



# The Holy See

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BEATIFICATION OF FOUR SERVANTS OF GOD

## *HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II*

*St Peter's Square*

*Fourth Sunday of Lent, 21 March 2004*

1. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (II Cor 5: 17). With these words spoken by the Apostle Paul, we can sum up the message of today's Beatification Liturgy, which is very fitting for this so-called "*Laetare Sunday*" in the middle of our Lenten journey. The Second Reading and the Gospel form as it were a duet in praise of the love of God, our Merciful Father (Lk 15: 11-32), who has reconciled us in Christ (II Cor 5: 17-21). It is a hymn that makes a heartfelt appeal to "*be reconciled to God*" (II Cor 5: 20). This invitation is based on the certainty that the Lord loves us. He loved the Israelites and led them into the land of Canaan after the long journey of the Exodus that is full of heartfelt longing, as we heard in the First Reading. The Passover that they celebrated "in the evening in the plains of Jericho" (Jos 5: 10) and the first months that they spent in the Promised Land became for them an eloquent symbol of divine fidelity, a gift of God's peace to his Chosen People after the sorrowful experience of slavery.

2. *The four new Blesseds* whom the Church presents to us today are special witnesses of God's loving Providence that accompanies humanity on its way: [Luigi Talamoni](#), [Matilde of the Sacred Heart](#), [Piety of the Cross](#) and [Maria Candida of the Eucharist](#). They faced the labours and trials of their earthly pilgrimage sustained by indomitable trust in the Heavenly Father. In the difficult events of life, their support and comfort was always Christ. Thus, they experienced in themselves how true it is that by living in him we become "*new creatures*" (cf. II Cor 5: 17).

3. The priest [Luigi Talamoni](#) was a faithful reflection of God's mercy. Achille Ratti, subsequently Pope Pius XI, the most famous of the Blessed's high school students at the Seminary of Monza, described him as a "*gem of the Ambrosian [Milanese] clergy and a spiritual director and father for countless souls because of his holy life, enlightened knowledge, great heartedness, Magisterial expertise, apostolic zeal and praiseworthy civic services in Monza*". The new Blessed was diligent in the ministry of the confessional and in his service to the poor, to prisoners and especially to the poverty-stricken sick. What a shining example he is to us all! I urge especially priests and the Congregation of the Misericordine Sisters to keep their gaze on him.

4. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (II Cor 5: 17). St Paul's words can be applied perfectly to [Mother Matilde of the Sacred Heart](#). In love with Christ, she gave herself to him as a true disciple who embodied this newness. This tireless, religious woman devoted herself through an intense prayer life to transforming the society of her time by welcoming young orphan girls, nursing the sick at home, advancing the working woman and collaborating in ecclesial activities. Her deep devotion to the Eucharist and contemplation of Jesus in the Sacrament of the Altar gave rise to her desire to be like the bread that is broken and given

to all to share. This is what she also taught her Religious, the Daughters of Mary, Mother of the Church. Her luminous witness is a call to live in adoration to God and in service to our brethren, two fundamental pillars of Christian commitment.<sup>5</sup> *Mother Piety of the Cross* was born in Bocairente, Spain, and founded the Congregation of the Salesian Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Alcantarilla, Murcia. She is a marvellous example of the reconciliation that St Paul suggests to us in the Second Reading: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (II Cor 5: 19). But God asks us to collaborate with him to achieve his work of reconciliation (cf. vv. 19-20). Mother Piety gathered various young women who were eager to show the lowly and the poor the love of the provident Father as it is expressed in the Heart of Jesus, thereby giving life to a new religious family. A model of Christian and religious virtues and in love with Christ, the Blessed Virgin and the poor, she leaves us the example of austerity, prayer and charity to all the needy.<sup>6</sup> Maria Barba became a "new creature" who offered her entire life to God in Carmel, where she received the name *Maria Candida of the Eucharist*. She was an authentic mystic of the Eucharist; she made it the unifying centre of her entire life, following the Carmelite tradition and particularly the examples of St Teresa of Jesus and of St John of the Cross. She fell so deeply in love with the Eucharistic Jesus that she felt a constant, burning desire to be a tireless apostle of the Eucharist. I am sure that Bl. Maria Candida is continuing to help the Church from Heaven, to assure the growth of her sense of wonder at and love for this supreme Mystery of our faith.<sup>7</sup> "*Laetare, Jerusalem!* - Rejoice Jerusalem! (*Entrance Antiphon*). The invitation to rejoice that marks today's liturgy is broadened by the gift of the Blesseds Luigi Talamoni, Matilde of the Sacred Heart, Piety of the Cross and Maria Candida of the Eucharist. They give to us, pilgrims on earth, a taste of heavenly joy, and are witnesses for every believer of comforting hope. © Copyright 2004 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana