



CANONIZATION OF BROTHER ANDRÉ

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2010

Homily of Pope Benedict XVI

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The celebration of holiness is renewed today in St Peter's Square. I joyfully address my cordial welcome to you who have come from even very far away to take part in it. I offer a special greeting to the Cardinals, to the Bishops and to the Superiors General of the Institutes founded by the new Saints, as well as to the Official Delegations and to all the Civil Authorities. Let us seek together to understand what the Lord tells us in the Sacred Scriptures proclaimed just now. This Sunday's Liturgy offers us a fundamental teaching: the need to pray always, without tiring. At times we grow weary of praying, we have the impression that prayer is not so useful for life, that it is not very effective. We are therefore tempted to throw ourselves into activity, to use all the human means for attaining our goals and we do not turn to God. Jesus himself says that it is necessary to pray always, and does so in a specific parable (cf. Lk 18: 1-8).

This parable speaks to us of a judge who does not fear God and is no respecter of persons: a judge without a positive outlook, who only seeks his own interests. He neither fears God's judgement nor respects his neighbour. The other figure is a widow, a person in a situation of weakness. In the Bible, the widow and the orphan are the neediest categories, because they are defenceless and without means. The widow goes to the judge and asks him for justice. Her possibilities of being heard are almost none, because the judge despises her and she can bring no pressure to bear on him. She cannot even appeal to religious principles because the judge does not fear God. Therefore this widow seems without any recourse. But she insists, she asks tirelessly, importuning him, and in the end she succeeds in obtaining a result from the judge. At this point Jesus makes a reflection, using the argument a fortiori: if a dishonest judge ends by letting himself be convinced by a widow's plea, how much more will God, who is good, answer those who pray to him. God in fact is generosity in person, he is merciful and is therefore always disposed to listen to prayers. Therefore we must never despair but always persist in prayer.

The conclusion of the Gospel passage speaks of faith: "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (Lk 18: 8). It is a question that intends to elicit an increase of faith on our part. Indeed it is clear that prayer must be an expression of faith, otherwise it is not true prayer. If one does not believe in God's goodness, one cannot pray in a truly appropriate manner. Faith is essential as the basis of a prayerful attitude. It was so for the six new Saints who are held up today for the veneration of the universal Church: Stanisław Sottys, André Bessette, Cándida María de Jesús Cipitria y Barriola, Mary of the Cross MacKillop, Giulia Salzano and Battista Camilla Varano.

(...)

Brother André Bessette, a native of Quebec in Canada, and a religious of the Congregation of the Holy Cross, experienced suffering and poverty at a very early age. They led him to have recourse to God through prayer and an intense inner life. As porter of the College of Notre Dame in Montreal, he demonstrated boundless charity and strove to relieve the distress of those who came to confide in him. With very little education, he had nevertheless understood where the essential of his faith was situated. For him, believing meant submitting freely and through love to the divine will. Wholly inhabited by the mystery of Jesus, he lived the beatitude of pure of heart, that of personal rectitude. It is thanks to this simplicity that he enabled many people to see God. He had built the Oratory of St Joseph of Mount Royal, whose faithful custodian he remained until his death in 1937. He was the witness of innumerable cures and conversions. "Do not seek to have your trials removed", he said, "ask rather for the grace to bear them well". For him, everything spoke of God and of God's presence. May we, in his footsteps, seek God with simplicity in order to discover him ever present in the heart of our life! May the example of Brother André inspire Canadian Christian life!

(...)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, let us thank the Lord for the gift of holiness that is resplendent in the Church and today shines out on the faces of these brothers and sisters of ours. Jesus also invites each one of us to follow him in order to inherit eternal life. Let us allow ourselves to be attracted by these luminous examples and to be guided by their teaching, so that our life may be a canticle of praise to God. May the Virgin Mary and the intercession of the six new Saints whom we joyfully venerate today obtain this for us. Amen.