

Pedro Poveda: Prophet, Educator and Priest

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“A Priest, a man of heroic virtues, the Founder of the Teresian Association, a martyr of the Faith” —thus goes the Decree proclaiming the Beatification of Pedro Poveda Castroverde. Indeed a succinct way of announcing the fullness of Christianity that Fr. Poveda attained. Such a brief pronouncement, notwithstanding, can be broken down into parts in search for the profile of this man, his spiritual mettle, his thought and modes of action. We shall try to delineate some concrete characteristics of his complex and rich personality and focus on his work to bring about a Christian presence in the very heart of the world through education and culture, his prophetism as well as his creative vision and most importantly his priesthood as the fountainhead of the extraordinary fruitfulness of his life.

For a backgrounder on his life, we will situate him in five cities that were important scenes of his vital and spiritual itinerary. This will help us put our imagination in those places as well as follow the chronology of Fr Poveda's life and suggest influences at times decisive on his person and his actuation.

Linares 1874-1889 .

Linares, a city of the Province of Jaén, was Pedro Poveda's birthplace. He was born on December 3, 1874; baptized in the church of Santa María and his parents were José Poveda and María Linarejos Castroverde. He was the eldest son, after him four other sons were born and a daughter. His was a well-educated family though of modest means. He had two great aunts who were very fervent Christians. On the very day of his birth, they offered him to Our Lady — before a

painting of the Immaculate Conception which still exists today and is treasured by the Teresian Association. There was family warmth and a Christian atmosphere in his home. From the outside, there were mines and miners; and there was also social unrest, proper of that end of the century, which Pedro Poveda would perceive as he accompanied his father—a technical man in the mines—in his visits. Pedro Poveda manifested his attraction to the priesthood very early in life, so that at the age of 15 he entered the Seminary of Jaén.

Guadix 1894-1905

Guadix, of the Province of Granada, will witness a milestone in the life of Poveda. He finished his studies in Theology here. He was ordained priest on April 17, 1897, and said his first Mass on April 21st. He combined his task as a professor of the Seminary with an astonishing social action among the cave-dwellers at the margins of the city. The poverty of Guadix, where he arrived as a young priest, struck him and thus he began a work of transformation among its cave-dwellers. He lived in one of the caves with his parents and with this nearness to them, becoming like one of them, thus he came to realize what poverty really was, with its deepest consequences. He responded to this experience with a surrender of himself without counting the cost for the sake of the human promotion of the people in this impoverished zone. He sought to save the entire person, body and soul, by offering bread and faith, education and catechism. In Guadix he founded the Schools of the Sacred Heart, with the mess halls to provide meals for the school children and shops where the adults could learn how to earn a livelihood. "He made me a person," one of the cave-dwellers would comment later. Moreover, he built an "Ermita Nueva" or a small new chapel in a large plain, uniting those from "above" or the cave-dwellers with those from "below" or the townspeople. Poveda went there to serve: this is why the people loved him so. Guadix was the scene of his popular success and the beginning of a calvary made up of envy and the classic well-thinkers, of jealousy and accusations, of unexpected misunderstandings of those on whom he confided and the inevitable interior doubts that assailed him, ending up in his leaving the place.

Covadonga 1906-1913

Pedro Poveda was appointed Canon of the Marian Shrine in this northern part of Spain. Referring to this time of his life, he would write:

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"Why did God bring me, so young as yet to this very restful place?" He was only 31 years old then and he was formulating once again the eternal question that guided his desires. Covadonga became for him, from the time of his arrival there, a continuous encounter with the grotto and the Blessed Virgin of Asturias; a pause for the moment of his apostolic action. Nevertheless, during the seven years lived in this solitary and recollected place in the mountains of Spain, in the first years of the century, he would carry out an intense pedagogical reflection, keeping in touch with the European educational movements of those times. He would concern himself with the social and cultural problems, following them very closely. From the Covadonga cliffs he would go down to the libraries of Oviedo; here he would be in contact with the teachers and other people concerned about education. He would write and offer concrete responses to the challenges he observed. Thus Covadonga was the place where his first publications or elaboration of his first writings around the educational question would come about, like his *Ensayo de proyectos pedagógicos*, *Simulacro pedagógico*, *Las Academias*, *Diario de una fundación*, *Alrededor de un proyecto*. In Oviedo, he established the first Academy for those studying in the Normal School, on the 11th of December in 1911. He was able to gather a group of professionals around this project. In the grotto of Our Lady of Covadonga, fondly called the *Santina* by the people, there is a modern marker that says: "The Teresian Association was born here."

Jaén 1913-1921

Jaén already represented the Seminary where the young Poveda arrived at the age of 15. The significance of this place, however, in the life of Poveda is after his sojourn at Covadonga, since 1913. Here he met Josefa Segovia who had just finished her studies in the *Escuela Superior de Enseñanza* or the Normal School in Madrid. He prevailed upon her to direct the Academy. Her sympathetic understanding of his projects would make her his most faithful collaborator. Jaén saw the first plenitude of the Work—that of the Academies which were the seed of the Teresian Association itself. This is where it began to extend to other places.

Madrid 1921-1936

Madrid saw the final consolidation of Poveda's Work. Before he established himself definitively in this place, he had his encounter here

with the university world so that, in 1914, he created in Madrid the first Residence for University Women in Spain. When Poveda was appointed Royal Chaplain, he fixed his residence in Madrid. Madrid, like Jaén before, became the center of the manifold activities of the foundation and the participation as well as the coordination of and with other Catholic movements. It was also here where his definitive surrender of himself would take place: his martyrdom for the sake of the faith, at the dawn of the 28th of July 1936, in the outskirts of the city of Madrid.

Poveda's Prophetism and Creative Vision

Pedro Poveda was a man of action, deeply rooted in the historical moment he was in. Shortly before he died he affirmed: "I, who have my mind and heart in the present moment,..." His penetrating gaze at the historical moment he was experiencing made him capable of looking beyond the concrete state of things. It stimulated him to reflect and to dilate his heart. He was attentive to what was beyond the immediate, to the signs that could be seen in the horizon. The vision in him was not only for announcing or denouncing. It was for creation: his realistic as well as active disposition would give responses unbelievably early for his times in Spain during the first one-third of the century.

We can single out four very revealing responses he offered to the challenges of his times:

1. The State School Imposes Itself

Since the start of the century, and from his study and reflection in the peaceful silence of Covadonga, he saw that the State schools were progressively covering more areas. And he could surmise that the incoming governments would close the centers run by the Religious with the pretext that there would be government centers to be established in their vicinity. He was surprised when on May 14, 1936, in the newspaper *La Gaceta*, it was announced that in the province of Santander three primary schools run by the Religious were just closed.

He also knew that in those first years of the century, those persecuting the faith were programming strategies in international congresses for the formation of teachers —Poveda cites the one that took place in Trouville, France. "If they win the souls of these teachers," —he commented— "they will also win those of the children." In the face of this, Poveda felt the need to awaken the restlessness among the

Catholics and move them to do something about it. But while working at it, with more or less success, Poveda started to do something that was practically impossible at the moment, namely, the creation, with the help of a group of convinced women, of the Teresian Academies in Oviedo. The efficacy of these, originally intended for the formation of teachers, has reached us even today.

2. *The Social Problem*

Together with the first response went his attention to the "social question" which Pope Leo XIII, in his *Rerum Novarum*, had put into bold relief at the end of the 19th century, and that had animated undoubtedly his generous action in Guadix. This was described by one of his biographers, Flavia Paz Velázquez, as his "going from the brilliant atmosphere of the cultured clergy to the dusty air of the caves and situating himself beside a culture placed at the service of man."

Now in Covadonga, he was thinking also of the more modest and humble classes who in the majority would attend the State schools. So he chose their education and development as one of the most efficacious responses to the social problem. He even had the inspiring idea that if they [the Government] removed the crucifixes from the classrooms, the children would not lack the needed beneficent influence, if the teachers could be formed so that they can, through the example of their lives, become "Living Crucifixes."

3. *Woman, the Key of Our Times*

The advanced recognition of Poveda on the importance of women, not only for the salvation of Christianity in Spain but for her social efficacy as well, is one of his best contributions to our times.

The Academy which Poveda conceived involved male teachers at first, but this did not work. In spite of this, he was undaunted. He thought of getting the cooperation of someone who until then was alienated from the intellectual world at that time but whose action was decisive in the formation of a new generation: the *woman*.

Most Catholics during the first decade of this century were alarmed by the vindictive feminist movements in France, England or the United States. Pedro Poveda, on the other hand, believed in the capacity of the individual woman as a person and in her rights. Thus,

with professional women, he organized centers of education and culture.

In the declarations of the Masonic Congress in Trouville, France, it was said: "There are two kind of persons who can give strength to masonry: the teacher and the woman." From this Poveda concluded that if the teacher was a woman, there would be double strength.

To those who advocated that the feminine personality was very fragile to be able to support the dilemma posed by the union of faith and science, Poveda responded that no such dilemma existed. On the contrary, he would encourage the students and his close collaborators to study without being discouraged, since this was their most committed duty, proper to their condition as Christian professionals.

"If you are women of faith," —he would say— "you would esteem as your primordial duty the fulfillment of your obligations, and one of them, and certainly the most sacred, is study. You must study assiduously to be prepared and to possess a title in a dignified manner. If you are given access to social positions of honor and importance, you are obliged to acquire the scientific preparation needed to carry out their corresponding responsibility with dignity so as not to deceive society."

Poveda's texts on the equality between the sexes when it comes to possessing science and exercising it cover, in fact, many pages.

4. *The Laity in the Church*

The "Lay apostolate" or, in today's terminology, the "mission of the laity" in the Church, is the last note of Poveda's facet as a man whose mind and heart was always in his time, yet with his gaze upon the horizon. He believed that the access of the laity to positions of responsibility in the Church would be joined to the recognition of women in society and in the Church itself. And he would underscore in his writings the importance of the Teresian Association which he described as a "light force that is prepared." Its members, being lay people, could be where the religious or the clergy cannot have access because of their norms and habits or simply because of governmental dispositions. From these circumstantial realities, Poveda reflected deeply on the importance of the participation of the laity in the mission of the Church. This was a conviction that Pope Pius XI, founder of Catholic Action, would soon support. Pedro Poveda felt called to form believers, who within the temporal structures, and as loyal servers of society, would open

possibilities to the faith. Pope John XXIII would write about this in his *Mater et Magistra*, emphasizing the need to Christianize the temporal realities. Later on, Vatican II would clearly affirm this. And in our present day, Pope John Paul II's *Christifideles Laici* on the "Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World," could not be more explicit on this regard.

The life of the early Christians would was for Poveda, a point of reference, a way of being in the world, in the very heart of the world. They belonged to the world and to the Church and their very presence, their life coherent with their faith was already an opening for the faith in spite of the hostile environment. "You have to assume the responsibilities of the moment," —Poveda would say— "you have to be like the First Christians, as dauntless as they were as self-sacrificing."

The texts referring to the Early Christians multiply in Poveda's writings. Just to cite twp more:

"The Work we intend to bring about has to be identical to what the Early Christians imagined and the means they used to attain it, even if we were taken to be fools." "The example of the First Christians, who were united in heart and soul, should be the norm to which your conduct must abide."

Pedro Poveda, Educator and Humanist

The UNESCO recognized Pedro Poveda as Educator and Humanist during his birth centennial, in 1974.

As an *educator*, he analyzed the different aspects of a well-developed human personality, as it can be seen in the following quotation from his writings:

"How should the will of a person be? It must be the queen and mistress of the whole self. Strong and gentle, easy for what is good and invincible for evil. Passionate without danger, determined without being stubborn, prompt without imprudence, free without dissipation... a slave without humiliation. Tempered yet ardent."

"How about the intelligence? I do not wish to see your reasoning beclouded with error, since truth is connatural to the intelligence just as goodness is to the will... May you be models when it comes to reasoning and to loving as well."

"Your memory must be so fortunate as to be able to retain, conserve, maintain and sustain the good remembrances and to forget quickly what is useless and less holy."

He loved to make pairs of contrary concepts —as we have just seen— to define the ideal distinctive features of a desired personality, like well-preparedness and simplicity; prudence and naturalness; tolerance and firmness; intolerance and condescension. Gentle towards others, hard wit oneself; benign with others, austere to oneself.

He chose the characteristic binary quality, that of fortitude and love, for those who would join in his school. Those who knew him affirm that, unwittingly, he was defining himself when he wrote:

"We must believe that these words were directed to us: God's gift is not a spirit of fear but a spirit of fortitude and love. (1 Tit. 1,7) In love we learn what we must practice with respect to God and neighbor. Fortitude is our defense and it will make us patient and courageous and daring enough to conquer ourselves and the world as well as undermine the power of evil."

He would say to those who were working with students in the school or in other educational centers: "Do not begin by asking, but rather by giving yourselves unreservedly to them." "It is better to give than to receive," (Ps 76, 11) he would advise them with the Psalm. And he added: "I am advocating a new system, a fresh method, a kind of proceedings as new as it is old, inspired in love."

As a good educator, Poveda always trusted in the youth. To his young collaborators, he would say: "You can conquer the world, no more, no less." Towards the end of his life, he saw the growth of a project almost exclusively in the hands of the young. It was then that he said:

"O youth, powerful weapon, potent arm, strength of the world! Give thanks to God because young as you are, he has led you to this noble undertaking. Who made this great Work possible? Who overcame the numerous difficulties of this enterprise? Who propagated it and did everything? The youth!"

Poveda did not know at that time, although perhaps his intuition might have told him, that a young lady of 22 years, exceptionally endowed with natural gifts, possessing an attractive personality coupled with an excellent intellectual formation, —quite uncommon to many young people of her time— would later be the providential instrument of his Work. This was Josefa Segovia, who would be the

embodiment of his dream. Years later, he would acknowledge this in writing by saying: "She is the perfect incarnation of the spirit of the Teresian Association."

Poveda, as we saw before, was always attentive to what was happening in the surrounding world. In an educational congress celebrated in Spain he noted that there were two educational concepts brought to the fore and made to confront each other, namely, the transcendent and the immanent. Poveda, wanting to break the bipolarity with a pedagogy that affirmed the human in the person, without negating the transcendent, said:

"I want lives that are human, centers in which humanism, taken in the most orthodox sense, rules; but, as I understand that these lives cannot be what we desire if they are not lives lived for God, I want to begin by filling with God those who have to live true human lives."

Poveda, who was a true believer, found the perfect equilibrium between immanence and transcendence in the Incarnation of the Son of God. He wrote: "To grasp the full meaning of the Incarnation, the person of Christ, his nature and his life, is to find the surest way to become holy. We will become holy, being at the same time truly human in the full sense of the word."

For Poveda, this integration between the human and the divine found its realization in an admirable way in St. Teresa of Avila. She was enterprising, courageous, active, generous and charming. Though Spanish by nationality, her appeal was universal. The life of this saint seemed to Poveda, in all its simplicity and charm, to characterize what the life of a Christian should be — a life totally lived for God. Because of the life she lived so authentically for God, she evoked universal attraction. It was noteworthy that the first academies flamed after St. Teresa gained significance as the Teresian Association grew.

The first students of Poveda's centers proudly called themselves Teresians. The name Teresian, during those times, came to be synonymous with serious, scientific, updated, professionally prepared. At the same time, it was a guarantee of having a deeply lived experiential faith, a piety free of affectations and flimsy practices.

Poveda aspired to that the scientific preparation of his cooperators were such that it silenced those who took "believers" to be backward. So he asked them: "Can you measure the influence you will have, if they

see that the most competent and the best teachers are those who are the most virtuous and who possess a living faith?"

Poveda and the Teresian Association

Fr. Pedro Poveda, a man of faith, was bent on finding answers to the present questions through a vital reference to the Gospel of Jesus. He proposed a Christianity authentically lived by people in the very heart of the world. He convoked people who could show the transforming power of the Gospel when it is deeply lived. He was convinced that the contribution of Christians in the building up of a world that is solidary is invaluable. This is what lead him to found the Teresian Association in 1911.

With a group of closely related professionals and collaborators, he constituted the Teresian Association, one which gathered his thoughts in an organized manner: Its members were to be Christians committed to the transformation of the world in the most solidary sense; present in the educational and cultural field in the different social spheres of the moment; from their concrete profession, but always with a serious preparation, the fruit of a habitual study. Poveda said as well that they had to be salt, with the disproportion in its measure: hardly a handful for a big mass. Like salt, distributed and tasteful. For him, salt was like that: the savor and joy of the world, and that was how they ought to be in the world; like people of hope over and above the proper self-limitation and those of others, with the charge of "making life agreeable for others." Likewise, with a testimony of simplicity, with a believer's presence in the midst of others, be they believers or not, trying to convince by means of deeds, "because these are what give testimony as to who we are." Poveda had felt in his very bones that this testimony was not always accepted, that at times it was inconvenient and others hid themselves in a thousand and one silences. But for Poveda there was no ambiguity possible, he was a man of only one Lord and he assumed its consequences. "I believe, he says, therefore I speak."

Poveda thinks of a Christianity that is authentic, without mixtures and he focuses on what is closest to the existence of Jesus: the First Christians. He proposes the example of a simple life.

Poveda pointed to the Blessed Virgin Mary, at the foot of the cross, as the Model of those who would belong to the group he was forming. A true devotion to the Blessed Virgin, especially in her sorrows, was bequeathed to the Teresian Association by its Founder and which was

further nourished by Josefa Segovia, his faithful collaborator. In one of his writings, Poveda would declare: "This love for the Blessed Virgin, so tender, simple, deep and strong is something so substantial, fruitful and visible that it is most evident to all, be it inside or outside the Association.... I would prefer to see the Work disappear than to see its Marian devotion growing less."

Poveda's Profile as a Man

We have seen very little so far about the interior profile of Fr. Poveda. We only know what is revealed about him in his attitudes, in his words, in his approach. In order to get to the depth of his spiritual dimension, we should start from his childhood, from his early calling to the priesthood, because God drew him from the very first moment to where he wanted to take him. From the beginning of one's existence, almost unknowingly, life is like a dry run of what is to be one's earthly mission, if one is faithful to God's call.

The childhood of Poveda was the outline of his life as a mature man: his priesthood, exquisite orderliness in everything, asceticism without compromises, enthusiastic surrender to God, devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, patient and meek love toward all, the limit of his condescension was sin.

Some experiences in his childhood days bespeak of this. Besides the time spent in school, games and outings with boys of his age, young Pedro spent the time in the house of his aunts, where he saw his cherished inclination especially favored: to play the role of a priest. "My favorite pastime," he wrote in his autobiographical notes, "was to make altars, to say mass, prepare sermons, etc." These were not just games. When he solemnly made the sign of the cross, standing on an armchair which he used as a pulpit, before beginning the homily or saying mass, dressed up in all the sacred vestments made by his aunts, he was fulfilling a first act of fidelity to his calling.

Fr. Poveda, thirty years after his entry into the Seminary would recall with satisfaction the time of his first fervor: "I believe I was a good seminarian. The Lord granted me sweetness, peace and joy such as I never knew afterward." It was no doubt a response to his generosity, his youthful haste to please Christ, to please Our Lady. He demanded a great deal of himself. Time does not allow us to gather more from the short biography written by María Dolores Gómez Molleda treating of his Seminary days, which depicted the fundamental seriousness of

Pedro Poveda in his spiritual life and his dream of a holy priesthood which radiated a strong power of attraction.

How was Poveda himself as he matured into a man? How was this man who untiringly made programmes and molded characters without respite? The descriptions given of him are as varied as the scholars who have written his biography or about some concrete aspect of his personality. Almost always, however, they played with contrasting elements of his character, life and action.

He himself commented in a particular letter on the biographical sketch made by a friend on his disposition, applying to him the Latin aphorism: *firmiter in re, suaviter in modo*. He compared the firmness and mettle of his will to steel and his exterior gentleness and sweetness to velvet. "Whether the semblance is proper or not," —he wrote— "I do not know, but if I knew ... my greatest joy would be to see to it that what such a semblance signifies is being realized in my life."

"When one peers through his soul," Rosalía Giménez writes, "there emerges at first sight the difficulty of reconciling in him the data that are apparently contradictory about his personality or his spiritual itinerary: he is a lion and a lamb; tenacity and gentleness; meekness conquering violence; humility and heroic obedience as well as interior liberty. One who knows only his agenda —of visits, conversations, attendance at meetings, presence in management boards, solicitations of those who wanted to carry out an educational projects or programs of social regeneration— would get the impression of a man who is active, realist, well-documented, present in the problems of his times over which he makes lucid and objective judgments."

"This man, however," —the same author notes— "to whom the solicitude and dedication to burning issues, to current events, do not seem to leave him time for reflection, for silent contemplation, is the very same one whom his friends remember as recollected, studious, shunning to be in the first place, incapable of mixing with rowdy groups. Above all, he loses himself in the daily Eucharist and focuses all events in its light."

Fr. Poveda was a defender of peace though not precisely a conformist. He came to say: "Esteem justice as much as you should life itself." He knew well that what is unjust is a fertile field for violent actions. For him, a way to work for peace was to "love everyone, prefer the little ones, the needy, the poor." It is not possible to opt for peace while closing one's eyes to injustice. But that peace is possible only if it

is founded on love. "You have to love your enemies as well," he would say. For him, the true peacemaker "gives in over his rights because something was changed in his heart." This is only possible, Poveda would say "by putting God in the heart." From this secret, he asked his collaborators what was revolutionary, heroic, the best way —and perhaps the only way— of making possible a living together in peace: being tolerant and benign with others while rigorous and austere to themselves.

Fr. Poveda's role was crucial during the difficult hour for the faith in Spain which was waging a great battle in the field of education. He would unsettle some for his urgency to awaken the apathy of some social classes that would hide conveniently behind a falsified traditional Christianity which joined their faith more on cult than to a coherence of life, to ethics or the needed social justice. One of Poveda's biographers, Fr. Domenico Mondrone, entitled the book he wrote about him: *The Unsettling Priest*.

Fr. Poveda felt called, with the Teresian Association he founded, to change the past injustice through an authentic educational and social renewal —and his sign of Christian identity— against the falsified reforms that were beginning to impose themselves. In the Decree on the beatification of Fr. Pedro Poveda, the words of Pope Paul VI in his *Evangelii Nuntiandi* were applied to him saying: He worked so as "to upset, through the power of the gospel, mankind's criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interests, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life which are in contrast with the word of God and the plan of salvation."

The same Decree recalled that: "Poveda is found among those who have made the educational and cultural mission of the Church their own."

Pedro Poveda, the Priest

If we have to look for the fountainhead of such an extraordinarily fruitful activity in the life of Fr. Poveda, we can find it in the gift of his priestly vocation.

His priestly ordination on April 17, 1897 had marked a decisive milestone in his life. His first Mass, on Easter Wednesday that year on the morning of April 21, would shed its light over each and every day of his life. These two sacerdotal anniversaries were the only dates he

would celebrate since then. And since those dates, Poveda would always be, above all, a Priest. In his intimate writings of the last years of his life we read: "Lord, that I may always be a priest in thoughts, words and deeds." (April 17, 1933)

In his writings we find this very revealing frame of mind:

"May Christ's life be shown in us. Lord that I may think what you want me to think, that I may love what you want me to love; may I speak the words you want me to speak; may I act as you want me to act. This is my only wish."

Poveda's priestly self-giving was an option without any rift. Every person who crossed his path, anyone who would go to his office seeking consolation, orientation or economic help always found in him a man of God, a friend who infused an exceptional sensation of assurance. He would listen with attention as if he had no other thing to do but that. He would condescend and welcome anyone with sympathy. He would give advice and assess situations in truth, with serenity and balance. "Within him one always thinks as a priest," one of his close collaborators would testify.

The Eucharist was for him the root and reason for his priesthood. Those who participated in his Mass could not forget the impact of his faith and unction which they received. "I will never forget the Masses of Poveda," —says Bro. Emiliano Mencia— "I would like to point out expressly that there was nothing forced or strident in his fervor. On the contrary, what impressed me to a point that I could never forget, was the serenity, peace and silence that one felt, full of meaning, throughout the whole celebration. His gestures manifested clearly that he was living intensely the Mystery."

The Eucharist was indeed the very heart of his priestly existence. In his intimate writings we find such aspiration as: "I ask God for the grace never to miss, even for a single day, to celebrate [Mass] with fervor." The Lord granted him this favor. On July 27, 1936, feast of St. Pantaleon, Martyr, he was able to celebrate Mass in the morning in spite of the uncertainty. War had just broken out in Spain —just 10 days before— and the climate was one of extreme caution especially among believers. Fr. Poveda was especially threatened. Some friends advised him to leave Madrid or at least to make himself less conspicuous. He consented to wear secular clothes. However, he continued celebrating Mass everyday. That morning a group of armed military men went up the stairs looking for a priest. Poveda offered no

resistance. He was brought to several tribunals, even if there was already an implicit sentence for him. In the pseudo-trial that preceded his death, he gave an account of his profound identity: "I am a priest of Christ."

At the dawn of the 28th of July, he was celebrating his Mass with his martyrdom, outside the city, already identified with Jesus Christ as Priest and Victim. His ideal, to be another Christ, culminated then.

Pedro Poveda, Founder of the Teresian Association, together with Victoria Díez, a member of the same Association, was beatified by Pope John Paul II on October 10th 1993, in Rome. This public and ecclesial recognition situates him among the men who lived their lives making the cause of Jesus credible, even to the point of giving up their lives as witnesses to the Gospel. He is a witness close to us. He is a model for Christians today. If something is wanting at the close of this XXth century, it is precisely credibility and hope; reasons to live and these can only be given by an authentic testimony. A joyful and optimistic testimony despite the shadows of the present; of one who wants to change the world, not withdrawing from it, but remaining in the very heart of it.

Men like the newly beatified Pedro Poveda undoubtedly encourage us to work for a world that is more human, more solidary and more fraternal for everyone. He opens new paths for us with his proper experience of life. He presents himself as sign and message. He is a witness—very near to us—of the transforming power of the Gospel in the heart of the world at the threshold of a new millennium.

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