

THE BEATIFICATION OF THE MARTYR BROTHERS OF TURON AND THE BROTHER JAIME HILARIO

Pope John Paul II's address at the audience for pilgrims

(Monday April 30, 1990)

1. The solemn beatification of eleven Servants of God, martyred for Christ, and sons of Spain's noble land, gives me an opportunity to hold this most welcome meeting with you who have come to Rome to honour the new Beati and take part in this great demonstration of faith and Church fellowship.

On this happy occasion I wish to greet especially the Brothers of the Christian Schools and their many students and former students here presents, as well as the members of the Passionist congregation. Let us all honour together the eight Brothers and Father Inocencio de la Inmaculada, martyred in Turon, Asturias, and Brother Jaime Hilario who shed his blood in Taragona.

2. These eleven martyrs, apart from sharing a rich spiritual personality, forged by fidelity and dedication to their vocation, have in common also the fact they were all teachers and educators of young people. School gave them the opportunity to stay close to children and young people, to listen to them, to love them, to accompany and help them in their growth as human beings and Christians. This is what these Brothers and Sister Maria Mercedes did, because they believed in the great value of their educational and religious mission in the service of children and young people. They wished to be faithful to the noble cause of the Catholic school, the distinctive purpose of which is, as the Vatican II Council says, «to create for the school community an atmosphere enlivened by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity... so that the light of faith will illumine the knowledge which students gradually gain of the world, of life and of mankind» (Gravissimum Educationis, 8). And so they did not hesitate to shed their blood and thus bear witness to their faith in an exceptional way.

These martyrs should provide an incentive for all Christian teachers and especially for religious to dedi-

cate themselves totally to an apostolate which is so worthwhile and necessary in our days. St. John Baptist de La Salle had this in mind when he said to the Brothers of his Institute: «You must not doubt that it is a great gift of God, this grace he has given you to be entrusted with the instruction of children, to announce the Gospel to them and to bring them up in the spirit of religion» (Med. 201).

3. These words tell us that the Catholic school is a privileged place in which children and young people discover God in their lives and are trained to be true Christians, witnesses to their faith and followers of Christ. But this training and evangelisation can be brought about only by men and women of faith, who through their religious consecration share their experience of God with young people and who are prepared also to give their lives for him and for them, as the new Beati did.

Heroic actions are not improvised. They are the result of a whole life of renunciation and abnegation. This is the kind of witness that we find in particular in Blessed Maria Mercedes Prat, who is remembered as being a humble and pleasant religious, always ready to be of service to others.

Similarly striking is Brother Jaime Hilario's dedication to God, borne out by the following words he wrote: «The day you give yourself totally to God, you will enter a whole new world, as has happened to me. You will enjoy a kind of peace and tranquility you have never experienced before, even on the happiest days of your life».

4. Before ending, I should like to say a few words to you, teachers, parents, and students of the Brothers of the Christian Schools or of the Company of St. Teresa of Jesus. As Christians and members of Spanish society, you should be aware that institutes involved in

social work, which the Church itself or other institutions support, are not restricted to a purely religious or ethical plane, but offer society valuable service, stimulating cultural, civic and religious life, constantly aware of the needs of contemporary progress.

This same second Vatican Council, recognising that parents are those who are primarily and principally responsible for the education of their children, defends their right to total freedom in the choice of schools. In this way it is possible to oppose the temptation to impose an educational system which would deny the inalienable right of parents in the name of healthy pluralism, and which «would militate against the native rights of the human person, the development and spread of culture itself, the peaceful association of citizens, and the pluralism which exists today in very many societies» (Gravissimum Educationis, 6).

«For this reason the Church gives high praise to those civil authorities and civil societies that show regard for the pluralistic character of modern society, and take into account the right of religious liberty, by helping families in such a way that in all schools the education of their children can be carried out according to the moral and religious convictions of each family» (Ibid. 7). In this way, civic legislation will be enriched by important spiritual and ethical values.

In the fervent hope that the beloved Spanish people, ever faithful to their Christian roots, will continue at the present time also to promote culture and peaceful coexistence, with affection I impart the Apostolic Blessing to you all, to your families and to the educational communities of your Institutes.

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EXTRACT FROM THE POPE'S HOMILY AT THE BEATIFICATION MASS

St. Peter's words in the second reading remind us that «the blood of Christ, the spotless lamb» (1 Pt. 1:19) was the price paid for our redemption and salvation. Thus it is consoling to state that in Church history there have been very many Christian men and women who have imitated Jesus Christ in the supreme act of shedding their blood, and at the same time were his witnesses in difficult situations of persecution. In this solemn Eucharist, then, the Church puts forward some of these Christian for veneration and reflection by all.

First among them we remember the community of eight Brothers of the Christian Schools of Turon (Asturias, Spain) who in 1934, together with the Passionist religious Father Inocencio de la Inmaculada, were led to death without giving any resistance. In the eyes of their persecutors, they were guilty of having dedicated their lives to the human and Christian education of youth in the Catholic school of Our Lady of Covadonga in that mining town.

The Passionist priest met occasionally with the De La Salle Brothers. In that way, God in his inscrutable providence wished to unite in martyrdom members of two congregations who worked in solidarity for the Church's one mission. This fact which might seem circumstantial, is truly significant, since it makes clear to us the unity, interdependence and collaboration which must exist between religious congregations in the church, especially in our time, in order to face up to the challenge of the new evangelisation.