



FRATELLI DELLE SCUOLE CRISTIANE

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BEATIFICATION OF 58 BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

"They conquered by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; love for life did not deter them from death" (Revelation 12: 11).

Dear Brothers and members of the Lasallian Family,

The universal Church is joyfully preparing to celebrate the beatification of 498 martyrs on October 28 of the current year. Of these, 58 are Brothers of the Christian Schools. All of them gave their lives in defense of their faith and their religious identity during the religious persecution that took place in Spain between the years of 1934 and 1939. The place chosen for the beatification is Rome, a city well-known for the martyrdom of the early Christians.

Among the new blessed, in 23 different causes, are 2 bishops, 24 diocesan priests, 462 men and women from Institutes of Consecrated Life, 1 deacon, 1 sub-deacon, 1 seminarian, and 7 lay persons. Although the great majority of these martyrs are Spaniards, there are 5 who were born outside of Spain, of whom 2 are Brothers of the Christian Schools who were born in France.

This is, no doubt, one of the largest groups to be beatified in the history of the Church, and the group of De La Salle Brothers is the fourth largest component within the group. The first martyrs from this period of religious persecution to be beatified and later canonized were our 8 Brothers from Turón and Brother Jaime Hilario. Following them came the martyrs from Valencia and Almería and now, again, we receive the grace of the beatification of 58 more Brothers.

In all countries and at every time, the fact of martyrdom always offers different readings and interpretations, but only religious persecutions have martyrs. Those who knew these persons well, and our Brothers in particular, were witnesses of the authentic reasons for which they surrendered their lives. All of these Brothers stated and recognized the strength of their own faith, confessing their state as believers and as religious. Before their death they were imprisoned, tortured, and condemned without a trial through no fault of their own. Some rejected proposals to renounce their identity as religious, or to abandon the school or the community in which they found themselves to save their lives, but they did not do it. All died heroically as they pardoned their executioners and proclaimed Christ as the only King and Lord of their lives.

The occasion of their beatification means that our 44 Brothers from communities in Barcelona in the District of Catalonia, 4 Brothers from Consuegra (Toledo), 5 from Santa Cruz de Mudela (Ciudad Real) and 5 from Lorca (Murcia) from the District of Madrid, become for us true signs of faith and charity, and at the same time they proclaim for us their hope in a world that is more just and more fraternal where life is always defended and where the freedom of religious expression is respected.

The shedding of martyrs' blood for Christ is considered by the Church *a supreme gift and the greatest test of charity*. As disciples of Jesus, their *love for life did not deter them from death*; all of them signed on to the words of the Master with their blood: "*No one has greater love than the one who gives his life for his friends.*" As followers of John Baptist de La Salle, each of them discovered how to respond to the commitment to *give your very life for the children entrusted to you* (Meditation 198.2).

Brothers and members of the Lasallian Family, may the witness of our Brother martyrs inspire our ***Faith*** as followers of Jesus Christ – the Paschal Lamb who freely accepted his death for our salvation – and also strengthen our ***Zeal*** for the education of new generations, so that we can all live as sons and daughters of God, and as brothers and sisters, respecting one another and living in peace with one another.

We are grateful for the work of all those who, over the course of many years, have carried the responsibility for the various processes of beatification, both in Spain as well as in Rome, who now see their efforts recognized.

Let us prepare ourselves in the best way possible to experience and to participate in this great feast of the Church and of the Lasallian Institute. Let us unite in giving thanks to God for the gift of the new martyrs. By his intercession, may God grant us, as an outcome of their beatification, the grace of fidelity to our vocation as Brothers and as Lay Lasallians. May Mary, the Queen of Martyrs, give us strength during difficult times in life and may she bless the Mission which, together, we carry out for the entire world, for the greater glory of her Son, Jesus.

We will be delighted to greet and to welcome any pilgrims who come to Rome and to the Generalate for this occasion.

Brother Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría
Superior General