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22 September

**Blessed JOSEPH CALASANZ MARQUÉS
and HENRY SÁIZ APARICIO, priests
and companions martyrs**

Memorial

On numerous occasions the Roman *Martyrology* refers to bishops, priests, religious men and women and lay faithful, women and men who during the Spanish persecution of the Church were crowned «by a glorious martyrdom», «who deserve to carry the palm of victory before almighty God» and to «take part in the eternal wedding feast with Christ their Spouse», obtaining «the crown of glory for having borne witness to Christ». The expressions which are read on 22 September also introduce the memorial of the Salesian martyrs.

On 18 July 1936 the civil war broke out in Spain, accompanied at times by religious persecution. Laity, religious and priests were imprisoned and killed for their religious faith; among these 95 members of the Salesian Family: 39 priests, 22 clerics, 24 brothers, 2 Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, 4 Salesians-Cooperators, 3 Salesian aspirants and one lay helper. All of them gave their lives for their faith in Christ between July 1936 and April 1938.

There were two Causes which led to the recognition of their martyrdom: that of the group from Valencia – 32 martyrs – led by Fr Joseph Calasanz Marqués († 29 July 1936), beatified on 11 March 2001 in Rome; and the group from Seville and Madrid – 63 martyrs – led by Fr Henry Sáiz Aparicio, who offered his life in exchange for those of the young people who had been entrusted to him by Divine Providence, beatified in St Peter's Square on Sunday 28 October 2007 among a group of 498 martyrs from the persecution in Spain.

They died giving an example of fidelity to their Christian faith and their Salesian vocation, trusting in God and forgiving their killers.

From the Common of martyrs: for several martyrs. Psalms of the day as in the Ordinary.

Office of Readings

SECOND READING

From the «Letters» of Blessed José Calasanz, Jaime Ortiz and Julio Junyer

*(Positio super martyrio servorum Dei Josephi Calasanz et sociorum, Rome 1995.
Informatio pp. 103-104 e 170; Summarium, pp. 204-205)*

We have put our trust in God, in the protection of Mary Help of Christians and of Don Bosco

From his confinement in the Valencia prison the Provincial Fr José Calasanz, wrote to Fr Peter Ricaldone, Rector Major of the Salesian Congregation, briefly informing him of the situation in which he found himself: «Just a few lines to give you news about some and myself, since about the others it is not possible. We were in our house in Valencia for the retreat and we intended to finish today. Although a general strike had been called on Monday we spent the whole day and part of the night peacefully, but starting at one in the morning shots could be heard outside our house, and they became more intense and started to break our windows. Afterwards we learned that from nightfall they had surrounded the house.

You can imagine the deep shock and even the fear with which we all hastily got up especially since we didn't have a single weapon in the house with which to defend ourselves, even if we had tried to do so; but without any kind of weapon what could we do? To give strength to our souls and to prevent any profanation, some went into church to get the Blessed Sacrament and we received communion, consuming all the consecrated hosts.

About five in the morning and fully convinced that we would not be able to defend ourselves not having any arms, they attacked our house, destroying whatever they found, and arrived where we were all gathered together. According to our calculations there must have been more than two hundred attackers carrying all kinds of arms and even poles: they searched us and locked (?) us in a room. Afterwards they gave us to understand that they intended to kill us. Shortly afterwards the police force arrived who we had been calling for urgently all night, from the time we heard the first shots.

We thought that these forces, that we had asked for, had come to our help, but what in fact happened was that they took all of us (37 of our own and 5 employees) to this prison in Valencia, from where I am writing, and I don't know in what capacity: someone told me as government prisoners, even being accused, I believe of having fired shots, which is quite false since, as I have already said, we didn't even have a simple weapon in the house.

I don't know how long they will keep us here: God knows whether it will be for days or for weeks; even less do I know what sort of death may be awaiting us. However, our trust is placed in God and in the protection of Mary Help of Christians and of our Father Saint John Bosco: nor do we doubt your blessing and your prayers and those of the other superiors and confreres. You can imagine how painful it is not being able to send news about a single house: we cannot communicate among ourselves, and items of news about this uprising are contradictory. In the hope that this letter can be sent soon, I conclude, recommending us to your prayers and asking your blessing.»

Also the Salesian Brother Jaime Ortiz, weeks before his death wrote two letters to his mother from which we draw the following sentiments: «Perhaps God Our Lord has allowed this state of affairs so that we don't fall asleep, so that we might work with fresh energy, so that we might seek only His greater glory and not our well-being ... not everything happens as we would like or as seems best to us. Certainly God Our Lord will draw the greatest good in this way, more than in any other and for this reason he has allowed this apparent failure [...].

You will certainly be worried about what might happen to us if the atrocities of the last few days continue ... We are continuing to work normally, the Salesians and the boys, calmly, without worrying too much about what might happen to us. I mean without letting ourselves be overcome by pessimism ... and we shall see how much the Lord want to test us ... Pray that we may love our vocation a bit more and that we may contribute, as far as possible, to the greater glory of Christ the King. »

On his part the priest Julio Junier wrote to his cousin a few hours before his death: «My Dear Paco: the last day of my life has come and to you and to all the family I address my final greetings, which should be an embrace. I shall wait for you in heaven, where I hope to arrive through the mercy of God. I am dying innocent; and I offer my life to the Lord for the good of the Church and of Spain. As far as my parents are concerned, your good sense will tell you what to do. With all my heart I forgive the judges who are condemning me and I pardon them. Nothing else, Paco. I ask aunt Salvadora just to be resigned and to be conformed to the will of God. Pray for me and until we meet again in heaven ».

RESPONSORY

Wisdom 3, 9; 4, 15

R/. God looks on, his angels look on, Christ, too, looks on as we struggle and strive in the contest of faith: * What great dignity and glory are ours what happiness to join battle in the presence of God, and to be crowned by Christ, the Judge!

V/. Let us be armed with great determination and be prepared to face the combat, pure in heart, sound in faith, and full of courage:

R/. What great dignity and glory are ours what happiness to join battle in the presence of God, and to be crowned by Christ, the Judge!

Concluding prayer as at Morning Prayer.

Morning Prayer

SCRIPTURE READING

2 Cor 1, 3-5

Let us give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the merciful Father, the God from whom all help comes: he helps us in all our troubles, using the same help that we ourselves have received from God. Just as we have a share in Christ's many sufferings, so also through Christ we share in his great help.

SHORT RESPONSORY

R/. These were holy men * they will live for ever.

These were holy men. They will live for ever.

V/. The Lord himself is their reward:

* they will live for ever.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

These were holy men they will live for ever.

Ant. At the Ben. Blessed are those who are persecuted in the cause of right: theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

INTERCESSIONS

In union with the Blessed martyrs Joseph Calasanz, Henry Sáiz and companions, who gave their lives for love of Christ, let us celebrate and invoke our Saviour:

You redeemed us by your precious blood, O Lord.

Through your martyrs O Lord, who embraced death in witness to their faith,

– grant us in the trials of life a faith that is pure and coherent.

Christ our Lord you gave your martyrs the strength to follow you on the way of the cross,

– grant a that we may face up to the sufferings and crosses in our lives uniting ourselves to your redeeming passion.

During the violent persecution of the Church the Salesian Spanish martyrs, crowned with the glories of martyrdom were found worthy to carry the palm of victory before God Almighty:

– grant O Lord that all Christians may be always courageous witnesses to you and to your Church before the world, even in persecution.

Our Blessed martyrs faced death putting their trust in God, in Mary Help of Christians and in their father Don Bosco:

– grant that we too O Lord, may always place our trust in you, in all the circumstances of life sustained by the intercession of Mary Help of Christians and of St John Bosco.

Our Father.

PRAYER

Almighty and eternal God,
who gave to the priests and martyrs
Blessed Joseph [Calasanz] and Henry [Sáiz],
and their companions martyrs
the grace to share in the passion of Christ,
come to the aid of our weakness;
and as they did not hesitate to die for you,
grant also to us that we may live courageously
in confessing your name.
Through Our Lord Jesus Christ your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God for ever and ever.

Evening Prayer

SCRIPTURE READING

1 Pt 4, 13-14

My dear people, if you can have some share in the sufferings of Christ, be glad, because you will enjoy a much greater gladness when his glory is revealed. It is a blessing for you when they insult you for bearing the name of Christ, because it means that you have the spirit of glory, the spirit of God resting on you.

SHORT RESPONSORY

R/. Rejoice in the Lord: * Let the just shout for joy.

Rejoice in the Lord:: Let the just shout for joy

V/. Let the upright sing praise;

* Let the just shout for joy

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

Rejoice in the Lord: Let the just shout for joy

Ant. At the Magn. The saints who followed in the footsteps of Christ, rejoice in heaven. They gave their life for love of Christ; therefore, they will reign with him for ever.

INTERCESSIONS

Let us give thanks to the king of martyrs for this is the hour when he offered himself in the last supper and laid down his life on the cross.

We praise you Christ the Lord.

We praise you Christ our saviour example and strength of the martyrs because you have loved us to the end:

– grant that we may live our Christian vocation with fidelity and respond to your love by giving ourselves.

With the shedding of their blood the martyrs imitated the passion of Christ,

– through their intercession unite us with your passion, which continues in the oppressed, the marginalised and all who suffer.

Our Blessed Spanish martyrs – Salesians, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, Cooperators – gave their lives in fidelity to Christ and to the Church:

- grant O Lord that all the members of the Salesian Family, may in every circumstance of life show their love for Christ and the Church, faithful to the teaching of Don Bosco.

O Lord you associated the blessed martyrs with your redeeming death:

- grant that we may make our own the prayer of one of these your martyrs: « Perhaps God Our Lord has allowed this state of affairs so that we don't fall asleep, so that we might work with fresh energy, so that we might seek only His greater glory.»

We entrust to you O Lord our brothers who have left this world:

- may they enjoy your kingdom of light and peace, in the company of the saints.

Our Father

PRAYER

Almighty and eternal God,
who gave to the priests and martyrs
Blessed Joseph [Calasanz] and Henry [Sáiz],
and their companions martyrs
the grace to share in the passion of Christ,
come to the aid of our weakness;
and as they did not hesitate to die for you,
grant also to us that we may live courageously
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Through Our Lord Jesus Christ your Son,
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