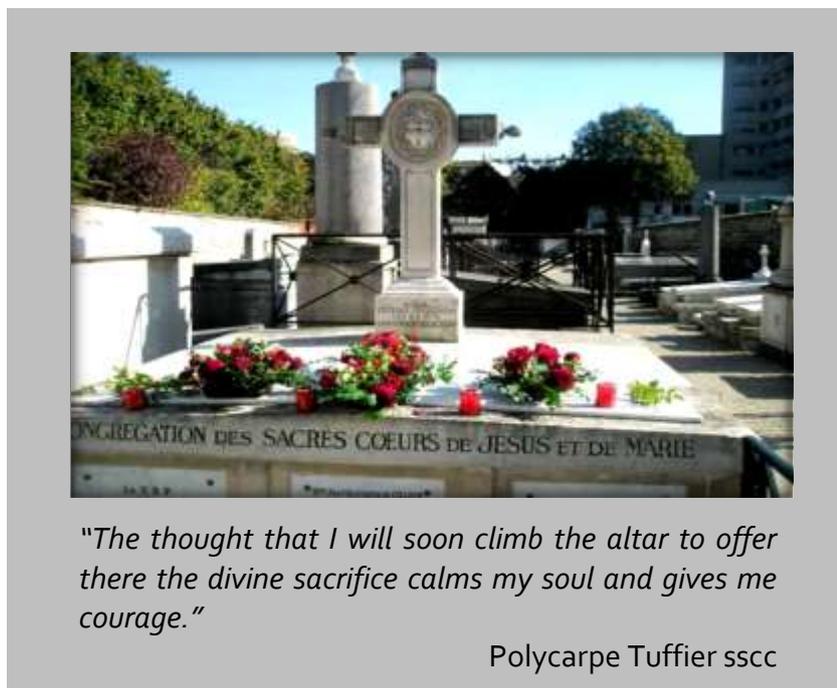


THE GRACE OF A LIFE GIVEN

The grace of a life given, even unto death, is that of clearly and bravely looking at one's own fear in the face of impending violence, and choosing to unite oneself to Jesus' self-giving for the men and women that He loves. Jesus, the sun that comes from above not only illuminates the darkness of our fears and the shadows of violence and death in our societies, but he also shines on good and bad alike. A life in Christ no longer belongs to us and it becomes fruitful when it is given up as He gave up his life.

Alberto Toutin ssc
Superior General



Martyrdom, witness as a duty

In speaking of the relationship between religious life and martyrdom we must keep in mind the two meanings that the word "martyrdom" had in ancient times: firstly, and following its common usage, a 'martyr' was a witness in a trial speaking up on behalf of one of the parties.

In this way a Christian martyr, is the one who lives his life as a witness on behalf of Jesus. But a second meaning appeared whereby "martyr" came to mean the person who gave his life for the sake of faith.

Therefore, religious life and our Congregation find their roots and foundation in being a "witness" to the presence of Jesus in the midst of the world, which is often immersed in violence, inequality and injustice. For this reason, "aware of the power of evil that opposes the Father's love and disfigures his design for the world, we wish to identify with the attitude of Jesus and with His reparative work." (Const., art. 4).

"SHOT DURING THE COMMUNE"
Personal and community guide

Our SSCC religious life is called to become a real and effective, sacramental witness that bears testimony that another way of living and another world are possible, that one grows to the extent that he or she can recognise and meet the Other who inhabits us and the stranger who knocks at our door. Our life should evidence how we are growing in belonging to God and that we do not need acquisitions to be happy. In the words of Frézal Tardieu: "I have nothing. I possess nothing, and I am content, more content than if I had a great fortune. The person who lives contented with little, possesses all."

This means, therefore, that our SSCC religious life, if it is to fulfil its vocation and mission, is called to form people:

- **capable of living maturely** against the tide (neither nostalgic nor illusory);
- **free to embark on future projects** (postponing the recompenses for later);
- **who dare to compromise their ego** in a community space that is sometimes not so kind;
- **who are prepared to commit themselves to a life** that is neither understood nor comprehended by many of those around us, without falling into victimism or pessimism.

Religious life and martyrdom have been **profoundly united from the beginning as a giving of one's life for the sake of the Kingdom and Jesus**. In fact, when monasticism appeared, one of the names by which it was known was that of "bloodless martyrdom", because it was a way to reproduce in one's own person the sufferings that martyrdom used to cause, but undertaken with the aim to give body and soul to the same growth and project.

In this way, throughout history, religious life has become **one of the main quarries for witnesses to values that in many cases contradict the predominant values, witnesses who commit to a fidelity that is no longer valued and a person, that of Jesus, whose criteria, options and lifestyle call into question many of our life choices. There is something counter-cultural in entering into the pain and suffering of the Heart of Christ**. We discover in each one of our SSCC "martyrs" of the Commune a very original and personal way of conceiving and living their own vocation as children of the Sacred Hearts, which is, according to the Founder's expression: "to enter into the interior suffering of the Heart of Jesus".

This is an uncomfortable testimony that has led on many occasions to "insults and slanders" on his account (cf. Mt 5:10-11), and even, as was the case of our brothers, to being shot. Perhaps **the worst thing that can happen to religious life is not that it is persecuted (even by those "inside"), but that it stops being "salt" and "light" of the world and therefore is rendered insignificant**.

Witness in the martyrs

In our world today, where in some places there is a tendency not to believe, there is a very strong prophetic dimension to saying that we do believe. The faith that we have is something that we have to transmit, because there are people who are desperate to believe.



Our SSCC "martyr" brothers present to us a journey of faith, that leads them to give their lives, confessing their love for the Heart of Jesus, pierced for us.

Besides giving witness, we have to find a new story, a more courageous way to speak about our vows, which are the instruments that make concrete the giving of one's life in the present journey. That is what Jesuit José M^a Rodríguez Olaizola is thinking:

“What if one day, instead of talking about the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, we could talk about freedom, love and shared mission, which is the same thing?”

What we have to do is to see how we can translate the Gospel for the people of today, thirsty for God, because in a world where it is a rare thing to consecrate one's life and be connected to God, the same timeless voice continues to be heard again and again: "Do not be afraid". And we should not be afraid of the past or the present or the future, because **we believe that the Spirit of God will continue to support us and raise us up and it is this conviction that is our only and necessary hope.**

An ecclesial testimony

In "More than their Lives" it is pointed out how "the secular and regular clergy, grouped around their archbishop, constituted a striking representation of the Church in its various activities, with the Fathers of the Sacred Hearts represented the contemplative life".

It is a question of a Church united in the face of martyrdom. Let us also remember the situation that our sisters lived in Picpus and in prison.

For personal and community reflection

- 1) How does what we profess resonate with us each day: "in whose service I want to live and die"?
- 2) What really gives us happiness?
- 3) If we had to explain the meaning of our vows of chastity, poverty and obedience to young people, what would we say to them?
- 4) How do we enter into the inner pain of the Heart of Jesus?
- 5) Lasdislas Radigue said: "If we are educators, it is to trace the infant life; adorers, to trace the hidden life; missionaries, to trace the evangelical life, and if we practice external and especially internal mortification, it is to trace the crucified life". What do you think of this way of understanding our spirituality?

ADORATION

Introduction

"Prostrate before you, O my God and covered with the blood of your Son, I offer you and consecrate to you all that I have, all that I am, my thoughts, my words, my actions, my infirmities, my sickness, my possessions, my reputation, my life. You have given everything to me. I give you all to be used for your glory and for the salvation of my neighbour." (Frézal Tardieu).



Opening song

Gospel: Mt 10:37-42

"Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. "Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me. Whoever receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and whoever receives a righteous man because he is righteous will receive a righteous man's reward. And whoever gives only a cup of cold water to one of these little ones to drink because he is a disciple - amen, I say to you, he will surely not lose his reward."

Reflection



Keep us firm in Love, so that people do not escape us without our loving them. May we believe that all we have received has been given to us freely and be aware of the gift of support that others freely give us. Raise us up from falling into indifference towards others. Make us grateful, attentive, supportive and fraternal, in our daily life so that we may generate life. Raise us up from the apathy into which we sometimes fall through routine or indifference. May we live attentive to what my brother, my sister needs. Help us to avoid falling into the egocentrism of believing that we are the centre of the world. You rose up, Jesus, to continue walking with the cross on your shoulders... We too rise up to continue our journey with humour, courage, smiles for others and gratitude

Silence

Time for sharing

Our Father

Blessing

Closing Prayer

We thank You, Lord, for the grace You have given us not only to believe in You, but also to suffer for You, especially in those who suffer and live discarded in the gutters of life. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.