



LETTER ON THE OCCASION OF THE BEATIFICATION OF 74 BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

**TARRAGONA (SPAIN)
OCTOBER 13, 2013**

*"In their distress they cried to the LORD, who saved them in their peril; He brought them forth from darkness and the shadow of death and broke their chains asunder"
(Psalm 107: 13 - 14).*

Dear Brothers and Lay Lasallians,

This song of liberation that comes from the heart of the psalmist also resounds in the life and death of our Brother martyrs. Educated in the school of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, they were willing to witness to their faith in Christ, not only with their lips but also by shedding their blood. *Love for life did not deter them from death* (Revelation 12: 11).

With great joy we will celebrate the beatification of 74 of our Brothers and one lay person on October 13, 2013, in the city of Tarragona, Spain. This is the largest beatification celebrated until now of the Spanish persecution which took place between 1934 and 1939. All together 522 martyrs will be beatified on this occasion. Their deaths took place in different places and at different times. For that reason they have been grouped together in different canonical processes, in accordance with the Dioceses in which they died.

In the twentieth century of the 1930's, the Church in Spain was the object of a fierce offensive on all levels as the laws which prohibited worship and religious activities were applied and transformed into bloody persecutions. Numerous priests and religious were brutally assassinated for no reason other than their Christian and religious identities.

In recent years many of them have been beatified and some have been canonized. In the sad and at the same time glorious listing of these martyrs, including those to be beatified at this time, are 165 of our Brothers. I believe that it is worth it to underscore, at this time when we Brothers and lay partners share the same mission, the fact that one of the martyrs, José Gorostazu, died alongside the Brothers in the house of formation in Griñón, where they valiantly witnessed to their faith.

With this celebration on October 13 the cycle of beatifications of our Brother will come to a close since the three Causes that were pending will conclude, two from the Archdiocese of Madrid and the last one from the Diocese of Tarragona, which was promulgated by the Decree of Martyrdom on June 28, 2012. With this Decree the long journey of our Brother Martyrs in Spain comes to an end. This journey began on March 25, 1947, with the opening of the Cause of the Brothers from Turón in the Diocese of Oviedo. Soon we will publish the biographies of all these Brothers.

During this Year of Faith, by means of various pastoral initiatives, we have taken a comprehensive look at the meaning of the "*confessio fidei*" and we have been motivated to live with a greater coherence between faith and life, in order to be more credible witnesses and seeds of the re-evangelization of our society. It is moving to think that, this same faith that we profess, at times weakly, is the same faith for which many of our Brothers gave their lives. There is no doubt that each one of them is for us a splendid example of fidelity and strength.

Brothers, I invite you to give thanks to God and to know these true "*prophets of hope,*" as John Paul II called them. "*Their witness has extraordinary strength which, like the grain of wheat that dies in the ground, it produces much fruit*" (Angelus of March 24, 1996).

The next glorification of our Brothers will no doubt be a blessing for our Institute. We thank particularly Brothers Leone Morelli, of happy memory, and Rodolfo Meoli, for the excellent and conscientious work that they did over the course of more than fifty years, as they carried forward the Cause of our Brother Martyrs and other Brothers, who today for us are models and intercessors for us before God.

The example of heroic generosity that these Brothers offer us should move us to follow, as they did, in the footsteps of Jesus Christ so that our entire life will be a credible witness of the faith we profess, at a historic time in which we are surrounded by so many people who deny God and fight against religion. Religious intolerance still produces thousands of victims in many countries. Let's do everything possible so that our educational institutions may become an example of coexistence where life is respected as the highest value and where we build together a world of brothers.

We know that, even if we are not called to shed our blood as witnesses, we are called to give witness to our faith in our daily mission. If the Church glorifies the martyrs it is not only to honor them but to keep their memory alive and to invite us to follow their example.

Our Founder knew very well that daily fidelity to the educational ministry is also an authentic type of daily martyrdom, as he states in the meditation for the Feast of Saint Bartholomew, Apostle: "*You are called to suffer a constant martyrdom, which is no less violent for the spirit than Saint Bartholomew's was for his body. You must, so to speak, tear off your own skin which Saint Paul calls the old man, in order to be clothed with the spirit of Jesus Christ, which is, according to the same Apostle, the new man*" (Meditation 159.3).

With these thoughts, Brothers, I extend to you my most cordial greeting in Christ and in De La Salle.

Brother Álvaro Rodríguez Echeverría
Superior General

