

VATICAN CITY, 12 OCT 2008 (VIS) - At 10 a.m. today, Benedict XVI celebrated the Eucharist in St. Peter's Square. During the ceremony he canonised the Blessed Gaetano Errico, Italian priest and founder of the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary (1791-1860 . . .

In his homily the Pope commented on the Gospel parable of the wedding banquet, telling the more than 40,000 people present that

"the banquet of the Eucharist anticipates the final feast of heaven, to which the Lord invites us every day and in which we should participate with the wedding garments of His grace. Should we sully or tear this clothing with sin, the goodness of God does not turn us away, nor does it abandon us to our fate, rather it offers us the possibility to restore the integrity to the wedding garments necessary for the feast through the Sacrament of Reconciliation".

After highlighting how "the ministry of Reconciliation never loses its relevance" the Holy Father recalled how Gaetano Errico "dedicated himself to this ministry with diligence, assiduity and patience, without ever refusing or holding himself back. Thus he inscribes himself among the extraordinary figures of the priesthood who, unceasingly, made the confessional the place to dispense the mercy of God, helping men to find themselves, to fight against sin and to progress in the path of spiritual life. The street and the confessional were the privileged places for pastoral action of this new saint. The street allowed him to encounter the persons to whom he would address his usual invitation: 'God loves you, when will we see you?', and in the confessional he made it possible for them to encounter the mercy of the heavenly Father".