

GENERAL CURIA

Beatification of Sr. Marguerite Rutan, D.C.

Dax, France, 19 June 2011

Reflections by

Evelyne Franc, D.C., and G. Gregory Gay, C.M.

Sr. Evelyne Franc, D.C., Superioress General of the Daughters of Charity, and Fr. G. Gregory Gay, C.M. Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission were among the nine-thousand people who attended the beatification of Sr. Marguerite Rutan, D.C., in Dax, France on June 19, 2011. Hundreds of Daughters of Charity, Vincentians, and members of the Vincentian family were present for a series of weekend-long events, which culminated in the Mass of Beatification in the Maurice Bayou Sports Stadium in Dax.

Sr. Marguerite Rutan came to Dax in 1779 and founded a hospital, school, and shelter for abandoned young girls. She was martyred on April 9, 1794 at the height of the “Reign of Terror” during the French Revolution. Sr. Evelyne and Fr. Gay paused reflect on the meaning of Sr. Marguerite’s life for the Church and the world today.

The beatification of Sr. Marguerite Rutan on June 19, 2011 in Dax, France was a moment of great joy for all members of the Vincentian family, particularly sisters, priests, and brothers in the “Double Family” of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac. At this festive occasion, Sr. Evelyne Franc, the Superioress General of the Daughters of Charity and Fr. G. Gregory Gay, Superior General of the Vincentians reflected on the witness of Sr. Marguerite’s life and what her beatification means to the “Double Family” and the Church today.

Sr. Evelyne noted that Sr. Marguerite's life is a key way to understand her path to martyrdom: "During the 37 years of her life as a Daughter of Charity, Marguerite put her creativity, rich personality and professional know-how to serve the poor and the sick. Daily, she endeavoured to love, serve and forgive like Christ. In her 15 years of service in the hospital at Dax, Marguerite gave joyful witness of authentic friendship with everyone." Fr. Gay noted, "Sr. Marguerite kept her gaze fixed on Christ, which enabled her to be a serene and effective servant of the poor at a time of political and social upheaval."

Sr. Marguerite refused to buckle under to pressure put upon priests and religious in the French Revolution to renounce allegiance to the Church and their religious communities by taking the oath of loyalty to the civil constitution. Sr. Evelyne observed, "In those troubled times, Marguerite lived more intensely her gift to God and others. In spite of grave and imminent danger, she continued to follow in the footsteps of Christ with assurance. When it was impossible to work without risk, she stayed faithful to her religious convictions." Fr Gay noted, "Sr. Marguerite met violence with non-violent resistance. She was not only a servant of the poor, but a peace-maker who lived the Beatitudes in violent times."

What lessons can the life of Sr. Marguerite Rutan hold for the Church and world today? Sr. Evelyne noted, "Marguerite Rutan lived deeply this conviction: when Jesus Christ sends one on mission, he also gives the strength to accomplish it. Today, the witness of her life is like a beacon which enlightens our way toward unwavering fidelity to Christ." Fr. Gay added: "Sr. Marguerite is an apt model for today's world as one who stood up for her faith while still serving the poor. She never gave in to the forces of fear and intimidation. Today, when Christians are attacked and persecuted for the desire to live their faith, Sr. Marguerite's life and death challenge us to resist the culture of violence and to strive to be peace-makers and servants of the poor."

Sr. Evelyne concluded her comments on Sr. Marguerite's beatification with a thought all members of the Vincentian Family can take to heart: "Sr. Marguerite's life shows us Christ leads us on the way of unconditional Love toward the true face of the Father, who is both Gift and Pardon."