

TOGETHER pilgrims on the way towards MADRID 2011

Spiritual journey in the company of CA young saints

Fifth stage (October 2010)

TIME TO MEDITATE

Luke 19,1-10 • WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR DEATH AND RESURRECTION; YOU WERE OBEDIENT TO THE WILL OF THE FATHER UP TO THE END AND BECAUSE OF THIS YOU ARE LORD OF ALL AND OF ALL THINGS

“He came to Jericho and intended to pass through the town. Now a man there named Zacchaeus, who was a chief tax collector and also a wealthy man, was seeking to see who Jesus was; but he could not see him because of the crowd, for he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus, who was about to pass that way. When he reached the place, Jesus looked up and said to him, «Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house». And he came down quickly and received him with joy. When they all saw this, they began to grumble, saying, «He has gone to stay at the house of a sinner!» But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, «Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor, and if I have extorted anything from anyone I shall repay it four times over». And Jesus said to him: «Today salvation has come to this house because this man too is a descendant of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost»”.

Every change is a little death: change means a separation from something, which is part of oneself or outside oneself and means that we have to face a new world and to find new ways of relating to it. This makes us fear change even when we wish it: we have to face situations which are new to us and leave behind those with which we are familiar.

In the narration of the story of Zacchaeus, Jesus shows us a happy change, a conversion. Everything seems easy and easy flowing, one action follows another without any apparent shakes, nearly without any pain or effort. This evangelical episode shows us the way to the light of the final outcome. To encourage us, it shows us the joy which ensues. But, as always, in his life, Jesus does first what he asks of us: in his death and resurrection he has shown us the seriousness and cost of necessary change. He died for us, so that we may remain in the love of God the Father. His obedience to the will of the Father until death tells us that we could (and maybe should) be ready to accept the cost of change and conversion in order to find Zacchaeus' joy and his feast.

IN THE COMPANY OF SAINTLY YOUNG PEOPLE



BLESSÈD MARCEL CALLO

Biography

Marcel Callo was born in Renne, France, on the 6th December, 1921. He came from a numerous and modest working family and was the second of nine brothers. At school he was an average student and liked playing jokes on his classmates. He grew up in a truly Christian environment. His parents maintained that their sons had to be educated in society, outside domestic walls. Marcel started as a member of the “Eucharistic Crusade”, a Christian movement. In 1933, he joined the Scouts and in 1934 the JOC, the Young Christian Workers, where he realized that spiritual life was the source of all good work and committed himself to spread the Gospel in a social class which was no longer Christian. Among his fellow workers he met Margherita, to

whom he got engaged in 1942 but whom he never succeeded in marrying. When the Germans occupied France in 1940, many workmen were transferred to Germany to do forced labour in weapon factories. Marcel was taken by the Nazi on the 8th March 1943, the day after the bombardment on Rennes during which he lost his sister. He had a strong temptation to escape but he did not and left because he knew that his father and his brother, who was a priest, would suffer revenge for his actions.

When he arrived in Turingia, Marcel met other JOC young workers and he instantly "set himself to the mission of helping his companions" involving also fellow scouts and Catholic Action youth. His fervour drew a group of young men around him. The Gestapo was afraid that this Catholic group could turn into a resistance group and did not approve of Marcel's initiative. Marcel was arrested on the 19th March 1944 after having been condemned «for his Catholic action with his companions who were in the Forced Labour Service». He appeared to be «a danger to the Nazi Regime and to the safety of the German people».

At first he was sent to the prison in Gotha, then to the concentration camp in Flossenbürg where he finally found himself in the section reserved for those who were condemned to death. Wherever he was, he always behaved as a fervent Christian. The Nazi authorities decided that Marcel Callo had to be eliminated. On the 25th October, he was transferred to the extermination camp of Mauthausen, in Austria. He arrived there so worn out that on the 19th March 1945 he fell exhausted into the common cesspool which served as a latrine. He died a very inhuman death.

His body, like that of many other victims of the extermination camps, was never found. It was probably burnt in the crematorium.

Some comments about Marcel

«I go as a missionary to help the others to resist».

When leaving for forced labour in Germany, 19th March 1943

«Christ is a friend who does not leave you not even for a second. He sustains you and with Him you can bear anything...I feel Christ at my side, He helps me, He comforts me...».

His last letter to his family, 6th July, 1944

The witness given by Andrea Tibodo, a fellow prisoner in Mathausen, who survived:

«I got to know him during the very last moments of his life. He died in my arms. But this was enough for me to understand that that there was something extraordinary about that young man. I saw many prisoners dying but I was impressed by the look on Marcel's face. I could see an expression of profound conviction: he was leaving for his last journey for a better life. I have never seen that look on a dying person's face».

The Pope says

«In a few words I would like to appeal to you all to let yourself be inspired by the Pauline and Marian spirituality which transformed Marcel's life. It was the mysticism of Saint Paul which enwrapped him: "If I live, it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me". This explains his out of the ordinary grace in Rennes and in Germany. Today, Brittany, France, Europe urgently need evangelizers of the Marcel Callo's worth. [...]

Marcel did not not study Marian theology, but the education he received from his mother and from his parish lead him towards the authentic Marian devotion of the Catholic Church. He had a special place for the Virgin Mary right up to the end. Mary's divine maternity and Her participation in the birth and growth of the Church were not just words for him. It is truly with Her and for Her that he answered to the Good News of Jesus Christ».

John Paul II, Homily during the beatification Mass, 4th October, 1987