



The Holy See

CANONIZATION OF 4 BLESSEDS

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

Sunday, 25 November 2001

1. *"There was an inscription over his head, "This is the King of the Jews" (Lk 23,38).*

That inscription, which Pilate had placed on the cross (cf. Jn 19,19), contains the motive of the condemnation and the truth about the person of Christ. *Jesus is king ... he affirmed it ... but his kingdom is not of this world* (cf. Jn 18,36-37). Before him humanity is divided into two parts: those who reject him on account of his apparent failure, and those who recognize him as the Christ, "the image of the invisible God, begotten before all creation" (Col 1,15), according to the expression of the Apostle Paul in the Letter to the Colossians, that we have heard.

Before the Cross of Christ, the great scene of the world is opened up and the drama of our personal and collective history takes place. Under the gaze of God, who in his Only begotten Son immolated for us, has become the measure of every person, institution, and civilization, each one is called to decide for or against Christ.

2. Those who were just proclaimed saints: Joseph Marello, Paula Montal Fornés de San José de Calasanz, Leonie Frances de Sales Aviat and Maria Crescenzia Höss come before the crucified divine king. Each of them entrusted himself/herself to his mysterious kingship, proclaiming with their entire life: "Jesus, remember me when you enter into your kingdom" (Lk 23,42). And in an absolutely personal way, each received the reply from the immortal King: "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise" (Lk 23,43).

Today! That "today" belongs to the time of God, to the plan of salvation, of which St Paul speaks in the Letter to the Romans: "Those whom he foreknew he also predestined ... he also called ... justified ... glorified" (Rom 8,29-20). That "today" *contains the historical moment of today's*

canonization, in which these four exemplary witnesses of evangelical life are raised to the glory of the altars.

3. *"It pleased God to make every fullness dwell in him Christ"* (Col 1,19). [St Joseph Marello](#) participated in that fullness, as priest of the clergy of Asti and as Bishop of the Diocese of Acqui. Fullness of grace, fostered in him by an intense devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary; fullness of the priesthood, which God conferred on him as gift and mission; fullness of holiness which he achieved, by being conformed to Christ, the Good Shepherd. Bishop Marello was formed in the golden period of holiness in the Piedmont area, when, in the midst of numerous forms of hostility against the Church and the Catholic faith, the champions of the spirit and of charity flourished, Sts Cottolengo, Cafasso, Don Bosco, Murialdo and Allamano. Joseph was a good and intelligent young man, enthusiastic about cultural and social movements, but our saint only found in Christ the synthesis of every ideal and was consecrated to him in the priesthood. "To take care of the interests of Jesus" was his motto in life, and for this reason he wanted to imitate St Joseph, the spouse of Mary, the custodian of the Redeemer. What strongly attracted him to St Joseph was the life of hidden service, joined with deep interior life. He knew how to transmit this style to the Oblates of St Joseph, the Congregation he founded. He liked to repeat to them, "Be extraordinary in ordinary things" and he added, "Be Carthusians inside your house and apostles outside". The Lord wanted to use his robust personality for his Church, calling him to govern the Diocese of Acqui, where, in the span of a few years, he spent himself for his flock, leaving a memory that has only grown with time.

4. *"I say to you: today you will be with me in Paradise"* (Lk 23,43). [St Paula Montal Fornés de San José de Calasanz](#), foundress of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary, Sisters of the Pious Schools, was received in paradise, into the fullness of the kingdom of God, after a life of holiness. First in her native city, Arenys del Mar, she was involved in many apostolic activities and in prayer and interior devotion she was led into the mystery of God; then as foundress of a religious family, inspired by the slogan of St Joseph Calasanz "Piety and Letters", she gave herself to advancing women and the family with her ideal: "Save the family, educating the young girls in a holy fear of God"; in the end, she was to give proof of the authenticity, the firmness and the beauty of her spirit, a spirit shaped by God during the 30 years of hidden life in Olesa de Montserrat.

The new saint belongs to the group of founders of religious orders who in the 19th century came forward to meet the many needs that were present and that the Church, inspired by the Gospel and by the Spirit, wanted to respond to for the good of society. The message of St Paula is still valid today and her educational charism is a source of inspiration in the formation of the generations of the third Christian millennium.

5. The loving plan of the Father "who has made us enter the kingdom of his beloved Son" found a splendid realization in [St Frances de Sales Aviat](#): who lived her self offering to the end. At the heart of her dedication and of her apostolate, Sister Frances de Sales put prayer and union with

God, where she found the light and the energy to overcome trials and difficulties, and to persevere to the end of her life in the life of faith, desiring to be led by the Lord: "O my God, let my happiness be found in sacrificing my will and my desires for you!". The resolution which distinguished Mother Aviat so well, "Forget oneself completely", is also for us an appeal to go against the current of egotism and easy pleasures, and open ourselves to the social and spiritual needs of our time. Dear Oblate Sisters of St Francis-de-Sales, at the school of your foundress, in profound communion with the Church and wherever God has placed you, be determined to receive the present graces and to benefit from them, for it is in God that we find the light and the help necessary in every circumstance! Trusting in the powerful intercession of the new saint, accept with joy the invitation to live, with renewed fidelity, the intuitions which she so perfectly lived.

6. Give glory to Christ the King: this wish inspired *St Maria Crescenzia Höss* from her childhood. It was for his service that she used her talents. God gave her a beautiful voice. Already as a young lady she could sing a solo part, not to display herself but to sing and to play for Christ the King.

Her knowledge of her fellow men she placed at the service of the Lord. This Franciscan was an esteemed advisor. To her convent came many visitors: both simple men and women, princes and empresses, priests and religious, abbots and bishops. In a certain way she became a kind of "midwife" and helped those seeking counsel to bring forth the truth in their hearts.

Sorrow did not spare the saint. "Mobbing" took place in her time. She endured the intrigues of her own community, without ever doubting her own vocation. The long period of suffering allowed her to grow in the virtue of patience. That was helpful for her when she became superior: for her to direct meant spiritually to serve. She was generous with the poor, motherly with her sisters, and kind to all who needed a kind word. St Crescenzia lived what the Kingdom of Christ means: "Whatever you do to the least of your brothers, that you do to me" (Mt 25,40).

7. "*Let us give thanks with joy to the Father who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light*" (Col 1,12). Never as at the present time do the words of St Paul find an echo in our hearts! Truly the communion of saints gives us the foretaste of the Kingdom of heaven, and, at the same time, inspires us, following their example, to build it in the world and in history.

"*He must reign*" (I Cor 15,25), the Apostle wrote referring to Christ.

"*He must reign*", you repeat to us with the example of your lives, St Joseph Marelló, St Paula Montal Fornés de San José de Calasanz, St Leonie de Sales Aviat and St Maria Crescenzia Höss. May your example inspire us to living contemplation of Christ the King, crucified and risen. May your support help us to walk faithfully in the footsteps of the Redeemer, to share one day with you together with Mary and all the saints, his eternal glory in heaven. Amen.

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