

## THE NIGHT OF MARTYRS

*Laurentino,  
Virgilio  
and 44  
other brothers*



TODAY, WITH OUR FORMER MARTYRS,  
IT IS CHRIST WHO CONTINUES  
TO BE KILLED AND GLORIFIED.



# 1. Two letters

## 1.1 *Letter from Manuel de Irujo<sup>1</sup>, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Spain in the Republican Government, 7<sup>th</sup> January 1937<sup>2</sup>*

The Minister of the Republic to the Government of the Republic.

*The Constitution of the Republic proclaims the freedom of conscience and of religions. The law on the congregations and the denominations rules on the practice of religion and guarantees it.*

*The present situation of the Church, as of last July<sup>3</sup>, throughout all the loyal territory, except in the Basque Country, is the following:*

- a) All the altars, objects and images of worship, except in some rare exceptions, have been destroyed and often profaned.*
- b) All the churches have been closed to worship, which remains totally and absolutely suspended.*
- c) A large number of churches has been burned in Catalonia, and this seems to have been accepted as if that was normal practice.*

<sup>1</sup> Manuel de Irujo is of Basque origin, a committed Catholic, called to be a part of the Republican government on the 25th December 1936.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Hilari Raguera, *La pólvora y el incienso, La Iglesia y la Guerra Civil española*, - PenínsulaHCS, pp. 418-420.

The Republicans were in power in Spain in 1936. On the 18th July, Franco rose up against this government and created the Nationalist Movement. Spain was split into two: some regions stayed faithful to the Republic, others joined the movement of Franco. Persecution reigned in the regions that remained Republican. In these Republican regions priests and religious were killed by the thousands. – The letter of this minister is full of merit as it describes the persecution in all of its bluntness.

<sup>3</sup> The 18th July witnessed the rising up of Franco against the government of Madrid.

- d) The warehouses and official organisations have received bells, chalices, ciboria, candelabras and other objects of worship; they have melted them down for military or industrial purposes.*
- e) Warehouses of all types have been set up in the churches: markets, garages, military stables, shelters and other various modes of occupation...*
- f) All the convents have been emptied and religious life forbidden. The buildings objects of worship and goods of any sort have been burnt, vandalised, seized or destroyed.*
- g) Priests and religious have been arrested, sent to prison and shot by the thousands without any process. This state of affairs, instead of having diminished, continues all the more, not only in the countryside, where they are hunted down and killed savagely, but also in the cities. Madrid and Barcelona and the other large cities have hundreds of detainees whose only fault is to be a priest or a religious.*
- h) It is now absolutely forbidden to have images and objects of worship in private. The police keep registers of families, searching their houses, in the most intimate aspects of their personal or family life and destroy maliciously and violently any religious images, prints or books and anything to do with worship or things that are simply just a reminder of it...*

*The opinion of the civilised world is observing, with an astonishment that is tilting towards repulsion, the conduct of the government of the Republic, which has not prevented these acts of violence mentioned previously*

*and which consents to their continuation in the form and terms thus exposed. The revolutionary wave may be considered blind, irresistible and uncontrollable in the first instances. The systematic destruction of churches, altars and objects of worship can no longer be considered as a business out of one's control.*

*The participation of official organisations in the transformation of churches and objects of worship has industrial motivations, the imprisonment in State gaols of priests, religious, their assassinations, the continuation of a truly fascist system given that everyday the individual conscience of believers is outraged in the intimacy of their very houses and by the official forces of public power, all of that cannot receive a possible explanation without placing before the Government its complicity or powerlessness in this dilemma. The conclusion is that the exterior policy of the Republic is not attracting the esteem of the civilised world to its cause.*

The Minister concludes by suggesting a series of measures to put an end to this situation: give freedom back to priests and religious, reopen the churches, allow public worship, no longer attack the families in their private life...

### **1.2 Now is the time!**

These are the quite surprising New Year greetings that Brother Laurentino, Provincial, sent to his

brothers at the start of 1933:

*"You who tell God every day that you love him with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your being, well, now is the time to show this. Yes, now while those who persevere in loving him are mocked, abandoned, defamed, deprived of their legitimate rights as citizens, insulted and made the target of a satanic persecution.*

*Now is the time to show how great is the fidelity that you have sworn to the Lord. Now is the time to prove that your desires for sacrifice are not illusory and pure fantasy. Perhaps those who today show cowardice and desert the good cause once believed they were invincible...*

*The time is coming when we will see the valiant, those for whom there is nothing that they cannot master with the help of the One who gives them strength, those for whom nothing in the world can take away their peace, but who shelter behind the rampart of God, give the impression that their souls are becoming stronger as they face the present difficulties and worries. They do not recoil from great sacrifices – although they willingly recognise their fragility – as with the group of martyrs, of confessors and of men enamoured of Jesus Christ did not recoil from the tyrants and persecutors...*

*Now is the time to rejoice and to exult, as Jesus told us and as the apostles did when the time came to suffer trials and persecutions for the name of the divine Master.*

## 2. The persecution

*Besides, it is not we who are persecuted, but Jesus who is persecuted in each of his faithful servants. Each of us suffers individually, but he suffers in all his members.*

*So cease your complaints and lamentations, you who follow the Redeemer; you have not yet experienced the sufferings of Calvary or the destitution of the Saviour. He remains silent, prays, suffers and redeems. Pray, make amends, work, co-operate with Him for the salvation of souls. Would you want any better preparation to celebrate the 19<sup>th</sup> centenary of the blood-soaked drama of Calvary?*

*Now is the time to make amends more efficaciously for oneself and for others for our unfaithfulness to God. Now is the time to storm heaven with fervent and continual prayers for the intentions of God and of the Church; and for the intentions of the people and the works that are so dear to us and particularly recommended to us.*

*Yes, now is the time to pray and to pray indeed as our situation demands of us.*

*Now, now, without waiting any longer... Now is the hour to benefit from this time of trial, which is a time of grace and of blessing... This is to be our motto for the year 1933.*

*(Brother Laurentino – Stella Maris, January 1933, number 138, page 5.)*



Brothers killed in Barcelona, 8th of October 1936.

*“A Marist Brother must have no politics other than Christ!”*

*Br. Laurentino*

Brother Laurentino shows clearly how much our brothers in Spain were aware that martyrdom was a real possibility for them and that the climb to Calvary had already begun.

We would like to forget that today. Our society has become more tolerant and we weigh up better the horrors that were perpetrated on both sides in what we call *“the Spanish Civil War”*. It could be that we are tempted to view our martyred brothers as simply political victims because of the forces and social violence at the time.

It is very rare for the political dimension to be absent from martyrdom. In the death of Christ, the political actors and motivations are strongly evident and the real reason that John the Baptist was beheaded was because a young woman had danced in front of a weak king. A martyr is the one who is killed because somebody wants to kill God, Christ, the Church and destroy all that builds humanity and organises society in the values of the Spirit.

The brothers were aware that they should avoid the trap and the pretext of politics. Brother Laurentino wrote to them in February 1933: *“Now more than ever we must remove all that is political from our houses, as all of this can foster division in groups. What a sad spectacle would be offered by the religious who declared himself partisan of some political sector... The religious, or at least a Marist Brother, must have no politics other than Christ!”*<sup>4</sup>

Those who killed our brothers in Spain clearly expressed this project to expel God from the heart of mankind and of society; this was the collision of two different visions: Promethean man or man in the light of God. The testimony of Brother Elias Arizu Rodríguez confirms this explanation: *“I had been called before the leaders of the Revolution to be expelled from Spain. I spoke to four men, Aurelio Fernández, Portela from the F.A.I.<sup>5</sup>, Eroles and Ordaz, and I asked them why they were persecuting and murdering us. They answered that they had nothing against us personally; but that the ideas we profess are completely opposed to theirs and that they wanted to exterminate these ideas. Thus, the only reason for the death of so many Servants of God was the hatred of the Church and of its ministers.”*<sup>6</sup> This intention was clearly confirmed by one of the leaders of the revolution: *“We intend, in all of Spain, but especially in Catalonia, to*

*finish with all that smells of candle wax!”*<sup>7</sup> The militiamen of the Revolutionary Committee sang a similar refrain to Brother Hipolito, Director of the house at Las Avellanes: *“You and yours should manage to leave this area as soon as possible. In the case that this does not happen you are going to have a nasty time. We want neither religions nor religious people. Our religion is humanity.”*<sup>8</sup>

The material facts also talk of persecution. Out of about sixty communities and establishments that we had in Spain in 1936, forty-four had members who were victims of persecution, eleven establishments were burnt down, just as many were ransacked with countless numbers of chapels and sacred objects profaned. One hundred and seventy-two of our brothers were murdered but many more knew imprisonment, torture and insults. *“As soon as the revolutionary movement was declared on 18<sup>th</sup> July 1936, churches and convents were set on fire, wrecked and destroyed; priests and religious were persecuted to the point of death, many were murdered... and religion was totally forbidden until the end of the war in January 1939.”*<sup>9</sup>

Today we have strong feelings about the large number of martyrs in Russia during the Marxist period and we admire their silent witness to their

4 Informatio, p. 367.

5 F.A.I. is for Federación Anárquica Ibérica.

6 Informatio, p. 369.

7 Informatio, p. 370.

8 Informatio, p. 139.

9 Madame Mercedes Setoain Puig, witness to the diocesan process. Informatio p. 369.

## 3. Two remarkable brothers!

faith. Our martyred brothers in Spain deserve as much and for the same reasons. They speak to us of how to love and to remain faithful in extreme situations. As examples of humanity and holiness, they are a precious treasure in our Marist Family. They are our intercessors and they are our brothers.

The struggle that we know today is simply more subtle, but in the media and social laws there are constantly two opposite visions of mankind: the one which has no other vision than absolute mortality, a child of the absurd. The other vision is of the one in the light, a child of God, strong in the hope and the freedom that is given by love. We know a daily violence without the pouring forth of blood but there is certainly the loss of life.

Reflecting on our martyrs will help us to respond to God and to all humanity in a way that is audacious, full of integrity, faithful and that opens the doors to hope.

### 3.1 Brother Laurentino<sup>10</sup>

*Mariano Alonso Fuente (Laurentino)* was born on the 21<sup>st</sup> November 1881, in Castrecias, in the province of Burgos.

After he entered the Houses of Formation in Burgos and then Canet-de-Mar, he obtained the diploma that allowed him to teach at the age of fourteen.

In 1897, he made his novitiate and took the name Laurentino. He pronounced the vow of obedience on the 26<sup>th</sup> July 1899 and commenced his apostolate at Cartagena. At first, he found it difficult to keep control of his students. But in following the advice of the Brother Director, he quickly took charge with a noble character, evenness in mood, kindness and knowledge. He won the hearts of his students to the point that forty years later they still remembered his eminent qualities as a teacher. On the 30<sup>th</sup> August 1903, he made his perpetual profession in the grotto of Manrèse. It was a moment of profound spiritual maturation. He was appointed Director of the College of Cartagena in 1905 at the age of twenty-four. Brother Bérillus, Assistant General, in visiting the school found such a unity in the community and such a devotion to the students that in his admiration he offered the



Brother Laurentino (1930).

<sup>10</sup> This biography is inspired from what is in the *Informatio*, pp. 62-67.

brothers a trip to the city of Oran, in Algeria. In 1912, he went to Grugliasco<sup>11</sup> for the second novitiate. On his return, aged thirty-two, he took over the direction of the college in Burgos, at that time the most important in Spain. He succeeded there very well and in particular he was able to train a large number of brothers in their practicum. He knew how to give much stability to his community and the brothers who were a part of it stayed there a long time. Brother Fleury, Provincial, in introducing Laurentino, said, *"I am giving you a brother who has a great devotion to the Sacred Heart."* In effect, Brother Laurentino consecrated the college to the Sacred Heart and enthroned the statue. At the end of his mandate in Burgos, Brother Eold, Visitor, asked him to be his assistant as the Province of Spain was large, consisting of 800 brothers and 60 establishments. But then, Brother Eold was sent to Mexico as Provincial and Brother Laurentino found himself as the only Visitor. During his visits, he knew how to speak the truth without hurting anybody.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> June 1928, Brother Laurentino was called to lead the Province of Spain. At Canet-de-Mar, at the sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin, he renewed the consecration that he had made thirty-one years before and he placed all the work that he had been given into the hands of the Blessed Virgin. Spain was entering into a troubled and tragic peri-

od. The brothers needed to be guided by an intelligent, wise and strong-willed person. Through this torment, Brother Laurentino gave his brothers the courage and audacity to continue to run their schools and to found new ones: Seville, Cordoba and Huelva, all still flourishing today. He knew also how to create that spiritually intense climate that energises the apostle and prepares the martyr. Truly, during this stormy period, the spiritual and apostolic life of the communities was at a very high level. Brother Laurentino also opened new mission fields in Uruguay and Argentina, foreseeing the possible expulsion of the brothers from Spain. The hour of martyrdom was close. On the 18<sup>th</sup> July 1936, the African garrison revolted. On the 19<sup>th</sup>, gunfire and cannon blasts filled the streets of Barcelona and in the evening the churches and convents were set on fire. Our publishing house Luis Vives and the colleges *San José Oriol* and *Sagrado Corazon* were burnt to the ground... What was Brother Laurentino's state of mind at this time? On the 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1936, he sent Brother Atanasio to Murcia. He carried with him some sacred hosts and this message: *"Tell the brothers of Murcia that since the bloody eruption of the revolution, I live only for them and that at every moment of the day I am with them in spirit as I recommend them to the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary."*

Brother Laurentino received the offers and the means to escape to Italy. He always preferred to

<sup>11</sup> The General House of the Marist Brothers at this time and the centre for the Second Novitiate.

stay with his scattered and targeted brothers. He succeeded in getting 117 young brothers in formation into France. However, he fell with 106 other brothers in a trap set by the F.A.I. to whom he had given a large amount of money in order to save his brothers. On the 7<sup>th</sup> October 1936, at Barcelona, they were made prisoners in the boat *Cabo San Agustín* that was to have taken them to France according to the agreement with the F.A.I.

In the early hours of the 8<sup>th</sup> October, forty-six brothers, including Brothers Laurentino and Virgilio, were shot in the cemeteries of Moncada and Las Corts in Barcelona.



Brothers Laurentino and Bernardo (stain-glass in the chapel of Miraflores, Burgos).

**3.1.1** *A glance into the soul*  
These extracts allow us to come to a deeper appreciation of Brother Laurentino.

*“Throughout these days full of problems during which all of us or nearly all of us experienced long periods of great worry, ... my thoughts had been constantly on the people and the good works of our beloved Province; wanting to be in nearly continual contact with the brothers, particularly those who had*

*to suffer from the messy situation in which they found themselves. I wanted to console them, encourage them, ... understand them and share with them my heart’s religious affection that I felt for them as a father more than ever before during these days of mourning.”*<sup>12</sup>

*“In these critical moments may our attitude not be such that is given to sterile lamentation... Let us be religious in work, word and feelings, particularly in these moments when the Lord wants us to feel a little the light weight of his adorable cross... So let us pray fervently, study intensely and methodically... devote ourselves unconditionally to God and to our work... We are living in a precious time. Now we truly feel ourselves to be disciples of Christ; a thousand times happy to be judged by the Lord worthy of suffering for Him.”*<sup>13</sup>

People insisted that he take refuge and they found ways for him to leave the danger zone. Invariably his answer was that he would never abandon any of his brothers who could need his help.<sup>14</sup>

His final words to his brothers imprisoned with him, a few hours before being shot, are a farewell until heaven: *“May God be our help; I have done all that is possible; I have lived with you through the pains and the bitterness of the revolution. Let us be reunited in heaven.”*<sup>15</sup>

12 *Informatio*, p. 377. Letter dated 24.5.1931. Two weeks before, the communities of Alicante, Murice, Grenade, Denia and Alcoy had been attacked and looted.

13 *Informatio*, p. 378. Response to the letter above.

14 *Informatio*, p. 380.

15 *Informatio*, p. 381.

After this he retreated into a recollected silence; the antechamber of martyrdom.

### 3.2 Brother Virgilio<sup>16</sup>

Trifón Nicasio Lacunza Unzu (Brother Virgilio) was born on the 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1891 at Ciriza in Navarre.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> March 1903, his older brother, Brother Sixto, took him to the Juniorate at Vich. From this time, he followed the normal stages of Marist formation, sealed by perpetual vows on the 15<sup>th</sup> August 1912 and confirmed by the vow of stability on the



Brother Virgilio (Trifón Lacunza).

17<sup>th</sup> July 1926. He was a brilliant student and obtained a Teaching Diploma in 1908, a Higher Teaching Diploma in 1916, the Bachillerato (the diploma needed to be able to study at university) in 1920 and finally a Degree in Philosophy with History and Geography in 1923.

In October 1908, he was sent to the college at Burgos where he was to stay until 1935. In 1925 he was appointed as Director of this college of 638 students. When Brother Virgilio left the college, the

number of the students had doubled. Even during the difficult years of the persecution, the number of students continued to grow. A new chapel was built, a drama hall, new classrooms and new playgrounds were added.

In 1935, Brother Virgilio went to Grugliasco for the Second Novitiate. He was even appointed as Assistant-Director. In the following year, at Murcia, he was also appointed as Assistant-Director. The intention of the superiors was to prepare him to replace Brother Laurentino and to assist also in the government of the Province.

When the revolution broke out on the 19<sup>th</sup> July 1936, Brother Virgilio was at Barcelona, in one of the schools. He escaped from the anarchists by jumping through a window.

Brother Laurentino asked him to look after the departure of the young men in formation for France. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1936, he went to las Avellanes with Ordaz, one of the leaders of the F.A.I. On the 4<sup>th</sup> October, the young men crossed the border. The brothers, on the contrary, were made prisoners, taken to Barcelona and put firstly into the ship *El Cabo San Agustín* and then into the prison *Checa San Elias*. Virgilio was one of the forty-six brothers who, in the quiet of the small hours of the 8<sup>th</sup> October 1936, was shot: a group of martyrs enveloped in night and in silence.

<sup>16</sup> This biography summarises the main ideas that are found in the *Informatio*, pp. 67-85.

### 3.2.1 A rich personality<sup>17</sup>

Many witnesses have shed light on the rich personality of Brother Virgilio.



The martyr embraced by the Founder.  
Bas relief in ceramic of Br. José Santamarta, 1989.

□ *“His authority over the students was absolute but loving. He inspired confidence. He inspired his students by his eloquence...”*<sup>18</sup>

□ In community he always had his “sleeves rolled

up”, ready to be of service and always the first on the job for any work.

- *“His Spartan way of life strengthened his character, forged his will, made him a self-educator and prepared him to render all types of services.”*<sup>19</sup>
- As soon as he finished his studies, he was asked to write a Universal History. From that time on, he did not cease working on the publications from the publishing house Luis Vives.

- When the superiors appointed him as Director at Burgos he started to cry. He saw himself as the worst of the daredevils in the community.<sup>20</sup>
- He spoke about the Virgin Mary in accents of authentic lyricism. He was drawn to the Mother of the Lord towards whom he turned his suppliant and trustful eyes: *“May I never lack your favour and may you love now and for always enchant me, amaze me, captivate me, fascinate me, seduce my heart, glorify me, surprise me, enthrall me and lead me to greater heights...”*<sup>21</sup>
- He was the friend of joyfulness and jokes: *“He was a companion from whom you find courage, with whom you could forget your daily troubles and be re-energised for the lessons of the following day. During times of relaxation, it would be one of his jokes that brought joy and broke the tension.”*<sup>22</sup> A confrere who knew him in the Second Novitiate remembered him thus: *“Friendly, happy in his conversations, enthusiastic for work, undertaking all the initiatives. During our walks, recreation time, trips away, he displayed a kind, family spirit. His healthy joy and his good humour enchanted everybody and even made the most serious of us laugh. An untiring worker, assiduous and simple in the accomplishment of his tasks... His simplicity and his sociable charac-*

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, pp. 67-85.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 69.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 70.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. p. 71.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p. 72.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. p. 74.

ter earned him the affection of many and the admiration of all.”<sup>23</sup>

- A confrere who had been confined to bed for a year by illness remembered how Brother Virgilio visited him several times every day, as if he did not have the task of directing the school.<sup>24</sup>
- He was humble and prudent enough to be open to the advice of everybody, even new teachers, and he would ask brothers who had arrived from other colleges about the successful methods they had used previously.<sup>25</sup>
- He became a specialist as a “cinema technician”. As early as 1918 during the long winters when it was impossible to go out, he showed the students films that were followed by discussions on the artistic and moral values of what they had seen. He insisted to his superiors that the college be provided with better equipment for talking movies. He justified the film sessions in this way: “It is an excellent work for saving the children and the young people and for doing the work of the apostolate.”<sup>26</sup>
- Brother Virgilio had also organised the association for the Apostolate of Prayer, the confrater-

nity of the Infant Jesus of Prague, the disciples of Saint Tharcis, the adorers of the Most Holy Sacrament and he would give all his students the annual spiritual exercises.

- In 1932 the Company of Jesus was suppressed in Spain. Before the evident threat of persecution, Brother Virgilio created the civil company “La Cultura” and gave the brothers’ college to this company through legal contract. The college took on a new name, “Liceo Zorilla”. The teaching personnel consisted of lay teachers and secularised Marists, without soutane and no longer using the title “Brother”. In the same way, he made allowances for the security of the museum, the library and the furniture.<sup>27</sup> In September 1933, the Marist Brothers disappeared from Burgos as teachers. Brother Laurentino found this to be a good initiative and suggested it to all the other Marist schools with these words: “Be calm, resist and save all our works if possible.”<sup>28</sup>
- It was Brother Virgilio who went to Barruelo, despite the dangerous situation, to identify the body of Brother Bernardo. He saw the persecution as a sign from Providence: “Revolutions are the lanterns of Providence, light sent by God to illu-

23 Ibid. p. 81-82.

24 Ibid. p. 74.

25 Ibid. p. 74.

26 Ibid. p. 75.

27 Ibid. p. 77.

28 Ibid. p. 78.

## The group of martyrs

In the early hours of the 8<sup>th</sup> October 1936, forty-four other brothers were shot with Brothers Laurentino and Virgilio. Here is the list of names:



In the group of martyrs we recognize Brother Laurentino, Virgilio and Eusebio.

- ALBERTO MARÍA (NÉSTOR VIVAR VALDIVIELSO) AGED 26.
- ÁNGEL ANDRÉS (LUCIO IZQUIERDO LÓPEZ) AGED 37.
- ANSELMO (ANICETO FALGUERAS CASELLAS) AGED 57.
- ANTOLÍN (ANTONIO ROIG ALIBAU) AGED 45.
- BAUDILLO (PEDRO CIORDIA HERNÁNDEZ) AGED 48.
- BERNABÉ (CASIMIRO RIBA PI) AGED 54.
- CARLOS RAFAEL (CARLOS BRENGARET PUJOL) AGED 19.
- DIONISIO MARTÍN (JOSÉ CESARI MERCADAL) AGED 33.
- EPIFANIO (FERNANDO SUÑER ESTRACH) AGED 62.
- FELIPE JOSÉ (FERMÍN LATIENDA AZPILICUETA) AGED 45.
- FÉLIX LEÓN (FÉLIX AYÚCAR ERASO) AGED 24.
- FORTUNATO ANDRÉS (FORTUNATO RUIZ PEÑA) AGED 38.
- FRUMENCIO (JULIO GARCÍA GALARZA) AGED 27.
- GABRIEL EDUARDO (SEGISMUNDO HIDALGO MARTÍNEZ) AGED 23.
- GAUDENCIO (JUAN TUBAU PERELLÓ) AGED 42.
- GIL FELIPE (FELIPE RUIZ PEÑA) AGED 29.

*minate the path of our future activity, the Lord knocking strongly on the doors of our hearts so that they will burn with love for our neighbour, our students, our society and our country.”<sup>29</sup> In another reflection he adds: “Revolutions are the fruit of ideas. The ideas are sown in schools and today this occurs with a far stronger commitment than ever before. The school is the workshop where we forge in the same way either the complete and dignified person or the most vile of criminals.”<sup>30</sup>*

- More precisely to his collaborators he would repeat: *“I speak from experience; the ideas that I am suggesting to my dear colleagues, the secondary teachers, are not utopian. S.E.T.O. = Sacrificio (sacrifice), estudio (study), trabajo (work), oración (prayer) whose initials form the word ‘seto’ (a Spanish word that means hedge). We must all be like a living hedge to protect the soul of the child... In the name of religion, of the country, of the soul of our students, we educate, we christianise.”<sup>31</sup>*

Beyond martyrdom, there is indeed in Brother Virgilio a kindly saint who is very close to us.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. p. 80. This text and the following one, taken from the magazine *Stella Maris*, are signed with the letters H.V.L which could be interpreted as Bro. Virgilio Lacuzna or more probably Bro. Victor Luis (Jerónimo Tresserras) who also was writing in the magazine. Nevertheless these were the ideas circulating among the Brothers during those years of the persecution.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. p. 80.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. p. 81.

HERMÓGENES (ANTONIO BADÍA ANDALE) AGED 28.  
ISAÍAS MARÍA (VICTORIANO MARTÍNEZ MARTÍN) AGED 37.  
ISMAEL (NICOLÁS RAN GOÑI) AGED 26.  
JAIME RAMÓN (JAIME MORELLA BRUGUERA) AGED 37.  
JOSÉ CARMELO (GREGORIO FACI MOLINS) AGED 28.  
JOSÉ FEDERICO (NICOLÁS PEREDA REVUELTA) AGED 20.  
JUAN CRISÓSTOMO (JUAN PELFORT PLANELL) AGED 23.  
JUAN DE MATA (JESÚS MENCHÓN FRANCO) AGED 38.  
LAUREANO CARLOS (PEDRO SITGES PUIG) AGED 47.  
LEÓNIDES (JERÓNIMO MESSEGUÉ RIBERA) AGED 52.  
LEOPOLDO JOSÉ (FLORENTINO REDONDO INSAUSTI) AGED 51.  
LINO FERNANDO (VÍCTOR GUTIÉRREZ GÓMEZ) AGED 36.  
LICARIÓN (ÁNGEL ROBA OSORNO) AGED 41.  
MARTINIANO (ISIDRO SERRANO FABÓN) AGED 35.  
MIGUEL IRENÉO (LEOCADIO RODRÍGUEZ NIETO) AGED 36.  
PORFIRIO (LEONCIO PÉREZ GÓMEZ) AGED 37.  
PRISCILIANO (JOSÉ MIR PONS) AGED 47.  
RAMÓN ALBERTO (FELICIANO AYÚCAR ERASO) AGED 22.  
SALVIO (VICTORINO GÓMEZ GUTIÉRREZ) AGED 52.  
SANTIAGO (SERAFÍN ZUGALDÍA LACRUZ) AGED 40.  
SANTIAGO MARIA (SANTIAGO SÁIZ MARTÍNEZ) AGED 23.  
SANTOS (SANTOS ESCUDERO MIGUEL) AGED 29.  
TEÓDULO (LUCIO ZUDAIRE ARAMENDÍA) AGED 46.  
VÍCTOR CONRADO (JOSÉ AMBRÓS DEJUAN) AGED 38.  
VICTORINO JOSÉ (JOSÉ BLANCH ROCA) AGED 28.  
VITO JOSÉ (JOSÉ MIGUEL ELOLA ARRUTI) AGED 43.  
VIVENCIO (JUAN NUÑEZ CASADO) AGED 28.  
VULFRANO (RAMÓN MILL ARÁN) AGED 27.

To enter into the details of their lives would be too long, but the group does represent characteristics that are worthy of emphasis:

If we look at the ages of the brothers, we find that the youngest brother was aged 19, while the oldest brother was aged 62. Between these ages there were sixteen brothers in their twenties, eleven brothers in their thirties, eleven brothers in their forties and six brothers in their fifties. This was a young group that was martyred.

The biographical pages devoted to them in the *Informatio*<sup>32</sup> are in general full of praise. Before death and martyrdom, we tend to remember the good aspects of a person. Here, however, we have a group who knew for five years they were heading for the final trial of martyrdom and during this time they were guided by superiors who made them aware of this and created a climate of generosity and piety to prepare their hearts to accept and even desire this sacrifice.

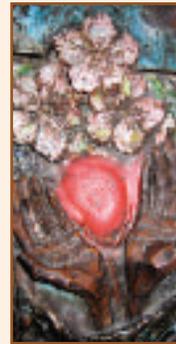
All did not have the makings of a saint: one brother was too melancholic and taciturn, another too authoritarian in his positions of responsibility, one young brother had found a fiancé but had said yes to his Provincial for going on the *Cabo San Agustín*... In their human frailty, their choice was for Christ.

<sup>32</sup> *Informatio*, pp. 59-285.

The reading of these biographies gives rise to great admiration due to the quality of their lives rather than their tragic deaths. Some were true intellectuals, others expert teachers who were close to young people, others in their leadership roles were able to marry the art of organisation with paternal care and those employed in manual work were capable of rendering great service to others that was always done willingly and joyfully. There were poets, and others with the kindest of hearts, like the brother at las Avellanes who was responsible for welcoming the poor and always made sure that he added a glass of wine with the meal that he offered them.

All were wholeheartedly devoted to the Mother of the Lord and led simple and discreet Marist lives. We, as a family, can be truly proud of these brothers. We can ask them to intercede for us so that our hearts may be open to the generosity that God is asking of us today.

This prayer-poem that was composed by one of these brothers, a cry from the heart, may also be the prayer that joins us all together in fraternity.



### *Mane nobiscum Domine !<sup>33</sup>*

*Con nosotros, Señor, permanece,  
Sigue amante rigiendo tu grey;  
Signo augusto que nunca fenece  
Es la Cruz en que dictas tu Ley.*

*Hoy que te echan de esotro santuario  
De la escuela, cristiana hasta ayer,  
No te vayas, oh Dios del Calvario,  
¡No te alejes, porque has de volver!*

*Queda al menos del templo en la calma  
Do en penumbra tu efigie se ve;  
Reina siempre, Jesús, en el alma  
Del que en Ti deposita su fe.*

<sup>33</sup> Informatio, p 100, Prayer-poem of a martyr (Brother Angel Andrés):  
*Mane nobiscum Domine (Stay with us, Lord!)*

*Stay with us Lord  
continue to guide your flock with love  
Your Cross where you give us your Law  
is the august sign that never perishes.*

*Today as we are chased from this sanctuary  
from school that was until yesterday Christian,  
Do not leave us, O God of Calvary  
Do not stay far away, as indeed we need you to return to us.*

*Stay for the least in the calm of the temple  
where we see your effigy in the obscurity  
Reign forever, Jesus, in the soul  
of the one who places his faith in You.*