



The Holy See

MASS OF THANKSGIVING FOR THE EQUIVALENT CANONIZATION OF TWO CANADIAN SAINTS

HOMILY OF POPE FRANCIS

*Vatican Basilica
Sunday, 12 October 2014*

Video

We have heard Isaiah's prophecy: "The Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces..." (*Is* 25:8). These words, full of hope in God, point us to the goal, they show the future towards which we are journeying. Along this path the Saints go before us and guide us. These words also describe the vocation of men and women missionaries.

Missionaries are those who, in docility to the Holy Spirit, have the courage to live the Gospel. Even this Gospel which we have just heard: "Go, therefore, into the byways...", the king tells his servants (*Mt* 22:9). The servants then go out and assemble all those they find, "both good and bad", and bring them to the King's wedding feast (cf. v. 10).

Missionaries have received this call: they have gone out to call everyone, in the highways and byways of the world. In this way they have done immense good for the Church, for once the Church stops moving, once she becomes closed in on herself, she falls ill, she can be corrupted, whether by sins or by that false knowledge cut off from God which is worldly secularism.

Missionaries have turned their gaze to Christ crucified; they have received his grace and they have not kept it for themselves. Like Saint Paul, they have become all things to all people; they have been able to live in poverty and abundance, in plenty and hunger; they have been able to do all things in him who strengthens them (cf. *Phil* 4:12-13). With this God-given strength, they have the courage to "go forth" into the highways of the world with confidence in the Lord who has called

them. Such is the life of every missionary man and woman... ending up far from home, far from their homeland; very often, they are killed, assassinated! This is what has happened even now to many of our brothers and sisters.

The Church's mission of evangelization is essentially a proclamation of God's love, mercy and forgiveness, revealed to us in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Missionaries have served the Church's mission by breaking the bread of God's word for the poor and those far off, and by bringing to all the gift of the unfathomable love welling up from the heart of the Saviour.

Such was the case with Saint François de Laval and Saint Marie de l'Incarnation. Dear pilgrims from Canada, today I would like to leave you with two words of advice drawn from the Letter to the Hebrews. Keeping missionaries in mind, they will be of great benefit for your communities.

The first is this: "Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith" (13:7). The memory of the missionaries sustains us at a time when we are experiencing a scarcity of labourers in the service of the Gospel. Their example attracts us, they inspire us to imitate their faith. They are fruitful witnesses who bring forth life!

The second is this: "Recall those earlier days when, after you had been enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings... Do not therefore abandon that confidence of yours; it brings a great reward. For you need endurance..." (10:32,35-36). Honouring those who endured suffering to bring us the Gospel means being ready ourselves to fight the good fight of faith with humility, meekness, and mercy, in our daily lives. And this bears fruit.

We must always remember those who have gone before us, those who founded the fruitful Church in Québec! The missionaries from Quebec who went everywhere were fruitful. The world was full of Canadian missionaries like François de Laval and Marie de l'Incarnation. So a word of advice: remembering them prevents us from renouncing candour and courage. Perhaps – indeed, even without perhaps – the devil is jealous and will not tolerate that a land could be such fertile ground for missionaries. Let us pray to the Lord, that Québec may once again bear much fruit, that it may give the world many missionaries. May the two missionaries, who we celebrate today, and who – in a manner of speaking – founded the Church in Québec, help us by their intercession. May the seed that they sowed grow and bear fruit in new courageous men and women, who are far-sighted, with hearts open to the Lord's call. Today, each one must ask this for your homeland. The saints will intercede for us from heaven. May Québec once again be a source of brave and holy missionaries.

This, then, is the joy and the challenge of this pilgrimage of yours: to commemorate the witnesses, the missionaries of the faith in your country. Their memory sustains us always in our journey towards the future, towards the goal, when "the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all

faces...".

"Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (*Is* 25:9).