

TOGETHER pilgrims on the way towards MADRID 2011

Spiritual journey in the company of CA young saints

Second stage (June – July 2010)

TIME TO MEDITATE

**Luke 11,1-13 • WITH YOUR WORDS AND DEEDS YOU HAVE REVEALED TO US WHO GOD IS:
YOUR FATHER AND FATHER OF US ALL; AND WHO YOU ARE: OUR SAVIOUR**

"One day Jesus was praying in a certain place and when he had finished, one of his disciples said to him: "Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples." He said to them, "When you pray, say:

Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread and forgive us our sins for we ourselves forgive everyone in debt to us, and do not subject us to the final test."

And he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend to whom he goes at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, for a friend of mine has arrived at my house from a journey and I have nothing to offer him,' and he says in reply from within, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been locked and my children and I are already in bed. I cannot get up to give you anything.' I tell you, if he does not get up to give him the loaves because of their friendship, he will get up to give him whatever he needs because of his persistence.

"And I tell you: "Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. What father among you would hand his son a snake when he asks for a fish? Or hand him a scorpion when he asks for an egg? If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father in heaven give the holy Spirit to those who ask him?"

Words and deeds: our experience is that these two things do not always go together; normally it is easier to say many words but very often deeds do not follow accordingly. But we too, even though "we are bad", (as this Gospel says!), sometimes, "we know how to give good things to our children". Sometimes, we are lead to do good beyond all reasoning.

Jesus teaches us that our words and what we in fact do can only be consistent if based on faith in God: we can say with full trust "Father" because God is and acts like a Father with us.

Words: Jesus invites us to turn our words into a prayer. Only if our every word is a prayer, in the so many possible ways this can be, can it be a true word. This can only be so if our words do not express our conviction, our promises or our ideas but rather the faith we have received. This faith makes us believe firmly that what we ask for ourselves and for others, is given to us by the Father. Only thus can our words be trustworthy.

Deeds: Jesus invites us to realize that any good we do comes directly or indirectly from God. We can hope because God, the Father, has already worked and still works in us. "Blessed is He who has worked and still works!" says Ephraim the Syrian.



BLESSED IVAN MERZ

Biography

Ivan was born on the 16th December 1896 in Banja Luka, in Bosnia, in a very liberal family. At that time, Bosnia was under the occupation of Austria-Hungary. He followed his secondary education in a multi-ethnic and multi religious environment in his native town. He finished his studies at the time when the hereditary prince Francis Ferdinand was killed (28th June 1914). Following his parents' wish, he enrolled in the military Academy of Wiener Neustadt but left after three months because of the corruption which prevailed. In 1915, he started his university studies in Vienna but in 1917 he was recruited in the army to be sent on the front, where he spent the greater part of 1917 and 1918. Between 1919 and 1920 he was back in Vienna as a student in the Faculty of Philosophy. In October 1920 he left for Paris where

he attended the Sorbonne and the "Institut Catholique". "In the meantime he prepared his doctorate dissertation on «The influence of the liturgy on French writers» which he presented at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University in Zagreb (1923). He also passed the State examination and was thus qualified to teach French and German language and literature. Up to his death (10th May 1928), he was a teacher at the Archbishop's Grammar School in Zagreb.

As a lay person, he promoted the liturgical movement and was greatly involved in the Croatian Catholic Movement. He helped the Aquile Youth Movement, for which he offered his life on his death-bed, to adopt the principles of Catholic Action. He was definitely a "pioneer" in this field following the directives of Pius XI: forming apostles "for the renewal of all things in Christ".

Ivan Merz' spiritual journey is most striking and truly singular, especially in the first phase of his formation. Without a family, without a novitiate, without a seminary, without a stable spiritual guide, on his own he found the way to sanctity, so much so that someone defined him as "a spontaneous spiritual product". His intimate diary is most enlightening. He reflects on love, suffering and death in the light of faith.

Ivan Merz, "a European saint" is the «catholic man » par excellence. His heart beat in unison with the heart of the Church which has no national or political boundaries; of the Church which is the mystical Body of Christ, gathered around Christ, really present in the Eucharist and represented on earth by his Vicar, the Pope. The Church, the Eucharist and the Pope were Merz' three loves, or better still, Merz' only love. With all his strength, He tried to instil this love in the heart of Croatia's catholic youth.

Ivan's words

«You should know that my university life in Vienna, the war, my studies and finally Lourdes have deeply convinced me of the veracity of the Catholic faith. This is the reason why all my life revolves around Christ our Lord». (*From a letter to his mother from Paris in 1921*)

«The catholic faith is my vocation in life».

«If you do not believe, you stop existing».

«The struggle against sin should be at the root of every apostolate».

«Suffering does more for the Kingdom of Christ than hard work, learned discussions or splendid articles».

The Holy Father said...

«Dear Brothers and Sisters: the righteous person, filled with divine light, in its turn, becomes a torch which shines and heats. And this is the message which the new Blessed Ivan Merz gives us.

He was a brilliant young man, who knew how to multiply his natural talents, with which he was endowed, and managed to achieve so much human success. We can describe his life as a great success. But the reason for his being included in the list of those who have been beatified is not that. He has joined the choir of the Blessed because of his success in front of God. His greatest aspiration of his life was, in fact, "never to forget God and to foster a great wish to be always closer to God". In all his activities, he tried to discover "the sublimity of knowing Christ Jesus" and to let himself "be conquered" by Him (cfr Ph 3,8.12))».

John Paul II, *Homily during the mass for the beatification of Ivan Merz – Banja Luka, 22 June 2003*