



Beatification of the MSC martyrs of Guatemala Missionaries of the Sacred Heart 23 April 2021

Celebration space: prepare a space with an image of the Blessed of Quiché, Father Jules Chevalier, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, the Paschal Candle, three candles to represent the Blessed and the Word of God in the centre.

1- SALUTATION

We gather together this day together with the Church and as a religious family to proclaim the heroic virtues of our Brothers: Father José María Gran Cirera, Father Faustino Villanueva, Father Juan Alonso Fernandes and seven lay people martyred in Guatemala. They lived until their definitive surrender to the merciful love of the Heart of Christ, incorporating the gift of martyrdom into our charism. "The blood of martyrs is the seed of new Christians", let us go further, the blood of MSC martyrs, are seeds of new MSC vocations.

V. We gather in the name of the FATHER, the SON and the HOLY SPIRIT.

R. Amen.

V. May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be loved everywhere.

R. Forever!

2- OPENING SONG

Laudate omnes gentes, / Laudate Dominum.

Laudate omnes gentes, / Laudate Dominum.

(The youngest member of the community lights the Paschal Candle and says aloud)

Blessed are you, God of life, for the light of Christ, and for so many witnesses to the Kingdom, among them the Missionary Martyrs of the Sacred Heart!

Laudate omnes gentes, / Laudate Dominum.

Laudate omnes gentes, / Laudate Dominum.

3- HYMN (as you choose)

4- MARTYRDOM CHARISM

Reader 1: Central America. Beginning of the eighties. The general situation of the countries in that region was appalling, to say the least. Dictatorships were strongly imposed and brought with them all the evils of lack of freedom. In the economic area, unemployment and low wages. In the social area, illiteracy, racial and social discrimination. In the political sphere, repression and violence increased more and more. During this process, religious life in those lands, in its desire to be faithful to the Gospel, played a decisive role in the defence of human rights. In this way, they strove for a greater commitment to the poor and a greater commitment to a liberating evangelization.

Reader 2: They made themselves peacemakers. However, to stand on this side of history, in that context, meant to stand against the Regime. The stance in defence of human rights was identified as "dangerous and subversive" and foreign missionaries were seen as a "threat to national sovereignty". One of the most dynamic groups and the most committed to the option for the poor in the following of Jesus were, without doubt, the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart.

Faustino Villanueva, Juan Alonso Fernandes and José María Gran Cirera, three Spaniards whose evangelical commitment to the most marginalised, cost them their lives. They gave meaning to their lives by offering to the people of God in Guatemala and Nicaragua the saving and liberating love of God the Father manifested in the Heart of Jesus of Nazareth. They chose the poorest as their friends and died a terrible death for having been faithful in following Jesus in love and service to the marginalised.

All: "The poor are the greatest wealth of the Church".

Reader 1: José María Gran Cirera, born in Barcelona, went to work as a missionary in Guatemala three years after his ordination. His pastoral work obliged him to make long missionary journeys to be present in each of the communities of the parish. On 4 June 1980, after celebrating



Mass, he went on his way together with Dominic Batz, his faithful friend and sacristan. They went on their way undisturbed. They did not imagine, however, that in a lonely place there were some soldiers waiting to shoot them in the back. While they were talking, suddenly a loud shot rang out, causing the surrounding birds to take flight. A bullet, fired with precision, pierced the priest's heart, knocking him off his horse. How can one not remember the blow of a lance with which another soldier pierced the heart of Jesus? Falling to the ground, six more bullets pierced the chest of the priest (pause and silence), that man with a clean

and generous heart who, with the gospel of peace, proclaimed justice, love, freedom and forgiveness. Dominic Batz was also machine-gunned in the back. Two soldiers blew his skull apart. It was the eve of the feast of Corpus Christi. Like Jesus, priest and catechist gave their body and blood as the price of their choice for peace and love.

Reader 2: After the first martyrdom, the MSC community met to discern whether or not they should continue there, since things were getting worse and worse. It was decided that they would continue to carry on with their work of evangelization and defending the rights of the people as long as they had life. After this meeting, Fr Faustino returned to his parish. The question "Who will be next?" hammered in his head. No one thought that it could be him, because nothing had happened in the place where he worked. However, on 10 July 1980, about half past eight in the evening, after celebrating Mass at the parish church, he was called to the door of the parish house. The cook went to answer. They were two well-dressed young men. They asked if they could speak to the priest. She watched as the young men entered and heard the priest greet them. They said something in a low voice and soon Fr Faustino entered the office, followed by one of them, while the other remained by the door. The maid, quieter, continued to clean the furniture. Suddenly a gunshot noise was heard that echoed through the house. As she ran to the office she heard the second shot. She could still see when the killers took off across the square, mounted on their motorbike and disappeared into the night. The woman ran in and found the priest lying on the ground, bathed in the blood that came copiously from his head (pause and silence). Now as before, and even more insistently, the question hung in the air: "Who will be next?"



All:
Lives for life
Lives for the kingdom
Lives for the kingdom
All our lives
Like his lives
Like his life
The martyr Jesus.

Reader 1: After the murder of Father Faustino, Father Juan Alonso, who always preferred the most risky and difficult for himself, insisted on going north, where the danger was greater, even though at that time in the region any place was dangerous



for those who opted for the poor. In those days, towards the end of January, he wrote to his brother: "I have the feeling that I am in danger. I don't want to be killed in any way, but neither am I ready, out of fear, to abandon this people. Never as in those days did the truth

of the apostle's words shine in his life. On the afternoon of Friday 13 February 1981, he was forced to go to the Military Detachment in order to extract from him the "confessions" that suited them. Courageous as always, Father Juan was not intimidated: "What we preach, anyone can hear. If you want to know what I say, just go to church. I do nothing but preach the word of God.

Reader 2: That day they did not release him until late at night. The next day after lunch he took his motorbike and set off for a community. In all these localities the people, despite their fear, were waiting for their pastor. Time passed and Father Juan did not arrive. The people then began to worry. At that hour, however, Juan Alonso was already living his Calvary. Witnesses saw soldiers dragging the priest up the ravine. He asked for water, but they would not give him any. In exchange they tortured him. The soldiers broke his ankle, then sat him down on a rock and blew his head off with three shots from close range (pause

and silence).

Reader 3: Around six thirty in the afternoon, Msgr. Vitor Hugo Martinez telephoned the MSC saying: "The body of Father Juan has been found. Three bullets in the head. In the city, a drunk soldier was saying, as if it were a feat, that he had killed another priest. It was February 15, 1981. These three MSC were martyred, together with seven other lay people. They have stories in common but lived a different vocation. They were persons in different situations, but with at least one thing in common: the profound sense of coherence and fidelity to the Gospel. They were nourished by the conviction that the perfect model for the heart of humanity is the Heart of Jesus. To defend full life for all, as Jesus did, cost them their lives, as it also cost the life of Jesus. They followed Christ in life, they followed him, also in death. With Christ they now reign in eternity. The Gospel sometimes demands of us an attitude of integrity that can cost us dearly. The question we could perhaps ask ourselves is: to what extent are we willing to do so?

All:
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Lives for the kingdom
Lives for the kingdom
All our lives
Like his lives
Like his life
The martyr Jesus.

5- GOD SPEAKS TO US

LISTENING TO THE WORD - Jn 12: 24-26

(Prayerful silence and spontaneous sharing)

(After the reading and sharing of the Word of God, one MSC of the community reads the following text below, and lights one of the three candles located on the ornamentation, representing one of the martyrs (one in turn).

6- BEATIFICATION OF THE HEART

Father of Goodness, we, Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, stand before the witness of our brother Fr. José María Gran Cirera, who by his life propagated the merciful love of the Heart of Christ. The Church, having on this day recognized his heroic virtues by his martyrdom, we ask his intercession: Blessed José Mary Gran, pray for us!

The first candle is lit, representing Blessed José Mary Gran.

Father of Mercy, we, Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, stand before the testimony of our brother Fr. Faustino Villanueva, who by his life propagated the merciful love of the Heart of Christ. The Church having, on this day, recognized his heroic virtues in his martyrdom, we ask his intercession: Blessed Faustino Villanueva, pray for us!

The second candle is lit, representing Blessed Faustino Villanueva.

Loving Father, we, Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, stand before the testimony of our brother Fr. Juan Alonso Fernandes, who with his life propagated the merciful love of the Heart of Christ. Having on this day the Church recognized his heroic virtues in his martyrdom, we ask his intercession: Blessed Juan Alonso Fernandes, pray for us!

The third candle is lit, representing Blessed Juan Alonso Fernandes.

7- PRAYERS

OUR FATHER OF MARTYRS

Our Father, of the marginalized poor
Our Father, of the martyrs, of the tortured
Your name is sanctified in those who die defending life
Your name is glorified, when justice is our measure
Your kingdom is of freedom, of fraternity, peace

and communion

Cursed be all violence that devours life through repression

We want to do your will, you are the true God of liberation

We will not follow the doctrines corrupted by oppressive power

We ask you the bread of life, the bread of security, the bread of the multitudes

The bread that brings humanity, that builds people instead of cannons

Forgive us when out of fear we remain silent in the face of death

Forgive and destroy the kingdoms where corruption is the strongest law

Protect us from cruelty, from the death squad, from the prevailing ones

Our revolutionary Father, partner of the poor, God of the oppressed

Our Father, revolutionary, partner of the poor, God of the oppressed

Our Father, of the marginalized poor

Our Father, of the martyrs, of the tortured

Remember Our Lady of the Sacred Heart...

Let us pray: Lord merciful Father, thanks for your son Jesus Christ, the faithful witness. Thanks for the priests, Missionaries of the Sacred Heart: José María, Fausto and Juan Alonso; and for the laymen: Rosalis, Miguel, Reyes, Tomás, Nicolás, Domingos and Juanito, who, moved by your Spirit, have been among us witnesses of your love. Thank you because new paths of truth, forgiveness and reconciliation are opening up in the midst of your people, so that justice, love and peace may be everywhere present. Through Jesus Christ, your Son and our Lord. Amen.

Blessed José Mary Gran and companions, pray for us.

8- FINAL BLESSING

