

ENG




Triduum
of Prayer

**Blessed
Juan Maria
de la Cruz,
SCJ**



Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus
Dehonians



Pope Francisco, in the Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exultate*, n.109, wrote to us recently, “*the powerful witness of the saints is revealed in their lives, shaped by the Beatitudes and the criterion of the final judgement. Jesus’ words are few and straightforward, yet practical and valid for everyone, for Christianity is meant above all to be put into practice*”.

Convinced of the exemplarity of the testimony of the proto-martyr of our Congregation, the blessed Juan María de la Cruz, we present this Triduum of Prayer. This is a guide to pray and meditate on three aspects that summarize his life and offer the possibility to appreciate the legacy left us:

- Animator and Protector of the vocations
- Apostle of the Sacred Heart of Jesus
- Martyr of Christ

As a Dehonian family, let us ask the intercession before God, the Blessed Juan María de la Cruz and the Venerable Leon Dehon. May their traces of Christian life marked by the Beatitudes illuminate the path that we are called to walk in this world.

“We must cooperate and spiritually and materially help the formation of dehonians missionaries”

(Sermon on missions and vocations)

When entering the Congregation of the priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mariano García Méndez, who was a priest in Ávila, took the name of Juan María de la Cruz. After working in teaching at the dehonian school of Novelda, he is devoted to the community of the Apostolic School of Puente la Reina. His health is precarious, but he asks God “ten years of Apostolate”. Obedience led him to devote himself to collect alms and to travel the paths to look for young boys with vocational restlessness to religious life and the ordained Ministry.

There are many memories that remain among families, friends, seminarians and contributors of “the father who was a Saint”. To those who had him as a guest in their homes that were left with his testimony of a humble and helpful man of prayers.

Reading

As I said in a previous letter from Vitoria, I was still uncertain about the will of God at this point; but after consulting with our Lord and our Blessed Mother, and having already been inclined to this part the Council of spiritual director, as well as of my superiors. I finally threw myself into the arms of Holy obedience, confident that our Lord will inspire my superiors with what best is suited for me, as the kind of life as in everything else; and quite sure of that, through Holy obedience, I conquer all the difficulties that oppose my sanctification. I put all my trust in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

4

Thank God I'm now pleased, because it seems that our Lord has put us various vocations of very good and pious children in our hands during this last season. We now have 21. And we must trust, that if God Our Lord gives us vocations he will also give us the means to sustain them.

(Letter to the General Superior, Fr. Lorenzo Philippe, 16 November 1929)

Petitions

We respond to each invocation saying:
Lord, hear us.

- For the Church, to make every day a sign clearer reconciliation, fraternal service and worship in spirit and truth.

- So the Dehonian family continues enriched by the contribution of new members, lay persons and religious who live according to the charism of Father Dehon.
- For those preparing for religious life and priesthood, so that the good Shepherd sees them living their discernment and delivery with joy and hope.
- For Christian families to be a home and a source where future vocations for the Church can be born.
- For young people, so that they are generous in following Christ, and, if God calls them,



that they are brave and put their lives to the service of evangelization on behalf of the Kingdom of God in this world.

Our Father _____

Final prayer _____

Almighty and everlasting God, that you've given to your Church through your servant the blessed Juan María de la Cruz, priest and martyr, seeds of new life; grant us the grace to imitate his virtues in a generous dedication to fulfill your will, proclaiming your love and serving to the reconciliation. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.



“Let anything be for the Sacred Heart of Jesus”

(Letter from prison to the Bishop of Luxembourg, Mons. Lorenzo Philippe, scj, August 1936)

Equipped for preaching, P. Juan Maria was always willing to exercise this service, if needed. His love for the Eucharist led him to be a propagator of the work of perpetual Adoration and speak always of the merciful love of the Savior. Marian spirituality was another of his great loves. His years in Puente la Reina allowed him to visit some shrines and, later, tell it to his seminarians in order to encourage them.

Reading

Who can probe my dear brothers, the infinite depths of that goodness, that compassion, love, that pervades the entire universe like a sea without banks?

How good is God, dear brothers! How good God is for those who love him, although they have been so ungrateful as I to that divine love!

How good is he for those who are abandoned in his paternal arms and deposited in him all their confidence!

Why, my dear, I recommend strongly that you have a confidence without limits in the one who is goodness and mercy without limits. That you feel much love to the divine heart of Jesus, who so dearly loves us, and that you love him not only with words and affection, but also with works and spirit of sacrifice, because love manifests itself both enjoying and suffering for our loved one.

(Letter to his family, 1 November 1929)

Petitions _____

8

We respond to each invocation saying:
Lord, hear us.

- For the Church, so it has the same greatness of Christ's heart and always opens its doors to all the men and women who need a word of hope.
- For those who have a responsibility to make a fairer world. So that they are able to overcome the difficulties and place the dignity of individuals as the center of their interests.
- To make our heart, like that of Jesus, a merciful heart that does not fall for insensitivity and indifference to the suffering of the people.

- So who are part of the Dehonian family continue discovering the inexhaustible source of God's love in the heart of Jesus.
- For all the Christians, so that we are able to have a heart attached by a single ideal and we let us form a fraternity in communion, having the same feelings of Christ.

Our Father _____

Final prayer _____

Almighty and everlasting God, that you've given to your Church through your servant the blessed Juan María de la Cruz, priest and martyr, seeds of new life; grant us the grace to imitate his virtues in a generous dedication to fulfill your will, proclaiming your love and serving to the reconciliation. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.



“Happy who have the fortune to spill their blood for our Lord!”

(Testimony collected by his family)

At the outbreak of the Spanish civil war, Father Juan is at the shrine of Garaballa (Cuenca). The community has to disperse, fled in search of a safe place. Arriving in Valencia, where he tries to go unnoticed, he stumbles with the fire of the Royal parish of los Santos Juanes. Viewer, like so many others, of the artistic and religious barbarism, he has to say out loud that it is a crime, a sacrilege. When asked for explanations, he answers simply and plainly that he is a priest.

He ends up at the model jail in Valencia, fourth Gallery, cell 476. Without trial, on the night of Aug. 23, without further charge than that of being priest and not hiding it, under the slogan of ‘Freedom’, they called him out of his cell. In the fields of Silla, ten bodies are lying among olive trees. In the early hours of the day they will be buried in the cemetery, in a mass grave without a name. The tenacity

of his confreres manages to find his remains. His relics will be transferred to Puente la Reina. The Church of the Crucifix, where his grave remains, is now silent testimony of delivered and generous living among so many generations of faithful religious, seminarians, students, and pilgrims.

On 11 March 2001, Pope Juan Pablo II declared Father Juan María de la Cruz to be Blessed, as well as 232 other martyrs.



We were edified from day one for his great piety and devotion. We prayed together the Breviary during the first month of jail, when we had three hours of recess in the morning, and another three in the afternoon, in the patio, where we would meet in the fourth gallery, R.P. Recaredo de los Ríos, salesian and martyr, he and I, could observe the large religious fervor with which he prayed. He was very often kneeling down on his knees in the middle of the patio, despite being for some strange reason given advise to omit signs of devotion, but he answered that there was not to have human respect, therefore, he had to confess to Christ, and had to imitate the martyrs of the first centuries, praying and kneeling, as they prepared for martyrdom.

Towards eleven o'clock in the morning, a large number of prisoners met to pray the Litany of the Saints in common, and on holidays we used to pray and read mass in public. Father Juanito, as we called him, was always there.

In the evenings, each priest used to meet with a squad of prisoners and pray the Holy Rosary in common: Father Juanito had his chosen Group, and not only prayed the Rosary, but other prayers as well as spiritual readings. I used to go from group to group when they finished prayers in common, and encourage all to virtue and love God. I was truly jealous.

*Blissful who reached the hand of martyrdom!
And, Blissful his congregation, which today
feels glorified by such excellent martyr!*

(Testemunho do Pe Tomás Vega, C.S.S.R.,
companheiro na prisão)



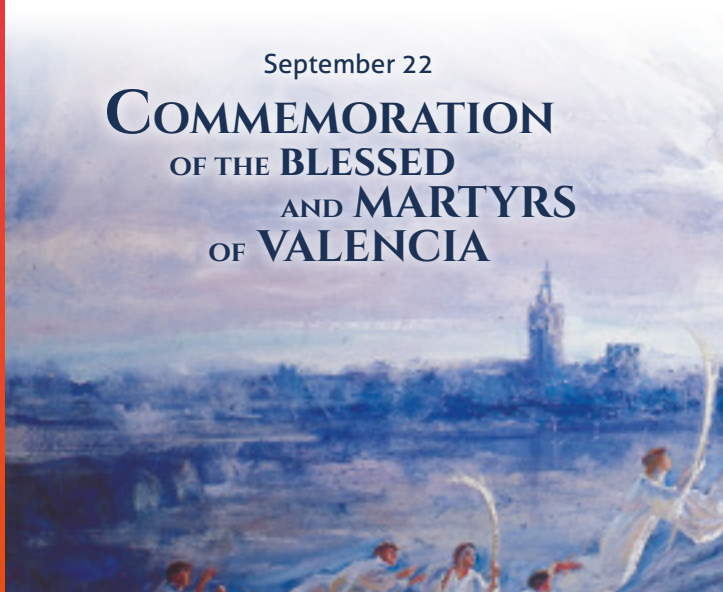
Petitions

We respond to each invocation saying:
Lord, hear us.

- For the intercession of the holy martyrs, who freely gave their lives as testimony of faith, grant us, Lord, the true freedom of spirit.
- For the intercession of the holy martyrs, who proclaimed their faith to shed their blood, grant us, Lord, integrity and constancy of faith.
- For the intercession of the holy martyrs, who, taking the cross, followed his footsteps, grant us, Lord, suffer with generosity the setbacks of life.

September 22

COMMEMORATION OF THE BLESSED AND MARTYRS OF VALENCIA



- For the intercession of the holy martyrs who washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, grant us, Lord, the overcoming of the works of the world and the flesh.

Our Father _____

Final prayer _____

Almighty and everlasting God, that you've given to your Church through your servant the blessed Juan María de la Cruz, priest and martyr, seeds of new life; grant us the grace to imitate his virtues in a generous dedication to fulfill your will, proclaiming your love and serving to the reconciliation. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.





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