

IESUS CARITAS PRIESTLY FRATERNITY

PREPARING BRO. CHARLES CANONIZATION

THEME 1: BROTHER CHARLES CANONIZATION AND OUR OPTION FOR THE POOR.

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"The pandemic has exposed the difficult situation of the poor and the great inequality that reigns in the world", said Pope Francis on August 19¹. And, later added: "the virus, although it does not make exceptions among people, has encountered, in its devastating way, great inequalities and discrimination. And it has increased them!". In other words, the poor today are suffering more than before due to lack of health care, unemployment and hunger.

The Holy Father recognizes that the response to the pandemic must be twofold. On the one hand, "it is essential to find a cure for a small but terrible virus that brings everyone to their knees." On the other hand, the Pope continues, "we have to cure a great virus, that of social injustice, inequality of opportunities, marginalization and the lack of protection of the weakest." This situation prompts us to reaffirm our evangelical option for the poor.

Francis said in his catechesis: "Faith, hope and love necessarily push us towards this preference for the neediest, which goes beyond the mere necessary assistance. In fact, it implies walking together, allowing oneself to be evangelized by them, who know the suffering Christ well, allowing themselves to be "infected" by their experience of salvation, their wisdom and creativity. Sharing with the poor means enriching each other. And, if there are sick social structures that prevent them from dreaming about the future, we have to work together to heal them, to change them. " (Who would not recognize in these words Brother Carlos' way of evangelizing?)

The Holy Father affirms that "the pandemic is a crisis and we do not come out the same from a crisis: either we come out better or we come out worse. We should come out better, to improve social injustice and environmental degradation."

The canonization of Brother Carlos occurs in this context and it is not by chance. Through this event of grace, God wants to make visible to all, a man, a believer, a pastor, a missionary who gave himself body and soul to the poorest and most abandoned of his time: the Tuaregs. He became one of them, walked with them, allowed himself to be evangelized by them. Today holiness passes through the preferential option for the poor.

¹ Pope Francis, "The preferential love for the poor is mission for all", General Audience, August 19, 2020.

If we want to prepare and celebrate the canonization of Brother Carlos as well as possible, it is not to glorify Brother Charles but to strengthen in the whole Church the active and proactive love for the least, today more necessary than ever. The Pope says in the *Evangelii Gaudium*: "The very beauty of the Gospel cannot always be adequately manifested by us, but there is a sign that must never be lacking: the option for the last, for those that society discards and rejects" (EG n.165).

We, the Spiritual Family of Brother Charles have received as a grace his charism that takes on a special update and validity in this context of a pandemic. We cannot hide it, neglect it, or render it infertile. "Revive the charism of God that is in you", Saint Paul said to Timothy (1 Tim 1:6). This is the invitation that our Brother and Lord Jesus makes us today to contribute to the great renewal of the Church that the Holy Spirit is promoting today through Pope Francis. So, we have a great responsibility.

For our personal or group reflection and prayer

- Do I see the connection between option for the poor, renewal in the Church, and the canonization of Bro. Charles?
- What calls for conversion that the Lord is inviting me through this canonization?
- What can I contribute so that the canonization yields all the fruits that God expects from it?