

July 26, 2023



Daily Reflections

JOURNEYING THROUGH CHALLENGING TIMES

Image by Christine Sponchia from Pixabay

A PILGRIM'S DISPATCH: BEING THERE

By Julie Mussché

Maxim 39

“Be nothing to yourself and be utterly given to God and the neighbor.”

FR. JEAN-PIERRE MEDAILLE, S.J.

Reflection

Following along our pilgrim's path, the next day included a visit and a reflection on the place of the martyrs located in the city center, as well as an exploration with options for lunch at the Town Market. At the place or square of the martyrs, our pilgrim community remembered the Sisters of St. Joseph who persevered through the hardships and, in some cases, lost their lives during the French Revolution.

A quick pass by the French Revolution as it will offer some context for this and

upcoming conversations: At its beginning in 1789, the old regime of aristocracy and a powerful clergy -- both of whom had significant influence over the lives and efficacy of people -- grew incapable of governing and caring for larger society. In a feudal system, the situation in France at the time, people relied on leaders to provide for their basic civil needs and protection. This deteriorated and a revolt developed in response.

The ideals of the Revolution -- liberty, equality, and fraternity -- guided the reestablishment of a new governmental structure. Amid this transition from the old to the new, an institution of terror was enacted, a literal purging of the old influences, the most notable being the king and queen of France.

Thousands of people were arrested, some of whom died in prison or were executed; included in this number were clergy and religious. Also, churches and church-affiliated properties were seized by the state. During this Reign of Terror, five Sisters of St. Joseph were martyred and Mother St. John Fontbonne missed execution by a day. The martyred sisters were murdered by guillotine.

Being present to the memory of the martyrs offers a line of connection that is timeless and relates to the present. Societal chaos and terror, guillotines, drones, AR-15s, hypersonic missiles, all instruments of destruction and fear. Insurrectionists, mob and random acts of violence, all too visible in our time as well as in eighteenth-century France.

What an incredible testimony to faith and valor, the sacrifice of self for the sake of God and belief. A communion of saints, past, present, and future, those martyred, those giving witness to God's great love in the middle of existential challenges, then and now.



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