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| **Brother Basilio** |
| **“To burn my life for Christ!”** |
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| This was Brother Basilio’s ideal, to give his life totally for Christ. He often repeated Paul’s cry: For me, living is Christ! It is Christ who lives in me! What could separate us from the love of Christ?  The texts that follow contain some of Brother Basilio’s reflections. They show the place that Jesus had in his life. We can organise a complete celebration from these texts .  **1 - Basilio in his early years:**  These quotations place us in 1951. Basilio was 27 years old. He was following the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius preparation for his perpetual profession.  “And after confession, as he was being counselled, God placed on the lips of Rev. P. Martínez these words which had been said to a saint: ‘Do not speak to me of sins; speak to me of love!’ and he continued: ‘your sins are numerous, but love erases all. Do acts of perfect charity.’ I had come out of confession completely calm and the first words plunged into my soul like a sword and they constantly returned to my mind, filling me with light, consolation and love. Yes, Jesus, I wish, I desire to love you more and more. I want to love you without moderation, with all my strength, with a love that is intense, generous, true, with passion. I want the whole of my life to be a cry of love towards you with all of my being. May each beat of my heart, may each breath, may every action and exercise of my physical or spiritual faculties tell you, Lord, that I love you and that I wish to live with you. I want to speak to you constantly of love. I want to love you, Lord, because you are infinitely loveable, because you are immensely worthy of love. I want to love you with gratitude for the love that you have always had for me… Ah! I want to love you Jesus, to please you, but also to satisfy a strong need in my poor heart.”  **2 - Jesus the Centre**  Basilio realised that, in all good will, the Institute was too focused on the means of helping the poor, the missions, on the means of evangelising, and “a little at a time, Christ Jesus is put in second place and on certain occasions has disappeared, when in reality he is the main reason, the sublime reason for which we live and we die. He is the basis of our vocation, of our brotherhood and of our friendship. He is our salvation… it is obvious that it is now time to make every effort to place Jesus again at the centre of our life.”  Here are some brief excerpts that speak of this centrality of Jesus:  “If we ask ourselves what is the centre, the quintessence, the heart and central core of our vocation we must reply that it is Jesus; the vocation is Jesus.”  He wrote to his Mexican confrères in South Korea: “May your missionary zeal, your work, your worries, etc. never allow you to forget that human means are of no use in God’s work unless people are filled with Christ. Everything comes from Him and without Him, there is nothing. Christ, therefore, must always be the centre of your life.”  When Brother Cecilio Alonso was preparing to leave for the mission in Congo, Basilio reminded him of what was essential to the mission: “If you go to the mission, it is not only, but before all and above all else, it is to proclaim Jesus Christ and to found and develop the Church. This point is fundamental at this time when theology is taking an anthropological turn, creating the risk that the centre of Religion and Redemption sees only man, in his temporal, material and natural state. The brother who does not feel the need to be a living incarnation of the Gospel, and a presence of the love of God among the people, should not go, in spite of everything he is capable of in the temporal domain…”  On Saturday April 26th 1986 , after breakfast, Basilio went down to the chapel and meditated on the first song of the Servant of Yahweh “I realise that Christ, his Sacred Person and his mystery must be the centre of my life, as a diamond which has a thousand facets.” April 27th: “The need and the desire are confirmed in me to centre my study, my prayer and my love on the Person of Jesus, going so far as to create a great obsession and love in my life.”Brother Basilio Rueda  Sometimes he left this message for a Brother Provincial: “My visits to the Provinces reveal two weak points, even when it is said that everything is going well and that the brothers are happy: 1- Jesus is not yet the centre of life. 2- In many Brothers, the ‘for always’ has not yet been declared.”  “We are invited to open fully all the doors to the Lord in our Congregation, to allow the sun to enter fully into the life of our Brothers, so that God is truly served above all. Yes, it is necessary that gratuitousness, praise and listening are found everywhere they are needed, and that we finally become available so that the Spirit can work in us and shape our hearts in his way.”  **3 - Basilio and the Eucharist.**  “At this time it is He who governs the Congregation.”  Making a play of words on the name of the sister, Maria Eucaristia , Basilio gave a marvellous reflection on the Eucharist: “St. Thomas insists that in the Eucharist, with all the grandeur which it represents (Jesus himself is present), it is not so much the sacrament, but the sign and the means to produce something more important than the Eucharist itself, and it is the presence of Jesus in the heart of each one of us, to ‘inundate’ us in his life….what is important to the Lord is not to remain under the holy species of bread, nor in the tabernacle, nor on the altar, but in the heart and total being and in the personal conduct of each one of us.”  The testimony of the Brothers of Bogota also makes us understand the importance that Basilio gave to the Eucharist: “A telephone call about nine o’clock surprised us. It was Brother Basilio calling from a hotel in the centre of Bogota. He asked us if he could have dinner with us. ‘With great pleasure!’, we answered. And we went to find him at the hotel. On the way, he wanted to visit a church. After a moment of recollection before the Blessed Sacrament (Mass was not being celebrated,) we left. We were very close to the Museum of Gold, a favourite place for tourists. We suggested to Brother Basilio that he might like to visit it. He said that he would prefer to find another church, for nothing on earth would stop him from Holy Mass and communion…. I thought that Basilio would be very tired after such a long journey and I was edified that he insisted on going to Mass. The church was full of simple people. At the end of the Eucharist, Brother Basilio thanked us for enabling him to attend Mass with these humble and fervent people.”  To Brother Firmino Schneider, a missionary in Angola, he wrote: “Accept a special place in my affection, as you will always be present in my prayers, especially during the Holy Sacrifice of the Eucharist which we celebrate, some Counsellors, the Secretary and your servant, in the late hours of the night, after a long day’s work. At the moment it is He who governs the Congregation. We are totally convinced that without Him we could do absolutely nothing.”  Brother Alfonso Wimer, a Mexican and personal friend of Basilio and his General Councillor from 1967 until 1976, shared this revelation with us: “Very few people know about his great devotion to the Holy Eucharist. Brother Basilio dedicated one hour of adoration, in spite of his numerous occupations, his journeys, his correspondence, his circulars. He never neglected ‘his hour with the Lord’.”  **4 - Jesus and the man**  “Does not Jesus make great space for man?”  “Jesus is the biggest developer of values that has ever been known by humanity. In Him, in his person, in his testimony, in his message, many things are clarified and made apparent, things which were obscure, although sensed, and we discover things which were never sensed. It is He who achieves in a magnificent way what is most human and elevates it to a new life…”  “Christ communicates and when he touches a heart he opens it to charity, to kindliness, to the gift of one’s self and to fertile initiatives to approach one’s brothers, to enter into communion with them and he makes him find especially all means of serving them and doing good for them.”  “I want to approach the second question that I have asked about the Christian school: What should it propose, values, or Christ? It is clear that for a believer, if he confronted the dilemma, there would be no doubt about the answer. The option would be for Jesus, loved, chosen, the favourite… But let us return to the starting point. Are the values opposed to Jesus? On the contrary, Jesus is the greatest developer of values that humanity has ever known. In Him, in his person, in his testimony, in his message, things become clear and transparent which never were clear, although sensed, and others are discovered which had never been thought of. It is He who achieves in a magnificent manner that which is most human in us and raises it to a new life…”  “It is necessary also to know how to listen to Christ. The young person discovers the extraordinary range of personal values, social and historical, contained in the life, which Christ has passed on to us, and in the history of salvation. From this meeting of the Gospel and the world, of the Gospel and history, new lucid and creative answers should emerge that aid Christians to be committed witnesses of the Lord and builders of history in the year 2000… A good pedagogy should lead values to Christ and Christ to values…”  “It is necessary to be open with all our hearts to the values of our times; but it is also necessary that we guard against a humanist mentality, in a godless sense which makes man his own goal and model. Christ is our unique model. Our anthropology deprives itself of the mystery and history of salvation, with its great richness: the goodness of creation, the fact of the fall with the disasters which befell human nature, and the blessed event of Christ’s redemption that saved the world and man- a world worthy of man and of man worthy of this name – in a Christian humanism.”  “It is essential to put the person of the great evangelist, Our Lord Jesus Christ, into the heart of every pupil and it is necessary to put the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ there also.”  Basilio: a friend who could not stop being an apostle, someone who would like everyone to discover the Lord, a contemplative of the incarnation who remained close to people. What he wrote to his friend Brother Victorino de Arce was very apt: “Jesus Christ wants us to fight side by side with Him, not in a perfect Church, but in a Church of sinners and pilgrims; it’s is in this Church that, in faith and love, we must hope, serve and work…”  **5 - Some pearls in our hands.**  “The essence, the heart, the whole of Christianity, is love, love that grows a little in the Old Testament, but explodes into fullness in Christ.”  “Each one carries a mystery within: Jesus Christ is me and I am Jesus Christ in the most profound sense of the word.”Brother Basilio Rueda  “We must never forget that religious life is not something apart from the evangelical life of Christ poured into our hearts and ‘worked’ constantly by the Holy Spirit.”  “When a man prays and his life is indeed Christian, it is Christ, the first-born of Mary, who prays to him; his prayer is nothing but the life of Christ expressed in words.”  “While sharing in the uniqueness, which is the Son, with Jesus who takes strength from the Father, shaped by the spirit of Jesus, we can invoke and call: Abba, Father!’’  “It is not just a question of knowing ourselves to be called by a transcendent ‘You’ but rather to be known as brothers of Jesus, joined to him by the Spirit and, with his strength, to be able to cry: ‘Abba, Father.’”  “Let us live, then, this time of Advent in the ardent anticipation of the arrival of the Lord… God is more necessary to us than the oxygen we breathe.”  April 29th 1986: “Every time that Jesus comes he brings peace. Peace is the sign of his presence and his action. Even in the case of sin, of serious sin, peace must endure. When repentance is accompanied by concern, without peace, the devil will be at least partially involved. When repentance comes from Christ, from God, it comes with pain, with tears, but in peace. We sincerely recognise not only the potential for sin but the fact of sin; it causes pain, but we are recognised, forgiven and loved.” “Jesus recognises himself in this peace!”  **6 - His last message before his death**  “You are burning your life at both ends (Brother Leonida reminded me) and he sent me a whole page of Life on which appeared a large candle lit at both ends.  And my answer to him was perhaps a little crazy: ‘ That has always been my ideal.’” “To burn my life for Christ and for my Congregation, even if it finishes sooner than normal.”  “Did I do the right thing? Was I wrong? I don’t worry about it. I put it all in the hands of Jesus Christ, in the hands of the Father and I feel a deep peace, in the action of grace. I know that there are no better hands than those of God and I am in them. It is in his hands that Christ commended himself at his death.”  Someone told Basilio: “But don’t you realise that Christ can seduce you just like a wizard?” He answered: “I realise that hypothetically it could be so. And in spite of that I practised it all my life. I worked completely for Christ.”  “Many regard Basilio as a saint. I can’t say that for sure, but what I know is that he was a man who followed Christ, that he was happy and that he wanted to share with everyone his fidelity and joy.” |