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Press Conference in view of the Canonization of Blessed Paul VI and Óscar Arnulfo Romero y Galdámez

At 17.00 this afternoon, in the Holy See Press Office, a press conference was held in view of the Canonization of Blessed Paul VI and Óscar Arnulfo Romero y Galdámez, which will take place on Sunday 14 October.

The speakers were His Eminence Cardinal Giovanni Angelo Becciu, prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, and His Eminence Cardinal Gregorio Rosa Chávez, auxiliary bishop of San Salvador, El Salvador.

The following is the intervention by Cardinal Giovanni Angelo Becciu:

Intervention of Cardinal Giovanni Angelo Becciu

Paul VI will be **canonized** on 14 October by our Pope Francis. He was the Pope of Vatican Council II. While John XXIII had the prophetic courage to open the great ecumenical assembly, Paul VI had the mission to guide it, to conclude it and to make it enter the life of the Church and of the world. Before his election to the Supreme Pontificate, Monsignor Giovanni Battista Montini had been the principal collaborator of the Venerable Pius XII. He was then very close to John XXIII. After becoming Pope, it was he who created the cardinals who would be his successors: Albino Luciani, Karol Wojtyła and Joseph Ratzinger. Thus the figure and mission of Paul VI must be considered in this historical continuity of the living tradition of the Church.

Pope Montini, who died on 6 August 1978, on the Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord, was a heroic and brilliant witness of Christ the light of the world. It is precisely this profound and convinced **Christocentrism** that constitutes the driving force of his spiritual profile and of his extraordinary teaching. The love of Jesus and His Church, for whose renewal he made extraordinary efforts, was conducted *usque ad finem*. From this perspective we can understand his life as a continuous journey of holiness, from infancy to presbyterate, from his commitment in the Roman Curia to the Ambrosian chair, from pastoral activity to the Throne of Peter.

Giovanni Battista Montini personally knew **the great dramas of the twentieth-century**: the two World Wars, the

totalitarian systems of fascism, Nazism and communism, and then the extreme violence of terrorism. But thorny questions were not lacking even within the Christian community: the years of the immediate post-Council were the most difficult and painful of his pontificate.

But in all these events, he was constantly sustained by that Spirit of Christ Who nourished his interior life and his many courageous initiatives. We mention some of the most obvious: liturgical reform, the internationalization of the Roman Curia with the establishment of new Dicasteries, the establishment of the Synod of Bishops. His apostolic journeys to different parts of the world, in the service of evangelization and peace, were another great novelty. From a doctrinal point of view, his **teaching** is no less important. For its characteristic pastoral immediacy, the Wednesday general audience was particularly original (another of his initiatives, followed by his Successors), and are a continuous catechesis for the People of God. His teachings illuminate many aspects of faith and Christian existence and are notable for his commitment, sometimes heroic, in defending the truth, life, the family, peace, and the authenticity of love. Faithful to the programme of his first encyclical, *Ecclesiam suam*, Paul VI was always the Pope of **dialogue with all**: within the Catholic Church, with Christian brothers of other Churches, with non-Christians and non-believers, and always with the passion of evangelization, to bring to each man the light of Christ and the love of Christ.

As the synthesis and peak of his entire journey, we note in Paul VI, in a truly prophetic way, the great line of **charity, sustained and motivated by a living and solid faith**. To a priest in Milan who had asked him what the most important thing was for the formation of seminarians, he replied: "Educate them to treat Jesus as the friend of the heart; the priest must be in love with Jesus". It is from this love, lived and witnessed, that there flows the great dynamic he universally proposes: Christ, Church, World. We must love the Church, said Pope Montini, in her reality, *simul sancta et semper purificanda* (LG 8). It is the greatest "antinomy" that charity must know how to overcome and resolve. The heart of Paul VI overflowed in the expression of the purest spirituality of the Council: an "inner reform" of the Church, guided towards holiness, which unites prayer and dogma, charity and truth, and which animates the People of God in the diversity of vocations, in ecumenical dialogue, in true openness to the world to better communicate the light of Christ. Paul VI's entire life was animated by a great love of neighbour: as a young lay person, then as a priest, as a bishop and as Pope. It was a sort of continuous growth and expansion of charity up to the Pope's love as Universal Pastor, Vicar of Christ the Good Shepherd. He exercised this charity in particular in Rome during the Second World War, promoting charitable assistance and hospitality for those persecuted by Nazi-fascism, in a significant way for the Jews, and then in his Milanese episcopate. As a Pope, he was always committed to justice and peace, in the dynamic of the Gospel.

His expression, which has almost become a proverb, is very famous: "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 41). Indeed, it is precisely this phrase that would appear to be the most authentic biography of the Pontiff who pronounced it: Paul VI, himself a messenger of the light of Christ and exceptional teacher of faith in God and in man.

The priest **Francesco Spinelli** was born in Milan on 14 April 1853, and lived in the period, difficult but at the same time creative, of the construction of the new Italian society born after unification. In this ecclesial and social context he sensed the urgency of the formation of the female world. He therefore took action to support the most destitute girls and, intensifying his commitment to serve Christ in the least among society, he established schools and oratories, and ensured assistance to the sick, the disabled, and the lonely elderly. In Rome he was inspired to start a community of young women who consecrated their lives to the Lord present in the Eucharist: in this way the intrinsic relationship that binds divine worship to the exercise of solidarity took on the greater consistency and visibility of fraternal love. In 1889, following an economic crisis entirely beyond his control, he moved to the diocese of Cremona. His earthly existence came to a peaceful end on 6 February 1913. He was beatified by John Paul II in 1992.

The priest **Vincenzo Romana** was born in Torre del Greco near Naples on 3 June 1751, and received priestly ordination in 1775. While he immediately conducted his ministry in constant service to the least and to the

education of children and young people, it was above all the disastrous eruption of Vesuvius on 15 June 1794 that made him a key figure in the material, spiritual and moral rebirth of his city, of which he became parish priest in 1799. Depth and rigour in the search for the will of God were combined in him with the inspiring charity that accompanied him to the last days of his life. He died on 20 December 1831. The Supreme Pontiff Paul VI declared him Blessed in 1963.

Mother Maria Katharina Kasper was born on 26 May 1820 in Dernbach, a small village in Germany. Strong and extrovert, she spent her adolescence working in the fields and even splitting stones for road construction. The virtue of hope shone in her and drove her to “look ahead”, overcoming the temptation of mediocrity and setting off on the path of evangelical perfection. In her context of undeniable hardship, she took the initiative of founding an Institute of nuns at the service of the most humble social classes: thus, in 1845, the first nucleus of the “Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ” was established, engaged in welcoming and promoting poor. She constantly visited homes, increasingly numerous, to get to know people and their problems, and did so unexpectedly, so as not to receive honours, travelling on foot and often in precarious conditions. Mother Maria Katharina died of a heart attack on 2 February 1898. The Supreme Pontiff Paul VI listed her among the Blessed in 1978.

Mother Nazaria Ignazia of Saint Teresa of Jesus March Mesa was born in Madrid on 10 January 1889, but in 1905 her large family moved to Mexico. However, this was not the final destination of her journey. In fact, although it was in Mexico that she became aware of the signs of her vocation to religious life and entered the Institute of the Sisters of the Abandoned Elders, her most significant field of action was Bolivia, where she was sent in 1912. Here she came into contact with a situation of extreme poverty and real degradation. Nazaria Ignazia put her natural gifts and talents of grace at the service of human development in that environment and, in 1926, she established the Congregation of the Crucified Missionary Sisters of the Church, in the service of the poor and for the promotion of women, for the proclamation of the Word of God and for the religious formation of children and adults through missions, spiritual exercises and the press. Her life was in grave danger both in Bolivia and in Spain during the civil war (1936-1939): indeed for a certain period she returned to her country of origin. In 1942 she transferred from Spain to Buenos Aires, but her health conditions, already of concern, suddenly worsened. She died on 6 July 1943. The Supreme Pontiff John Paul II celebrated her beatification in 1992.

Nunzio Sulprizio was born on 13 April 1817 in Pescosansonesco in the province of Pescara. In childhood he experienced the pain of becoming a young orphan of both parents. He received his human and Christian education from his maternal grandmother. But, after the death of his grandmother, Nunzio was accepted into the home of an uncle, Domenico Luciani, who had no particular regard for his young age or for his health conditions, which, already precarious, worsened due to the hard work imposed on him as a blacksmith. Bone tuberculosis forced him to move to Naples, where he was well looked after by an officer of the Bourbon army, Colonel Felice Wochinger; but he later had to be admitted to the Hospital of the Incurable. Here he finally received his much desired First Communion. As his faith grew, Nunzio participated in the mystery of the cross of Christ, ending his earthly path on 5 May 1836, at the age of just nineteen years. The Supreme Pontiff Leo XIII recognized the heroic nature of his virtues in 1890, proposing him as a model for the young. On 1 December 1963, Paul VI proclaimed him Blessed. The Synod of Bishops, which is currently reflecting on the pressing problems affecting the young, may find in him the basis of a perennially current path.
