

## Today, the beatification of card. Pironio: the 'pillars' of his spiritual life in a tribute by card. Kevin Farrell

In Argentina, the beatification of the cardinal who was President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity




Photo: © <http://cardenaleduardopironio.blogspot.com/>

The Church in Argentina, and with it the universal Church, joyfully celebrates the beatification of Cardinal Eduardo Francisco Pironio this Saturday, 16 December, 2023. We publish a tribute by the Prefect of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, Cardinal Kevin Farrell.

\*\*\*

Five years ago, in February 2018, I had the privilege of celebrating Holy Mass on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Cardinal Pironio's death in his father's hometown of Percoto, Friuli-Venezia Giulia. I remember that it was the second Sunday of Lent when we are invited to meditate on the Transfiguration of Jesus on Mount Tabor. This is an episode in which the divine glory of Jesus is revealed as a foretaste of his resurrection. At the same time, it is closely linked to the first announcement of his passion, reminding us that it is only through the cross that the destiny of glory of Jesus and of each of his disciples is fulfilled.

I recall that it was precisely these two aspects present in the Transfiguration – Christ's glorious paschal mystery and the mystery of the Christian cross – that made me think of the 'pillars' of Cardinal Pironio's spiritual life. 

**Card. Pironio, an 'Easter man'**

He was truly an 'Easter man'! The theme of the Paschal Mystery, which was very dear to him, returns frequently in his speeches: the certainty that Christ, after having experienced death, entered into the fullness of life; that Christ lives and communicates Easter light and joy to the Church and to every baptised person, especially in times of darkness and despondency. It is not by chance that the central theme he chose when he was called to preach the spiritual exercises to the pope and the Curia in 1974 was precisely 'the Easter Church'. This is what he said in one of those meditations: 'The whole Church is essentially Easter ... the new life of the Christian who has clothed Christ is essentially Easter life: of being raised with Christ'.[1]

### **A witness of the mystery of the cross**

He was a priest and a Christian who truly understood and lived according to the mystery of the cross. This is what he left written in his spiritual testament: "I thank the Lord for the privilege of his cross. I am overjoyed to have suffered so much. I only regret that I did not suffer well and that I did not always relish my cross in silence. I hope that at least now my cross will begin to be bright and fruitful." [2] What great witness this is for all of us! Instead of rebelling and being hardened when faced with sufferings great or small, let us also learn to pray to the Lord that our crosses may be bright and fruitful!

### **'The cardinal of the young'**

Cardinal Pironio was also a great witness to Christian joy. Everyone remembers him for his smile, his good humour, his ability to rejoice when he saw good in every person and every situation. Commenting on Paul VI's apostolic exhortation on Christian joy, he wrote: "We will be happy to the extent that we enter into communion with God, perceiving and savouring his presence in the beauty of things or in the sincerity of friends, because in this too God is revealed and communicated." Cardinal Pironio really had eyes of faith to grasp the presence of God in others! That is why he treated everyone with respect and almost veneration; he could 'taste' the beauty and joy of friendship as a sign of God's love for us. That is why young people loved him so much! The cardinal saw the presence of God in them and he could really enjoy their friendship. Young people felt that he was happy to be with them and that he wanted to accompany them and encourage them like a true father. Young people felt loved, respected and esteemed by him. They felt understood in their deepest desires and in the difficulties they faced in life. Cardinal Pironio is still remembered today as 'the cardinal of the young'. He was the one who helped to bring about St John Paul II's desire to establish World Youth Day. He organised six of them, not merely out of official duty, but by putting his heart into it as a pastor and friend of young people. We recall God's promise to Abraham: "I will bless you abundantly and make your descendants as countless as the stars of the sky and the sands of the seashore" (Gen 22:17). We can say that the millions of young people who have participated in WYD over all these years are the "descendants as countless as the stars of the sky" that God gave to Cardinal Pironio.

### **An exemplary Christian with a clear and profound faith**

We could not possibly recall all of the immense pastoral work carried out by Cardinal Pironio that was always done with generosity and great love for the Church. We can just remember how he taught theology and trained young candidates for the priesthood, his episcopal ministry in various dioceses and his presidency of CELAM, and his service in the Roman Curia where he was committed to ecumenism, religious and secular institutes, the laity and young people.



The Cardinal was a great man of the Church and a diligent priest who was motivated by a deep interior life; he had great love for Our Blessed Mother Mary, and he was eloquent in preaching and tireless in apostolic works. Above all, he was an exemplary Christian with a clear and profound faith. He professed his faith with his words, and above all by giving witness through his life and his service to others.

**Card. Farrell: "his prayers will assist me in my ministry and all those who work in the Dicastery to continue his work in the service of the laity and young people"**

I am particularly grateful to God for the beatification of Cardinal Pironio. It motivates me to draw inspiration from his example, not only because I inherited his office as prefect of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, but also because Providence wanted me to be ordained a priest precisely by him forty-five years ago, on Christmas Eve 1978. I am convinced that his prayers will assist me in my ministry and all those who work in the Dicastery to continue his work in the service of the laity and young people. I wholeheartedly join the Church in Argentina in thanking the Lord for having given us this father, this brother in the faith, this exemplary witness to the love of Christ.

**(original: Italian)**

---

[1] E. PIRONIO, *Vogliamo vedere Cristo. Meditazioni sulla Chiesa*, Ediz Paoline, Roma 1984, p. 23s.


[2] E. PIRONIO, *Giovani amici miei .... Eduardo F. Pironio Cardinale dei giovani. Scritti, discorsi e preghiere raccolti e presentati da Renato Boccardo*, Roma 1998, p. XVII.

 16 December 2023

 [The Prefect](#)

 [Speeches](#)

 [Pastorale giovanile](#)

 [Youth](#)

Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life  
Palazzo San Calisto  
00120 Vatican City



© Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life 2017 - 2022

info@laityfamilylife.va  
Tel.: +39 06 698 69 300  
Fax: +39 06 698 87 214

**Cookie Policy - Privacy Policy**

