



VATICAN - Propaganda Fide venerates Relics of Saint Therese of Lisieux at the start of the missionary month of October: "Love is the soul of mission"

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - At the start of the missionary month of October which will culminate with Mission Sunday on the 22nd, the Cardinal Prefect and staff of Propaganda Fide welcomed and venerated the relics of Saint Therese of Lisieux, Patron saint of missions with St Francis Xavier delle Missioni, in the chapel of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples. For the occasion Cardinal Ivan Dias presided a special Mass, concelebrated by Archbishop Henryk Hoser secretary adjunct also president of the Pontifical Mission Societies, and by CEP under secretary Fr. Massimo Cenci PIME, in the presence of the four general secretaries of the Pontifical Mission Societies.

In his homily Cardinal Dias recalled that as a young girl Therese Martin, showing great courage and determination, travelled to Rome, to ask Pope Leo XIII to grant her permission to enter a convent although she was only 15 years old. The Cardinal said the main characteristic of the Saint's brief but intense life was love: love for Jesus and love for neighbour, for all humanity as she wrote in her autobiography: "My vocation is love. At the heart of the Church my Mother, I will be love, and in this way I will be everything". "Love, charity, is the soul of mission" the Cardinal said, recalling the experience of Saint Therese and Pope Benedict XVI's message for Mission Sunday this year.

The two patron saints of missionary activity, Saint Therese and Saint Francis Xavier, the Cardinal said: "remind us of the two aspects of mission, contemplation and action. We must be contemplatives in action, working while not forgetting prayer and the spiritual aspect". Both Saints died young, living only a few years, Saint Therese in the convent in Lisieux and Saint Francis on mission in the Far East, nevertheless they will never be forgotten. "If I am here - Indian born Cardinal Dias told those present - it is because Saint Francis baptised my forefathers".

Holding up these two exemplary Christians the Cardinal Prefect reminded CEP staff members "it is not the quantity of work but the quality which counts and the love with which it is performed" and that bureaucratic aspects must not be allowed to dominate, the important thing is to have a heart filled with love, like Saint Therese. Cardinal Dias offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for the whole missionary world, in mission territories that depend on the CEP, for the bishops, clergy and religious, local and missionary, for all the lay Catholics and for all the many men and women who have yet to hear the message of the Gospel and he asked St Therese to intercede that God may grant abundant graces from heaven, like the 'shower of rose petals' the dying Therese promised to send from heaven. (S.L.) (Agenzia Fides 3/10/2006 - righe 33, parole 452)