



POPE CANONISES SEVEN NEW SAINTS

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Vatican Radio) Following in the footsteps of Paul VI and John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI celebrated World Mission Sunday by canonizing seven new Saints. Tens of thousands of pilgrims from around the world gathered in Saint Peter's Square as Jacques Berthieu, Pedro Calungsod, Giovanni Battista Piamarta, Maria Carmen Sallés y Barangueras, Marianne Cope, Kateri Tekakwitha, and Anna Schäffer were raised to the honours of the altar.

In his homily during the Mass, Pope Benedict noted that the canonization is taking place as Bishops from around the world are gathered in Rome to take part in the General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: "The coincidence between this ecclesiastical meeting and World Mission Sunday is a happy one; and the word of God that we have listened to sheds light on both subjects. It shows how to be evangelisers, called to bear witness and to proclaim the Christian message, configuring ourselves to Christ and following his very path. This is true both for the mission ad Gentes and for the new evangelisation."

The Pope gave a brief reflection on the life and works of each of the new saints. Among them is Pedro Calungsod from the Philippines. Pedro "displayed deep faith and charity and continued to catechise his many converts, giving witness to Christ by a life of purity and dedication to faith." Saint Pedro was martyred in 1672.

Marianne Cope, also canonised today, was born in Germany but moved to the United States at a very young age. She joined the Franciscan order and became Superior General of her congregation. She eventually answered the call to serve the lepers in the Hawaiian island of Molokai. "At a time when little could be done for those suffering from this terrible disease, Marianne Cope showed the highest love, courage, and enthusiasm."

Today also saw the canonisation of the first Native American saint from North America. "Leading a simple life, Kateri remained faithful to her love for Jesus, to prayer, and to daily Mass. Her greatest wish was to know and to do what pleased God." Speaking in French, Pope Benedict prayed, "Saint Kateri, Protrectress of Canada and first Native American saint, we entrust to you the renewal of faith in the First Nations and in all of North America! May God bless the First Nations!"

At the end of the Solemn Mass, the Holy Father addressed the faithful before the recitation of the Angelus. In his remarks, he called upon Mary, the Queen of all the Saints, and turned his thoughts especially to the Marian shrine of Lourdes, which is experiencing heavy flooding. "In particular," he continued, "we wish today to entrust to the maternal protection of the Virgin Mary all missionaries – priests, religious, and lay – that in every part of the world sow the good seed of the Gospel." He prayed, too, for the Synod of Bishops, as they continue to face "the challenge of the new evangelization for the transmission of the Christian faith."

The Holy Father concluded his remarks with greetings in several languages to all the pilgrims gathered in Saint Peter's Square: "On the happy occasion of the canonizations today, I greet the official delegations and all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors, especially those from the Philippines, Canada and the United States of America. May the holiness and witness of these saints inspire us to draw closer to the Son of God who, for such great love, came to serve and offer his life for our salvation. God bless you all!"