



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO PILGRIMS IN ROME FOR THE
BEATIFICATION OF FIVE SERVANTS OF GOD**

Monday, 5 May 1997

*Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and the Priesthood,
Men and Women Religious,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

1. The joyous and festive atmosphere of the Easter season that illumined the solemn beatification liturgy yesterday morning continues and intensifies at this gathering where we would like once again to pause and reflect together on the spiritual experience and Gospel virtues of the new blessed.

In communion with the particular Churches where they lived and worked, let us offer our praise to the Lord for the marvels worked by his grace in our glorious brothers and sisters in the faith. At the same time, we feel encouraged by them to become ever more convinced witnesses of Christ the Lord, to proclaim him with our words and our life. May the spiritual closeness and fraternal support of their powerful intercession comfort us.

2. With great affection, I address all the Spanish-speaking pilgrims who have come from Spain and Latin America to take part in the joy of the beatifications of Bishop Florentino Asensio, Ceferino Giménez Malla “El Pelé” and Mother María Encarnación Rosal.

I greet the Bishops of Spain, particularly Bishop Ambrosio Echebarría of Barbastro-Monzón, and the faithful of this Diocese which since yesterday has two new blessed. Your Ecclesial Community has the honour of having seen the flourishing of these two martyrs, models of life for Christians, who now intercede for us.

Among the many aspects of the rich spiritual biography of Bishop *Asensio* we must stress his *constant and unconditional dedication to preaching the Gospel, first as a priest and then in his brief episcopal ministry*. He remained ever faithful to this task, preaching in the cathedral until the last Sunday before his arrest. He offers us an admirable example of the great importance for the Christian life of the explicit proclamation of Christ and the transmission of and formation in the faith through catechesis. I encourage you all, Pastors and faithful, to spare no efforts or means to give catechetical activity its due place in the life of the Ecclesial Communities so that it can offer everyone a deeper knowledge of Christ.

The new blessed died as a witness to the faith that he had lived and proclaimed so many times. At that decisive moment he did not lack the integrity and dignity, strength and courage which were the fruits of his unconditional adherence to Christ and his Gospel. May his example help Christians to witness to the faith as he did.

3. *Bl. Ceferino Giménez Malla* achieved the palm of martyrdom with the same simplicity that he had lived. His Christian life reminds us all that the message of salvation knows no boundaries of race or culture, because Jesus Christ is the redeemer of people of every tribe, race, people and nation (cf. Rv 5:9).

“El Pelé” was a deeply religious man: with particular devotion to the Eucharist and the Virgin Mary, he regularly took part in Mass and fervently recited the Rosary; he prayed frequently and belonged to various religious associations. His life was consistent with his faith; he practised charity towards all, was honourable in his activities, peacefully settled conflicts and gave wise advice about situations as they arose. For this reason he enjoyed the esteem of all who knew him.

Dear sons and daughters of the Gypsy people, for you *Bl. Ceferino* is a light on your path, a powerful intercessor, a guide for your steps. On his journey to holiness, *“El Pelé”* must be an example for you and an encouragement for the full involvement of your particular culture in the social context where you live. At the same time, it is necessary to overcome old prejudices which cause you to suffer from forms of discrimination and rejection that sometimes lead to an undesirable marginalization of the Gypsy people.

4. Latin America has a new blessed, *Mother María Encarnación Rosal*. I affectionately greet the Bishops and faithful who have come from there as part of the pilgrimage of the *Bethlehem Family* from Guatemala, the native land of Mother María Encarnación, from Colombia, the country where she is buried, from Ecuador, Costa Rica, Panama, Venezuela, El Salvador, Nicaragua, the United States and also from Spain and Italy, and the two nations with Bethlehem missions: Cameroon and India.

Bl. María Encarnación enriched the Church by helping to preserve the spirituality of Bethlehem. A tenacious and strong woman with an extraordinary personality and great love for the Sacred

Heart, she did not despair in the face of difficulties and thus succeeded in actively and faithfully co-operating with the plan of God “who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tm 2:4). Her commitment to the task of evangelization, even in the midst of troubles and sacrifices, makes her worthy of the admiration of all and, most especially, a constant model for her daughters.

Today, when the Church on the threshold of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 is gaining new awareness of the mission entrusted to her by the Lord, *Bl. María Encarnación Rosal is an example and encouragement in view of the challenges of the new evangelization.*

Dear Sisters of Bethlehem, in your Mother you have an admirable *model of a life totally consecrated to God and totally devoted to the mission* with generosity, creative fidelity to her own charism and unconditional service to the Church and to her brothers and sisters, in the spirit of simplicity and welcome which radiates from the Bethlehem cave.

5. Together with the Christian community of Reggio Calabria-Bova, we rejoice at the beatification of Gaetano Catanoso, the first diocesan priest of Calabria to be raised to the glory of the altars. He is resplendent for his fidelity to the flock of Christ, whose sufferings and deprivations he fully shared, taking on their problems and bringing everyone a word of comfort and hope. He achieved this ideal of priestly life in the poor, isolated village of the Aspromonte mountains, where he began his pastoral work, and in the urban parish of Reggio Calabria, which was entrusted for many years to his pastoral care.

From the very first years of his priestly ministry, he was deeply concerned about reparation centred on devotion to the Holy Face of Jesus. He himself confided: “The Holy Face is my life. He is my strength”. He passed on this particular spirituality to the congregation he founded, which by its very name, “Sisters of St Veronica of the Holy Face”, expresses its own goal and mission in the Church and in society: to wipe the Face of Christ, wounded and suffering, in all the “crucified” people of the contemporary world.

The life of Bl. Catanoso, lived entirely for the good of his brothers and sisters and for the redemption of his land, is a pressing invitation for all to seek in the perennial values of the Christian faith the foundations for building the authentic progress of society.

6. From his youth, Bl Enrico Rebuschini was committed to following Christ “the Way, the Truth and the Life”. He continually entrusted himself to God, cultivating intimacy with the paschal mystery, ceaseless prayer and humility. At the same time, he gave his life for his neighbour, especially the neediest, for whom he developed the virtues of listening and service, and even more, of obedience, “as if one were obeying God himself”.

In the months that preceded his entry into the Order of Clerics Regular Servants of the Sick, he

had written in his diary: "I offer my whole self and my life for my neighbour". God rewarded him with the gift of contemplative prayer, in which he remained immersed even as he wandered on foot through the streets of Cremona. The people liked to call him "the street mystic". The example and intercession of Bl. Rebuschini inspire us to intensify, with unswerving fidelity to Christ, our daily service to promoting the "civilization of love" in the world.

7. Dear brothers and sisters, by their witness these five new blessededs illumine our way in Christ's footsteps.

Returning to your city, you will bring with you the joyful memory of intense hours spent in Rome. May the heavenly intercession of the new blessededs sustain you today and always. May the maternal presence of the Mother of God, to whom the month of May which has just began is especially dedicated, protect you.

And may you be accompanied by my Blessing, which I cordially impart to all of you present here, to your families and to your communities.

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