



EUROPE/ITALY - 24 March-XX Day of Prayer and Fasting for Missionary Martyrs

Rome (Agenzia Fides) - Founded in 1993 by the Missionary Youth Movement of the Italian Pontifical Mission Societies, on the anniversary of the assassination of Archbishop Oscar A. Romero, Archbishop of San Salvador (March 24, 1980), the Day of prayer and fasting in memory of the the Missionary Martyrs reaches its twentieth year milestone. The initiative, intended to commemorate with prayer and fasting all the missionaries who have been killed around the world and all the pastoral workers who shed their blood for the Gospel, is now extended to many dioceses, youth and missionary groups, Religious institutes of different continents.

The theme chosen for this twentieth Day of the Missionary Martyrs is "To love until the end", which "Does not want to be a forced happy ending that cancels the hardness of violence and tragedy of a life cut dramatically, but simply depicts the last moments of those, who like the Master, give life, forgiving their persecutors" writes Don Gianni Cesena, National Director of the Pontifical Mission-Mission Societies, submitting the subsidy for the animation. "That is why every martyr, since the days of Stephen onwards, is a witness and revealer of God the Father who loves and forgives. Jesus reveals the pain of the Father, which is not a vague feeling of sorrow for the sin of children or compassion for their suffering, but it is his way of being compassionate and trustworthy. On the Cross Jesus reaffirms that the Father's plan is the unity of the human family, who experiences sharing and lives reconciliation as the only gesture capable of generating peace and justice and to gather around him all peoples. That is why the missionaries are persecuted and killed, because carriers of a Gospel that continues today and always, to overturn the human logic based on selfishness and injustice".

Among the plans to celebrate the Day, the Missionary Youth Movement invites parishes and consecrated life communities, seminaries, and novitiates, to use tools such as Vigils, the Stations of the Cross, Eucharistic Adoration and Ecumenical celebrations, prepared for these circumstances, even in the days preceding and following March 24, to create "a corner of martyrdom" in the church using a cross and a red flag and writing the names of the missionaries and those killed in the year. In addition, it is worth inquiring whether in one's own diocese, there have been missionaries killed in the past, and to make their testimony known; to make a gesture of reconciliation with members of other religious denominations.

Families can make a gesture of reconciliation between husband and wife, between parents and children, between brothers and sisters, and other family members; can invite a brother or sister of another nation to lunch; pray together for the missionaries killed. The sick and the suffering can offer up their suffering in memory of the slain missionaries and others killed, to support the apostolic work of those operating in every corner of the earth and to ask the Lord for the gift of holy and numerous missionary vocations. Young people are invited to donate their own blood, to visit those who are alone and oppressed with suffering (in hospitals, nursing homes, prisons or the sick and elderly people living alone), to live and promote the Day in their own parish and diocese.

This year, an outreach Project is planned with the donations that will be collected on the World Day of Prayer and Fasting for Missionary Martyrs, for the people who live in the highlands of Papua New Guinea, which reach up to 4,000 meters. Here there are many mothers and their children with HIV/AIDS and hundreds die without any assistance, in fact, Papua New Guinea is among the countries of the Pacific with the highest number of HIV-positive. Last year the first center for analysis and treatment was built, at least another five would be needed in the mountains, where it takes days to travel on foot to reach the different villages scattered in the vast forests or high plateaus. (S.L.) (Agenzia Fides 21/3/2012)

> LINKS

Subsidies and plans for the Day, in Italian: <http://www.giovani.missioitalia.it/>: