

NEW SAINT GIVES JOY TO THE POPE

by John M. Haffert



There may not be many things these days to make the Pope, "happy". But belonging as he does completely to Mary (Totus Tuus), the Pope was filled with joy as he raised to the altars of the Church last April 24th the black youth who suffered beating rather than give up wearing the Scapular.

Isidore Bakanja was a convert from paganism and proudly wore the Scapular as the "Habit of Mary". After having it torn off and having been beaten for wearing it, he continued. "the Habit of Mary". From the next beating he died after six months of suffering during which he almost constantly prayed the Rosary, forgiving those who had caused his death.

When he was beatified last April 24th the Postulator, Rev. Redemptus Valabek, O. Carm, thanked the Pope for raising this young devotee of the Rosary and the Scapular to the altars of the Church. And the Pope touching his breast (where he wears the Scapular) said:

"I am very happy."

For this gave the Holy Father the opportunity to hold up to the world a

wonderful model of devotion to Mary and the sanctifying fruit of the two devotions which Pope Paul VI had said are especially to be fostered at this time: The Scapular and the Rosary.

The Gift of Faith, the Two Hearts

Isidore was only a teenager when Trappist missionaries from Belgium taught him about Jesus and Mary. He had a marvellous gift of faith, something so much of us take for granted! He proudly donned the Scapular (not the medal). It was especially conspicuous because in the tropical heat of Zaire it was his only upper clothing.

The Scapular is "Our sign of consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary," said Pope Pius XII. And Sr. Lucia, who saw Our Lady in the skies of Fatima as Our Lady of Mt. Carmel holding forth the Scapular, said: "The Scapular and Rosary are inseparable". They lead us, through the Heart of Mary, into union with the Sacred Heart of Jesus in all His mysteries.

Isidore had been taught only rudimentary catechism. He had little more than the same basic truths of the faith which Our Lady taught to the children of Fatima. And on that rudi-

mentary foundation, through the Scapular and Rosary devotions he became a saint.

Pope Calls Him Model for the World

The day after his beatification, speaking to a large group of pilgrims the Pope said:

"Blessed Isidore, who loved to pray the Rosary and wore the Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, is a model of devotion to Mary. As all humanity approaches the threshold of the third millenium, the church, in Africa and elsewhere, needs to turn to the Mother of the Redeemer to implore Her motherly help in the many problems present in the life of individuals, families and nations. We need Her as a guide to bring light wherever ignorance dwells, to spread justice wherever oppression reigns, and to bring harmony wherever conflicts are raging.

"May you be strengthened to face the hardships of life with the same courage shown by Blessed Isidore Bakanja. May you be, like him, apostles of reconciliation, promoters of dialogue and agents of peace."

(Osservatore Romano, Engl Ed. 18 May, 1994, pg. 3)