
"Let the holiness of God shine forth" (cf. Mt 5, 16)

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tribute of a son to his father

"... And to you I swear, oh beloved Mother, loyalty for life!"
- from a song of the Marian Congregation of Brazil

At the beginning of this brief story I have quoted a few words from a song of the Marian Congregation, an Association of Lay Catholics who are trying to live Christianity through a life dedicated to the Mother of God, the Virgin Mary. I do so because I want to introduce a very special man, who consecrated his life to Our Lady, and who became a great example for me. This man is called Francisco José Marques, and he is my father.



He lived for 71 years, born a day before the feast of St Francis, 03 Oct 1944. And because his was a very Catholic family, he was given the name of Francis. My father had 8 brothers. As a little boy he was sent to the Franciscan Seminary for studies, but he did not remain there because, I believe, God had other plans for his life. Ever since he was young he knew of the Marian Congregation and on 08 Jul 1963 he consecrated himself to the Virgin Mary. Ten years later he married Zulmira Amora Marques, with whom he had three children, amongst whom I am the middle one. My parents were able to celebrate 42 years of married life.

He was very active in the Santa Isabel Pallottine parish, *Queen of Portugal*, in Rio de Janeiro. Since he was part of the Marian Congregation he was involved in many pastoral activities such as Bible study groups, meetings with couples and families, so he became really well known. Pallottines have worked in this parish for many years so, understanding their work and charism, in May of 2005 my father made the apostolic commitment in UAC. A year earlier, in 2004, he saw his son Francisco José Marques Filho, receive priestly ordination as a Pallottine.

These were the first chapters of the story of my father. The last few have not been so easy. He suffered from many diseases before he died. Because he was also diabetic, in 2006 he had kidney and vision problems. But even though he suffered much, he never turned against God. Every day he attended Mass and always, at 18.00 hours, recited the rosary. In 2012, difficult news: the discovery of a tumor in his urinary tract, then another in the lung and yet another in the 'gastric curve'.

Mr Francisco, as he was known to so many people, has left us the example of a religious father who taught his children the virtue of faith, and with so much joy. Yes, although he suffered much, he never lost his sense of humour and cracked many jokes. All who visited him laughed at his interesting tales and stories. I also remember his life of prayer, especially that prayer entrusting himself to the care of Our Lady. He handed himself over to her because she could obtain the blessings of God for him. And this feeling struck me primarily on the day of his death, on 12 December last year.

I was able to see my father the day before he died. My brothers and I decided to take him to hospital. Before putting him into the car, he already started praying the Hail Mary. I could administer him the anointing of the sick – he trusted in the power of the sacraments, they gave consolation for his soul. Shortly before entering a coma, twice he prayed to Our Lady: "Mary conceived without original sin, pray for us who take recourse to you". These were his last words. His last words were addressed to Mary, whom he never failed to love! On the following day, a Saturday (day of devotion to Our Lady), at 12 pm (an hour dedicated to Our Lady) and the day of the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, December 12, my father made his Passover.

These recent events have made clear to his wife and to us, his children, the promise that is contained in the prayer of Ave-Maria: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us, sinners now and at the hour of our death". Yes, this promise was indeed realized! Mary made herself present at the last moment! Mary never abandons us. She never abandons anybody and she did not abandon my father ... who had sworn his loyalty from his younger days until the end of his life.



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memories of a missionary [I]

Germany – India

The life of everybody is different. As well there are many ways to priesthood. And likewise the ways within the priesthood are different.

My way began when, as a small boy, I entered the Pallottine boarding school in Bruchsal, **Germany** in 1950. One year later, at the request of the Holy See, the Pallottines took up a mission area in central India. At first two priests went there and a third soon followed. As youngsters we eagerly followed this development, and many formed a desire to also join the mission, including myself.

After ordination in 1965, when the superiors sent me to study philosophy, I thought wistfully that now I could forget the mission idea and instead would be staying at home to teach in our institutions. But God's plans are always good for a surprise! It was just the study of philosophy that brought me to **India**. For the formation of future priests there we needed teachers of philosophy. When my Provincial asked if I could imagine myself in

India as a lecturer I did not think about it a lot, but agreed quite willingly. However it took me two years before I had all my papers together and could start.



After arriving at Trivandrum, the capital of Kerala, I had to first become accustomed to my new surroundings, to all the different customs, food, clothes, noises, smells, etc. And it was just the time of feasts and festivals, and high volume celebrations during the nights! At Pallottigiri seminary, situated on a small hill (giri = hill), the noise sounded deafening. I still remember that I could not sleep for about four nights, but I was then so dead tired that I could sleep in every situation and position, even on the bare floor – which would later be the case several times in the future.

At the beginning I had difficulty with the English language, especially the way it is pronounced in India. It served as the colloquial language since our students came from different States and each one spoke another language at home.

Over time we succeeded in building our own philosophical institution in Goa. Ironically, because of my political situation, I could not move there. So I was asked to teach religious subjects, which I liked more, and became too the spiritual father of our students.

The weeks went by like most ordinary days at a boarding school, and at the weekends we went out to our different out-stations. Every priest took a student or a Sister along to translate the sermon and give catechism classes after Mass. We Germans did not speak Malayalam.

I myself went every alternate fortnight to assist a diocesan priest. He was a good friend of ours and had to look after more than a dozen centres. Some could only get Mass once a month. Nevertheless – and this impressed me very much – the people came together every Sunday for common prayers. Where do we find this in our countries?

Each of us were allocated to three centres. To get there this priest gave me an old British motorbike, with a very loud exhaust. This replaced, so to say, any need for bells, for it was heard already from afar and became the signal that Mass was starting.

I could not take anybody along to these out-stations and had to look after myself. The liturgy was mostly in English and the “Upadeshi” [the catechist], who himself did not speak English had to give the sermon, while I was praying to the Holy Spirit that he may find the right words.

We soon found it necessary that, besides religious and intellectual formation, students should also be introduced to social responsibility. For this we created different projects, e.g. rehabilitation of a slum area; replacing palm huts with simple, but solid, concrete houses; mother and child care; medical care and adequate food supply sources; aid for school-going children; school materials, clothing and at least one full meal a day; job identification to earn one’s living – for ladies usually tailoring and



getting a sewing machine, for men repair-work and getting a small workshop.

One project that met with great success was the “action goat” (Aktion Ziege). One goat was provided to a poor family which provided milk and meat, and then they had to pass on the first female offspring to another poor family.

Some years went by in this fashion until I received a great shock – the Indian Government refused to renew my residency permit, in spite of great efforts from our side. Thus I had to leave India with a heavy heart.

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