

Rome, 9 October, 2013

To the Members of the Vincentian Family,

***Peace and joy in the Risen Lord!***

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

We are approaching the celebration of our faith which will take place in Tarragona (Spain) and during which time forty-two members of the Vincentian Family will be beatified, men and women who were faithful to their vocation of following Christ as they engaged in the ministry of preaching and teaching and charitable service on behalf of the poor. For us as Vincentians, next Sunday, October 13th, will be a day of great joy and gratitude, a day on which we are all called to renew our fidelity to our vocation and, at the same time, called to give a new impetus to our missionary endeavor. Our brothers and sisters who were martyred, knew how to embrace such a proposal and did so without any fear or anxiety. The initiative, the call to follow Jesus Christ always comes from God, but nevertheless we are able to be mediators, able to be men and women who are willing to accompany others on the journey.

These martyrs are witnesses of the faith and they illuminate us with light ... with the light of the Holy Spirit who filled their own life with strength, enthusiasm and generosity that ultimately enabled them to profess courageously their faith and to seal that profession with their own blood. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends (John 15:13). Only a love for Jesus Christ, a love greater than the love for one's own life, can explain the admiration and the value of martyrdom.

Next Sunday, October 13th, the Church in Spain will witness the beatification of 522 men and women who gave witness to their faith during the twentieth century. These men and women come from thirty-three distinct dioceses and various religious Congregations. Among this group of witnesses we find:

- ***27 (twenty-seven) Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul and Saint Louise de Marillac***
- ***11 (eleven) priests of the Congregation of the Mission***
- ***3 (three) Coadjutor Brothers of the Congregation of the Mission***
- ***1 (one) laywoman, a member of the Daughters of Mary of the Miraculous Medal Association: Dolores Broseta.***

This is a time of light and grace for the Church and the Vincentian Family. During these past few weeks I have been impressed by the enthusiasm and the joy that has been expressed by the family members of these martyrs during interviews with the various media outlets. In the works that have been written about our martyrs we find some literary images that speak to us about the light and strength and peace that was so much a part of the martyrs. For example, some of the books that have been written about the Daughters are entitled *Luminaries of Faith* and *A Diamond of Thirty Faces* ... Here we are referring to the Light of Christ which the martyrs received at the time of their Baptism, a dim light that they knew how to accept, how to care for, and how to spread.

All of the Major Superiors and the Bishops in Spain, who in some way promoted the cause of the martyrs, have written letters and messages about the meaning of this beatification. The majority of these writings coincide in the use of some important gospel expressions, key words in the life of faith that these martyrs lived and professed: **grace, gift, light, service and happiness.**

In my opinion those words are the characteristics of the faith about which Pope Francis has referred to on so many different occasions.

**Grace and gift** require our acceptance and mean that we are willing to imitate our Founders and the saints and blessed of the Church and of the Vincentian Family and thus, willing to live in complete openness to the movement of the Holy Spirit.

**The light of faith** that in a world like ours is darkened by the eclipse of God, once again shines forth through prayer and study and participation in the sacraments and charity on behalf of the poor and those in need. That light, revealed by our martyrs, is a divine invitation to live anew our charism, to rise above all forms of superficiality, to become more contemplative, to deepen our spiritual and apostolic life, to become more focused and less scattered.

**Service** lived as a continuation of the mission of Jesus Christ was what led to the execution of our martyrs. During that time of persecution there was an attempt to eradicate the name of God from the heart of school children, from the sufferings of the infirm in the hospitals and from the kindness that was offered by the Sisters in the various charity centers.

**Happiness** is the fruit of joy that comes from the Holy Spirit. Indeed, it is the Spirit, and the Spirit alone, who gave the martyrs the necessary strength that enabled them to embrace martyrdom as an extraordinary gift and the supreme act of charity (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, #42). The martyrs, as prophets of hope, invite us to overcome every form of pessimism and to live our vocation with a new zeal that allows the light of faith to shine forth in our daily faithfulness to the gospel.

I invite all of us to rejoice together with the members of the Vincentian Family in Spain and to give thanks to God for the new blessed by following their example of faith and courage and charity. I hope and trust that all of the members of the Vincentian Family will live this event as a time of grace and gift and light and service and happiness.

Your brother in faith and charity,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Gregory Gay, C.M.".

Fr. Gregory Gay, C.M.

*Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission*

