



**A DEHONIAN MEMORIAL: THE CELEBRATION OF
THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH
OF FR. MARTINO CAPELLI, SCJ**



In order to set the place of prayer, various items can be used with reference to the theme of the vigil (i.e., a cross, candles, flowers, incense etc...). It is important to pay attention to the sensibilities of all the participants.

The leader or animator will be asked to guide the vigil with the help of various readers. If possible, it would be useful to provide the technical means necessary for projecting images and playing music.

All the texts can be adapted by the group to the various situations in which the prayers are addressed. It would also be possible to change them in order to provide for two or three shorter moments of prayer.



- Song: In the night, O God, we will watch / *Laudate Omnes Gentes* (Taizé)
- We begin our prayer in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.
- Introduction

In 2000, the then Superior General, Fr. Virginio Bressanelli, announced to the Congregation the approval of the Decree of Martyrdom of Blessed Juan Maria de la Cruz. He invited us to "recover the historical memory of those significant figures, our sisters and brothers, who can be models to inspire us to live the vocation and mission we have in the Church and in the world of today with greater intensity " (18th Dec. 2000, prot 286). On 31st May 2004, the Superior General, Fr. José Ornelas Carvalho, communicated to the Congregation the institution of the Dehonian Memorial Day. This was to be celebrated every year on November 26th, the day of the death of Bishop Wittebols and the other brothers in the Congo. "The death of Mgr. Wittebols along with other priests, speaks of a witness in the Church and with the Church, a martyred and missionary Church."

This year we propose to highlight the figure of our brother Fr. Martino Capelli.

75 years ago, on 1st October 1944, Fr. Capelli was killed by German Nazis together with the Salesian priest Don Elia Comini and another 39 men, women and children, in Pioppe di Salvaro (about 30 km from Bologna). The massacre of Monte Sole, also known as the Marzabotto massacre, took place between 29th September and 5th October 1944 where a total of 1830 people were killed. In this vigil we would like to know more deeply the person and life of our brother, Fr. Martino Capelli, and enter into his missionary desire, the passion for his people, and his availability for martyrdom.

Opening prayer

God who is great in goodness,
with love you have called us to make our lives
a gift to you and to our brothers.
We contemplate today
the example of so many Dehonians,
that with their witness of shedding their blood
they proclaimed the greatness of your love.
Give us the grace to know more deeply,
to accept more generously,
the stories of their lives given up to the last breath,
for your glory
and the salvation of the world.
For our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who is God,
and lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
One God, forever and ever. Amen.



A Missionary desire



Photo by Fr. Capelli with missionaries



From the first letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians (Corinthians, 9, 16-23)

In fact announcing the Gospel is not a source of pride for me, because it is a necessity that is imposed on me: woe to me if I do not announce the Gospel! If I do it on my own, I have the right to a reward; but if I do not do it on my own, it is an assignment that has been entrusted to me. So what is my reward? That of proclaiming the Gospel for free without using the right conferred on me by the Gospel. In fact, although I was free from all, I made myself the servant of all to gain the greatest number: I became a Jew for the Jews, to gain the Jews. For those who are under the Law - although I am not under the Law - I have become like one who is under the Law, for the purpose of earning those who are under the Law. For those who have no Law - even though I am not without the law of God, rather being in the law of Christ - I have become like one who is without Law, for the purpose of earning those who are without Law. I made myself weak for the weak, to gain the weak; I made myself everything for everyone, to save someone at all costs. But I do everything for the Gospel, for whom I myself have become a slave.

LETTER BY P. MARTINO CAPELLI TO HIS BROTHER ANTONIO

On the 3rd October 1938 Fr. Martino Capelli writes to his brother Antonio:

"Dearest Antonio, I have a desire to send you my fraternal greetings from Africa, in the hope that one day, not far away, we will really establish here a missionary apostolate. If our good soldiers can live among the dunes of an arid desert and live there willingly to serve the Fatherland, the more we, the missionaries, must wish to travel there. Meanwhile, I prepare myself through studying. In a few days we will enter the school and then the regular life of study will begin. We have just one year of school; it is the last one".



REQUEST TO BE SENT TO THE MISSION IN CHINA

At Pentecost 1939, in a letter to the provincial superior, Fr. Giovanni Zagaria, p. Capelli reiterates his missionary desire.

"I, Martino Capelli, after considering everything before the Lord and with the permission of my Confessor and Director, I ask the Most Reverend Fatherhood to be sent immediately to our mission in Junnan [China]."

Psalm 138

R. All the kings of the earth, will give you thanks, O Lord,

I thank you, Lord, with all my heart:
you have heard the words of my mouth.
Not to other gods, but I want to sing to you,
I bow to your holy temple.

R. All the kings of the earth, will give you thanks, O Lord

I give thanks to your name for your Love and your loyalty:
you have made your promise greater than your name.
On the day I called you, you answered,
you have increased your strength in me.

R. All the kings of the earth, will give you thanks, O Lord

They will thank you, Lord, all the kings of the earth,
when they hear the words of your mouth.
They will sing to the ways of the Lord:
great is the glory of the Lord!
Because the Lord is exalted,
He looks towards the humble;
the proud are acknowledged from afar.

R. All the kings of the earth, will give you thanks, O Lord

If I walk in danger,
you give me your life;
you lay your hand against the anger of my adversaries
and your right hand saves me.
The Lord will do everything for me. Lord your love is forever:
do not abandon the work of your hands.

R. All the kings of the earth, will give you thanks, O Lord



Symbol: a globe and a Bible are placed in front of the altar

Together with Fr. Capelli we remember many Dehonians who have left their home, their cultures, to witness the good news in all parts of the world...

- silence

- prayer

Chosen as apostles
and sent by the Spirit
for all the earth,
is in your hands
it is the work of the Father,
on your lips is
the message of salvation.
One day you were weak,
but now made strong and free
through the breath of God,
nothing scares you,
nothing more will harm you:
it is no longer broken
the voice of fear.
In your humble announcement
the cross turns to dust
the walls of your hearts:
and sin crumbles,
level and sweet opens up
the way of joy. Amen.

- Song: Alma misionera / Ecce venio / Jubilate Deo omnis terra (Taizé)



The passion for his people

Photo: Fr. Martino, Prefect of Trent



A Reading from the Gospel according to St. Matthew (Mt 25, 34-40)

I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me a drink; I was a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me. Then the righteous will answer him: Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you, thirsty and give you a drink? When did we see you as a stranger and we welcomed you, or naked and we dressed you? And when did we see you sick or in jail and visit you? In reply, the king will tell them: "Truly, I say to you, every time you did these things to one of these my little ones, you did it to me."

Let's listen to two witnesses

Remember Fr. Enrico Agostini: "One day the Germans took some partisans, three or four, and took them to a meadow near the rectory. We saw the movement of the Germans from the house, but we thought they were signs of intimidation. It was Father Capelli who at a certain moment said: "They will really kill them, you have to go out, do something! ". He rushed out first, confessed them and then he embraced them and kissed them, one by one before they were cut down. "



Fr. Dario Zanini writes: "I have no doubt in confirming that [Father Martino and Fr. Elia Comini] had both become, for the people, a real point of reference in a special way, when we consider that every established authority had disappeared, and the people felt abandoned, and at the mercy of continuous raids, whether by German or partisan, but always experiencing suffering and death ... The two priests dedicated themselves incessantly to their ministry and offered help and comfort on many occasions: when they knew the victims they were determined to celebrate a proper funeral, striving to present to the family at least the impression of being able to honour their dead. The last event, the departure for Creda, was also a further act of charity on their part, hoping to still be able to save someone or give the sacraments to the dying."

Psalm 1

Blessed is the man who does not enter
into the council of the wicked,
he does not remain in the way of sinners
and does not sit in the company of the arrogant,
but in the law of the Lord he finds his joy,
and meditates on his law day and night.

He is like a tree planted along rivers,
which bears fruit in due season:
Its leaves do not wither
and everything he does bears fruit.

Symbol: A priestly stole and holy oils are placed in front of the altar

Let us remember the many brothers who lived the Passion of Our Lord for their people, who carried out their apostolate in difficult circumstances ...

- silence



- prayer

Teach us to keep watch,
O Risen Lord,
teach us to pray
without ever getting tired.
You have marked out the way for us
while, in secret,
you remained in prayer
all night long.
You took with you
Some alert companions,
to manifest to them
the glory of your face.
You took with you
Some fellow sufferers,
to watch and pray
in the hour of your anguish.
Let our vigilance,
the oil of our lamps,
allow us to enter
when you call us.
In Your light
they will see our eyes:
from our hearts will flow
the eternal canticle. Amen.

- Song: We will announce your kingdom; Ubi caritas et amor (Taizé)



Readiness for martyrdom

Photo: detail of the painting by Fr. Hair / Photography of the Botte di Salvaro



From the Book of the Apocalypse (Ap 12,10b-12a)

I, John, heard a loud voice in heaven saying: "Now the salvation, the strength and the kingdom of our God and the power of his Christ has been fulfilled, since the accuser of our brethren has fallen, the one who accused before our God day and night. But they have won by the blood of the Lamb, thanks to the testimony of their martyrdom; for they have despised life to the point of death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them. "

CONSECRATION OF EVERYTHING TO THE BLESSED IMMACULATE VIRGIN

On the feast of the Immaculate, December 8, 1932, Fr. Capelli writes and prays:

"May I also consecrate to you all my weaknesses, defects, and lukewarmness: you are my Mother, my true Mum, indeed you are to me twice Mother; you always help me get up when I fall, always defend me, always forget my wrongs and keep me under your mantle ... For you I must go to Jesus, for whom I alone must live, act, suffer, die. Someday O mother we will meet again on the death bed of my martyrdom. Yes! I will always be yours, all yours. Your son. MARTINO MARIA CAPELLI ".

**During the last moments of the life of Fr. Capelli, Fr. Lorenzo Ceresoli writes:**

On Sunday afternoon, October 1st, the 45 or so poor inmates realized the terrible fate that awaited them from the fact that their documents, wallets, watches and what they kept in their pockets were taken away from them. An eyewitness, Mr. Aldo Ansaloni, asserts that Fr. Capelli spoke little and prayed a lot. Both priests, he says, will have confessed to each other, as I have seen them speak softly and make the sign of the Cross in one corner of the room.

Around 7.30 pm they were taken to the so-called "Botte" (the water tank, at the end of the canal, next to the Rhine: it serves to regulate the water that gives the electricity to the factory). However, this tank was without water: only the bottom had a thick slime layer. The machine guns were just a few meters away. After removing the shoes from everyone, to some even the tunic and the priests their overcoat, they placed them on the sides of the "barrel". Don Elia Comini had time to give Absolution and then shouted aloud several times: "Pity! Mercy! ". But his heartfelt plea was suppressed, around 7.45 pm, there was machine gunfire followed by painful moans that lasted into the night. Shots were fired at the slightly injured; then all were thrown into the "barrel". The Germans then throw in four or five hand grenades, retreated from the place. Two of the soldiers , some days later, were boasting to themselves by saying: "Due Pastoren Kaput!" (Two priests are dead)

Mr. Aldo Ansaloni, already maimed during the First World War (crippled), who was still alive, although he suffered three injuries, tried to get out of the "Botte". In standing up he leaned against Fr. Capelli (the one in the cordon), who, when he was touched, stood up, addressed a few words to him and made a sign of the cross. But he was so dizzy (he remained deaf) that he didn't understand what he was saying. A few minutes later he saw him still standing, making signs of the Cross. "

Canticle: Pt 2, 21-24

Christ suffered for you,
leaving you an example,
of why follow his footsteps:
he did not commit sin
and no deception was found
on his mouth;

insulted,
yet he did not respond with insults,
abused, yet he did not threaten revenge,
but he relied on him
who judges with justice.



He bore our sins in his body
on the wood of the cross,
because, no longer living for sin,
we lived for justice;
from his wounds
you have been healed.

Symbol: red roses or palm trees of martyrdom are placed in front of the altar

Let us remember the many brothers who shed their blood for God and his people, offering their lives, following the Master, imitating Jesus, who gave himself for us. We ask for the intercession of our Blessed John of the Cross, the first martyr, to be a model of inspiration.

- silence

- prayer

Jesus Master, Saviour,
blessed is he who offers his life,
whoever takes up your yoke,
who follows you to the cross!

Talk to his heart and tell him
the mystery of every seed on earth:
if he dies he bears much fruit,
just so love wins!

Shine Your splendour on his face
and on the lips will be your name;
He does not fear when the time comes
to pass into you from this world to the Father. Amen.

- Song: Jesus Christ, you are my life / *Crucem tuam, adoramus, Domine* (Taizé)



Conclusion

In the letter to the Congregation of July 9 of this year, our Superior General, Fr. Carlos Suárez Codorniú, invites us, on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the assassination of Fr. Martino Capelli, to welcome his life as a privileged symbol of the love of God and our vocation: “We thank God for the testimony of Fr. Martino Capelli. I invite you to take him as an intercessor in prayer for our needs, especially for the development of our younger missions”.

Final blessing

Song

