



► Remembering holiness in the particular Church

Pastoral guidelines for remembering the Saints, Blessed, Venerables and Servants of God in each diocese of Spain

► Document approved at the 127th Plenary Assembly of the Spanish Bishops' Conference, held from 31 March to 4 April 2025

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INTRODUCTION

The Jubilee Year we are celebrating brings to our hearts the message of St John Paul II at the beginning of the new millennium, making us recall "the words with which Jesus, after having spoken to the crowds from Simon's boat, invited the Apostle to "put out into the deep" in order to catch fish: *Duc in altum* (Lk 5:4). [This word resounds for us today too and invites us to remember the past with gratitude, to live the present with passion and to open ourselves with confidence to the future: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever" (Heb 13:8) [...]. Let us walk in hope! A new millennium is opening before the Church like an immense ocean into which we must venture, counting on Christ's help"¹.

Twenty-five years later, the Holy Father Francis invites us to rekindle hope, which is born of love and founded on the love that flows from the Heart of Jesus pierced on the cross, being docile to grace, under the action of the Holy Spirit⁽²⁾ who nourishes us with his gifts and places at our side companions along the way who help, comfort and stimulate us to a fruitful, full and holy Christian life. They are the Saints, Blessed, Venerables and Servants of God of our lands, whom we remember with gratitude in order to live with passion the evangelising mission that corresponds to us at this time in history.

1. THE WITNESS OF HOLINESS IN OUR TIME

On 16 November 2024 Pope Francis published a *Letter for the remembrance in the particular Churches of their Saints, Blessed, Venerables and Servants of God*. In it, the Holy Father gave the possibility to the Episcopal Conferences to "elaborate and possibly propose indications and pastoral orientations".

In this first part, we will focus on the content of the *Letter* and the pastoral consequences it can have for diocesan life.

1. Letter of the Holy Father Francis. Full text³

With the Apostolic Exhortation "Gaudete et exsultate" I wanted to propose once again to the faithful disciples of Christ in the contemporary world the universal call to holiness. It is at the heart of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, which recalled that "all the faithful, in whatever state or condition, are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity" (LG, 40). We are all called to accept God's love "because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom 5:5). Indeed, holiness, rather than being the fruit of human effort, is to make room for God's action.

Each one of us can recognise in many of the people we have met along the way, witnesses to the Christian virtues, especially faith, hope and charity: spouses who have lived their love faithfully, opening themselves to life; men and women who, in their various professions, have supported their families and cooperated in spreading the Kingdom of God; men and women who, in their various professions, have supported their families and cooperated in spreading the Kingdom of God.

¹ St. JOHN PAUL II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, at the conclusion of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 (6-1-2001) 1, 58.

²We are especially mindful of these documents of Francis: *Spes non confundit*. Bull of convocation of the Ordinary Jubilee of the year 2025 (9-5-2024) and *Dilexit nos*. Encyclical Letter on the human and divine love of the Heart of Jesus Christ (24-10-2024).

³The English translation of the letter is from the Office for the Causes of Saints of the Spanish Episcopal Conference.

God; adolescents and young people who have followed Jesus with enthusiasm; pastors who, through their ministry, have poured out the gifts of grace on God's holy people; men and women religious who, living the evangelical counsels, have been living images of Christ the Bridegroom. We cannot forget the poor, the sick, the suffering, who in their weakness have found support in the divine Master. This is the "everyday" and "next door" holiness in which the Church throughout the world has always been rich.

We are called to allow ourselves to be stimulated by these models of holiness, among whom stand out first of all the martyrs who shed their blood for Christ and those who have been beatified and canonised as examples of Christian life and our intercessors. Then we think of the Venerables, men and women whose heroic exercise of virtue has been recognised, of those who in special circumstances have made their lives an offering of love to the Lord and to their brothers and sisters, as well as of the Servants of God whose Causes of beatification and canonisation are in progress. These processes show the extent to which the witness of holiness is also present in our time, in which the great witnesses to the faith (cf. Phil 2:15), who have marked the experience of the particular Churches and, at the same time, have made history fruitful, shine like stars. They are all our friends, companions on our journey, who help us to fully realise our baptismal vocation and show us the most beautiful face of the Church, which is holy and mother of saints.

Throughout the liturgical year, the Church publicly honours the Saints and Blessed, on pre-established dates and in predetermined ways. However, it seems important to me that all the particular Churches commemorate the Saints and Blessed on the same date, as well as the Venerables and Servants of God in their respective territories. It is not a matter of inserting a new memorial in the liturgical calendar, but of promoting with appropriate initiatives outside the liturgy, or of remembering within the liturgy, for example in the homily or at another moment that is considered opportune, those figures who have characterised the local Christian journey and spirituality. I therefore urge the particular Churches, beginning with the next Jubilee in 2025, to remember and honour these figures of holiness each year on 9 November, the feast of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica.

This will allow each diocesan community to rediscover or perpetuate the memory of extraordinary disciples of Christ who have left a living sign of the presence of the Risen Lord and remain sure guides on our common journey towards God, protecting and sustaining us. To this end, the Episcopal Conferences will be able to draw up and possibly propose pastoral indications and orientations.

May the saints, in whom the wonders of divine grace shine forth, impel us to a more intimate communion with God and inspire us to sing with them the praises of the Most High.

Rome, St John Lateran, 9 November, Feast of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica.

FRANCISCO

2. Pastoral keys

The Letter is structured in five paragraphs, each of which invites us to focus our attention on various aspects of a single message: God's design for each one of us as an invitation to holiness, a vocation for all, a journey of faith that each one of us must build from our fragility and with God's support.

a) Holiness, a current call

Since the beginning of his ministry, Pope Francis has referred to holiness on many occasions⁽⁴⁾ but his masterpiece in this regard is undoubtedly the apostolic exhortation *Gaudete et exsultate, on the call to holiness in today's world*, dated 19 March 2018. It was the first pontifical magisterial text dedicated exclusively to this subject.

In the Letter of 16 November 2024, as he did with that Exhortation, Francis wishes to situate his words in a clear continuity with the Second Vatican Council. The Pope suggests as a key to interpreting the Council the universal call to holiness, placing it "at the heart of the teaching" of the Council. But he specifies its content very well: "holiness, rather than being the fruit of human effort, is to make room for God's action". This is a constant insistence in the magisterium of Francis: the primacy of grace and the protagonism of God in the life of the Christian.

b) The saints "next door".

In *Gaudete et exsultate* the Pope coined the term "saints next door" to refer to those concrete lives that enlighten those around them⁵. (5) Francis wants to situate two distinct but complementary levels of holiness: the universal call for all the baptised and that of the corresponding canonical process which concludes with canonisation, for only a few.

As the Council has already recalled, this call to holiness includes all states of Christian life without favouring any one, and the Pope expresses it clearly: "To be saints it is not necessary to be bishops, priests, nuns or religious. We are often tempted to think that holiness is reserved only for those who are able to distance themselves from their ordinary occupations in order to devote much time to prayer. This is not the case. We are all called to be saints by living with love and offering our witness in our daily occupations, wherever we find ourselves" (GeE 14). Francis, without detracting from the great saints of history, wants to call for a holiness of the everyday, "next door", with a special regard for those who have been called to be "saints" (4).

⁴Among others: "The saints are not supermen, nor are they born perfect. They are like us, like each one of us, they are people who, before reaching the glory of heaven, lived a normal life, with joy and pain, toil and hope. But what changed their lives? When they knew the love of God, they followed him wholeheartedly, without conditions and hypocrisy; they spent their lives in the service of others, they endured suffering and adversity without hatred and responded to evil with good, spreading joy and peace. This is the life of the saints: people who out of love for God put no conditions on Him in their lives [...] To be saints is not a privilege of the few, as if someone had a great inheritance. All of us in Baptism have the inheritance of being able to become saints. Holiness is a vocation for all. We are all, therefore, called to walk the path of holiness, and this path has a name, a face: the face of Jesus Christ" FRANCISCO, *Angelus* (01-11-2013).

⁵This expression is not entirely new. He takes the idea, as he himself indicates in his Exhortation, from the French writer Joseph Malègue who speaks of "the middle class of holiness" (cf. *Pierres noires. Les classes moyennes du Salut*, Paris 1958). For Malègue, the middle classes are made up of those who resist the spiritual mediocrity of their time by deepening a discreet existence. Benedict XVI, too, in a general audience devoted to holiness, had referred to this reality: "In fact, I must say that also according to my personal faith many saints, not all, are true stars in the firmament of history. And I would like to add that for me not only some great saints, whom I love and know well, are "traffic signs", but also the simple saints, i.e. the good people I see in my life, who will never be canonised. They are normal people, so to speak, without visible heroism, but in their everyday goodness I see the truth of the faith" BENEDICT XVI, *General Audience* (13-04-2011).

the poorest and most needy.

It is an invitation to recognise, in our own personal journey, those people whose simple lives have marked us: our family, parents and grandparents especially, who have perhaps passed on the faith to us and have been luminous models; teachers and catechists; priests who have accompanied us in the stages of our Christian life; consecrated men and women with whom we may have met at some personal crossroads; so many lay people with whom we have shared mission, work or fun... perhaps people with whom we have never conversed in depth but whose example has left its mark. To recognise them we must be awake, with our senses open and ready to be stimulated by them. The realisation that these people exist is an impetus for us on our own path to holiness.

c) Models of holiness for everyday life

In the third paragraph of the letter, the Pope focuses on those whose lives have already been set as models - saints and blessed - or are in the process of being so - venerables and servants of God.

He places in first place, among all those canonised and beatified, the martyrs, who have identified themselves with Christ through the shedding of their blood, whose "witness we need to preserve in order to make our hope fruitful"⁶.

He then refers to those who are in the process of beatification and canonisation, whether by virtue of virtue or by offering their lives (a new way introduced by Francis) "who in unique circumstances have made their lives an offering of love to the Lord and to their brothers and sisters"⁷.

(7) The Pope remarks that the processes of contemporary people put concrete and close faces to this call to holiness. He describes them as "friends and companions on the journey" and therefore encourages us to get to know them, to spread their life and work and to have recourse to their intercession.

d) In the communion of saints

The saints have been able to respond in the first person to the question that troubles the heart: "For whom am I? Their lives refer us immediately to the Heart of Christ who gave himself for us; in the communion of the saints we discover the source that gives us new life, the blood that redeems us and the breath that makes us dare to say also to each one of us: "I want to be a saint".

This desire of the human heart can only be sustained by the grace that is implored and accepted. The prayer of the Church and the witness of our brothers and sisters come to our aid. For this reason, it seems important to the Pope that all the particular Churches remember the Saints and Blesseds on the same date, as well as the Venerables and Servants of God in their respective territories, making present on 9 November each year those figures who have characterised the local Christian journey and spirituality.

⁶FRANCISCO, *Spes non confundit*. Bull of convocation of the Ordinary Jubilee of the year 2025 (9-5-2024) 20.

⁷Cf. Pope Francis, *Apostolic Letter in motu Proprio Maiorem hac dilectionem on the offering of life* (11-07-2017). To the two existing ways (martyrdom and virtues) the Pope has added a third ordinary way to reach the altars: the offering of life.

3. The application in the Church on pilgrimage in Spain

a) Evangelising at the crossroads of existence

We find ourselves in an epochal change that presents new challenges, both on a global and local level. We are witnessing a spiritual impoverishment with serious consequences for the family and society, which casts doubt on the very reality of the human person. Artificial intelligence opens up unsuspected horizons and yet makes us feel defenceless, shipwrecked in uncertainty in the absence of questions of meaning, fearful of the future, concerned with appearing more than with being and even more than with doing or having. This has generated a disconnected, disordered and insecure society in which mistrust and confrontation are growing. On the other hand, there is a return to the local, the close, the most genuine, the rural, a search for roots, for identity, which leads to a new appreciation of the local environment.

It is always a propitious time to announce the good news of salvation; it is the time for a dynamic missionary outreach that springs from the joy of mercy. We are bearers of hope, of the good news that our life has a future and meaning because a Father, who loves us beyond measure, has called us by name.

How can we bring the Gospel of God's great love to these crossroads of existence? The rupture between the Gospel and culture is undoubtedly still the drama of our time, as it was in other times⁸. There is an urgent need to integrate faith into everyday life. We need a pastoral conversion that passes through a personal conversion in a vocational key, and through an explicit, clear, concrete and courageous proposal of Christian anthropology and of the universal vocation to holiness.

The Holy Father's initiative will help us to become aware of the legacy of these illustrious sons of the diocesan Church, to celebrate them together; it will encourage us to link the local saints with the new parishes, to refer to them in other diocesan initiatives or areas, joining forces; in short, it will be a way of developing the pastoral care of holiness.

b) The footsteps of the saints in the particular Church

"The People of God is not only a community of different peoples, but is itself made up of different parts, the particular Churches, formed in the image of the universal Church, in which and of which the one and only Catholic Church is constituted. The particular Church is entrusted to the Bishop, who is the visible principle and foundation of unity, and through his hierarchical communion with the head and with the other members of the episcopal college, the particular Church is inserted into the *full communio ecclesiarum* of the one Church of Christ"⁹.

In the exercise of the mission of sanctifying the People of God entrusted to us, according to the particular vocation of each one, we are sustained by the saints whose life, teaching and holiness enlighten and guide our spiritual journey. In a special way, "the great Bishops of the first centuries of the Church, the founders of the particular Churches, the witnesses to the faith, the saints whose life, teaching and holiness enlighten and guide our spiritual journey" (8).

⁸Cf. ST PAUL VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, on evangelisation in the contemporary world (8-12-1975) 20.

⁹CONGREGATION FOR BISHOPS, Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops "*Apostolorum Successores*" (22-2-2004) 5.

In times of persecution, the great rebuilders of dioceses after persecutions and calamities, those who have lavished themselves on the poor and the suffering by building hospices and hospitals, the founders of Orders and religious Congregations"¹⁰, without forgetting their predecessors in the episcopal see who have shone for holiness of life. These devotions and exercises of piety should be ordered "in such a way that they harmonise with the sacred liturgy, are inspired by it and lead towards it"¹¹.

(11) Here the Holy Father's wish finds great meaning, for he does not intend to add a new liturgical memorial but that there should be a day, 9 November each year, when each particular Church can *remember* (not celebrate liturgically) all those who are already on the altars or whose process is open. In its pastoral care, it exhorts each particular Church to preserve, present and spread the memory of these extraordinary disciples of Christ (saints, blessed, venerable and servants of God) who are the greatest patrimony of the diocesan Church.

We all venerate the great saints who have gilded the history of the Church on pilgrimage in Spain. Often, however, there is little knowledge of the Blessed themselves and it is not known that in the diocese there are people whose causes are in process, leaving this diocesan wealth reduced to specific spiritual families. The lives of children, young people and adults; bishops, priests, members of the consecrated life, lay people (several married couples); enlighten and drive evangelisation in our dioceses. An immense treasure to be known!

II. UNIVERSAL VOCATION TO HOLINESS AND CANONICAL PROCESS

A holy life is the most eloquent message that shocks the powers of the world; "holiness represents the living face of Christ", said Saint John Paul II at the beginning of the third millennium¹². (12) His light shines in the faces of the saints, through whom it becomes visible. We understand this statement clearly when we look at the great saints in the chapels of our churches. But "holiness is not the prerogative of a few", Francis points out, "holiness is a gift offered to all, none excluded, and is therefore the distinctive character of every Christian"¹³. (13) It excludes no one, but only some reach the altars. What is the difference, what does this gift consist in?

1. The universal call to holiness

By virtue of the grace of baptism, we are all called to a holy life. We are convinced that "if Baptism is a true entrance into the holiness of God through insertion into Christ and the indwelling of his Spirit, it would be a contradiction in terms to be content with a mediocre life, lived according to a minimalist ethic and a superficial religiosity. To ask a catechumen, "Do you want to be baptised?

¹⁰CONGREGATION FOR BISHOPS, Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops "*Apostolorum successores*" (22-2-2004) 48. The number continues: "In order that the memory of Bishops eminent in the exercise of their ministry may always be kept alive, the Bishop, with the presbyterate or the Episcopal Conference, will take care to make their figures known to the faithful through updated biographies and, if necessary, by introducing their cause of canonisation".

¹¹CONGREGATION FOR BISHOPS, Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops "*Apostolorum Successores*" (22-2-2004) 152.

¹²Cf. ST JOHN PAUL II, *Novo millennio ineunte*, at the conclusion of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 (6-1-2001) 7.

¹³FRANCISCO, *General Audience* (19-11-2014).

time to ask him, "Do you want to be a saint? It means setting him on the path of the Sermon on the Mount: "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48). As the Council itself explained, this ideal of perfection is not to be misunderstood as implying some kind of extraordinary life, practicable only by a few "geniuses" of holiness. The paths of holiness are manifold and suited to the vocation of each person"¹⁴.

Holiness consists in living everyday circumstances in the light of the Gospel. It is not a matter of undertaking extraordinary undertakings, but of uniting oneself to Christ, of "making his attitudes, his thoughts, his behaviour our own. Holiness is measured by the stature that Christ attains in us, by the degree to which, in the power of the Holy Spirit, we model our whole life on his"¹⁵.

And we can continue to ask ourselves: how can it happen that my way of thinking, my attitudes, my behaviour become the way of thinking and acting with Christ and of Christ? We learn from those who have gone before us, because we need to heal the wounds of divisions in order to live in communion with each other and with God, the Father of all. Conscious of our weakness, we are sustained by the communion of saints, in which God's grace shines forth. There are saints of universal renown and others of unknown name. On 1 November, the feast of All Saints, we look up to heaven and pay homage to all of them, to those who are on the altars and to so many Christians who, after a life according to the Gospel, share in the eternal happiness of heaven. They are our intercessors and our models of Christian life.

2. The itinerary of the beatification and canonisation processes

"In the midst of this multitude of believers, whom I have called "saints next door" - the Pope reminds us - there are those whom the Church points to as models, intercessors and teachers. These are the beatified and canonised saints, who remind us all that living the Gospel to the full is possible and beautiful. In fact, holiness is not a programme of effort and renunciation, it is not "spiritual gymnastics", no, it is something else, it is above all the experience of being loved by God, of receiving his love and mercy freely. This divine gift opens us to gratitude and allows us to experience a great joy, which is not the emotion of an instant or a simple human optimism, but the certainty of being able to face everything with the grace and audacity that come from God"¹⁶.

From among the multitude of people who die a saintly death, the Church canonises some, that is, she sets them up as a canon of life, models for our Christian journey. This process is a long itinerary, which involves numerous specialists and is subject to the direct supervision of the diocesan bishop and the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, in order to effectively ensure the seriousness of the investigative procedure according to the norms established by the Holy See¹⁷.

¹⁴ST JOHN PAUL II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, at the conclusion of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 (6-1-2001) 31.

¹⁵BENEDICT XVI, *General Audience* (13-4-2011).

¹⁶FRANCISCO, *Address to the participants in the congress "Holiness Today"* organised by the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints (6-10-2022).

¹⁷Cf. ST JOHN PAUL II, *Apostolic Constitution Divinus perfectionis Magister* (25-1-1983). CONGREGATION FOR THE CAUSES OF THE SAINTS, *Normae servandae in inquisitionibus ab episcopis faciendis in causis sanctorum* (7-2-1983); *Sanctorum Mater*. Instruction on the Diocesan or Eparchial Instructional Procedure in the Causes of Saints (17-5-2007).

The starting point is the fame of holiness or of martyrdom or of dedication of life, i.e. the persistence among the people of God of the awareness that a person lived virtue above the ordinary, or that he or she died out of hatred for the faith or that he or she freely gave up his or her life for love. This reputation for holiness is accompanied by a reputation for signs: we spontaneously turn to this person asking for his intercession, we experience his help, we recognise that as a result of this request we have received more or less important graces. Only if these elements are present can the Bishop begin a Process of beatification and canonisation.

These Causes are carried out at two different levels: the diocese itself and the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints.

In the *diocesan phase*, the main task is to gather as much information as possible about the life, virtues-martyrdom-surrender of life and reputation for sanctity of the Servant of God and includes a documentary part and a testimonial part. In this phase no judgement is made, but the aim is to collect the material that will allow the authorities of the Dicastery to proceed to the appropriate discernment of the sanctity of a person.

Once all this work has been completed in the dioceses, the Dicastery validates it and the *Roman phase* of the Process begins. The Postulator of the Cause is responsible for compiling all the material gathered in the diocesan phase into a single document (the *Positio*), which will be examined by the various organs of the Dicastery and will conclude, or not, with the declaration of heroic virtues or the recognition of martyrdom. The purpose of *the Positio* is to enable the historical consultors, theologians and the cardinals and bishops who are members of the Dicastery to reach moral certainty about the martyrdom, the heroic virtues or the offering of the life of the Servant of God. For beatification (except in the case of martyrdom) and for canonisation, both miracles must be proved. With the act of canonisation the Pope declares definitively and solemnly that a faithful Catholic can be publicly venerated by the whole Church.

3. Considerations for the remembrance in the dioceses

To have a remembrance in each particular Church of the saints, blessed, venerable and servants of God of the diocese, regardless of the fact that each saint and blessed has his or her own liturgical celebration, is a very important initiative for the pastoral care of holiness, especially for two reasons:

- the first is the opportunity to make present to the faithful the local holiness for imitation and celebration of those who are so close to them geographically and culturally, whether they are lay people, members of the diocesan clergy or of the consecrated life.
- The second is to make known who are the Venerables and Servants of God whose causes are active in the diocese. This is valuable, not only as significant data for the particular church, but above all to foster piety towards these people so that they can be prayed for and favours can be asked so that, if it is God's will, the fame of sanctity spreads or the miracle we desire for beatification and canonisation takes place. You cannot love or pray to someone you do not know.

This initiative is a milestone in the history of the Causes of Saints. In order to be able to implement it properly, we believe it is advisable to clarify some concepts, such as: the difference between these four denominations (saint, blessed, venerable and servant of God), between vocation to sainthood and canonisation process, between liturgical memory and pastoral remembrance, public worship and private devotion, etc., in order to avoid confusion among pastoral workers and the people of the Church.

pastoral workers and the People of God, as well as highlighting an authentic pastoral care of holiness.

a) The different denominations

The denomination refers to the point in the canonical process:

Servant of God: this is the denomination given when the process of a Catholic faithful who has died with a reputation for holiness is initiated.

Venerable: the name given to the servant of God when the Pope authorises the promulgation of the Decree on the heroicity of virtues, martyrdom or the offering of life.

Blessed: this is the name by which the venerable is designated after the beatification ceremony. From then on, his or her liturgical memorial can be celebrated every year only in the places provided for by law, and his or her mortal remains are considered relics.

Saint: this is the name given to the blessed after the canonisation ceremony. From that moment on, his cult is extended to the universal Church.

b) The fame of sanctity and signs

As we have pointed out, the first requirement for the introduction of a cause of beatification and canonisation is the reputation for holiness and signs.

The reputation for holiness is a resplendent evangelical life in the faithful following of Christ, which invites all Christians to be configured to him and to establish his Kingdom. Authentic reputation for holiness is not the same as the importance a person has had in history, the works he or she founded or created, or the media popularity he or she received during his or her lifetime. It is to be distinguished from good reputation, public esteem and social and cultural notoriety. Nor can it be based on certain extraordinary phenomena such as stigmata, visions, apparitions, etc., which, although they constitute an important element in the life of a person, are always gifts offered by the Lord and not demonstrations of a holy life.

The regulations in force remind us that "fame must be spontaneous and not artificially procured. It must be stable, continuous, spread among people worthy of faith, extended among a significant part of the people of God"¹⁸.

The other element, already mentioned, which accompanies the fame of sanctity (or of martyrdom) and helps to value it is the fame of signs, "an opinion spread among the faithful about the graces and favours received through the intercession of the Servant of God"¹⁹. If someone is convinced of the holiness of a person, he will turn to him and ask for his intercession before God, a conviction that will increase if he receives the favour he requests.

c) Public worship and private devotion

Precisely because of this moral certainty that they are intercessors before God, the Church is very careful in the veneration of the blessed and saints, clearly distinguishing public worship from private devotions. So much so that improper public worship is grounds for closure.

¹⁸*Sanctorum Mater* Art. 7 - § 2.

¹⁹*Sanctorum Mater* Art. 6.

of the process of a venerable person or a Servant of God²⁰.

While the memory of saints and blessed can be celebrated liturgically (own prayers, own Liturgy of the Hours, public veneration of images and relics etc.), devotion to the venerable and servants of God can only be expressed privately and without any public manifestation of worship. These prayers for private devotion, which are said for the intercession of a Venerable or Servant of God and which appear on their holy cards, are in no way intended to prevent the judgement of the Church.

4. The pastoral care of holiness

Pope Francis reminds us that "every saint is a mission; he or she is a project of the Father to reflect and incarnate, at a particular moment in history, an aspect of the Gospel" (GeE 19). Therefore, canonisation is not a closure but a starting point for that threefold mission that Preface I of the saints sets out: we are offered the example of their holy life, the help of their intercession and participation in their destiny.

As *Lumen Gentium* teaches: "One and the same holiness is cultivated in the many kinds of life and occupations by all who are led by the Spirit of God, and obedient to the voice of the Father, adoring him in spirit and truth, follow Christ, poor, humble and cross-bearing, in order to deserve to be made sharers in his glory. But each one must walk unhesitatingly in the way of living faith, which gives rise to hope and works through charity, according to the gifts and functions proper to it" (LG 41).

We wish to propose holiness as a "pastoral priority"²¹ in the rich multiplicity of the Church's life. The pastoral care of holiness includes the diffusion and knowledge of the life and teachings of the saints, blessed, venerable and servants of God who can help each individual Christian to walk the path of his or her own holiness.

III. POSSIBLE PASTORAL ACTIONS

These *Guidelines* take the form of pastoral actions appropriate to the peculiarity of each diocese. We set out some initiatives that help us to live out the desire expressed by Pope Francis in his Letter, to enrich the life of our particular Churches with the examples of holiness that are close to us.

These are suggestions - some of which are already being implemented - which each diocese should consider and see whether they should be implemented in their respective territories.

A) Coordinated by the Office for the Causes of the Saints

Next year will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the creation of the Office for the Causes of Saints in our Episcopal Conference. Its subsidiary mission is to coordinate and encourage the particular Churches in their work for the Causes of Saints.

²⁰Cf. *Sanctorum Mater* Art. 88: "In the churches, and outside them, it is very important always to abstain from any act which might unreasonably lead the faithful to think that the initiation of the procedure necessarily leads to the beatification and canonisation of the Servant of God (e.g. liturgical celebrations and eulogies in honour of the Servants of God, etc., are to be avoided)". *Sanctorum Mater* Art. 143 § 4: "It is very important to abstain from any act which might lead the faithful to think that the closure of the procedure necessarily entails the beatification and canonisation of the Servant of God".

²¹Cf. ST JOHN PAUL II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, at the conclusion of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 (6-1-2001).

The Holy Father, in the functions of counselling and formation, with particular dedication to the processes by way of martyrdom.

For this reason, in addition to the ordinary function of accompanying the dioceses in the area of its competence, the Office will undertake two concrete initiatives deriving from these *Guidelines*.

1ª. Publications on the Venerable and Servants of God

In collaboration with the Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, the Office for the Causes of Saints is preparing a volume that summarises the main biographical details of all those candidates whose Process is open. In this volume it will be possible to find, for the first time, in an orderly and complete way, a list of all those Christians in our dioceses who can shine like stars in a pluriform firmament.

In addition, a simple bibliography and a final study on the main characteristics of these brothers and sisters who are called to continue to accompany and enlighten our lives will be provided.

2ª. Aids for remembrance at liturgical moments

The dioceses will be provided with a small subsidy that can be used on that day, following the indications of Pope Francis: "it is not a question of inserting a new memorial in the liturgical calendar, but of promoting with appropriate initiatives outside the liturgy, or of remembering within it, for example, in the homily or at another moment that is considered opportune".

B) In the particular Churches

Pope Francis wants each particular Church to direct its gaze towards those who, to paraphrase the Preface of 1 November, are "the best members of the diocesan Church".

The Spanish reality is very rich and diverse; there will be dioceses that have many saints, blessed and open processes, and others less so. Each particular Church will find its own way to carry out this initiative. It is an opportunity to show that holiness permeates all the evangelising work of the Church, and so it is an opportunity to involve the various diocesan bodies in this remembrance of local holiness: catechesis, youth, vocations, seminary, family, laity, social pastoral, etc.

In many cases it will not be a question of organising new things but of making the most of what we already have by contributing to this transversal line of action of holiness. The following are suggestions of possible initiatives that could help us to make this "remembrance" a reality.

1ª. Routes of holiness

The places where the saints lived, or where their remains are preserved, are places of pilgrimage and encounter. In many of them there is a small museum that preserves their belongings or explains their life and work. To come into contact with them is also to get to know more about the great charitable work of the Church. At the origin of many hospitals, asylums, schools, soup kitchens, centres for listening to and integrating migrants, shelters, etc., there is a saintly person.

To realise that they are men and women of flesh and blood, to feel the places of their

life, it can be a good initiative and an occasion for catechesis and times of prayer. It will also be a sign of communion between the different realities that make up the particular Church, getting to know and enriching each other.

2ª. Popular piety: pilgrimages, brotherhoods and other devotions

In many parts of our geography, popular piety is the cornerstone of evangelisation and of generous dedication to others. The sanctuaries in honour of different invocations of the Lord and of the Blessed Virgin Mary attract hundreds of pilgrims, as do the local festivities in honour of the patron saints.

Of particular importance are the brotherhoods and confraternities, which over the centuries "have been a forge of holiness for many who have lived in simplicity an intense relationship with the Lord. Walk resolutely towards holiness," Pope Francis exhorts them; "do not be satisfied with a mediocre Christian life, but let your membership be a stimulus, above all for you, to love Jesus Christ more"²². (22) And this love is made concrete in that

"to "carry" the Christ in the procession, to carry every day the cross that the Lord proposes to us or to carry on our shoulders the brother we find prostrate on the road, as the Good Shepherd would do, is the same love, is the same *hidden charity* that we find in the tabernacle of the Holy Church Cathedral, and in that of our titular church"²³. Devotion to Our Lord Jesus Christ, to his Blessed Mother Mary, to the patron saints of our towns and cities, must always make present the commitment to bring God's tenderness closer to men and women who suffer in body and soul.

Taking advantage of these occasions for an adequate catechesis on holiness of life, which translates into Christian charity, is a task that requires our effort and creativity.

3rd. Study days and testimonies of local holiness

The remembrance of local holiness can go beyond the devotional aspect, which is why it would be interesting to organise, in communion with the diocesan study centres, seminars, specific days or monographic conferences that make known, from different points of view, the figure of all those saints, blessed, venerable and servants of God of the diocesan Church.

These initiatives can also be carried out by the parishes and the different areas of diocesan pastoral work. Consecrated life will have the opportunity to share the rich heritage of holiness that it has accumulated in its history.

4ª. Media and cultural initiatives

In today's culture, the media play a key role, it is common to address "influencers", warns the Vatican Dicastery for Communication, and "we should all take our "influence" seriously. There are not only macro-influencers with a large audience, but also micro-influencers. Every Christian is a micro-influencer [...] Every follower of Christ has the potential to establish a link, not with himself, but with others [...].

²² FRANCISCO, *Homily* at the Holy Mass Mass with occasion of the Day of the brotherhoods and popular piety (5-5-2013).

²³ FRANCISCO, *Message* of the Holy Father to the participants in the "II International Congress of Confraternities and Popular Piety", 04.12.2024 (9-5-2024).

with the Kingdom of God, even for the smallest circle of their relationships"²⁴. It is a clear call to personal witness. The document goes on to state: "What does it mean to be a witness? The Greek word for witness is "martyr", and some of the most powerful "influential Christians" can be said to have been martyrs. The attraction of martyrs is that they witness to their union with God by the sacrifice of their own lives. "Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in you and whom you have received from God, and you do not belong to yourselves" (1 Cor 6:19). The bodies of the martyrs are exemplary instruments for the revelation of God's love"²⁵.

This "remembrance" on every 9th of November is an opportunity to bring influential witnesses closer through the technical and audio-visual means of the present time. Putting all the means of communication at the service of the pastoral care of holiness is a challenge we can take up. We have photographs and even videos of the most recent saints, blessed, venerable and servants of God; being able to see them and hear their voice brings us closer to their figure and their witness.

It will be important to offer young people the life of the saints through different languages that help them to get to know them: films, exhibitions, musicals, etc. As Pope Francis recalled: "The heart of the Church is also full of young saints, who gave their lives for Christ, many of them even to the point of martyrdom. They were precious reflections of the young Christ who shine out to stimulate us and to bring us out of the doldrums. The Synod emphasised that "many young saints have brought out the features of youth in all their beauty and in their time were true prophets of change; their example shows what young people are capable of when they are open to encounter Christ"²⁶.

CONCLUSION

We conclude these *Guidelines* with the hope that these words of Pope Francis will resound in our particular Churches: "I hope that these pages will be useful for the whole Church in promoting the desire for holiness. Let us ask the Holy Spirit to instil in us an intense yearning to be holy for the greater glory of God and let us encourage one another in this endeavour. In this way we will share a happiness that the world cannot take away from us" (GeE 177).

²⁴DICASTERIO FOR COMMUNICATION, *Towards a full presence. Pastoral reflection on interaction in social networks* (28-5-2023) 72 and 74.

²⁵Dicastery for Communication, *Towards a full presence. Pastoral reflection on interaction in social networks* (28-5-2023) 78.

²⁶FRANCISCO, *Christus vivit*, to young people and to all the people of God (25-3-2019) 49.