

40 YEARS OF A PATH TO HOLINESS

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Forty years ago, on October 17, 1986, the Cause of Beatification and Canonization of Faustino Pérez-Manglano was opened in Valencia. Thus officially began a journey intended to demonstrate within the Church something that many of those who had known Faustino during his lifetime had always held as a deep conviction: in the short and simple course of that young man's life, the universal call to holiness had shone in a special way.

The opening of a Cause does not mean anticipating a judgment on a person's holiness. Rather, it means beginning a rigorous process of listening, study and discernment. In its first phase, carried out in the diocese where the candidate lived and died - Valencia, in the case of the now Venerable Faustino - testimonies were gathered from those who had known him, his writings were studied, and the reputation for holiness that had remained alive after his death was examined. In this way, the local Church becomes the first guardian of a memory that will later be examined by the universal Church.

The ceremony held on October 17 in the chapel of Nuestra Señora del Pilar School in Valencia brought together a number of people who were especially significant in Faustino's story and for the whole Marianist Family. The opening was presided over by Archbishop Miguel Roca Cabanellas, then Archbishop of Valencia, a former student of Colegio del Pilar in Madrid and very close to the Marianists. At his side was Father José María Salaverri SM, Faustino's teacher and spiritual director, the great promoter of his Cause and, at that time, Superior General of the Society of Mary-Marianists.

That same year, which also marked the centenary of the Marianist presence in Spain, other prominent religious of the Society of Mary took part in the opening of Faustino's Cause: Enrique Torres, who passed away recently and was then Postulator General of the Marianists, responsible for guiding and accompanying the beatification process from a canonical standpoint. José Antonio Romeo, another participant in the ceremony, served as Vice-Postulator. He was the founder of the Congregación Estado de María Inmaculada (CEMI), the Marianist lay group to which Faustino had belonged. Ignacio Otaño, then Provincial of the Marianists and a living witness to that beginning, was also present.

Looking at that photograph from 1986 with the eyes of today, we see something more than its undeniable historical value. It reminds us that a Cause of Beatification is sustained by a chain of memory, testimony, affection and ecclesial responsibility. Each of those people, from a different mission, helped to preserve and pass on Faustino's life so that it might be known, studied and proposed to new generations.

Forty years later, the beginning of that journey still challenges us. The Cause is not meaningful merely as the remembrance of a young man from the past - Venerable Faustino died in 1963 - but as an invitation to reflect on what his way of living the Faith can still teach us today: naturalness, joy, apostolic commitment, attentiveness to others and a deep friendship with Jesus and Mary.



The Rosary: a friendship made prayer

As part of a firmly established tradition, on October 7 we celebrated the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, an important day within an entire month - October - dedicated to this prayer. We can say that it is eminently biblical and evangelical, profoundly Marian and, for that very reason, profoundly Christ-centered. Through the Rosary, “the Christian people sit at the school of Mary and are led to contemplate the beauty on the face of Christ and to experience the depths of his love.”

The greeting of the angel, Elizabeth's words, the prayer Jesus taught us, and the contemplation of the principal events of his life show us that the Rosary is a true compendium of the Gospel. At the same time, it offers us an opportunity to enter the home of Nazareth, to share in Mary's intimacy, and to learn from her how to look at, remember and understand Jesus.

Faustino came to understand this from the day he discovered the Rosary and learned to pray it at the age of ten. He did not always pray it perfectly, but almost without realizing it, the Rosary helped him to live in this habitual and spontaneous friendship with Jesus and Mary.

This is the gift Faustino offers us today: to approach the Rosary freely. Far from being something rigid or boring, it allows us to place the emphasis on contemplation, with all the importance this gives to images; on reflection; or also on the repetition of prayers and litanies, giving us the opportunity to allow ourselves to be guided by the promptings of the Spirit. It is a prayer that can be prayed in the quiet of one's room, but also while walking, alone or in a group, alone with God. We simply have to dare to discover it.

And so, forty years after the opening of Faustino's Cause, the best way to approach his example is not to remain merely in superficial admiration for a life belonging to another time, but to discover what sustained it from within; because the Faith that animated it remains a living call, capable of renewing every

generation. And it is precisely here that the continuing relevance of his witness lies: in gestures as simple as stopping to pray, looking at Jesus with Mary, and turning every small circumstance - school, a walk, illness, pain... - into an opportunity to encounter God. May this anniversary help us not only to remember the journey travelled since that October 17, 1986, but also to renew our desire to continue making Faustino known, to ask for his intercession and, above all, to allow ourselves to be challenged by the simple radicality with which he sought to live the Gospel.



Eucharist celebrated after the ceremony opening Faustino's Cause, presided over by Archbishop Roca, October 17, 1986.