

INTERVIEW with Andrzej Łukawski ssc, Postulator General

“What fascinates me most about the biography of our Martyrs of Picpus is the depth of their personal relationship with God”

■ **What does the imminent beatification of our brother martyrs Ladislas Radigue, Polycarpe Tuffier, Marcellin Rouchouze and Frézal Tardieu mean to you as Postulator General?**

For every Postulator, the celebration of any beatification is a very joyful moment that marks the culmination of a long and arduous process, the task of which is to make a thorough study of the life and writings of the candidate for the altars, the circumstances of his or her death, the fame of his or her holiness and the signs or, as in the case of our Martyrs of Picpus, the fame of their martyrdom. The results of this research are then collected and presented in the most important publication of the process, the "Positio",



a document prepared by the Postulator and his collaborators under the guidance of the Relator of the Cause who has been appointed by the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints. The beatification process generally lasts a very long time, as a result of which there can be many postulators and co-workers. Each postulator is responsible for his own time, carrying out the tasks that are necessary during that period: one sows, another waters, a third harvests. I am the one who has had the task of reaping the harvest of the work of all my predecessors in the very long – 125 year - history of the beatification process of the Martyrs of Picpus. It has also been my task, along with others to prepare the ceremony of their beatification. This is a time of joyful thanksgiving to the Lord God for the happy conclusion of the process and for the immense work done by so many people.

■ **What strikes you most about the biographical profile of Fr Ladislas and his companions?**

What fascinates me most about the biography of our Martyrs of Picpus is the depth of their personal relationship with God, wholly imbued with the spirituality of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts and fidelity to their religious and priestly duties. They were aware of their own weaknesses and sins, but their love and trust in the Lord God far outweighed this. They did not hold a grudge against their persecutors, but forgave everyone from the heart. They were able to notice the slightest gestures of kindness from the guards. Even in prison, they did not give up praying the breviary, which gave them comfort in this difficult situation. A way was found to provide them with Holy Communion. The Eucharist and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament were their most important spiritual need of their hearts, as is beautifully expressed in the words of Fr

Ladislav, written to the Superior General on 3 May 1871 from Mazas prison: "I'm trying to unite with the Holy Sacrifice celebrated in our chapels, to the adoring men and women who replace us at the foot of the Tabernacle. As Daniel turned himself towards Jerusalem, so I face in the direction of the altar in the Motherhouse and along with the members of my family who are in captivity, I adore."

During their lives they were united by their service to the Congregation in the bosom of the General Council, at the time of their death they were united in a common sacrifice of blood, while after death they share the glory of the blessed.

■ **What do our SSCC brothers martyrs of Picpus teach us today?**

Above all, a simplicity of faith that does not constantly seek new forms of expression, but focuses on fidelity to one's religious and priestly vocation and on complete trust in the Lord God, whatever the circumstances.

■ **Tell us about the events surrounding the beatification in Paris.**



The beatification celebrations of Fr Ladislav and his three Companions will last three days. On the eve of the beatification, 21 April, at 8.30 p.m., a **prayer vigil** is planned in the Picpus chapel, to which the SSCC brothers and sisters already present in Paris, along with others, are invited. However, we encourage all members of the Congregation to connect spiritually and organise similar vigils in the places where we are present and where we minister, if possible at the same hour. Our parishioners and others can be invited to this prayer.

The **Beatification of the Martyrs of 1871** will take place, as we know, on Saturday 22 April, at 4 p.m., in the Church of St Sulpice in Paris. This Church is currently serving as the cathedral while Notre Dame is being renovated.

After the Beatification Mass, a modest refreshment will be served in the square in front of the church for all those taking part in the celebration, as a way of sharing in the joy that comes with the elevation of the new Blessed to the glory of the altars. A little later, at around 7.00 pm, an official dinner is planned for the invited guests.

Sunday, 23 April, will be a **day of thanksgiving for the beatification**. Before noon, the two Congregations will organise thanksgiving Masses at their respective locations: the Religious of St Vincent de Paul in the Sanctuary of Notre Dame de La Salette, and we, at 10.30 a.m. in the chapel at Picpus, where the mortal remains - relics of our Martyrs - will be deposited after the beatification. A small exhibition is also being prepared, dedicated

to Fr. Ladislav and his three Companions. A celebratory lunch for the SSCC Brothers and Sisters and those accompanying us is planned for 13:00 near Picpus, at the Eugène Napoléon Foundation.

Sunday afternoon is reserved for a joint thanksgiving with the Religious of St Vincent de Paul at the site of the execution of our Martyrs, i.e. the Parish of Notre Dame des Otages, in Rue Haxo. It will take the form of solemn Vespers and it will start at 4.00 p.m. This will be the final point of our thanksgiving.

■ **How can we prepare ourselves spiritually as a Congregation for this event?**

Our spiritual preparation for the beatification has been going on practically since the promulgation of the decree on the martyrdom of our four Confreres from Picpus, that is, since 25 November 2021. To this end, the SSCC Commission for Historical and Spiritual Patrimony has prepared and published on the Congregation's website various materials to help brothers and sisters to deepen in their knowledge of the Martyrs and the circumstances of their death, as well as helping them in their personal and communal spiritual preparation for this great and joyful event. The materials included are and will continue to be supplemented by further studies. One of them will be the Order of Service for the Prayer Vigil, to which, as I have already mentioned, we are all invited on the eve of the beatification, at 8.30 p.m. Central European Time.

We are speaking here of certain external aids, which the individual SSCC Communities may use in any way they wish, at their own discretion. The most important thing, however, is our inner disposition: to welcome the gift of the beatification of our brothers in a spirit of gratitude for the courageous witness of their faith and love for Christ and the Church. After all, this is what we too are called to do.

■ **The figure of Father Mateo Crawley-Boevey is very significant for you. In what ways?**

Thank you very much for this question, although it does not seem to fit with the theme of our interview. Seemingly ... ! As it happens, when we speak about **Father Mateo** in the context of the beatification of the Martyrs of Picpus, we are talking about someone who is another potential candidate for the altar from our Congregation. And an exceptional candidate at that! Next to **St Damien de Veuster**, he is the second most recognisable SSCC in the world, a religious who is to be greatly credited for the development of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, for the spiritual formation of families and for imbuing whole societies and nations with the Christian spirit. It is my great dream to bring about the beginning of his beatification process, because for me he is one of the brightest stars in our SSCC heaven. And this is not just my opinion! Many confreres and, above all, multitudes of the faithful all over the world who have come into contact with this charismatic religious and who remain under his great charm and influence, have a similar opinion.

I will not hide the fact that Fr Mateo has accompanied me from the beginning of my journey in the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts; not only that, even before I joined the Congregation, before I met this wonderful figure, the Sacred Heart of Jesus had been enthroned in our family home. As I have already said, the founder of this movement was no other than Fr. Mateo. So, the Lord God permitting, I would like to present to the next General Chapter a request to start the beatification process of Fr Mateo. I am receiving signals from different parts of the world that indicate that many people are waiting for such a moment with great longing.