



The Holy See

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER

BEATIFICATION OF 5 SERVANTS OF GOD *Sunday, 9 April 2000* 1. "We wish to see Jesus" (*Jn 12: 21*). This is the request made to Philip by some Greeks who went up to Jerusalem for the Passover. Their desire to meet Jesus and to hear his word prompts a solemn response: "The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified" (*Jn 12: 23*). What is this "hour" to which Jesus refers? The context explains it: it is the mysterious and solemn "hour" of his Death and Resurrection. To see Jesus! Like that group of Greeks, countless men and women down the centuries have desired to know the Lord. They have seen him with the eyes of faith. They have recognized him as the crucified and risen Messiah. They have let themselves be won over by him and have become his faithful disciples. They are the saints and blessed ones whom the Church holds up to us as models to imitate and examples to follow. In the context of the Holy Year celebrations, today I have the joy of raising several new blessed ones to the glory of the altars. They are five confessors of the faith who proclaimed Christ in word and bore witness to him in continual service to their brethren. They are Mariano de Jesús Euse Hoyos, a diocesan parish priest; Francis Xavier Seelos, a professed priest of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer; Anna Rosa Gattorno, a widow, foundress of the Institute of the Daughters of St Anne; Mary Elisabeth Hesselblad, foundress of the Order of the Sisters of the Most Holy Saviour; and Mariam Theresia Chiramel Mankidiyan, foundress of the Congregation of the Holy Family in India.

2. "If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be also" (*Jn 12: 26*), Jesus told us in the Gospel we just heard. A faithful follower of Jesus Christ in the self-sacrificing exercise of the priestly ministry, Fr Mariano de Jesús Euse Hoyos, a Colombian, is raised today to the glory of the altars. From his intimate experience of meeting the Lord, Fr Marianito, as he is familiarly known in his homeland, dedicated himself tirelessly to the evangelization of children and adults, especially farmworkers. He spared no sacrifice or hardship, giving himself for almost 50 years in a modest parish of Angostura, in Antioquia, for the glory of God and the good of the souls entrusted to his care. May his shining witness of charity, understanding, service, solidarity and forgiveness be an example in Colombia and also an effective help in continuing the work of peace and full reconciliation in this beloved country. If 9 April 52 years ago marked the beginning of violence and conflicts, which unfortunately are still going on, may this day of the Great Jubilee year mark a new phase in which all Colombians will build a new Colombia together, one based on peace, social justice, respect for all human rights and brotherly love among children of the same homeland. 3. "Give me again the joy of your help; with a spirit of fervour sustain me, that I may teach transgressors your ways and sinners may return to you" (*Pss 51: 14-15*). Faithful to the spirit and charism of the Redemptorist Congregation to which he belonged, Fr Francis Xavier Seelos often meditated upon these words of the Psalmist. Sustained by God's grace and an intense life of prayer, Fr Seelos left his native Bavaria and committed himself generously and joyfully to the missionary apostolate among

immigrant communities in the United States. In the various places where he worked, Fr Francis Xavier brought his enthusiasm, spirit of sacrifice and apostolic zeal. To the abandoned and the lost he preached the message of Jesus Christ, "the source of eternal salvation" (*Heb 5: 9*), and in the hours spent in the confessional he convinced many to return to God. Today, Bl. Francis Xavier Seelos invites the members of the Church to deepen their union with Christ in the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist. Through his intercession, may all who work in the vineyard for the salvation of God's people be encouraged and strengthened in their task.

4. "I, when I am lifted up from the earth", Jesus promised in the Gospel, "will draw all men to myself" (*Jn 12: 32*). Indeed, from high on the Cross Jesus will reveal to the world God's boundless love for humanity in need of salvation. Irresistibly drawn by this love, Anna Rosa Gattorno made a continual sacrifice of her life for the conversion of sinners and the sanctification of all mankind. To be "Jesus' voice" in order to bring the message of his saving love everywhere: this was her heart's deepest desire! With complete trust in Providence and motivated by a courageous impulse of charity, Bl. Anna Rosa Gattorno had one desire: to serve Jesus in the suffering and wounded limbs of her neighbour, with sensitivity and motherly attention to all human misery. Today the special witness of charity left by the new blessed is still a stirring encouragement for everyone in the Church who is committed more specifically to proclaiming the love of God, who heals the wounds of every heart and offers the fullness of immortal life to all.⁵ "When I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all men to myself" (*Jn 12: 32*). The promise of Jesus is wonderfully fulfilled also in the life of Mary Elisabeth Hesselblad. Like her fellow countrywoman, St Bridget, she too acquired a deep understanding of the wisdom of the Cross through prayer and in the events of her own life. Her early experience of poverty, her contact with the sick who impressed her by their serenity and trust in God's help, and her perseverance despite many obstacles in founding the Order of the Most Holy Saviour of St Bridget, taught her that the Cross is at the centre of human life and is the ultimate revelation of our heavenly Father's love. By constantly meditating on God's word, Sr Elisabeth was confirmed in her resolve to work and pray that all Christians would be one (cf. *Jn 17: 21*). She was convinced that by listening to the voice of the crucified Christ they would come together into one flock under one Shepherd (cf. *Jn 10: 16*), and from the very beginning her foundation, characterized by its Eucharistic and Marian spirituality, committed itself to the cause of Christian unity by means of prayer and evangelical witness. Through the intercession of Bl. Mary Elisabeth Hesselblad, pioneer of ecumenism, may God bless and bring to fruition the Church's efforts to build ever deeper communion and foster ever more effective cooperation among all Christ's followers: *ut unum sint*.⁶ "Unless a wheat grain falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies it yields a rich harvest" (*Jn 12: 24*). From childhood, Mariam Theresia Mankidiyan knew instinctively that God's love for her demanded a deep personal purification. Committing herself to a life of prayer and penance, Sr Mariam Theresia's willingness to embrace the Cross of Christ enabled her to remain steadfast in the face of frequent misunderstandings and severe spiritual trials. The patient discernment of her vocation eventually led to the foundation of the Congregation of the Holy Family, which continues to draw inspiration from her contemplative spirit and love of the poor. Convinced that "God will give eternal life to those who convert sinners and bring them to the right path" (*Letter 4 to her Spiritual Father*), Sr Mariam devoted herself to this task by her visits and advice, as well as by her prayers and penitential practice. Through Bl. Mariam Theresia's intercession, may all consecrated men and women be strengthened in their vocation to pray for sinners and draw others to Christ by their words and example.⁷ "I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (*Jer 31: 33*). God is our only Lord and we are his people. This indissoluble covenant of love between God and humanity was brought to its fulfilment in Christ's paschal sacrifice. It is in him that, despite belonging to different lands and cultures, we become one people, one Church, one and the same spiritual building whose bright and solid stones are the saints. Let us thank the Lord for the splendid witness of these new blessed. Let us look to

them, especially in this Lenten season, in order to be spurred in our preparation for the forthcoming Easter celebrations. May Mary, Queen of Confessors, help us to follow her divine Son as did the new blessed. May you, Mariano de Jesús Euse Hoyos, Francis Xavier Seelos, Anna Rosa Gattorno, Mary Elisabeth Hesselblad, Mariam Thresia Chiramel Mankidiyan, intercede for us so that by deeply sharing in Christ's redemptive Passion we can live the fruitfulness of the seed that dies and be received as his harvest in the kingdom of heaven. Amen!

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