



The Holy See

PAPAL MASS FOR THE CANONIZATION OF BLESSEDS:

GUIDO MARIA CONFORTI (1865-1931)

LUIGI GUANELLA (1842-1915)

BONIFACIA RODRÍGUEZ DE CASTRO (1837-1905)

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

*Saint Peter's Square
Sunday, 23 October 2011*

[\[Video\]](#)

[Photo Gallery](#)

*Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

For various reasons, our Sunday Liturgy today is enriched by thanksgiving and supplication to God. While we are celebrating with the whole Church World Mission Day — an annual event aiming to awaken enthusiasm and commitment to mission — we praise the Lord for the three new Saints: Bishop Guido Maria Conforti, the priest Aloysius [also known as Luigi] Guanella and the religious Bonifacia Rodríguez de Castro. I joyfully greet all those present, in particular the official Delegations and the many pilgrims who have come to celebrate these three exemplary disciples of Christ.

The Word of the Lord, which was proclaimed just a moment ago in the Gospel Reading, reminds us that the whole of the Divine Law can be summed up in love. The Evangelist Matthew recounts that the Pharisees, after Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, met to put him to the test (cf. 22:34-35). One of these interlocutors, a doctor of law, asked him: “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” (v. 36). Jesus answered the deliberately tricky question, saying quite

simply: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment” (vv. 37-38). In fact, the main requirement for each one of us is that God be present in our lives. He should, as the Scripture says, penetrate all levels of our being and fill them completely. The heart should know him and let itself be touched by him, and thus also the soul, the energies of our will and determination, as well as intelligence and thought. One could say, as St Paul did, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20).

Jesus immediately adds something that the doctor of law did not actually ask: “And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbour as yourself” (Mt 22:39). By declaring that the second commandment is similar to the first, Jesus implies that loving your neighbour is as important as loving God. In fact, a visible sign that the Christian can show the world in order to witness to God’s love is love for our brothers and sisters. How providential it is that precisely today the Church holds up to her members three new Saints, who allowed themselves to be transformed by the divine love, that imbued their entire existence. Through various situations and with different charisms, they loved the Lord with all their heart and loved their neighbour as themselves: thus becoming “an example to all the believers” (1 Thess 1:7).

Psalm 17, just read, invites us to abandon ourselves with trust into the hands of the Lord, who is “steadfast... to his anointed” (Ps 18[17]:51). This interior attitude guided the life and ministry of St Guido Maria Conforti. Since, as a boy, he had had to overcome his father’s opposition to his entering the Seminary. He displayed strong character in following God’s will and by conforming in everything to the *caritas Christi*, that, in the contemplation of the Crucifix, attracted him to it. He felt strongly the urgency to announce this love to those who had not yet received the news and the motto “*Caritas Christi urget nos*” (cf. 2 Cor 5:14), summed up the Missionary Institute’s programme, to which he, after just turning 30-years-old, brought to life: a religious family completely at the service of evangelization, under the patronage of the great “Patron of the Orient”, St Francis Xavier. St Guido Maria was called to live this apostolic zeal in his episcopal ministry first in Ravenna and then in Parma. With all his strength he dedicated himself to the good of the souls entrusted to him, especially those who had moved away from the Lord’s path. His life was marked by numerous trials, even serious ones. He understood how to accept every situation with docility, welcoming it as an indication of the path traced for him by Divine Providence. In every circumstance, even in debilitating periods of illness, he knew how to recognize God’s plan, which led him to build his Kingdom, above all through self-denial and the daily acceptance of God’s will, ever more complete with a trusting abandonment. He first experienced and testified what he taught his missionaries, namely, that perfection consists in doing the will of God, following the model of the crucified Jesus. St Guido Maria Conforti fixed his interior gaze on the Cross, which sweetly attracted him. In contemplating the Cross he saw the horizon of the entire world open wide to him, he perceived the “urgent” desire, hidden in the heart of every person, to receive and welcome the good news of the only love that saves.

The human and spiritual testimony of St Luigi Guanella is a special gift of grace for the whole Church. During his earthly life he lived with courage and determination the Gospel of Love and the “great commandment”, which today too, the Word of God has recalled. Thanks to the profound and continuing union with Christ, in the contemplation of his love, Don Guanella, led by Divine Providence, became a companion and teacher, comfort and support to the poorest and weakest. The love of God aroused in him the desire for the good of the people who were entrusted to him in the routine of daily life. He paid caring attention to each one and respected the pace of their development. He cultivated the hope in his heart that every human being, created in the image and likeness of God, by tasting the joy of being loved by him — Father of all — can receive and give to others the best of himself. Today, let us praise and thank the Lord, who gave us a prophet and an apostle of love in St Luigi Guanella. In his testimony, so full of humanity and attention to the least, we recognize a bright sign of the presence and charitable action of God, the God — as we heard in the First Reading — who defends the stranger, the widow, the orphan, the poor person obliged to give his garment in pledge... his only covering for the night (cf. Ex 22:20-26). May this new Saint of love be for everyone, especially for the members of the Congregations founded by him, a model of profound and fruitful synthesis between contemplation and action that he himself lived and put into practice. We can summarize his whole human and spiritual life in his last words on his death-bed: “*in caritate Christi*”. It is Christ’s love that illumines the life of every person, revealing through the gift of himself to others that nothing is lost but is fully realized for our happiness. May St Luigi Guanella obtain that we may grow in friendship with the Lord to be bearers of the fullness of God’s love in our time, to promote life in all of its forms and conditions, and to ensure that human society increasingly become the family of God’s children.

In Spanish the Pope said: In the Second Reading we heard a passage from the First Letter to the Thessalonians, a text that uses the metaphor of manual labour to describe the work of evangelization and which, in a certain sense, can be applied also to the virtues of St Bonifacia Rodríguez de Castro. When St Paul writes the Letter, he is working to earn his bread and it becomes evident, from the tone and the examples he uses, that in the shop where he preaches he meets his first disciples. This same intuition motivated St Bonifacia who, from the beginning understood how to combine her following of Jesus Christ with painstaking daily work. Work, as she had done since she was a child, was not only a way not to burden people but also implied the freedom to pursue one’s vocation. At the same time it gave her the chance to attract and train other women, who in the workshop could meet God and listen to his loving call, discerning the plan for their life and preparing themselves to carry it out. Thus the Servants of St Joseph came into being in the humility and simplicity of the Gospel, which in the family of Nazareth presents a school of Christian life. The Apostle continues in his Letter that the love he entertains for the community is not without effort and difficulty, since it always means emulating Christ’s self-gift to man, without asking or looking for any reward, except to please God. Mother Bonifacia, who dedicated herself with joy to the apostolate and began to obtain the first fruits of her endeavours, also experienced abandonment and rejection by her disciples, and through it she learned a new dimension of the *sequela* of Christ: the Cross. She accepted it with the steadiness of hope,

offering her own life for the unity of the work born of her hands. The new Saint may be seen as an ideal model in whom the work of God resounds, an echo that invites her daughters, the Servants of St Joseph, and also all of us to welcome her testimony with the joy of the Holy Spirit, fearing no difficulty in spreading the Good News of the Kingdom of Heaven everywhere. We entrust ourselves to her intercession and we ask God for all the workers, especially those engaged in the more modest trades and who at times are not sufficiently esteemed, so that in their daily work, they may discover the friendly hand of God and witness to his love, transforming their own effort into a song of praise to the Creator.

“I love you, Lord, my strength”, we have just proclaimed this, dear brothers and sisters, in the Responsorial Psalm. These three new Saints are an eloquent sign of this passionate love for God. Let us follow their example, let us be guided by their teachings so that our whole life may become a witness of authentic love of God and neighbour. May the Virgin Mary, Queen of Saints, and the intercession of St Guido Maria Conforti, of St Luigi Guanella e St Bonifacia Rodríguez de Castro obtain this grace for us. Amen.

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