



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE PILGRIMS GATHERED IN ROME
FOR THE BEATIFICATION OF
ASCENSIÓN NICOL GOÑI AND MARIANNE COPE**

Monday, 16 May 2005

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today, I joyfully welcome all of you who have come to take part in the Beatification of Mother Ascensión of the Heart of Jesus Nicol Goñi and of Mother Marianne Cope, which was held on Saturday afternoon [14 May] in the Vatican Basilica. These two new Blesseds, exemplary witnesses of the charity of Christ, help us to understand better the sense and value of our Christian vocation.

Dear pilgrims, you have come to Rome to relive the missionary message that Mother Ascensión of the Heart of Jesus Nicol Goñi, who has just been proclaimed "Blessed", bequeathed to the Church with her life and works. I invite you to keep alive in your heart the apostolic ardour, born from love for Jesus, that Mother Ascensión lived and knew how to pass on to her spiritual daughters.

As I cordially greet my Brother Bishops, the various Authorities and the faithful who participated in this meaningful event, I address in particular the *Dominican Missionary Sisters of the Rosary*, so that, following the example of their Blessed Foundress, they help us to relive the spirit of St Dominic in our times. Keep alive the experience of God's presence in missionary life - "God is so closely felt", Mother Ascensión would say -, the spirit of fraternity in your communities, ready to go to those places where the Church needs you, with that bold spirit which led Mother Ascensión to the undeveloped territory of the Vicariate of Puerto Maldonado.

I greet the pilgrims of this Apostolic Vicariate and of the other Peruvian regions, in whom I see maturing a precious fruit of genuine evangelization, cultivated with an especially feminine care.

I also greet the pilgrims from Navarra, birthplace of the new Blessed, and from the other parts of Spain, where the seed of faith is deeply rooted and has given many missionaries to the entire world.

The ceremony took place on a very significant day for missionaries and for the entire Church: the vigil of Pentecost, a moment in which, under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, the disciples of Jesus fearlessly launched themselves to proclaim everywhere and publicly Jesus' teaching. Since then, others have welcomed the missionary mandate, placing their energies at the service of the Gospel. Among them is Mother Ascensión, who, in turn, allowed herself to be inflamed by the fire of Pentecost and made it her duty to spread it in the world.

May she now intercede for all of you so that you bring to the world the light that gave splendour to her life and joy to her heart.

I bless you all with much affection. Thank you.

It is with great joy that I welcome you to Rome, dear brothers and sisters, for the Beatification of *Mother Marianne Cope*. I know that your participation in Saturday's solemn liturgy, so significant for the universal Church, will have been a source of renewed grace and commitment to the exercise of charity which marks the life of every Christian.

Marianne Cope's life was one of profound faith and love which bore fruit in a missionary spirit of immense hope and trust. In 1862 she entered the Congregation of the Franciscan Sisters of Syracuse where she imbibed the particular spirituality of St Francis of Assisi, dedicating herself wholeheartedly to spiritual and corporal works of mercy. Her own experience of consecrated life saw an extraordinary apostolate unfold, adorned with heroic virtue.

As is well known, while Mother Marianne was Superior General of her Congregation, the then Bishop of Honolulu invited the Order to come to Hawaii and work among the lepers. Leprosy was spreading rapidly and causing unspeakable suffering and misery among the afflicted. Fifty other Congregations received the same plea for assistance, but only Mother Marianne, in the name of her Sisters, responded positively.

True to the charism of the Order and in imitation of St Francis, who had embraced lepers, Mother Marianne volunteered herself for the mission with a trusting, "Yes"! And for 35 years, until her death in 1918, our new Blessed dedicated her life to the love and service of lepers on the islands of Maui and Molokai.

Undoubtedly the generosity of Mother Marianne was, humanly speaking, exemplary. Good intentions and selflessness alone, however, do not adequately explain her vocation. It is only the perspective of faith which enables us to understand her witness - as a Christian and as a Religious

- to that sacrificial love which reaches its fullness in Jesus Christ. All that she achieved was inspired by her personal love of the Lord, which she in turn expressed through her love of those abandoned and rejected by society in a most wretched way.

Dear brothers and sisters, let us today be inspired by Bl. Marianne Cope to renew our commitment to walk the path of holiness.

With my own prayers that your pilgrimage here to Rome may be a time of spiritual enrichment, I gladly impart to you my Apostolic Blessing, which I willingly extend to the members of your families at home, especially those who are ill or suffering in any way.

May the Virgin Mary obtain for us the gift of continual fidelity to the Gospel. May she help us to follow the example of the new Blesseds and to strive tirelessly towards holiness. To all of you present here and to your dear ones, I impart my Blessing.

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