CARLOS ANTONIO FELIPE DI PRIETRO, A.A.
AND
RAÚL EDUARDO RODRÍGUEZ, A.A.
(disappeared June 4, 1976)



Introduction

Carlos Antonio and Raúl Eduardo were two Assumptionists who disappeared on June 4, 1976 in La Manuelita (San Miguel, Buenos Aires), victims of the violence that devastated Argentina under the dictatorship of the National Reorganization Process (Roberto FAVRE, *En memoria de ellos* In Memory of Them

, 5).

They knew that their vocation as religious was asking them for the riskiest of testimonies, and for that reason they also saw martyrdom coming: “The glory of the Christian was never a success,” wrote Raul, “but for the Cross.” And he continued: “The Church bears fruit when it has martyrs. There are still martyrs today, not only by the shedding of blood, but in many different ways. And I believe that the Lord wants us so in love with Him that we do not care about the how or when of our Cross, but [want to give instead] an unconditional submission to his will "(02/26/76). And Carlos Antonio: "I am in constant fear, but at the same time, the Lord has provided me a blind hope and a faith that overtakes that fear. It is strange, because there is fear deep inside of me but I am not afraid. He (The Lord) is watching over me "(05/24/76). Eleven days later he would be kidnapped, along with Raúl, and never seen again.

At 31 and 29 years old, respectively, they did not die as naïve young people or as idealists, but as men of faith, in love with Christ and dedicated to His cause, because “they knew very well in whom they had placed their faith.” The death of our brothers Carlos Antonio and Raúl was a consequence of the option for God and for men which came from their faith and their religious consecration. (Roberto FAVRE, The Assumptionists in Argentina 1910-2010, 250)

In remembrance of them today we want to learn from their testimony of life and to strengthen our experience of faith in a world that continues to write its history with innocent blood.

Let us prepare ourselves to listen by first listening to the Word of God that these brothers of ours lived until the end.

Romans 5: 1-5. *Hope will not be frustrated.*

Psalm 27: 1-5 R / *The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?*

Mt 5: 1-12 *The Beatitudes*

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Testimony (From Roberto Favre. The Assumptionists in Argentina, Buenos Aires. 248-250)

Towards 1976, Brothers Carlos Antonio and Raúl had envisaged a project that they presented to the Regional Superior. It was about a time of "desert" -- as they called it-- "understood as a time of prayer and reflection to seek the will of God and to respond in a personal way." It would be a time of "desert" and eremitic solitude in a place separated from the Patagonian South, understood as a means to give themselves in a gentle “face to face" with God.

According to the authorities of the Congregation, the "will of God" had been already manifested for Carlos Antonio and Raúl when they decided to follow Christ according to the Assumptionist way of life. But for them, however, the "desert" stage responded to the need of living more deeply the contemplative aspect of their personal relationship with God, and to increase that relationship and their own vocation.

In the correspondence relating to this project of solitude, which we have had in our hands, the insistence of both of them on suffering, on carrying the cross, and on martyrdom is striking. But the cross and martyrdom appear here in a wider context than the phenomenon of repressive violence could suggest, even if today it seems that the context generated by the regime of those years is what gives a fuller sense to this insistence and transforms it into something that looks like a close expectation. Is this the work of God in the soul of men of deep faith, that grace is preparing for total and definitive surrender? “I feel that the desert expands [...] Spiritually I feel very much like Jesus in his going up to Jerusalem, knowing that what awaits him is difficult, but he cannot stop doing it because the time is approaching,” says Br. Carlos Antonio (03/29/76). "The Lord wants us [...] so in love with Him, that we do not hesitate to sow, with our own blood, the seeds of the Kingdom," said Brother Raúl (02/04/76).

The events of June 4, 1976 prevented the project of Carlos Antonio and Raúl from being carried out; but what seems clear from the reading of these passages of the letters is that it was at least a preparation for what was to come.

In terms of spirituality, we must say that their faith was expressed by an abandonment to the will of God, dedication to the service of the Kingdom, radical obedience to God in the form of

fulfillment of what He announced to them through signs, and of availability for what could come from the Father. This faith put them in a state of openness to the cross, beyond what they themselves could suspect. It was the cross of daily fidelity, of contradictions full of pain, of interior purification, and on the horizon, the cross of martyrdom.

This living faith became a burning hope and the outbreak of love. Hope in the Church of Christ and the Assumption: "You see that the Assumption goes through a true Easter, "wrote Raúl (05/11/ 76). It was the love of men invited to the Kingdom.

Faith and encounter. Abandonment and intimacy. Communion established in love. Urgency of purification. Glimpse of a "face to face." This seems to be the path of their inner lives and the synthesis of their spirituality. When the cross falls like an anchor, Peace will be summed up in the unique name: “May the peace of Jesus be with you! May the peace of Jesus be with you!” These were the words that Carlos Antonio said to the regional Superior, in a phone call that his captors forced him to make on the morning of that June 4.

The deaths of Carlos Antonio and Raúl, like that of many others who fell, make sense in the phrase that God addresses to His chosen people of old: "Choose life, then, so that you and your offspring may live, loving the LORD, listening to his voice, living united to Him.” (66)

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For reflection (in silence and/or shared)

- What is your attitude towards the martyrdom that is being lived out today?

- What personal (or communitarian or congregational) conversion does the experience of Carlos Antonio and Raúl inspire in you?

Song for Meditation

Free intention - petitions

Our Father

Final hymn