

The image of this saint [Anthony Mary Zaccaria] is dear to me because he is one of the great figures of Catholic reform in the 1500's, engaged as he was in the renewal of Christian life in an era of profound crisis in the area of faith and customs.

His life coincides with a turbulent period in which Luther, in his own way, attempted to reform the Church, an attempt that, as we well know, ended in the tragic division of Christianity.

In dealing with the problems of his personal life and of his times, Luther had discovered the person of St. Paul, and with the intention of following the apostle's message, began his journey. Unfortunately, he placed St. Paul in contrast to the hierarchical Church, the law against the Gospel, and in doing so, even though he rediscovered him, he detached the saint from the totality of the Church, from the message of the Sacred Scripture.

Anthony Mary Zaccaria also discovered St. Paul; he wanted to follow his evangelical dynamism and he saw him in the totality of the divine message, in the community of the Holy Church. It seems to me that St. Anthony Mary Zaccaria is a saint of great current relevance, an ecumenical and missionary figure, who invites us to display and to live the Pauline message within the Church itself. He shows our separated brethren that St. Paul has his true place in the Catholic

Church, and it is not necessary to place his message in contrast with the hierarchical Church. Rather, there exists in the Catholic Church plenty of space for evangelical freedom, for missionary dynamism and for the joy of the Gospel.

The Catholic Church is not only a Church of law, but it must also concretely prove itself as the Church of the Gospel and of its joy to open the way to unity.

Saint Anthony Mary Zaccaria, born exactly five centuries ago, deserves to be rediscovered in his moral greatness and for his appeal to the fundamental values of Christianity and to the perennial lesson of evangelical radicalism. His entire brief existence—first as a young layperson, doctor and catechist, and then as priest and religious—is dominated by what the liturgy of July 5 calls “the sublime wisdom of Jesus Christ,” and is animated by the “folly of the cross,” as acquired at the school of the “learned Paul,” his model and mentor.

In this light shines his extraordinary devotion to the two fundamental mysteries of our faith, the Crucifix and the Eucharist, which he considered with genial intuition to be “the living Crucifix.”

It's not always easy to draw near to the image and the life of a saint—only God has the key to

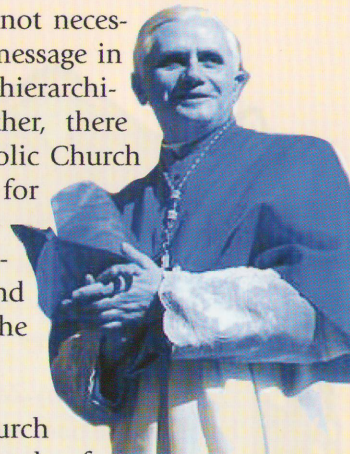


Photo (AFP)

enter into the secret of a soul dedicated to Him. It is even more difficult when that man lived in a distant era, among the most complex and troubled in the history of the Church.

(...) [St. Anthony Mary Zaccaria] was an authentic man of God and of the Church, a man burning with zeal, a demanding forger of consciences, a true leader able to convert and lead others to good.

[His action has been] described as the action of a “*bonus miles Christi*” (A Good Soldier of Christ) even in persecutions, which, however, did not prevent him from anticipating the times and preparing for the great event that was the Council of Trent. Anthony Mary Zaccaria's life was a constant struggle against the vice of spiritual “*lukewarmness*” and mediocrity that so “*reigned*” among his contemporaries. In his *Letters* and *Sermons*, and not the least in his *Constitutions*, there resonates an incessant call to sainthood.

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger  
*Pope Benedict XVI*

Rome, October 11, 2001

The text of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger is a translation of his *Prefazione* (Preface) to **FUOCO NELLA CITTÀ: Sant'Antonio Maria Zaccaria (1502–1539)** by Angelo Montonati.

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