceeded to greet the faithful in other languages.

I greet the Russian faithful who have wanted to join in our celebration. Beloved, on your return home, keep your eyes fixed on Christ. Listen to his voice. Christ calls you to give faithful witness to him in your lives. With affection I bless you. Praised be Jesus Christ.

I now greet the pilgrims of the Belarusian language. Beloved, imitate the newly beatified in faithfulness to Christ and in daily apostolic and missionary commitment. Take home to your country and to your homes the Pope's warm greetings and blessing for all the Belarusian Nation. Praised be Jesus Christ.

I now greet with affection the faithful of the Slovak Nation who are present. May your participation in the Mass make you courageous and strong in your witness to Christ. Carry my warm greeting and my special Apostolic Blessing to your communities. Praised be Jesus Christ.

I cordially greet the Hungarian faithful, who have come with their bishops. May the example of Theodore Romza give us spiritual courage. With my Apostolic Blessing. Praised be Jesus Christ.

I am happy to greet the faithful from Romania and I thank you for your presence. Beloved, Romania is always in my prayers, especially after my unforgettable visit two years ago. Take to your loved ones my greeting and my blessing. Praised be Jesus Christ.

Before closing this Solemn Liturgy, I cannot forget two famous persons who belong to this land. First, I have in mind St John of Dukla whose relics are present here with us. The spiritual son of St Francis exercised here in Lviv the role of guardian of the vigilance of Rus', here he acquired the fame of great preacher and confessor, and here he ended his life. Today, after five centuries, he returned to this city to rejoice in the fruits of his holiness in the hearts of the faithful people.

I also want to mention the great personality of the Armenian Archbishop Jozef Teodorowicz. This famous theologian and pastor, man of Church and State, guided with wisdom and dedication the Armenian community in the first decades of the last century. Remembering him, I greet all the faithful of the Armenian Church, who for centuries has been present in Ukraine and enriches it with her ancient spirituality and culture. May the memory of the Armenian martyrs and confessors confirm you in faith, hope and charity.

In a little while I will crown the Kind Mother of God, Our Lady of Lviv, known for the graces she grants. May her protection constantly protect this city and the entire Ukraine.

The Holy Father ended with these Ukrainian remarks.

Beloved, I want to thank you warmly for your joyful presence at today's celebration. My great thanksgiving goes to the entire city of Lviv for the sincere and cordial welcome offered me yesterday, sign of great hospitality and heartfelt openness. I invite all of you to the important beatification of the martyrs which will take place tomorrow. This afternoon I look forward to seeing you at the meeting with young people. Praised be Jesus Christ.

He greeted Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops from outside Ukraine in Italian.

I cordially greet the Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops who have come from many countries. Dear Brothers, I thank you for your participation in these days which find the Catholic Church in Ukraine gathered around the Successor of Peter. Your presence is a moving and precious sign of the communion and solidarity of your local churches with the sons of the Catholic Church who live in this land. I hope to see you tomorrow as we celebrate together Christ the Lord, followed faithfully as master and model of holiness by the martyrs and blessed of the Greek-Catholic Church.

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