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alla destra: BLESSED FRANCIS KEŚY AND COMPS.]

12 June

## Blessed FRANCIS KEŚY and companions, martyrs

### Optional Memorial

The young martyrs are: Czesław Józwiak, born in Lazyna (Poland) in 1919; Edward Kazmierski, born in Poznań (Poland) in 1919; Franciszek Keśy, born in Berlin (Germany) in 1920; Edward Klinik, born in Bochum (Poland) in 1919 and Jarogniew Wojciechowski, born in Poznań (Poland) in 1922. They have a number of features in common: the five attended the Oratory, were involved in leading their companions, consciously engaged in their own human and Christian development, linked together by their personal and shared interests and plans. They were arrested by the Gestapo almost simultaneously in 1940 and put in prison.

They were in prison together and suffered martyrdom on the same day 24 August 1942 at Dresden, and in the same way (being beheaded by axe). Their friendship from Oratory days sustained them to the end. Of each one of them it could be said: “He was among the group leaders of the Oratory, closely connected by friendship and high Christian ideals with the other four.” Associated together in prison and in death, each of them, however, has his own particular life story which intertwines with that of the others because of their Salesian background. The five young men came from good Christian families. On that foundation, life in the Oratory and its programmes stimulated generosity towards God, human maturity, prayer and apostolic commitment; open to life, yet always ready to enter Eternal Life.

This paradoxical statement was written by one of them an hour before their death: “What joy it is: to leave this world united with Christ”; and another: “How can I not be happy to be going to the Lord and to his most holy Mother fortified by the Body of Christ?”

On 13 June 1999 they were beatified by John Paul II in Warsaw with 108 Polish martyrs.

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

### Office of Reading

#### SECOND READING

#### READINGS

From the «Letters» written by the five young men to their families, as the time for the carrying out of the death penalty approached.

*(Positio super martyrio, vol. III-2, Summarium, pp. 1707. 1728-29. 1747. 1768. 1789)*

*With fearless faith and at peace I go to eternal life*

The time has come to say goodbye to you, and precisely today, 24 August, on the day of Mary Help of Christians. Oh, what joy I feel to be leaving this world; everyone ought to die this way. I short time ago I went to confession, and in a little while I shall be strengthened with the Blessed Sacrament. May the good God take me to himself. I have no regrets that so young I am leaving this world. Now I am in a state of grace, faithful to the promises made to God. My dear parents and brothers, once again with all my heart I ask pardon for the evil I have done. Forgive me. I am going to heaven. We shall meet again there! In heaven I shall pray for you. Just now I received the Blessed Sacrament. Pray now and again for me. Stay with the Lord! I am going now. Forgive me for everything (*Blessed Franciszek Keśy*).

My very dear parents, just today, 24 August, on the day of Mary Help of Christians, I received your letters. I have to leave this world. I can say to you, my dear ones, that it is with joy that I am going to the next world, more than I would feel the joy of being eventually freed. I know that Our Lady the Help of Christians, who throughout my life I have honoured will obtain forgiveness for me from Jesus. A short time ago I made my confession and shortly I shall receive Communion in my heart. The priest will bless me during the execution. We have this great joy of being together before death. All five of us are in the one cell. It is 19.45. At 20.30 I shall leave this world. I beg you, do not cry, don't despair, don't worry. God wanted it this way. In a special way I turn to you my dearest mummy, that you may offer your sorrow to Our Lady of Sorrows. She will heal your sorrowing heart. I beg you with all my heart to forgive me if I have done anything to displease anyone. I shall pray for you and ask the blessing of God so that one day we may all meet together in heaven. Till we see each other again in heaven! (*Blessed Czesław Józwiak*).

God's plans are strange but we have to resign ourselves to them, because this is good for the soul. My dears, inscrutable is the will of Jesus which takes me from this world in my youth. But how happy will that moment be for me when I have to leave this earth. How can I not be happy to be going to the Lord and to his most holy Mother fortified by the Body of Christ? Right to the end Mary was always for me a Mother. And now you mummy, when you won't have me any longer on the earth take Jesus. «Mother, this is your son». [...] Until we meet again in heaven with the Madonna, with Jesus and with Saint John Bosco. I have come to understand my life perfectly; I have understood my vocation and I rejoice that in heaven I shall repay you. (*Blessed Edward Klinik*).

I have received your last letter and greetings. Thank you for that. It made me very happy when I read about your calmness and resignation to the will of God. Give thanks to the most merciful Saviour, so that he may not take us unprepared from this world but after a time for repentance and nourished by the Body of Christ, on the day of Mary Help of Christians. Thank God for his infinite mercy. It has brought me peace. Accepting his most holy will I am leaving this world. He is so good that he will forgive us. I thank you mummy for your blessing. God has asked this sacrifice from you. Offer it for my sinful soul. Please forgive me in your heart for all my failings. I ask your forgiveness. I ask forgiveness of all those I have offended or to whom I have caused displeasure. Pray for me. Till we see each other again in heaven! [...] May the good Lord take care of all of you through the intercession of our Mother most holy, St Joseph, St John Bosco. Stay with the Lord! (*Blessed Edward Kazmierski*).

I thank you with all my heart; all those who have not forgotten me in life. I have known and seen clearly the life of mummy, of father, yours and mine. And so I am sure that you will rather rejoice with me than give way to despair. I have received an extraordinary grace from God, and I am leaving after having understood my past life; I do so without the least regret. I have known the world, life and men and so now my dear Lidus, be assured that you will not be left alone in this world. I and mummy are always close to you. I only ask you one thing: entrust what you are feeling to Jesus and Mary at every moment of your life since only in them will you find comfort. [...] Think about true happiness. I am leaving united with Jesus Christ through Holy Communion. In this last Communion I am thinking of you and I offer it for you and me, in the hope that all our family without exception will be very happy above. Please, ask our father for forgiveness for all the wrong I have done and assure him that I have always loved him. [...] Pray for me everyone, and I shall do the same for you up there. Jesus, Mary, Joseph! (*Blessed Jarogniew Wojciechowski*).

## RESPONSORY

**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 a 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, so that we are able to help those who have all kinds of 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 Francis Kęsy and companions, who gave their lives for love of Christ, we celebrate and call upon our Saviour:

*You have redeemed us with your blood, O Lord*

For your martyrs who embraced death in witness to the faith,

– grant us a faith which is pure and constant in the trials of life.

In the Blessed martyrs Francis Kęsy and companions, who grew up in the Salesian Oratory, you have given us a model of courageous young men ready for sacrifice:

– grant to all young people the courage and the perseverance to live according to the genuine values of the Gospel in the gift of themselves.

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

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

Lord, the young men Francis Kęsy and companions faced martyrdom strengthened by the Eucharist and gazing at Mary at the foot of the cross:

– grant that we too following the teaching of Don Bosco, may be sustained by love for you present in the Sacrament and for your Mother, the Mother of Sorrows.

Our Father.

## PRAYER

O God, who granted to the martyrs Blessed Francis [Kęsy] and his companions the grace of holiness in their youth;  
renew the wonders of your Spirit  
so that for love of you, we too may face up to every adversity,  
and with enthusiasm may walk to meet you who are the true life.  
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: \* 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 in followed 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 at 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 in fidelity to our Christian vocation, responding to your love with the gift of ourselves.

With the shedding of their blood, the martyrs became imitators of the passion of Christ,

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

The young martyrs Francis Kęsy and companions bore witness to what they had lived each day in the school of the oratory:

– grant that educators may transmit to the young the values of the faith through word and example.

The young martyrs expressed their joy at going to Christ and to his Mother nourished by the Body of Christ:

– grant Lord that in the trials and difficulties of life we may be strengthened by the Eucharist and the motherly presence of Mary.

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

– admit them into your kingdom of light and peace to enjoy the company of the saints.

Our Father.

#### PRAYER

O God, who granted to the martyrs Blessed Francis [Kęsy] and his companions the grace of holiness in their youth;  
renew the wonders of your Spirit  
so that for love of you, we too may face up to every adversity,  
and with enthusiasm may walk to meet you who are the true life.  
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.