

# In Rome, at home, we are Catholic

On most days in Rome, a haze settles over the city, and the din of traffic seems everywhere. On most Saturday evenings, such as the night before the canonization of five new saints, a peacefulness overtakes the Via della Conciliazione, the broad street leading to St. Peter's Square.

The next day, the square will be filled with about 50,000 people, but on this night, the street and the square experience a sort of calm before the crowds.

At this place especially, and a few other major shrines in the world such as Lourdes, one can really appreciate the Church Universal - the Catholic Church with both big C and small c. Catholic as in Roman Catholic, and catholic as in encompassing all.

Five new saints were canonized Oct. 11. There was the man who was born in what was then Poland, but is now Ukraine, studied in France and Russia, and became Archbishop of Warsaw before being exiled to Siberia. There was the Spanish Dominican who founded the Congregation of Dominican Sisters of the Annunciation, which now serves in Europe, the Americas, Africa and Asia.

There was a Belgian priest who asked for assignment to the mission land of Hawaii, half a world away, and there found his calling to minister to the abandoned. Also, a Spanish mystic whose vocation as a priest was cut short by illness, but one who continues to inspire people around the world, and a French nun who took in the elderly whom no one else wanted and started a congregation that serves around the world today.

As the saints were announced, in various languages, cheers went up from the crowd. In the meantime, the Synod for Africa is under way during these weeks at the Vatican, touching on issues that might never occur to us in the United States. Yet we are all part of this one, holy, catholic Church - and so we are connected. The concerns of Africa are our concerns as well.

Little Sister of the Poor Mother Alice Marie Jones said being in St. Peter's Square at the canonization Mass for St. Jeanne Jugan, her order's foundress, was a great experience of the universality of the Church, especially being mixed in with pilgrims who had come in support of the other new saints.

Seeing others representing the Little Sisters around the world, she said, "You see the family spirit. ... It's a wonderful, unifying experience."

Visitors from around the world found examples in the good work of the saints. William Tapa was with a group from Polynesia who came because of the canonization of St. Damien of Molokai. "This is a model for the modern time for the servant," he said.

Ellen McLoughlin, a member of Georgetown's Holy Trinity Parish in Washington, said the global experience was very inspiring. "The number of people from all the different countries - they were so kind," she said, noting that a woman from Spain helped her find a seat toward the front of the square.

Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien called the turnout for the canonization "a great sign for the Church's vitality, the Church's health these days."

Our Church will endure because our founder is the savior who lives forever. He calls us to follow him, in all our situations.

In the calm of a Roman evening, we are Catholic. In the cheers of St. Peter's Square, we are Catholic. In our home parishes and in our homes, "the domestic church," we are Catholic. When we pray with the communion of saints, we are Catholic. In the languages we speak from around the world, we are Catholic. In the actions we do, when we say nothing, but serve in love and charity, we are Catholic.

Let's strive for greater unity in our faith and in our hearts, and continue Christ's prayer: "That all may be one."

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