

**REDEMPTORIST NORTH AMERICAN SECRETARIAT FOR PARTNERSHIP IN MISSION  
ONGOING FORMATION AND FAITH-SHARING  
THE SPANISH REDEMPTORIST MARTYRS**

Time Frame: 90 minutes

**CENTRE OF BEAUTY:**

- Mission Cross
- Cloth
- Icon or picture of the Spanish Redemptorist Martyrs
- Candle
- Bible

**HANDOUTS:**

- Brief Biographies of the Spanish Redemptorist Martyrs
- Prayer of St. Alphonsus to the Holy Spirit

**MATERIALS:**

- Name Tags (if needed)
- Pens/pencils
- Paper

**NOTES:**

In preparation for this session, copies of the biographies of the Spanish Redemptorist Martyrs are distributed to all participants, in order that they may read the short article before coming together.

## **SATURDAY MORNING OR WEEKDAY EVENING SESSION**

### **GATHERING and WELCOME**

**OPENING PRAYER**– Prayer of St. Alphonsus to the Holy Spirit (attached)

**Experience**– For each person, copy the following section from the letter of Fr. Michael Brehl, Superior General, on the occasion of the beatification of the Spanish Redemptorist Martyrs in 2013:

“The witness of martyrs has always been very significant for the Church. The first disciples of Christ viewed martyrdom as following closely in the footsteps of Jesus and sharing his sufferings... The witness of the martyrs goes beyond the act of enduring a violent death. It expresses the reason for which they are willing to give their lives: as witnesses to Jesus Christ and to announce plentiful redemption for all. Martyrdom is a proclamation of the Good News, and the martyrs become witnesses to the Gospel, continuing to do good” for the sake of their sisters and brothers.”

Fr. Michael Brehl went on to write that: “For five of these six confreres, martyrdom came quickly. Yet it seems to me that the final surrender of their lives into the hands of God was the result of a much longer process. Their fidelity to God at the moment of martyrdom was shaped by the daily decision to say ‘yes’ to Jesus Christ as they lived their Redemptorist missionary vocation. In the daily ministry of preaching and confessions, prayer and service to others, teaching and spiritual direction, they lived this missionary vocation with fidelity. In the face of serious chronic illness, they learned to welcome others graciously and with a smile. Even in the experience of the failure of some apostolic endeavours, they did not despair or give up, but continued to proclaim the Gospel. “

**Reflection**– What is your response to Fr. Brehl’s words? Invite the group into a conversation about their response to his proposal that the final act of sacrifice was really a result of a much longer process of a life-long practice of sacrifice. Is this how you have thought of martyrdom? What is your response to this proposal?

### **Generalization**–

From the foundation of the Redemptorists in 1732, for over 200 years, no Redemptorist suffered martyrdom. This changed in Spain in 1936. Since then, there have been beatifications of Redemptorist martyrs from Spain, Slovakia and Ukraine.

Discuss the article which participants have read in preparation for this gathering: a brief

biography of the six Spanish Redemptorist Martyrs. Some reflection questions were appended to the article. You might wish to use the following questions as a discussion guide:

1. What impressed you about the six Spanish Redemptorist martyrs as you read and reflected on these very brief notes?
2. What can we draw from the spirituality of these brave servants of God that we could apply to our own lives or our own day?
3. As you read about the Spanish Redemptorist Martyrs, was anything affirmed for you? If so, what?
4. Did anything you read challenge you? If so, what was it?

**Action:** Name one thing that you will take home with you from tonight's session.

**Closing Prayer:**

God our Father,  
with the help of the Mother of God  
you gave Blessed José Javier and companions  
the strength to give their lives in the imitation of Christ by shedding their blood.  
Help us by their example and intercession to profess the same faith by word and deed.  
Through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

## PRAYER OF ST. ALPHONSUS TO THE HOLY SPIRIT



**L.** You are **fire**;  
**R.** enkindle in me your love.

**L.** You are **light**;  
**R.** enlighten my mind with the knowledge of eternal things.

**L.** You are the **Dove**;  
**R.** give me innocence of life.

**L.** You are the gentle **Breeze**;  
**R.** disperse the storms of my passions.

**L.** You are the **Tongue**;  
**R.** Teach me how to bless you always.

**L.** You are the **Cloud**;  
**R.** shelter me under the shadow of your protection.

**L.** You are the **Giver** of all heavenly gifts;  
**R.** animate me,

**L.** I beseech you, with your **grace**;  
**R.** sanctify me

**L.** with your **charity**;  
**R.** enlighten me

**L.** with your **wisdom**;  
**R.** adopt me by your goodness as your child, and save me in your infinite mercy;  
so that I may ever **bless** you, **praise** you, and **love** you;  
first during this life on earth, and then in heaven for all eternity.

Amen.

## THE SPANISH REDEMPTORIST MARTYRS

From July 1936 until April 1939 civil war raged in Spain. During this time many priests and religious were imprisoned, kidnapped and often savagely killed. There are six Redemptorists, from the community of St. Felipe in Cuenca, who became members of this persecuted group. They are known, collectively, as Blessed José Javier Gorosterratzu Jaurena, priest, and companions, martyrs.

### **Blessed (Fr) Ciriaco Olarte Y Pérez Mendiguren CSsR**



Fr. Ciriaco Olarte Y Pérez Mendiguren was born in Gomecha (Álava) on February 8, 1893 into a very religious family. Encouraged from childhood towards a priestly vocation. Oriented since childhood to priestly vocation September 21, 1904, he entered Redemptorist formation on September 21, 1904 at El Espino (Burgos) and professed his religious vows on September 8, 1911.

After being ordained a priest on July 29, 1917, he went to Mexico as a missionary from 1920 to 1926. He returned to Spain and the growing anti-clerical spirit in the Mexico of that time. From 1926 to 1935, he exercised his apostolic ministry in Madrid, at the community of Perpetual Help. In May 1935 he settled in Cuenca.

Right at the start of the civil war, on July 31, 1936, Fr. Ciriaco Perez was imprisoned by the militia of the Republicans. He was dragged to the plaza “Las Angustias” where he was left lying helpless after being beaten and seriously wounded. Fr. Ciriaco lived only a few hours until he succumbed to his wounds.

### **Blessed (Fr) Julián Pozo Y Ruiz de Samaniego CSsR**



Only nine days later, on Aug. 9, 1936, Fr. Julian De Samaniego was taken while saying the rosary. Suffering from tuberculosis, he was a quiet, serious man. Because of his gentle and laid-back nature, he was often sought as a confessor and spiritual director.

Fr. Julián Pozo Y Ruiz de Samaniego was born in Payueta (Álava) January 7, 1903. He entered the Redemptorist seminary of El Espino in 1913, where he was much appreciated for the seriousness of his spiritual journey. He professed vows in 1920 and was ordained a priest on September 27, 1925.

Suffering from tuberculosis since 1921, he was able to accept the disease with resignation, devoting himself to prayer, hearing confessions and caring for the sick. Of a serene disposition, he was much sought after for his gifts as a confessor and spiritual director.

In 1928 he was transferred to the apostolic community of Cuenca. He then moved to the seminary because of the outbreak of persecution. There, on August 9, 1936. he was taken by the military while praying the rosary, and was shot along the road that leads from Cuenca to Tragacete.

Then on the very next day, the 10th of August, Fr. Jose Januarena and Brother Victor (Calvo Lozano) were also arrested.

### **Blessed (Fr) José Javier Gorosterrazu Jaunarena CSsR**



Fr. José Javier Gorosterrazu Jaunarena was born in Urroz (Navarra) August 7, 1877. At age 14, against the wishes of his father, he entered the Capuchin College at Lecároz. At age 16 he entered the Redemptorists, made his profession on September 8, 1896 and was ordained a priest on September 28, 1903.

After a few years of teaching at El Espino (Burgos) and Astorga (León), he lived in the communities of Pamplona (Navarra), Madrid and Cuenca. He was a man of considerable culture as well as being a popular missionary, an expert confessor and a sought after spiritual director. He published two historical works and wrote a manual of philosophy. As a researcher and missionary in Spanish (Castilian) and Basque, he brought together in his life the proclamation of the Gospel with philosophical scholarship and historical research. He had a

great sensitivity for the local culture of the people whom he evangelized. He preached many retreats and spiritual exercise to nuns, especially the Redemptoristines.

On August 10, 1936, he and Brother Victoriano were arrested by the militia of the Popular Front. They bound them both and took them to the cemetery of Cuenca and shot them. Before he was shot, he forgave his executioners. He died together with Brother Victoriano. Both were attached to each other by the arm.

### **Blessed (Bro) Victor (Victoriano) Calvo Lozano CSsR**



Bro. Victor (Victoriano) Calvo Lozano was born in Horche (Guadalajara) December 23, 1896.

Distinctly inclined to the spiritual life, he wanted to become a priest. Unfortunately, the times, the reluctance of his family to allow him and financial constraints all mitigated against starting his studies. On March 31, 1919, in a letter he left with his family explaining his reasons, he left them to become a Redemptorist.

On November 13, 1920 he made his religious profession, taking the name Victoriano. In 1921 he was assigned to the Redemptorist community in Cuenca, where he worked as a clerk and porter. Although he had not attended school, he had an innate sense of culture, excelling particularly in a deep knowledge of asceticism. His superiors permitted him to be a spiritual director for young women, for whom he wrote a series of retreats and other works.

On August 10, he and Fr. José Javier Gorosterrazu were arrested by the militia, taken to the cemetery of Cuenca, and brutally murdered. Their bodies were found later, linked arm-in-arm.

### **Blessed (Fr) Miguel Goñi Ariz CSsR**



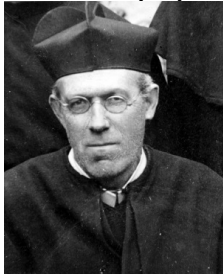
At the end of the same month, on Aug. 31, 1936, Fr. Miguel Ariz was arrested. Fr Miguel Goñi Ariz was born in Imarcoain (Navarra) April 27, 1902. Manifesting the desire to become a priest

even as a child, he entered the Redemptorists on September 8, 1918 and professed his vows on August 26, 1920.

Despite poor health and a shy nature, he was ordained a priest on September 27, 1925 and proved to be a strong and tireless preacher of popular missions.

After serving in the communities of Nava del Rey (Valladolid), Granada, Santander and Vigo, he was transferred in 1932 to Cuenca, where he ministered especially in the Redemptorist Church of St. Phillip Neri. On August 31, 1936 he was arrested by the militia, shot and left to bleed to death.

### **Blessed (Fr) Pedro Romero Espejo CSsR**



Fr Pedro Romero Espejo was born in Pancorbo (Burgos) April 28, 1871. He entered the Redemptorist school at El Espino and was eventually professed on September 24, 1889.

He was ordained on February 29, 1896. He was an extremely shy person and not given to outgoing missionary activity. So he devoted his life to the ministry of reconciliation, and to a religious life of meditation, prayer and mortification, witnessing a great spirit of poverty to others.

After being in the communities of Astorga (León) and Madrid, he was transferred Cuenca. With the outbreak of the civil war, he was forced to leave the community and to live, as was the case for the other colleagues, with a local family in their private home. To escape the attention of the persecutors and continue to engage in the apostolate, he chose to go begging in the streets of the city.

Detained several times by the militia, ultimately, in May 1938 he was arrested and taken to prison, where, physically and spiritually ministered to by other priests being held prisoner, he died of dysentery on May 29th.

The declaration of beatification of these Redemptorist martyrs took place on October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2013 in Tarragona, Spain.

### **FOR YOUR REFLECTION...**

1. What impressed you about the six Spanish Redemptorist martyrs as you read and



reflected on these very brief notes?

2. What can we draw from the spirituality of these brave servants of God that we could apply to our own lives or our own day?
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