



The Holy See

CAPPELLA PAPALE
FOR THE CANONIZATION OF FOUR BLESSEDS

Gaetano Errico (1791-1860)

Mary Bernard (Verena) Büttler (1848-1924)

Alphonsa of the Immaculate Conception

(Anna Muttathupadathu) (1910-1946)

Narcisa de Jesús Martillo Morán (1832-1869)

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

St Peter's Square

Sunday, 12 October 2008

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today, four new figures of Saints are proposed for the veneration of the universal Church: Gaetano Errico, Maria Bernarda Büttler, Alphonsa of the Immaculate Conception and Narcisa de Jesús Martillo Morán. The liturgy presents them to us with the Gospel image of the guests who take part at the banquet clad in the wedding garment. We also find the image of the banquet in the First Reading and in other passages in the Bible: it is a joyful image because the banquet accompanies a wedding feast, the Covenant of love between God and his People. The Old Testament prophets constantly led Israel to expect this Covenant. And in an epoch marked by trials of every kind, it was when the difficulties risked discouraging the chosen People that the Prophet Isaiah raised his reassuring voice: "the Lord of hosts", he says, "will make for all peoples a feast of rich and choice wine, juicy, rich food and pure, choice wines (25: 6). God will put an end to the sorrow and shame of his People, who will be able at last to live in the happiness of communion with him. God never abandons his People: for this reason the Prophet invites us to rejoice: "Behold our God, to whom we looked to save us... let us rejoice and be glad that he has saved us" (v. 9).

If the First Reading exalts God's fidelity to his promise, the Gospel, with the parable of the marriage feast, makes us reflect on the human response. Several of those first invited refused the invitation because they were attracted by different interests; others even disdained the king's invitation, provoking a punishment that afflicted not only them but also the entire city. However, the king was not discouraged and sent his servants out to seek other guests to fill his banquet hall. Thus the aspect of the refusal of those initially invited caused the invitation to be extended to all, with a special predilection for the poor and the disadvantaged. This is what occurred in the Paschal Mystery: the force of evil is defeated by the omnipotence of God's love. The Risen Lord can now invite everyone to the banquet of Paschal joy and he himself can provide the guests with a wedding garment, symbol of the free gift of sanctifying grace.

However, the human being must reciprocate God's generosity by freely adhering to him. It is precisely this generous path that was taken by those who we are venerating today as Saints. In Baptism they received the wedding garment of divine grace, they kept it clean and purified it and made it radiant during their life through the Sacraments. They are now taking part in the wedding feast in Heaven. The banquet of the Eucharist is an anticipation of the final feast in Heaven, to which the Lord invites us every day and in which we must take part, clothed in the wedding garment of his grace. Should it happen that we soil or even tear this garment with sin, God's goodness does not reject or abandon us to our destiny but rather offers us, with the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the possibility of restoring the wedding garment to the pristine state required for the feast.

The ministry of Reconciliation therefore is a ministry that is always relevant. The priest [Gaetano Errico](#), Founder of the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, devoted himself to it with diligence, perseverance and patience, never refusing or sparing himself. He is thus enrolled among the extraordinary priestly figures who tirelessly made the confessional the place for dispensing God's mercy, helping people to find themselves, fight against sin and progress on the path of the spiritual life. The street and the confessional were the privileged places of this new Saint's pastoral action. The street gave him the opportunity to meet people to whom he would address his customary invitation: *"God loves you, when will we see each other?"*. And in the confessional he enabled them to encounter the mercy of the heavenly Father. How many wounded souls did he heal in this way! How many people did he reconcile with God through the Sacrament of forgiveness! Thus St [Gaetano Errico](#) became an expert in the "science" of forgiveness and was concerned to teach it to his missionaries, advising them: *"God, who does not desire the sinner's death, is always more merciful than his ministers; thus may you be as merciful as you can be, so that you will receive mercy from God"*.

At a very early age, [Maria Bernarda Bütler](#), born in Auw in the Swiss canton of Aargau, experienced deep love for the Lord. As she herself said: "This is impossible to explain to someone who has not experienced the same thing". This love brought Verena Bütler, as she was then called, to enter the Capuchin Convent of Maria Hilf in Altstätten, where she made her final

profession at the age of 21. When she was 40, she received the call to the missions and went to Ecuador and then to Colombia. On 29 October 1995, my venerable Predecessor John Paul II raised her to the honours of the altar, because of her life and her commitment to her neighbour.

Mother Maria Bernarda, a figure well-remembered and well-loved especially in Colombia, thoroughly understood that the banquet that the Lord has prepared for all people is represented in a very special way by the Eucharist. In the Eucharist, Christ himself receives us as friends and gives himself to us in the banquet of Bread and the Word, entering into deep communion with each one. The Eucharist is the source and pillar of the spirituality of this new Saint and of the missionary drive that impelled her to leave Switzerland, the land of her birth, to open herself to other horizons of evangelization in Ecuador and Colombia. In the serious adversities that she was obliged to face, including exile, engraved in her heart she carried the exclamation of the Psalm we have heard today: "Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side" (Ps 23: 4). Thus, docile to the Word of God after Mary's example, she behaved like the servants mentioned in the Gospel narrative that we heard: she went everywhere proclaiming that the Lord invites everyone to his banquet. Thus she brought others to share in the love of God to whom, throughout her life, she dedicated herself with faithfulness and joy.

"He will swallow up death for ever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces" (Is 25: 8). These words of the prophet Isaiah contain the promise which sustained Alphonsa of the Immaculate Conception through a life of extreme physical and spiritual suffering. This exceptional woman, who today is offered to the people of India as their first canonized saint, was convinced that her cross was the very means of reaching the heavenly banquet prepared for her by the Father. By accepting the invitation to the wedding feast, and by adorning herself with the garment of God's grace through prayer and penance, she conformed her life to Christ's and now delights in the "rich fare and choice wines" of the heavenly kingdom (cf. Is 25: 6). She wrote, "I consider a day without suffering as a day lost". May we imitate her in shouldering our own crosses so as to join her one day in paradise.

Narcisa de Jesús Martillo Morán, a young Ecuadorian lay woman, offers us a perfect example of a prompt and generous response to the invitation that the Lord extends to us to share in his love. Already at a very early age, in receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation, she felt clearly in her heart the call to live a life of holiness and devotion to God. To sustain the Holy Spirit's action in her soul with docility, she always sought the counsel and guidance of good and expert priests, considering spiritual direction as one of the most effective means to arrive at holiness. St Narcisa of Jesus shows us a path of Christian perfection obtainable for all the faithful. Despite the many and extraordinary graces that she received, she lived her life with great simplicity, dedicated to her work as a seamstress and to her apostolate as a catechist. In her passionate love for Jesus, who led her on a path of intense prayer and torment and to identify herself increasingly with the mystery of the Cross, she offers us an attractive witness and a perfect example of a life totally dedicated to God and to her brothers and sisters.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us thank the Lord for the gift of holiness that is today resplendent in the Church with singular beauty. Jesus invites each one of us to follow him, like these Saints, on the way of the Cross, so that we might then inherit the eternal life that he, dying, gave to us. May their examples be an encouragement to us; may their teachings guide and comfort us; may their intercession sustain us in our daily efforts so that we too may one day come to share with them and with all the saints the joy of the eternal banquet in the heavenly Jerusalem. Above all may Mary Queen of All Saints, who in this month of October we venerate with special devotion, obtain this grace for us. Amen.

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