



The Holy See

BEATIFICATION OF SIX SERVANTS OF GOD:
FERDINAND MARY BACCILIERI, EDWARD JOANNES MARIA POPPE,
ARCANGELO TADINI, MARIANO OF ROCCACASALE,
DIEGO ODDI AND NICHOLAS OF GESTURI

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Sunday, 3 October 1999

1. *"The vineyard of the Lord is his people".*

We repeated this a few moments ago in the responsorial psalm. Today's Liturgy of the Word presents us with the image of the vineyard and highlights the love God has for his people. This allegory, present in both the first reading and the Gospel, becomes even more eloquent in this autumn season when grapes are harvested and the earth's fruits are gathered before winter.

The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel, which in the Gospel parable is broadened to include the pagans too, precisely those "other tenants" to whom the owner will entrust his vineyard. This describes the Church's mission as the people of the New Covenant, called to bear fruits of truth and holiness.

At today's celebration we have the joy of seeing six faithful workers in the Lord's vineyard raised to the glory of the altars. They are: Ferdinand Mary Baccilieri, Edward Joannes Maria Poppe, Arcangelo Tadini, Mariano of Roccacasale, Diego Oddi and Nicholas of Gesturi. At various times and in different ways, each of them generously dedicated his life to serving the Gospel.

2. *Ferdinand Mary Baccilieri*, a priest, was a zealous worker in the Lord's vineyard through his parish ministry, which he carried out with an irreproachable life. A poor "country priest", as he liked to describe himself, he cultivated souls with vigorous preaching, in which he expressed his deep inner conviction. He thus became a living icon of the Good Shepherd.

A member of the Third Order of the Servants of Mary, with an intense and filial devotion to Our Lady, especially Our Lady of Sorrows, he wished to include Mary's name in the very title of the religious family he founded, the "Sisters Servants of Mary of Galeazza". Now Bl. Ferdinand Mary sings in heaven, as we heard in the passage from the prophet Isaiah, his "love song" for the vineyard of the Lord (cf. *Is* 5: 1).

3. *"Let me sing for my beloved a love song concerning his vineyard"*. These words from the Book of Isaiah which we have just heard apply to Fr Edward Poppe, who consecrated his life to Christ in the priestly ministry. Today he becomes a model for priests, especially those of his country, Belgium. He invites them to conform their lives to Christ the Shepherd, in order to be, like him, "priests on fire" with love for God and their brethren. Pastoral activity is truly fruitful only in contemplation. It is nourished by intimate contact with the Divine Master, who unifies our inner being for the sake of doing his will. I invite priests always to put the Eucharist at the centre of their life and their ministry, like Bl. Poppe. It is from being enlightened by Christ that they will be able to transmit the light.

Following the example of the new blessed, may all who have a catechetical mission find the necessary time to meet Christ! Through their teaching and their way of life, they will bear witness to the Gospel and enable others, especially young people who are searching for truth and the source of life, to know the moral demands that lead to happiness. Fr Poppe, who knew suffering, has a message for the sick, reminding them that prayer and love for Mary are essential to the Church's missionary commitment. Let us beg the Lord to send priests like Bl. Poppe into his vineyard!

4. *"He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is who bears much fruit"* (Gospel acclamation). Union with Christ, a spirit of prayer and strong ascetic effort were the secret of the extraordinary pastoral effectiveness of another generous vineyard worker, the priest *Arcangelo Tadini*, whom the Church enrolls today among the blessed. In the school of the Eucharist he learned to break the bread of God's Word, to practise charity and to respond with pastoral resourcefulness to the social and religious challenges that marked the end of the last century.

Precisely because he was a person totally given to God, he could also be a priest totally dedicated to others. The needs arising then in the working world spurred his pastor's heart to search for new ways to proclaim and bear witness to the Gospel. His ideal of life and the solidarity he practised towards the weakest groups in society continue today in the commitment of the religious congregation he founded, the Worker Sisters of the Holy House of Nazareth.

5. As for the life and spirituality of Bl. *Mariano of Roccacasale*, a Franciscan religious, it could be said that they are symbolically summed up in the Apostle Paul's wish to the Christian community of Philippi: *"The God of peace will be with you!"* (4: 9). His poor and humble life, led in the footsteps of Francis and Clare of Assisi, were constantly directed to his neighbour, in the desire to

hear and share the sufferings of each individual, in order to present them later to the Lord during the long hours he spent in adoration of the Eucharist.

Bl. Mariano brought peace, which is God's gift, wherever he went. May his example and intercession help us to rediscover the essential value of God's love and the duty to bear witness to it in solidarity towards the poor. In particular, he serves as an example to us of showing hospitality, which is so important in the present historical and social context and is particularly significant in view of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000.

6. The same Franciscan spirituality, centred on a life of Gospel poverty and simplicity, characterized Bro. *Diego Oddi*, whom today we contemplate in the choir of the blessed. At the school of St Francis, he learned that nothing belongs to man except his vices and sins, and that everything the human person possesses is really a gift from God (cf. *Regula non bullata* XVII, in *Fonti Francescane*, 48). Thus he learned not to be anxious about anything, but to make all his needs known to God "by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving", as we heard from the Apostle Paul in the second reading (cf. *Phil* 4: 6).

During his long service of alms-begging, he was a genuine angel of peace and goodness towards everyone who met him, particularly because he knew how to care for the needs of the poorest and most sorely tried. By his joyful and peaceful witness, by his genuine and convinced faith, by his prayer and tireless work, Bl. Diego pointed out the Gospel virtues that are the high road to achieving peace.

7. *"The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner"* (Mt 21: 42).

These words, which Jesus applied to himself in the Gospel, recall the mystery of the Son of God's abasement and humiliation, the source of our salvation. And our thoughts naturally turn to Bl. *Nicholas of Gesturi*, a Capuchin, whose life remarkably embodied this mysterious reality. A man of silence, he radiated an aura of spirituality and the powerful attraction of the absolute.

Affectionately called "Brother Silence" by the people, Nicholas of Gesturi displayed an attitude that was more eloquent than words: freed from the superfluous and in search of the essential, he was never distracted by what was useless or harmful, preferring to bear witness to the presence of the Incarnate Word beside every person.

In a world often sated with words but poor in values, there is a need for men and women who, like Bl. Nicholas of Gesturi, emphasize the urgent need to recover the capacity for silence and for listening, so that their whole life can become a "song" of praise to God and of service to their brothers and sisters.

8. *"Let me sing for my beloved a love song concerning his vineyard"* (Is 5: 1). As we contemplate

the marvels that God has accomplished in our brothers, our spirit breaks into praise and thanksgiving. We give you thanks, Lord, for the gift of these new blessed. In their lives entirely dedicated to the service of your kingdom, we admire the abundant good fruits you have produced in them and through them.

May their example and intercession spur us to imitate them, so that we too, by our fidelity to the Gospel, may give glory to the One who is the *"source of all good"* (cf. Collect, Italian Sacramentary).

May Mary, Queen of All Saints, intercede for us; may we be supported and encouraged by Bl. Ferdinand Mary Baccilieri, Edward Joannes Maria Poppe, Arcangelo Tadini, Mariano of Roccacasale, Diego Oddi and Nicholas of Gesturi, whom we contemplate in your heavenly glory.

Amen!

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