



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II TO SPAIN

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

Plaza de Colón, Madrid

Third Sunday of Easter, 4 May 2003

1. "You are witnesses of these things" (cf. Lk 24: 46-48), Jesus said to his Apostles in the Gospel account just proclaimed. This was a difficult and demanding mission, entrusted to men who *did not dare to show themselves in public* for fear of being recognized as disciples of the Nazarene. Nevertheless, the first reading presented to us Peter who, once he received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, has the courage to *proclaim the Resurrection of Jesus to the people* and urge them to repent and convert.

Since then the Church, with the power of the Holy Spirit, continues to announce this extraordinary news to all people of all times. And the Successor of Peter, a pilgrim on Spanish soil, repeats to you: *Spain*, following a past of courageous evangelization, *continue today to be witnesses of the risen Christ!*

2. I greet with affection all the people of God who have come from the different regions of the Country and have gathered here to participate in this solemn celebration. I offer a respectful greeting to Their Majesties the King and Queen of Spain and to the Royal Family. I cordially thank Cardinal Antonio María Rouco Varela, Archbishop of Madrid, for his kind words. I greet the Spanish Cardinals and Bishops, priests and consecrated persons; I also greet with affection the members of the Institutes associated with the new Saints.

I am particularly grateful for the presence here of the President of the Government and the Presidents of the Autonomous Communities and of the civil authorities who have offered their

precious collaboration so that the various events of this Visit could be accomplished.

3. The new Saints are presented to us today as *true disciples of the Lord* and *witnesses of his Resurrection*.

St Peter Poveda, grasping the importance of the role of education in society, undertook an important humanitarian and educational task among the marginalized and the needy. He was a master of prayer, a teacher of the Christian life and of the relationship between faith and knowledge, convinced that Christians must bring essential values and commitment to building a world that is more just and mutually supportive. His life ended with the crown of martyrdom.

St José María Rubio lived his priesthood first as a diocesan priest and then as a Jesuit, giving himself totally to the apostolate of the Word and of the Sacraments, dedicating long hours to the confessional and directing numerous spiritual retreats in which he formed many Christians who would later die as martyrs in the religious persecution in Spain. "Do what God wants and want what God does!" was his motto.

4. *St Genoveva Torres* was an instrument of God's tender love for lonely people in need of love, comfort and physical and spiritual care. The characteristic note that fuelled her spirituality was adoration of the Eucharist for the expiation of sins, which formed the basis of an apostolate full of humility and simplicity, of self-denial and charity.

Love and sensitivity to the poor likewise prompted *St Angela of the Cross* to found her "Company of the Cross" for the most deprived with a charitable and social dimension that made an enormous impact on the Church and society of Seville in her day. Her distinctive traits were naturalness and simplicity, seeking holiness with a spirit of mortification and at the service of God in her brothers and sisters.

St Maravillas of Jesus was motivated by a heroic faith that shaped her response to an austere vocation, in which she made God the centre of her life. Having overcome the painful circumstances of the Spanish Civil War, she established new foundations for the Order of Carmel, imbued with the characteristic spirit of the Teresian reform. Her life of contemplation and monastic enclosure did not prevent her from responding to the needs of the persons she dealt with and promoting social and charitable works around her.

5. The new Saints have very concrete faces and their history is well known. What is their message? Their works, which we admire and for which we thank God, are not due to their own efforts nor to human wisdom but to the mysterious action of the Holy Spirit who inspired in them *an unshakeable adherence to the risen and crucified Christ* and the decision to imitate him. Dear Catholic faithful of Spain: let yourselves be influenced by these marvellous examples!

In giving thanks to the Lord for the many gifts he has poured out upon Spain, I invite you to pray with me that new saints continue to flourish in this land. Other fruits of holiness will be produced *if the ecclesial communities remain faithful to the Gospel* which, in accordance with a venerable tradition, has been preached since the earliest times of Christianity and has been preserved down the ages.

New fruits of holiness will be produced if the *family remains united* as a true shrine of love and life. "Christian and Catholic faith constitute the identity of the Spanish people", I said on the occasion of my pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela (*Address at Santiago*, 9 November 1982).

To know and to deepen a people's past means to strengthen and enrich their very identity. *Do not abandon your Christian roots!* Only in this way will you be able to bring the cultural riches of your history to the world and to Europe.

6. "Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures" (Lk 24: 45). The risen Christ enlightens the Apostles so that their proclamation can be understood and transmitted intact to all the generations, so that man, *in hearing may believe, in believing, hope, and in hoping, love* (cf. St Augustine, *De Catechizandis Rudibus*, 4, 8). In proclaiming the risen Jesus Christ, the Church desires to announce a way of hope to all men and women, and to accompany them to the encounter with Christ.

In celebrating this Mass, I invoke upon you all the great gift of fidelity to your Christian commitments. May God the Father grant it to you through the intercession of the Most Holy Virgin, who is venerated in Spain under many titles, and of the Saints.