

Blessed Juan Maria de la Cruz



**He lived loving and died
forgiving**

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I.

HE LIVED LOVING AND DIED FORGIVING

“Yes, my brothers, Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life. He himself said so. And with these three words, attributes which, we realize, are perfectly suited to Our Lord, we can define a synthesis of all that is the source of the gifts and benefits that Jesus Christ came to bring to humanity: Jesus Christ is charity, therefore God is charity, as his beloved apostle said: ‘Deus caritas est’. Yes, beloved ones, God is Charity, God is Love. So, if the Heart is the symbol of love, and the Heart of Jesus is the temple and throne of the Divine, the infinite source of charity can be no other than the Most Holy Heart of Jesus. Yes, beloved, God is Charity, Jesus Christ is Charity. The Heart of Jesus is the ‘source of life and holiness’, as the Church says; it is the infinite, inexhaustible spring of charity. The Heart of Jesus is the fire or the burning volcano of charity and love which came into this world to surround the full globe of the earth with its loving flame and to kindle the sweet flame of charity in the hearts of all people”.

(Blessed Juan Maria de la Cruz,
Preparatory speech for the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus,
Puente la Reina, June 13, 1928)

The life of Blessed Juan Maria de la Cruz can be seen as a failure: he was killed at a young age for being a priest. He was only 44 years old. The final stage of his life was a list of catastrophes and tragedies. On the other hand, his life of following in the footsteps of Christ, was a model to be imitated. His behavior was one of intense personal prayer. His was a tangible example of charity towards God and neighbor. He was also a model of complete availability to the Lord’s will, a life of real abandonment, as a concrete possibility to make a sacrificial offering of one’s life.

Blessed Juan Maria de la Cruz reminds us that our existence is not founded on death, but on life, more precisely, on God’s love for us. That is why he reminds us that God is Love or Charity. Father Juan found in Jesus the strength to live and in the end to give up his life, shedding his blood for love of the Heart of Jesus. For this reason, he affirmed:

“God be blessed! May his divine will be done in me and in everything! I rejoice to be able to suffer for him, who suffered so much for me, poor sinner”.

In his self-gift Blessed Juan followed Christ in his life and death. He was inspired by him. In doing the will of the Father, he allowed himself to be guided by the Spirit. Nothing was more valuable to him than the Kingdom of Christ. He loved his neighbor to the point of shedding his blood and he was willing to give up everything without demanding anything in return. In the end, he lived loving and died forgiving.



II. BLESSED JUAN MARIA DE LA CRUZ: HE LIVED LOVING

He was born on 25 September 1891 in San Esteban de los Patos (Avila, Spain). He was baptized two days later. At his baptism, in the parish church of Santo Stefano, he was given the name Mariano. He was confirmed on April 13, 1893. The first of fifteen children, he was brought up in the Christian faith in his family. Very early he experienced a call to the priesthood. To prepare himself to enter the seminary, he was instructed by Don Olegario, the parish priest at Mingorria, about 3 km distance from San Esteban. Mariano's brother confirms this:

“the Servant of God was born and lived his first years in a very pious family environment”.

After his first formation under the parish priest of Mingorria, Mariano stayed in residence with relatives during the time he was a student at the seminary of Avila (1903-1907). From 1907 to 1916 he was in residence at the seminary following courses in philosophy and theology. He was an excellent student in all the disciplines. He was an exemplary seminarian, appreciated for his great piety and commitment to his study:

“He was a model in everything [...] he distinguished himself in deep humility. He was an extraordinarily talented young man”.

Already as a seminarian he felt the call to join a religious community. He first tried with the Dominicans (15 August 1913), but health forced him to return to the seminary.

On March 18, 1916 he was ordained a priest. For nine years he served with great zeal in the parishes of Hernansancho and San Juan de la Encinilla. Here is the eloquent testimony of his sister Juana, who assisted him when he was in these villages near Avila:

“He spent every night before the tabernacle. He ate very little. Early in the morning, he could be seen in the confessional waiting for his parishioners to come for the Sacrament of Penance. His reserved character was such that, if a woman came to his office to talk with him, he would ask that my grandmother or I would be in the office with him for the duration of the conversation. He was very fond of penance. One morning, while arranging his room, I discovered a strap with bloody points. Some nights I heard him hit himself. During the dinner his conversations were always on spiritual matters, and martyrdom was a constant theme of his conversations”.

After an attempt to enter the Order of the Discalced Carmelites failed, in 1925 he finally obtained permission from his bishop to enter the Congregation of the Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (Dehonians), known through Father Guillermo Zicke, then in charge of the young Institute in Spain.

He handed over the parish to the Bishop and in the same year (1925) he entered the Congregation, taking the name of “Juan Maria de la Cruz”. At the end of his novitiate year, on

October 31, 1926, the Solemnity of Christ the King, he made his first profession in the “spirit of love, oblation and reparation” the motto of the Dehonian Congregation.

After a year of teaching religion in Novelda college of the Padres Reparadores (the name of Dehonians in Spain), he was transferred to the Apostolic School of Puente la Reina (Navarre) where he held the position of promoter of vocations. For nine years (1927-1936) he performed this humble service which was much removed from his personal desire. Although this work often took him out of the community, he was able to make himself loved and esteemed.

The great desire for a more contemplative life led him to ask for permission to enter the Trappist monastery of Cóbreces. He stayed there only a brief time. For reasons of health, he was soon back with the Dehonian Congregation.

There he continued his ministry of promoter of vocations and as a beggar went door to door to collect for the necessities of the pupils of Puente la Reina. Father Juan was esteemed for his behavior, his great spirit of prayer, his great charity and his virtuous life. Father Ignazio Maria Belda Pérez, his superior of the Spanish Province of the Dehonians, said of him:

“The new duties conferred on Father Juan did not make him lose his fervor, on the contrary, he made use of these opportunities to carry out his apostolate, spreading the devotion to the real and perpetual Adoration of the blessed Sacrament and to Merciful Love”.

These texts remind us how great was the desire in him for martyrdom. To the mother of a Capuchin friar, who had been taken prisoner by the Communists in China, he said:

“Your son is a martyr. If only I could suffer the same fate to be persecuted and die a martyr for Christ!”.

As the situation in Spain became ever more threatening, he indicated a desire to die as a martyr.

In 1936 the Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus obtained permission from the bishop of Cuenca to open a community in Garaballa. Father Juan was appointed to this cool and peaceful place. There he could restore his fragile health. But his stay was short-lived. It was abruptly interrupted by the dramatic events of the civil war, which led him to Valencia, the place of his sacrifice.

Having arrived in Valencia, on 23 July 1936 Father Juan passed in front of the Church of the “Santos Juanes” where a pile of sacred objects was being put to the torch. While looking at the fire, he spoke out loud to himself:

“What a horror! What a crime! What a sacrilege!” Upon hearing these words, someone said to him: “You are a man of the right, you are a traditionalist”. Father Juan answered: “I am a priest”. On the basis of this statement, he was arrested”.

He was locked up in the Valencia Modello Prison on the fourth floor. Father Juan wrote to Bishop Lawrence Joseph Philippe, the second Superior General of the Congregation, who had just been elected bishop of Luxemburg:

“I have been in prison for three weeks, because I uttered a few sentences of protest at the horrific destruction of the burning and desecrating of a number of churches. May God be blessed. May his divine will be done in everything. I rejoice very much for having been given the opportunity to suffer something for him, who suffered so much for me, a poor sinner”.

He also wrote to the mayor of Garaballa and informed him that

“as soon as I arrived in Valencia, they put me in prison with many other priests, religious and secular. However, thank God, I am calm and resigned to whatever the divine Providence has in store for me”.

His fellow prisoners described Father Juan as a quiet person ready to do God’s will, even if it meant to sacrifice his life. A lawyer, also in prison, reported:

“Without a doubt the Servant of God, given the circumstances, was convinced that they were going to kill him. Although he was in prison, in moments of recreation he led his fellow prisoners out loud in the recitation of the Holy Rosary. We were constantly in sight of guards with their guns. They insulted us and threatened us with death. It was then decided to interrupt the prayers to avoid any further provocation. However, Father Juan continued to pray by himself; you could see him praying so much so that someone said: ‘Someday Father Blabbermouth will be killed like a bird’”.

Another witness reported:

“he never did anything, that I know of, to regain his freedom. More than once he told me that he was willing to do what God asked of him. One day, when I heard shouts and voices from his cell, I ran and saw that the prison inspection was protesting what he had drawn on the walls of the cell in pencil, but very visibly. They were crosses spaced apart to make the stations of the Cross. They told him that as a penalty they would place in the penalty cell but, thanks to my intervention, he did not suffer this penalty (...). He always behaved like a very worthy priest”.

In the month (July 23-August 23) he spent in prison, he showed firmness and courage. Every time he was told that another one of his fellow prisoners was killed, he would say that he was ready to do God’s will. The small diary, found in a pocket of Father Juan’s trousers on the day of his exhumation - pierced by rifle bullets and soaked in his blood - testifies to his commitment in prison to follow all that was prescribed by the Dehonian Rule.

What had long been declared a “blessing” and an extraordinary grace happened to him on the evening of August 23, 1936. Taken from his cell at dusk, Father Juan left the prison joyfully and cheerfully, almost jumping with contentment. He was killed on the night of 23 August 1936 at Silla (Valencia) in the El Sario estate at the foot of an olive tree. Afterwards he was buried in the Silla cemetery in a mass grave along with the others murdered with him. Many saw him at the place of his death and later in the Silla cemetery where he was buried:

“On the night of 23 August 1936, when he left his cell, after being called by the officials, he jumped for joy. It is my opinion that the Servant of God guessed that they were leading him to martyrdom. I know from the secretary of the court and the coroner that he was shot, with others, on the night of 23 August 1936, in Silla (Valencia) in the ‘El Sario’ estate, at the foot of an olive tree. He was then buried in the Silla cemetery in a common grave. Later, in 1940,

his remains were exhumed and moved to the Apostolic School of Puente la Reina, in Navarre”.

His body was exhumed on March 28, 1940 and transferred from Silla to Puente la Reina. It was not difficult to identify the mortal remains of the Servant of God. On his body they found the cross of profession, the scapular of the Congregation and a diary with the timetable that he followed in prison. The mortal remains of Father Juan rest in the El Crucifijo Church of Puente la Reina. He is considered the Protomartyr of the Congregation of Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

On 11 March 2001 in Rome, Pope John Paul II proclaimed Father Juan Maria de la Cruz blessed along with 232 martyrs. His memory is celebrated on 22 September and he is invoked as the “patron saint of SCJ vocations”.



III.

SPIRITUAL PROFILE OF THE BLESSED: A LIFE OF LOVE, IMMOLATION AND REPARATION

From his biography it is clear that the life of Father Juan Maria de la Cruz is a testimony to us of uncommon Christian, religious and priestly virtues. They go beyond the ordinary level so as to leave, in those who knew him up close, a clear persuasion of an extraordinarily virtuous person. He was always exemplary and a model in everything.

The whole life of Father Juan, especially in the last period, when the socio-political contexts gave a glimpse of the approaching storm of persecution, of which also he would become a heroic victim, was one of a growing spiritual ascension, in which the thirst for martyrdom often returns.

1. Charity towards God

His charity towards God was the soul of his life and expressed itself in his piety and in the ardor with which he defended the honor and glory of God. It also showed in the apostolic zeal without limits, his total availability to the will of God and his abandonment into the hands of the Father to the point of the gift of his life. Father Guillermo Zicke, the superior of Father Juan, attested:

“With regard to the behavior of the Servant of God as a professed, I can say from personal knowledge that his piety was shown in his extraordinary love for the Blessed Sacrament and the most holy Virgin (...). His favorite theme in preaching and in his teaching was the merciful love of the Sacred Heart. With great personal sacrifices, he flocked to the Shrines of the Virgin”.

This ardent and courageous love for God and for the Church was evident in his pastoral life in the parishes entrusted to him, during his ministry as promoter of vocations and as the humble beggar for the Apostolic School of Puente la Reina, as well as during his detention in front of the Church of the Santos Juanes.

2. Love of the Eucharist

Love of the Eucharist and Eucharistic Adoration supported the spiritual journey of Father Juan. His lively desire for the Eucharist was such that he did not mind sacrifices, in order to be close to the Blessed Sacrament:

“I heard the mother of the Servant of God say – said his sister-in-law - that her son was a saint and also in his infantile games showed piety towards the Blessed Sacrament”.

Sister Juana recalls that

“he received Communion daily, and when at times he was not able to receive it in his village for lack of a priest, he would make every effort to go to neighboring areas. Sometimes he would have to travel to various places in search of communion without finding a priest. There was also a time when, after going from town to town, he had to return unsuccessfully to ours in the evening”.

3. *Filial devotion to the Madonna*

His other great love was the Madonna. His devotion to the most holy Virgin was extraordinary. He prepared the feasts of the Virgin with sermons full of affection:

“if at some religious function especially on feasts of the Blessed Virgin there was no preacher, at the request of the rest of the community, he would propose himself. And it happened that, even without any preparation, he would move his listeners to the great admiration of all. Sometimes, if his ease in the pulpit was pointed out to him, he used to say that, when one loves the Virgin Mary very much, it does not require much preparation”.

4. *Love for the cross*

In the name, chosen by him in religion, Father Juan wanted to combine his contemplative aspirations and Marian devotion with a generous love of the cross. He was faithful to the exercise of the way of the Cross. This practice proved to be so dear to him that it induced him to engrave the small crosses on the walls of his cell in the prison of Valencia, so that, while awaiting martyrdom in that place of great suffering, he would be able to relive this devotion of the Holy Cross. From it, he wanted to draw strong and serene readiness for the supreme sacrifice. This exemplary conduct can be seen as a preparation for martyrdom:

“The Cross is the book of my life”.

5. *Charity towards the neighbor*

From charity towards God one passes inevitably to charity towards neighbor and to profound humility:

“I have never heard a word of criticism come out of his mouth. He was always meek and humble of heart”; “On all occasions he manifested a great humility, coming to ask forgiveness from the very ones he had justly reproached”.

The life of Father Juan was characterized by pastoral charity and availability, no matter what the sacrifice. His priestly life was marked by his total self-gift to God and to his confreres. And, because his life was so completely consecrated to God and neighbor, his life was a testimony of a full and uninterrupted fidelity to the commitments he had undertaken:

“The already professed Servant of God - Father Lorenzo Cantó attested - demonstrated an extraordinary zeal in fulfilling his duties and, although he felt a special vocation for the preaching and direction of souls, he sacrificed everything to obedience, which destined him to the office of humble beggar [...] and favored vocations for our Institute , in such a way that various members of the Congregation owe their vocation to the Servant of God”.

6. *The virtue of fortitude*

The virtue of fortitude, which showed in Father Juan’s exemplary and persevering fidelity in the practice of virtues, sustained him during the most demanding occasion, when he found himself in the Valentia prison. Beside the testimonies of his fellow prisoners, which are collected in his biography, there is the testimony - silent and eloquent - of his little bloodied diary in which he had traced the daily program as a religious and priest of the Sacred Heart. Nothing ever stopped or showed more clearly his firm will to be always and everywhere a person consecrated to God and the Church. He always behaved like a very worthy priest, who, even in the very hard days of detention, was able to find the strength to instill in others the certainty of his faith and Christian hope.

7. *His reputation of holiness*

The reputation for holiness can be deduced from the religious lifestyle he led. In fact, his sister Juana reports that:

“everyone, on learning of the death of the Servant of God, was deeply grieved, and said: ‘We have lost a priest, but we have a saint’”;

“The general opinion of the people is that his death was a real martyrdom. I know that in all of Northern Spain very many invoke the Servant of God and recommend themselves to him.”;

“The reputation or belief of the people, even among the less pious or indifferent, is that the death of the Servant of God had all the traits of a true martyrdom. Those who knew him consider him a martyr and invoke him in their needs.”;

“I attended the transport of the remains of the Servant of God to Puente la Reina. There was a demonstration of the great veneration with which he was held. Already in life, everyone considered him a saint”.

IV. THE MARTYRDOM OF BLESSED JUAN: HE DIED FORGIVING

No one doubted that the violent death Father Juan Maria de la Cruz suffered at the hands of the persecutors of the Church was a true martyrdom. Following the stages of life and the habitual bearing of Father Juan, it comes naturally to apply to him the words of the Second Vatican Council:

“By martyrdom a disciple is transformed into an image of his Master, who freely accepted death on behalf of the world’s salvation: he perfects that image even to the shedding of blood. Though few are presented with such an opportunity, nevertheless all must be prepared to confess Christ before people, and to follow him along the way of the cross through the persecution which the Church will never fail to suffer.” (LG 42).

1. The desire for martyrdom

The last stages of Father Juan’s life took place in a dramatic period. It made real and present the always uncertain prediction of ferocious persecution against religion, the Church and those who most represented it: priests and religious men and women.

In this context, one cannot but note the irrepressible zeal which was such a qualifying component of his personality. A zeal that quickly manifested itself as a “desire for martyrdom”, and as an expression of the highest love for Christ and for the Church:

“Oh, that I may enjoy the same fate of being persecuted and dying for Christ!” “Happy the one who has the good fortune to shed his blood for Our Lord!”.

His faith and enthusiasm instilled all those who were close to him, encouraging them to face the looming great dangers. For him the Spanish tragedy of 1936 was designated as a time of martyrs. In his sermons and conversations many times he manifested his desire for martyrdom and spoke of martyrdom with enthusiasm, clearly foreseeing what lay ahead, encouraging everyone in such a way that, even then, people began to speak of the glory of martyrs. Father Juan was full of the courage of faith and fortitude which inspired him with great zeal for the glory of God:

“May God be blessed! His divine will be done in me and in everything! I rejoice to be able to suffer for him, who suffered so much for me, poor sinner.”

2. The killing of Fr. Juan Maria de la Cruz: he suffered a violent death

We do not have many proofs and testimonies of the martyrdom of Father Juan, which would allow us to know the last moments of his life before he was killed. What we do have are testimonies of his actual killing by the persecutors. The circumstances are sufficiently clear to exclude any reasonable doubt about the conviction, immediately consolidated among the people, that Father

Juan was a true martyr. Everyone stated that he was killed because he was good. He was considered a true martyr. They held that his sacrifice is due to nothing other than that he was religious. All the people who were questioned spoke of the fundamental traits of his deep and firm faith, his generous altruism, and his exemplary and austere life, together with a joyful service of God and neighbor.

The last witness who saw him alive was the priest Salvador Hernández, his companion in the Valencia prison, who declared:

“... one day, around 23 August 1936, I didn't see him again. The ‘deportations’ to kill prisoners used to take place at night. I had the breviary of the Servant of God. He prayed during the day and I at night. This is why I was left with the breviary, which later I handed over to Father Lorenzo (Cantó), also a Dehonian, when he entered the same prison”.

The reconstruction of what happened on the night of August 23 is based on the stories of the person who buried him, the doctor who recognized the body and a farmer. The truck carrying the prisoners, among them Father Juan, stopped in Silla, a town near Valencia, and there they were shot. The corpses were loaded onto the truck to take them to the cemetery where they were buried in a mass grave with lots of lime. Fr. Lorenzo Cantó stated:

“The day following his death, according to what the Secretary of the Tribunal told me, his body was collected and buried in the cemetery of Silla, in a mass grave together with nine other martyrs”.

On 28 March 1940 the body was exhumed and on 1 April it was transferred to the Apostolic School of Puente la Reina. The identification was easy, says Father Lorenzo Cantó:

“In starting to dig the grave I found the skull and some bones of the Servant of God. And from some of his clothes, a bridge he had in his upper jaw, the profession cross he carried on him, the scapular we use in the Congregation, we could easily identify the corpse of the Servant of God. Furthermore, as we have already said, in his pocket, a diary was found in which we could ascertain that his daily schedule in it was the same one used by us, the Priests of the Congregation. Due to the difficulties raised by the relatives of the other martyrs buried with him, we were unable to collect the remains of the Servant of God, and we covered him up again with the same earth. But later, having obtained the appropriate ecclesiastical and civil authorization, and provided with a special box, we carried out the exhumation and translation of the remains to Puente la Reina, and there they currently rest in the sacristy of the Apostolic School”.

3. *Odium fidei: he was killed because he was a priest*

There is no doubt that during the second Spanish republic there was a real religious persecution clearly highlighted in the laws and, violently, in the streets. In Valencia the persecution was particularly ferocious. Many victims were killed for being Catholics. This fact is indisputable and sufficient to prove and testify in favor of the martyrdom of Fr. Juan.

In the case of Fr. Juan, there is no doubt about the reasons for his being killed. Since he never got involved politically, there was no other reason that could have provoked the persecutors. Those who knew him believed that the reason for his death was due only to the fact that he was religious,

since he never pre-occupied himself with politics and nothing blameworthy could be found in his behavior.

He was therefore eliminated solely because of the persecutors' anti-religious position especially against clergy and religious. Various testimonies stated that the cause of his arrest and execution was due to his public confession of his priestly status:

“... his public confession was the cause of his detention. I can assure you that his imprisonment and his death were due exclusively to his priestly character”.

4. Acceptance of death: promptly and with joy

From the time that he was a young priest, Father Juan had asked for the extraordinary grace of martyrdom, and to be allowed to abandon himself into the hands of Divine Providence, so that during the persecution, he never excluded this possibility. And with this interior availability, he never hid his readiness to give his life in defense of the faith. With a good conscience, the help of prayer and the assiduous participation in the sacraments, he considered it his duty during the persecution, fully aware of the risks, to do all he could to protect and defend the persecuted. He asked others not to worry about him, when he was warned of imminent danger. With regard to these enemies, Father Juan unequivocally let it be known prior to his execution that he was ready and accepted death in defense of the faith.

The testimonies underlined his willingness to give his life and revealed that he refused to renounce his faith, knowing that he could have saved his life. And when the communists confronted him, he declared himself willing to accept everything in order to remain firmly faithful to Christ and the Church.

Martyrdom was accepted in a spirit of faith. Texts affirm that for some time Father Juan had been preparing for a possible martyrdom:

“The enthusiasm with which he spoke of martyrdom was admirable, clearly foreseeing when it was near, carrying us along so that, even then, all we talked was the glory of the martyrs”.

In addition to these testimonies, we have a letter from Father Juan, written in prison, in which he gave the reasons for his arrest and described his state of mind. It was written on 10 August 1936 and was addressed to Archbishop Philippe:

“I have been in prison for three weeks, because I have uttered a few sentences of protest at the horrific havoc perpetrated in some churches, which have been burned and desecrated. God be blessed. His divine will be done in everything. I rejoice very much for having been given the opportunity to suffer something for him, who suffered so much for me, a poor sinner”.

His attitudes during the time he spent in prison were described by some companions with whom he lived the last days:

“His behavior in the days of confinement was extraordinary. He displayed great serenity and tranquility of mind. The same cannot be said of many of his fellow prisoners. The truth is that entering prison had great impact and was scary”.

“More than once he told me that he was willing to do what God had asked ... He always behaved like a very worthy priest. If he was in the courtyard and heard the clocks sounding the hours, he would recite the prayers with whoever was there. I witnessed this many times. Other times I saw him praying in his cell by himself. He was never rude to anyone”.

5. *General recognition of his death as a martyr*

Wherever the news of the circumstances of the death of Fr. Juan became known, most people were immediately convinced that his execution ‘was an authentic martyrdom’:

“The general opinion of the people is that his death was a true martyrdom”.

This recognition quickly became a devotion and a trust in the intercession of Father Juan among the people who had known him:

“I know that there are people who recommend themselves to the Servant of God and say they have received help thanks to his intercession. Many have told me this when they came to visit his tomb”.



V.
BY WAY OF CONCLUSION:
A LIFE GIVEN AND OFFERED TO GOD AND TO THE CONFRERES

All witnesses have agreed that the only motivation for the killing of Father Juan was hatred of faith. There is no doubt therefore that the violent death of Father Juan was perpetrated because he was a priest and that it was accepted by him promptly and with joy. And to this evidence we may add his widely documented reputation of holiness among the people and in our religious congregation. Aware of the serious persecution against the Church and in particular against religious and priests, according to some fellow prisoners, Father Juan exploded with joy at the news of being selected for execution. He was killed for his faith and met his death praying for and forgiving his persecutors. He lived loving and died forgiving.

Our testimonies about Father Juan Maria de la Cruz speak of an honest and exemplary person, whose martyrdom sealed a life interwoven with work, prayer and religious commitment within his own family, the parishes and his religious congregation.

It is incumbent on us to keep alive the memory of our proto-martyr. His testimony must not be forgotten. It is the most eloquent proof of a life given as a self-gift to Jesus and to the confreres. It was a life filled with beauty even in the midst of suffering. As the Dehonian Family, we ask for the intercession before God of the blessed Juan Maria de la Cruz. May the example of his Christian life, marked by the beatitudes, light the path we are called to travel in this world.

**PRAYER FOR THE CANONIZATION
OF BLESSED JUAN MARIA DE LA CRUZ, martyr**

Lord our Father, rich in goodness and mercy,
grant us through the intercession of your servant
Blessed Juan Maria de la Cruz
that we may imitate his generous life
and commit ourselves to the end in the service of vocations
and among the poor and the humble,
to always be witnesses of your love.
To your Fatherly heart we entrust our desire
to see him glorified in the Church
and, through his intercession,
may we await to obtain the grace we ask of you ...
You who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

Fr. Ramón Domínguez Fraile, scj
General Postulator