



# The Holy See

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BEATIFICATION OF EIGHT SERVANTS OF GOD

## *HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II*

*Sunday 4 November 2001*

1. *"All things...are yours, Lord, who love the living"* (Wis 11,26). The words of the Book of Wisdom invite us to reflect on the great message of holiness that the solemn Celebration of the Eucharist relays to us with the proclamation of eight new Blesseds: [Pavel Peter Gojdic](#), [Methodius Dominic Trcka](#), [Giovanni Antonio Farina](#), [Bartholomew of the Martyrs](#), [Luigi Tezza](#), [Paolo Manna](#), [Gaetana Sterni](#), [María Pilar Izquierdo Albero](#).

With lives that were lived totally for the glory of God and the good of their neighbours, they continue in the Church and for the world to be an outstanding sign of the love of God, who is the beginning and end of human beings.

2. *"Indeed, the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost"* (Lk 19,10): Bishop *Pavel Peter Gojdic* and Redemptorist Father *Methodius Dominic Trcka*, today proclaimed Blessed, profoundly shared the saving mission proclaimed by Christ in the passage of the Gospel of Luke. Joined together in the generous and courageous service of the Greek Catholic Church in Slovakia, they passed through the same sufferings on account of their fidelity to the Gospel and to the Successor of Peter and now they share the same crown of glory.

Strengthened by the spiritual experience of the Order of St Basil the Great, *Pavel Peter Gojdic*, first as Bishop in the Eparchy of Presov and then as Apostolic Administrator of Mukacev, constantly sought to realize the pastoral programme he set for himself: "With the help of God I want to be the father of orphans, the help of the poor, and the consoler of the afflicted". Known to the people as "the man with a heart of gold", he became known to the representatives of the government of the time as a real "thorn in the side". After the Communist regime made the Greek Catholic Church illegal, he was arrested and imprisoned. Thus for him began a long calvary of

suffering, mistreatment and humiliation which brought about his death on account of his fidelity to Christ and his love for the Church and the Pope.

*Methodius Dominic Trcka* also passed his life in the service of the Gospel and of the salvation of his brothers and sisters, even to the supreme sacrifice of his life. As superior of the Redemptorist community in Stropkov, in Eastern Slovakia, he carried out a fervent missionary activity in the three Eparchies of Presov, Uzhorod and Krizevci. With the arrival of the Communist regime, he was deported to a concentration camp with his Redemptorist colleagues. With the support of prayer he faced with courage and determination the suffering and humiliation he had to bear on account of the Gospel. His calvary ended in the prison of Leopoldov where he died worn out by suffering and sickness, forgiving his persecutors.

3. Bishop *Giovanni Antonio Farina* presents the glorious image of the Pastor of the People of God after the model of Christ. His long pastoral ministry, first in the Diocese of Treviso and then in the Diocese of Vicenza, can be summed up as a vast apostolic activity totally dedicated to the doctrinal and spiritual formation of the clergy and the faithful. Looking back at his work performed for the glory of God, for the formation of young people, as a witness of charity for the poorest and most abandoned, we are reminded of the words of the Apostle Paul in the second reading: everything must be done so that in everything "*the name of the Lord Jesus might be glorified*" (2 Thes 1,12). The witness of the new Blessed continues to bear great fruit today, above all, in the religious family he founded, the *Sisters Teachers of St Dorothy, Daughters of the Sacred Hearts*, who have their own saint in the person of Maria Bertilla Boscardin, canonized by Pope John XXIII my venerable Predecessor.

In Father *Paolo Manna* we perceive a special reflection of the glory of God. He spent his entire life promoting the missions. In every page of his writings there stands out the person of Jesus, centre of his life and reason for the missions. In one of his letters to the missionaries, he stated: "In fact the missionary is nothing if he does not put on the person of Jesus Christ... Only the missionary who copies Jesus Christ faithfully in himself can reproduce his image in the souls of others" (*Letter 6*). Indeed, there are no missions without holiness, as the Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* pointed out: "The missionary spirituality of the Church consists in the movement towards holiness. One must stir up a new zeal for holiness among missionaries and in the whole Christian community" (n. 90).

4. "*May our God make you worthy of his call and fulfill by his power every honest intention and work of faith*" (2 Thes 1,11).

The reflection of the Apostle Paul on the faith which needs to be translated into resolutions and works of good, helps us to understand better the spiritual portrait of the Blessed *Luigi Tezza*, glorious example of a life totally dedicated to the exercise of charity and mercy towards those who suffer in body and spirit. For them he founded the *Institute of the Daughters of St Camillus*, whom

he taught to practice an absolute confidence in the Lord. "The will of God! Behold my only guide", he exclaimed, "the only goal of my desires, for which I wish to sacrifice everything". In his confident abandonment to the will of God, he took as his model the Blessed Virgin Mary, tenderly loved and contemplated particularly in the moment of the "*fiat*" and in her silent presence at the foot of the Cross.

Blessed *Gaetana Sterni*, who learned that the will of God is always love, dedicated herself with untiring charity to the excluded and the suffering. She always treated her brothers and sisters with the kindness and love of the one who serves Christ in the poor. She urged her spiritual daughters, the *Sisters of the Divine Will*, "to be disposed and content to put up with privations, fatigue, and any sacrifice to help your neighbour in need in all that the Lord might want of them". The witness of evangelical charity that Blessed Sterni left us reminds each believer of the need to seek the will of God in confident abandonment to Him and in generous service to one's brothers and sisters.

5. Blessed *Bartholomew of the Martyrs*, Archbishop of Braga, with great vigilance and apostolic zeal, gave himself to safeguarding and renewing the Church in her living stones, without looking down upon the provisional structures that are the inert stones. He paid special attention to the living stones who had little or nothing to live on. He took from his own pocket to give to them. To those who criticized him for cutting such a poor figure with the little that remained, he replied: "You will not see me ever so foolish as to spend with the leisure class what I can use to keep many poor alive". Since religious ignorance was the greatest form of poverty, the Archbishop did everything possible to remedy it, beginning with the moral reform and cultural formation of the clergy "because it is evident that if your zeal corresponded to your office...the flock of Christ would not stray so far away from the road to heaven". By his wisdom, his example and his apostolic zeal, he moved and made burn with zeal the souls of the Fathers of the Council of Trent so that they would proceed to the necessary reform of the Church, which he was inspired to bring about with persevering and undaunted courage.

6. "*I will extol you, O my God and King*" (Ps 144[145],1). The exclamation of the responsorial psalm reflects the life of Mother *María Pilar Izquierdo*, foundress of the *Missionary Work of Jesus and Mary*: praise God and in everything accomplish His will. One can sum up her short life: she died when she was 39 years old, noting that she wanted to praise God by offering him her love and her sacrifice. Her life bore the mark of constant, and not just physical, suffering while she was busy doing all for the love of Him who first loved us and suffered for our salvation. The love for God, for the Cross of Jesus, for her neighbour in need were the great concerns of the life of the new Blessed. She was aware of the need to catechize with the Gospel the outlying districts [of Madrid] and to give to eat to the hungry, in order to become more conformed to Christ through the works of mercy. Her fundamental inspiration is today wherever the *Missionary Work of Jesus* is present, performing the works of mercy in accord with her spirit. May the example of her life of self-denial and generosity renew in us a deep commitment to the service of the needy so that the present world may become the witness of the renewing force of the Gospel of Christ.

7. At the beginning of this Eucharist, we heard again from the Book of Wisdom the great message of the eternal and unconditional love of God for every human being: *"You love everything you created and you despise nothing of what you have made"* (Wis 11,24). The new Blesseds are the sign of the primary love of God. By their example and their powerful intercession they announce the salvation that God offers to humanity in Christ. Let us learn from their witness so that we may serve God in a "praiseworthy way", walking without obstacles toward the promised goods (cf. *collect, 31st Sunday*). Amen!