



## Letter to a companion “martyr”

Dear friend,

I had heard of you, although to be honest, not exactly about you, but of several like you. When receiving the book with short testimonies of the lives of fifty-seven Jesuit “martyrs”, and remembering the dozens of non-reported men and women, religious and lay people, all murdered for being defenders of rights and witnesses of the truth, I shuddered.

There is always a curiosity round the martyrs to know what they suffered, what those dramatic, terrible moments were like, those moments in which violence occupies all the space and makes it impossible to recognize the humanity of the other, and denies him, or her, the most basic thing that all life deserves: the possibility of existing. We would like to know if they were strong, how they controlled their fear or if they had any relief. But in the end, all this is of very little importance. Because your lives were not taken, you gave them – fully - as Jesus did. And because you gave your life freely every day, that's why they took it from you.

I would like to know much more about all those days, those years, in which you gave your life. Those days and events that are not kept in the short testimony of your death. The days when you felt deeply happy because your work was coherent and sincere, the days of joy when you discovered that the seed planted, small as a mustard seed, grew like a bush. I would like to know much more about your prayer, your personal struggle with God. I would like to know what sustained you in your commitment and what made you overcome discouragement; and what kept you attentive and vigilant in the face of threats and indifference. I do not believe that you were a hero of one day, I am sure that you filled many days of your life with heroism. That heroism that is not taken in consideration because it is so sincere, and so spontaneous, and so quotidian, that you simply do not count it.

I think that we do not lack that kind of heroism, what happens to us is that as we journey through this life, the desert becomes long and painful. Pain, suffering and injustice are still there, in front of us, but the usual ones distract us: the idols of a comfortable and carefree life, the idols of human intelligence that while they make life easy for us are polluting it, drying it, extinguishing it. We become discouraged, and our hearts harden. Therefore, when we remember your life, it is like a jolt, like the desire for that first love that wants to give the life for the friends. Remembering you at this moment, at this crossroads of our time, we remember Arrupe's words: *“I am not afraid of the new world that is emerging. I fear rather that the Jesuits have little or nothing to offer to that world, little or nothing to say or do, that can justify our existence as Jesuits. It frightens me that we can give yesterday's answers to tomorrow's problems. We do not want to defend our mistakes, but we do not want to make the biggest mistake of all: waiting with our arms folded and not doing anything for fear of making a mistake.”*

Therefore, even with my contradictions, I also want to tell you that I want to try it again, that I want to live as you have lived. I do not want to let myself be carried away by pessimism; on the contrary, I want my guide to be only hope, as it was for you. Your life illuminates my life, and helps me to dream, to continue searching, to continue trying, to share with others. And to dance, yes, with the music of the poets and the engagement.

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