

MEMORIAL OF THE BLESSED CLARETIAN MARTYRS

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Witnesses rooted in Christ and boldness in mission

1 February 2022

Today we celebrate the liturgical memorial of **Blessed Philip of Jesús Munárriz Azcona, priest, and his companions, religious and martyrs**. As we know, this obligatory memorial commemorates all together the **184 Claretian martyrs** who have been beatified so far. We remember, then, following the chronological order of the beatifications, the **51 martyrs of Barbastro** (25 October 1992), **Fr Andrés Solá Molist** (20 November 2005), the **23 martyrs beatified in Tarragona** (13 October 2013) and the **109 beatified in Barcelona** (22 October 2017). Together with them, we also celebrate the memory of **Blessed María Patrocinio Giner**, a Claretian Missionary Sister, martyr (beatified on 11 March 2001).

Let us also remember all those of our brothers and sisters whose martyrdom took place during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and who for various reasons have not been recognised until now. Without forgetting another two so well known among us as **Fr Francisco Crusats, the first martyr of the Congregation** (1868), who caused the admiration and holy envy of Fr Claret; and **Fr Rhoel Gallardo**, Filipino (2000), whose process of beatification has recently been opened.



The main reason for choosing 1 February

as the date of the memorial was to mark the memorial of the Blessed Martyrs with the date of **the attack that Claret suffered in Holguin (Cuba) on 1 February 1856**. Although our Founder did not die a martyr, as he wished, **his missionary spirituality is permeated by the desire to be configured with the Christ who suffers and dies for love**. For this reason, the shedding of his blood in Holguín had a great significance for him: "I cannot explain the pleasure, joy and happiness which my soul felt, seeing that I had achieved what I had desired so much, which was to shed blood for the love of Jesus and Mary and to be able to seal with the blood of my veins the truths of the Gospel" (Aut 577).

The liturgical celebration of the memorial of the Claretian Martyrs, after the celebration of the XXVI General Chapter, invites us to welcome in a special way the first words of the post-capitular exhortation: **"Beloved Congregation, take root in Christ and be bold in mission"** (QC 1). The lives of our confreres are a beautiful and challenging witness of rootedness and boldness. They could not have given their lives with the freedom and courage they did if they had not been deeply united to the Lord.

In the design of the second part of the dream which God inspired in the Congregation during the last General Chapter, it says: **"Inspired by the witness of our Founder and of the martyrs, the Word of God, of which we are hearers and servants (cf. CC 34, 46), is the light and the driving force of our missionary life"** (QC 52, a). Both the life of our Father Founder and that of our Martyrs refer us immediately to the Word of God as the source from which they drew their nourishment. **In it they found the light that attracted them to live rooted in Christ and freed them from the idolatry of loving one's own life more**. In it they found the

light that clarified their doubts and fears to the point of showing them that their fragility was the space in which they could welcome the strength of God. At the same time, **the Word was the driving force that launched them to be courageous witnesses of the Lord**. They did not seek justifications to escape the difficult circumstances they had to live through; on the contrary, in the midst of them, they discovered that there was no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends, just as the Lord did. Our brother Martyrs remind us that no circumstance can justify cowardice or mediocrity; on the contrary, when we live God-centred lives we will inevitably go out of ourselves to the peripheries that most need the light of the Gospel.

The title of the post-chapter document reminds us of the deep love our martyrs had for our Congregation. The document begins with the famous words with which one of the Blessed Martyrs of Barbastro, **already close to death, lovingly addressed the Congregation: "Beloved Congregation"**. For all of them, it is not a cold religious institution; rather, they considered it their "beloved mother", where they had learnt to know and follow Jesus in the style of Claret. **They felt part of a family that loved them and which they loved intensely**. It is moving to hear this affectionate way of referring to the Congregation. At the same time, these words become an interpellation that questions how we are living today our sense of congregational belonging: Do I consider the brothers that God has given me as my "beloved congregation"? What kind of fraternal relationship do I have with these brothers of charism and mission? Is my real and concrete community a "beloved" space that I care for and cultivate? Our martyrs encourage us to live this fraternity centred on Christ and mission.

Let us entrust the whole Congregation **to the intercession of the Blessed Claretian Martyrs** so that we may continue to embrace God's dream and commit ourselves to fulfil it faithfully.

Claretian Missionaries