

Letter of the Superior General on the Beatification of the Spanish Martyrs

ROME, 9 October 2013

To the Members of the Vincentian Family

Peace and joy in the Risen Lord!

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

We are approaching the celebration of our faith which will take place in Tarragona, Spain and during which time forty-two members of the Vincentian Family will be beatified. These were men and women who were faithful to their vocation of following Christ, as they engaged in ministries of preaching, teaching, and charitable service to those who were poor. As members of the Vincentian Family, Sunday, October 13, 2013 will be a day of great joy and gratitude. It calls us to renew our fidelity to our vocation, while giving new impetus to our missionary endeavors. Our brothers and sisters who were martyred embraced such a call, and did so without fear or anxiety. The initiative, the call to follow Jesus Christ always comes from God, but still we are mediators, men and women willing to accompany others on the journey.

These martyrs are witnesses of the faith and they illuminate us with light - the light of the Holy Spirit- who filled their own life with strength, enthusiasm and generosity that ultimately enabled them to profess courageously their faith and to seal that profession with their own blood. “*No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.*” (Jn. 15:13). Only love for Jesus Christ, a love greater than for one’s own life can explain the value of martyrdom.

On October 13th, the Church in Spain will witness the beatification of 522 men and women from thirty-three dioceses and various religious Congregations who gave witness to their faith during the twentieth century. Among this group of witnesses we find:

- ***27 Daughters of Charity of Saints Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac***
- ***14 priests brothers of the Congregation of the Mission***
- ***1 laywoman, Daughters of Mary, Miraculous Medal Association: Dolores Broseta.***

This is a time of light and grace for the Church and the Vincentian Family. In these days, I have been impressed by the enthusiasm and the joy expressed by family members of these martyrs during interviews with various media outlets. In the works that have been written about our martyrs, we find some literary images that speak to us about the light and strength and peace that was so much a part of the martyrs. For example, some works written about the Daughters are entitled *Luminaries of Faith* and *A Diamond of Thirty Faces*. Here we are referring to the Light of Christ which the martyrs received at the time of their Baptism, a dim light that they knew how to accept, how to care for, and how to spread.

All the major superiors and the bishops in Spain, who in some way promoted the cause of the martyrs, have written letters and messages about the meaning of this beatification. Most of these

writings contain some important gospel expressions, key words in the life of faith that these martyrs lived and professed, such as **grace, gift, light, service and happiness**.

In my opinion, those words are characteristic of our faith, which Pope Francis has referred to on so many different occasions. **Grace** and **gift** require our acceptance, and mean that we are willing to imitate our Founders, the saints, and beati of the Church and the Vincentian Family. In so doing, we show we are willing to live in openness to the movements of the Holy Spirit.

The light of faith that, in a world often darkened by the eclipse of God, once again shines forth through prayer, study, participation in the sacraments, and charity on behalf of the poor and needy. That light, revealed by our martyrs, is a divine invitation to live anew our charism, to rise above all forms of superficiality, to become more contemplative, and to deepen our spiritual and apostolic life. This enables us to become more focused and less scattered.

Service lived as a continuation of the mission of Jesus Christ was what led to the execution of our martyrs. During that time of persecution, there were attempts to eradicate the name of God from the heart of school children, from the sufferings of the infirm in hospitals, and from the kindness offered by the Sisters in their many centers of charitable works.

Happiness is the fruit of joy from the Holy Spirit. Indeed, it is the Spirit alone who gave the martyrs the necessary strength that enabled them to embrace martyrdom as an extraordinary gift and the supreme act of charity (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, #42). As prophets of hope, these martyrs invite us to overcome every form of modern pessimism, so we may live our vocation with a new zeal that allows the light of faith to shine forth in our daily fidelity to the gospel.

I invite all of us to rejoice together with the members of the Vincentian Family in Spain and to give thanks to God for the newly beatified, by following their example of faith, courage, and charity. In celebrating this event and living our charism, I hope all members of the Vincentian Family will find in this beatification a time of grace, gift, light, service, and happiness.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Superior General