



PROFILES AND CONTEXT

The shooting of our four brothers Ladislas Radigue, Polycarp Tuffier, Marcellin Rouchouze and Frézal Tardieu, on 26 May, 1871, in the final days of the Commune of Paris, places in front of us the risk that faith in Jesus entails. None of them were deceived in this respect. They knew this from the beginning and not just when they were taken to prison in the first days of April 1871, along with 84 female religious and 11 other brothers of the congregation and as well as men from other religious orders (St. Vincent de Paul, Dominicans, Jesuits), diocesan priests and lay people. They knew this when they decided to follow Jesus, who reveals the depth of God's love in a vulnerable, defenceless, pierced heart. How could those who had consecrated their lives to the reparative love made visible in the hearts of Jesus and Mary, not find themselves in the gaps that were opening up in society and for the sake of justice and in fidelity to the indefatigable mercy of God place themselves alongside those many others who were being persecuted?

Alberto Toutin ssc
Superior General

"SHOT DURING THE COMMUNE" Personal and community guide

Profile of the 4 who were shot



Ladislas RADIGUE (1823-1871). Son of wealthy farmers in the village of Boisauumont (France). Cheerful by nature, simple, educated. For twenty years he was the Master of novices. "He was the living rule of the Community, a model of regularity," according to the testimony of his former novices. In Commune times he reveals himself as a true leader for the community. At the time of his death he was a General Councillor and prior of the Mother House.

Polycarp TUFFIER (1807-1871). He was a natural of Malzieu (France), in the high plateaus of Margeride. His expansive nature was charming, enriched with a solid theological and humanistic education. He was joyful and knew how to spread it around him. "He went about doing" is what those who knew him say. He was also a General Councillor. He said: "Who knows what the Good God has in store for us?"



Marcellin ROUCHOUZE (1810-1871). Born in Saint-Julien (France), he was a brother of the Superior General, Euthyme Rouchouze. He was a born teacher and excelled at making himself available to students. Of fragile health and great humility, he performed the most important services with discretion. He was General Councillor and General Secretary.

Frézal TARDIEU (1814-1871). Born in Chasseradès (France), he was a modest and active man, who had the gift of forgetting himself and stepping back from the works he had founded or animated. This silent and humble religious would show himself to be an active and daring man. He prepared Brother Damien De Veuster for perpetual profession which, according to the Apostle to the Lepers, profoundly marked him. He was a General Councillor.



The Commune of Paris and Picpus: a painful story ...

From July 1870 to July 1871, France went through an eventful year: a war lost against Prussia, a capital besieged for many months, a harsh insurrectionary movement. Victor Hugo nicknamed it "the terrible year". And so it was for a good part of France and also for the Congregation.

The Paris Commune

The Commune, like any social movement, had its hopes. At the core of political and social reforms, there was a desire for more participation, freedom and equality. The Commune had neither the time nor the funding to carry out all the reforms it wanted to do. The measures sought to establish a secularization of society and education (separation of Church and State). They wanted to end the "old governmental and clerical world".

What was happening in the Congregation?

The Congregation had some thirty communities in France. In the Paris region, there was the community in Picpus and the Novitiate in Issy-les-Moulineaux. Picpus, during the war, had been transformed into a "field hospital". The wounded were taken in for treatment - up to 800 national gendarmes - until February 1871. The sisters' house had also been equipped with 18 beds until 23 April, 1871. Thus, brothers and sisters were able to help but they were forced to be as discreet as possible.

The situation was difficult and the future uncertain. Already in September 1870, the Superior General was discerning what would have to be done "in case the existence of the Congregation was compromised by a war or a revolution." *Fake news* and slanders were beginning to spread about Picpus and about the "White Ladies". It was a real saga that fed the press of the Commune. It was believed that the convent mentioned by Victor Hugo in "Les Misérables" was Picpus and so headlines began to appear such as "The Mysteries of the Convent of Picpus", and "The Crime of Picpus".

A bloody week

On Sunday, 21 May, 1871, the violence intensified. The Bloody Week begins. After two months of fighting outside Paris, the Versailles army of 130,000 soldiers enters Paris and a purge begins. The barricades fall.

The next day, 22 May, the SSCC Fathers with other prisoners were transferred to La Roquette prison.

The brothers imprisoned in Mazas remained there. They would escape on Thursday 25 May.

On 24 May, government troops took control of the San Lazaro prison and released the sisters. On Friday, 26 May, the government army was three hundred meters from La Roquette prison. Émile Gois, 41, a colonel, went to the prison around 3 p.m. On his initiative, he orders the director to release fifty inmates. They gave him thirty-six gendarmes, four men suspected of being informants, and ten randomly chosen priests: Father Enrique Planchat (Saint Vincent de Paul), four Picpus Fathers, a Sulpician seminarian, three Jesuits, and a diocesan priest. "They had to walk in procession through the streets of what was the last refuge of the increasingly desperate insurgents. On Haxo Street, in the courtyard of the National Guard headquarters in the area, they were attacked by a crowd of men and women."



The day after the shooting, on 27 May, the bodies - having been searched and items stolen - were dumped in a nearby grave. In the neighbourhood, the Versailles army continued its advance. On Sunday, 28 May, 1871, the last barricade fell. The bodies were removed from the grave. The Vicar of Belleville had them transported to the communal cemetery. Then, on the 30th May, Brother Marin arrived at the scene. Father Bousquet, upon returning from Versailles, wanted to bury them with the Founders at Picpus. The negotiations failed. On 8 June, Father Bousquet went to Belleville and identified the bodies of the martyrs who were to be transferred and buried at Issy.



The large number of victims of the civil war and repression

It is difficult to say how many people died during the Paris Commune. The piecemeal data discovered so far suggests that between 5,700 and 7,500 people died of their injuries during the fighting or were victims of summary executions. In 1872, the martyrs were transferred to Picpus. In 1894, Father Bousquet asked to collect everything of interest to the memory of the 4 brothers shot. In 1896, their cause was joined to that of Father Planchat. The informative trial took place in Paris from 1897 to 1900. Due to threats of expulsion, in 1903, the bodies were transferred to the Issy cemetery. In 1959, the bodies were transferred to the crypt of the Church of Saint Gabriel in Paris. The cause was stopped by the General Chapter of 1970, for various reasons. In October 2010, the martyrs were transferred to the tomb of our founders. The cause was resumed at the request of the 2012 General Chapter.

For personal and community reflection

We live in an aggressive world, whose violence we participate in to the extent that we too can react viscerally against others, or contemptuously ignore those who seem strange or think differently, or ruthlessly hurt others, or harbour feelings that nurture rejection and division. We must turn away from such violence so as to respond to our vocation of reparation and reconciliation. We cannot forget religious violence, the *odium fidei* and, in the case of our brothers, the *odium Ecclesiae*. This phenomenon is closely linked to the situations of religious persecution that exist today in so many countries: India, Pakistan, China, etc.

Let's also see things from the point of view of the "victims". Let us not imagine that we "deserve" it, if on some occasion we are the object of some attack; Rather, let us place ourselves in the perspective of being in solidarity with the multitude of victims who populate the earth. We as a Congregation also bear our share of the suffering caused by the brutality and violence of the world and of humanity. It would be strange if, in the face of so much misfortune and pain, we passed unscathed and impassive on the stage of history.

Many brothers and sisters have suffered in a privileged way the violence that has forever condemned countless masses of people to an existence full of suffering and darkness.

*** What do the persecuted, the martyrs, the imprisoned, teach us who apparently have almost everything?** They were free to the slavery of the self, of possessions, of lies, of personal, structural, institutional interests ... They put their trust in the One who died a martyr on the Cross and He filled their lives with His Love. A different love, without measure, a love issuing from a broken heart that really captivated the hearts of the disciples. They were "captured" by Jesus more than they were by prison. Their lives would belong to Him and thus they became radically free, crossing the borders of History, teaching us the force of love.

*** What do our SSCC brothers "martyrs" of the Paris Commune teach us?** After reading chapters IV, V, VI and VII of the book "More than their lives!", what characteristics about them stand out for you? How and in what way do they inspire your vocation and mission today?

ADORATION



Introduction

We live in a world where violence is spreading in different areas. We ourselves can contribute to this atmosphere of rejection and division. Called to be agents of peace, we sometimes become accomplices of violence with our own attitudes and behaviour. On the other hand, we are concerned about the escalation of violence and the *odium fidei*, which our brothers who were shot in the Paris Commune experienced. This continues today in so many countries, such as India, China or Pakistan, etc. Let us contemplate the suffering of so many faithful witnesses to the Crucified and Risen One.

Opening Hymn

Gospel: Mark 10: 28-31

Peter began to say to him, "We have given up everything and followed you." Jesus said, "Amen, I say to you, there is no one who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the sake of the gospel who will not receive a hundred times more now in this present age: houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and eternal life in the age to come. But many that are first will be last, and (the) last will be first."

Reflection



"Jesus warns those who want to follow him. They will discover a secret joy when they are persecuted, cursed, for his name's sake. But to discover that bliss, one must go through the present, with its luminous hours and also hours of unreason and violence. This presupposes a certain courage and intelligence to question the most radical aspects of the faith that is linked to the one who is at risk of harm: The Church and its members are inserted into a social body. The discomfort and tensions of society do not only affect the Church. Sometimes the Church channels such tensions, or sharpens them or even more provokes discomfort and tension. In their reflections in prison, the brothers, with more or less lucidity, perceive that they are in prison because they are priests, members of the Church. But this hatred against religion, against the Catholic Church and its members is also the expression of a deep social malaise on the part of those who are excluded, those who do not count, those who are left over. Those who are persecuted because they follow Jesus in the Church, yesterday and today ask themselves: Why is this hatred unleashed against us? What is our responsibility in this?" (Alberto Toutin ssc).

Silence

Time for sharing

Our Father

Blessing

Closing Prayer

Lord, give us the courage of our brothers Ladislav, Polycarp, Marcellin and Frézal, who trusted in your Love and remained faithful in the midst of violence, hate and persecution. May their example help us to live open to reconciliation and to build bridges so that Love may overcome the evil that threatens the world and the coexistence of peoples, religions and cultures. Amen.