



The Holy See

CAPPELLA PAPAIE FOR THE BEATIFICATION OF FIVE SERVANTS OF GOD

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

III Sunday of Lent, 23 March 2003

1. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son; whoever believes in him has eternal life" (*chant before the Gospel*, cf. Jn 3,16). These words of the liturgy of the Third Sunday of Lent invite us to contemplate with the eyes of faith the great mystery which we will celebrate at Easter. It is the full and definitive gift of the love of God realized in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

The mystery of redemption in which the faithful are called to participate was lived in an exceptional way by the new Blesseds whom today I have had the joy of elevating to the glory of the altars: Pierre Bonhomme, priest, founder of the Sisters of Our Lady of Calvary; María Dolores Rodríguez Sopena, virgin, foundress of the Sopena Catechetical Institute; María Caritas Brader, virgin, foundress of the Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of Mary Immaculate; Juana María Condesa Lluch, foundress of the Congregation of the Handmaids of Mary Immaculate; Ladislau (László) Batthyány-Strattmann, layman, father of a family.

2. "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes" (Ps 18 [19],10). This naturally applies to Fr Pierre Bonhomme, who in listening to the Word of God, notably the Beatitudes and the accounts of the Passion of the Lord, with Mary's guidance, found the way to live in intimacy with Christ and imitate him. The meditation of the Scripture was the incomparable source of all his pastoral activity, especially of his dedication to the poor, the sick, deaf-mutes and the disabled for whom he founded the Institute of the "Sisters of Our Lady of Calvary". Following the example of the new Blessed, we can repeat, "*My model will be Jesus Christ; I am delighted to be like him whom I love*". May Fr Bonhomme encourage us to become familiar with Scripture, to love our Saviour in order to be his untiring witnesses by our words and our life.

3. "*I am the Lord, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery*"

(Ex 20,1). The great revelation of Sinai shows us God who redeems and frees from every slavery, then bringing his plan to fulfilment in the redeeming mystery of his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. How can we fail to make this sublime message reach especially those who do not experience it in their hearts on account of their ignorance of the Gospel?

Dolores Rodríguez Sopeña felt this necessity and wished to respond to the challenge of making the redemption of Christ present in the world of work. For this reason, her goal was *"to make all persons one sole family in Christ Jesus"* (*Constitutions of 1907*).

This spirit is crystallized in the three foundations of the new Blessed: the Sopeña Lay Movement, the Institute of Women Catechists, called today Sopeña Catechists, and the Sopeña Social and Cultural Work. By means of these works, in Spain and in South America, a spirituality continues that fosters the building of a more just world proclaiming the saving message of Jesus Christ.

4. *"Six days you shall labour and do all your work, the seventh day is a day of rest dedicated to the Lord"* (Ex 20,9.10). The reading of Exodus that we have heard reminds us of the duty of work. We must collaborate in the work of the Creator with our endeavour and in this way make the world better and more human. However, in the 19th century, the introduction of the woman into salaried work outside the home increased the risks for her life of faith and for her human dignity.

Blessed Juana Condesa Lluch, guided by her exquisite religious sensitivity, realized this. She lived a profoundly Christian youth: assisted at daily Mass in the church of the Patriarch, united her faith to an assiduous prayer. In this way she was prepared to dedicate herself totally to the love of God, founding the Congregation of the Handmaids of Mary Immaculate who, faithful to her charism, continue to be involved in the advancement of working women.

5. *"We preach Christ crucified ... the power of God and the wisdom of God"* (I Cor 1,23.24).

In today's second reading, St Paul reports how he proclaimed Jesus Christ, even to those who were rather hoping for miracles or human wisdom. The Christian must always proclaim the Lord without pulling back before difficulties, no matter how great they are.

In the course of history numberless men and women have proclaimed the Kingdom of God in the whole world. Among them must be counted Mother Caritas Brader, the foundress of the Franciscan Sisters of Mary Immaculate.

From the contemplative life of the enclosed convent of Maria Hilf in her Swiss homeland, one day the new blessed set out, first in Ecuador and then in Colombia, to consecrate herself entirely to the Mission *ad gentes (to the nations)*. With unlimited confidence in divine Providence, she founded schools and homes, above all in poor areas, and in this way spread a deep Eucharistic devotion.

At the moment of death, she said to her sisters, "*Do not abandon the good works of the Congregation, the alms and great charity for the poor, great charity among the sisters, allegiance to the bishops and priests*". Beautiful lesson of a missionary life dedicated to the service of God and of neighbour.

6. "*The weakness of God is stronger than men*" (I Cor 1,25). These words of the holy Apostle Paul also reflect the devotion and life style of Blessed Ladislaus Batthyány-Strattmann, father of a family and doctor. He used the rich inheritance of his noble family to give free care to the poor and to build two hospitals. His greatest interest was not material goods; nor even less were success and career the goals of his life. He taught and lived this in his family and so he was the best teacher of the faith for his children. Drawing his spiritual energy from the Eucharist, he showed as many, as divine Providence led to him, the source of his life and mission.

Blessed László Batthyány-Strattmann never placed earthly riches before our true good which is in heaven. May his example of family life and of generous Christian solidarity be an encouragement for all to follow the Gospel faithfully.

7. The holiness of the new Blesseds inspires us in turn to tend toward evangelical perfection, putting into practice all the words of Jesus. Here is an ascetical way of life that certainly is demanding, and yet possible for all.

May the Virgin Mary, Queen of all saints, support us with her maternal intercession. May the new Blesseds be our sure guides towards holiness. Amen.

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