

Why can't you be holy?

ASSISI, Italy – A lot of people think they can't be holy. They believe they cannot get close enough to Jesus because they didn't live in his time and can't get to really know him. Father Richard Cash, of Fancy Farms, Ky., disagrees with that point of view. In the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi, Italy, April 28, Father Cash asked a group of 50 pilgrims from the United States if they thought that St. Paul was any holier than St. Francis, just because Paul lived at the time of Jesus, and Francis didn't. The priest, with his kindly Southern drawl, explained that Francis was as close to Christ as anyone could be. We can all be that close to the Lord, he said. We need not renounce everything, as Francis did, but we do need to listen to Jesus when he speaks to us, as he spoke to Francis and asked him to "rebuild my church." Francis thought he meant the physical building, and set about rebuilding, stone by stone, the Portiuncola, a small church now housed in the Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels in Assisi. He later realized the call was to rebuild the church from within with humility, radical poverty and a new order of friars and brothers, and eventually sisters with the Poor Clares. The next day, at Santa Croce (Holy Cross) Church in Florence, he spoke about the reading for the day in which Jesus, waiting on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias in the darkness of early morning, calls to the disciples to cast their nets after a night of fruitless fishing.



Father Richard Cash preaches about the light of the Lord at a Mass April 28, 2011, at the Santa Croce Church in Florence, Italy, as part of a pilgrimage for the beatification of John Paul II in Rome May 1. (Catholic Review photo | Christopher Guntz)

Grasping the paschal candle, lit for the Mass because it is the Easter season, he said, "Working without the Lord, it is darkness – you have nothing." He noted that Jesus sought out the disciples, not waiting for them to find him in the early days after the resurrection. He asked them to cast their nets, even as they were probably already heading back into the shore and had stowed all their gear. The great catch shows "If we obey the Lord, we will have great blessings. Trust the word of the Lord." Then on April 30, the group heard the readings for the Saturday within the octave of Easter,

in which they heard about how the apostles would not believe Mary Magdalene and the disciples who encountered Jesus on the road to Emmaus and when they said, “He is risen,” (“He is truly risen!”).