

PRAYING COMMUNITY



BRINGING THE HEART CLOSER TO THE HEART OF GOD

Dear Sisters,

A little more than a month ago, we received the grace of the Beatification of our Brothers Ladislaus, Polycarp, Frezal and Marcellin, martyrs of the Paris Commune of 1871. A grace which we certainly do not deserve, and which is a gift of the Spirit to our Congregation, which always needs the strength from on High to live out its mission in every time and place. Our challenge is to know how to take advantage of it and to make it bear fruit.

The preparation for the Beatification was accompanied by historical texts, reflections, and appropriate prayers to prepare us to experience this event of the Congregation and of the Church; to remember our history, trying to discover the meaning of the gift that the Lord is offering us. What is the Spirit asking of us through the witness of our brothers? In what way are we being faithful to what we pronounced on the day of our profession "in whose service I wish to live and die", as our martyred brothers did? What new invitations are we being offered?

I do not want to let this occasion pass without also remembering the sisters who at that time lived in Picpus, the " Mother House " as it was called at that time, and who, although they did not experience martyrdom, suffered mistreatment, anguish, lack of freedom, together with the persecuted Church and our martyred confreres. The Superior General, M. Benjamine Le Blais and

her council, 74 sisters and 10 novices experienced days of terror and death threats, of uncertainty, of hatred and slander, besieged by gendarmes in the house of Picpus and then in the Prison of Saint Lazare where they were taken by the leaders of the Commune and where they remained from the 5th to the 29th May 1871.

Sister Benjamine, especially valued and loved by the Good Mother, lived through the harrowing days of the war, encouraging the Sisters of Picpus to care for the wounded who arrived from the very beginning in the vast hall of the boarding school that served as a field hospital. The courage of the sisters is remarkable, and their tireless care for the sick earned them, later, the praise of the government and a medal of recognition. During the days of the Commune, the days of the popular uprising, and of particular darkness and confusion, the confederates invaded the convent and moved in, holding the sisters hostage.

These were moments of tension and much suffering, harassment, interrogations and threats, which the sisters endured thanks to the consolation of uninterrupted adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, which they hid in various places in the house. After a short time, they were taken to the women's prison of Saint-Lazare, where they remained for more than twenty days, trying to lead a life of community and adoration. It is not possible to judge from a distance the kind of response our sisters gave to the events of the time, but we can understand the suffering and pain they endured, which they were able to offer in the spirit of reparation proper to our charism.

This issue of INFO is dedicated to the praying community, with testimonies from sisters who put us in tune with the spirit of prayer bequeathed to us by the founders. There we recognise Reparation, so necessary in our world today, which always passes through the suffering associated with the cross of Jesus and culminates in "the new heavens and the new earth" envisioned in the Apocalypse (Rev 21,5). Let us seek in this, the profound meaning of the Grace that is offered to us at this time with the Beatification of our brothers.

With warm affection.