

22 May

## Francisco ESTEBAN LACAL

### - OBEDIENCE -

Birth	: 8 February 1888 in Soria (Spain)
Baptism	: unknown
First vows	: 16 July 1906
Perpetual vows	: 2 February 1911,
Ordination	: 29 June 1912
Death	: 28 November 1936
Place of burial	: Paracuellos del Jarama.

### Biblical texts

Prov 14, 2.  
Acts 5:29-30,32-33,40-41  
Ps 7:9-11 9  
Ps 119 (118), 113-115  
Ps 125 (124)  
Mt 10:28-32 28  
Mt 7:13-14,21. 13  
Lk 6 29b-31  
Lk 12:42-44

### Meditation

In the account of the martyrs of Paracuellos (Madrid), we find the famous gesture attributed to Blessed Francisco ESTEBAN LACAL, Provincial of the Missionary Oblates, before being shot, along with 12 other Oblates and several other religious.

After giving absolution to the future martyrs, he addressed the executioners with these words: "We know that you are killing us because we are Catholics and religious, we are. Both I and my companions forgive you from our hearts".

This gesture of asking permission for the final farewell and absolution shows very well the personality of Blessed ESTEBAN, marked by his sense of duty and obedience to God to the end. During his life he had often called himself a "soldier of Christ", who sought to do what God and his superiors commanded him. He had been a soldier throughout his life, before he became a priest. As a soldier, when he was only 21 years old, he had to face death in battle, in which he behaved bravely. Now, in 1936, at the age of 48, as Provincial of the other Oblates, he considered it his last duty to step forward, to confront the atheistic and blasphemous executioners and to ask the favour of being able to absolve his companions and give them a word of encouragement, encouraging them to forgive their executioners.

Those who knew him during his lifetime described Fr. ESTEBAN with these characteristics: his uprightness, his approachable way of dealing with everyone and his deep spirit of faith: Father Provincial Francisco ESTEBAN was a person of deep faith, rigid with himself, with great personal austerity, and affectionate with others and whose trust in Divine Providence was evident to all those who knew him, to the point that his confidence in God was manifested in all the problems he had to solve in the religious province, which at that time lacked everything.

During the religious persecution, when they had to hide in different houses after having been expelled from the Oblate house, he had already given many signs of courage and a sense of duty and obedience to God in the service of his fellow Oblates. In fact, his family suggested to him that he escape the persecution by going to take refuge with them, when they had not yet begun to kill hundreds and thousands of Catholics. But he said that his duty was to be with the Oblates, of whom he was the Provincial in Spain, for he was not indebted to himself but to others.

With his brother Oblates in the diaspora, he suffered the anguish of religious persecution in Madrid and experienced it directly when, on August 9, 1936, he was expelled from his community at the Oblate Provincial house, where several Oblates from the Scholasticate of Pozuelo, who had already been expelled from their house in Pozuelo, had also taken refuge. With them, he went to take refuge in a boarding house in the centre of Madrid.

In that unsettled and dangerous Madrid, he did not slip away and remained in hiding. There he encouraged his confreres and sought by all means, which were scarce and at great risk, to encourage materially and spiritually the other Oblates expelled from the house of Pozuelo and refugees in various places in Madrid, as well as other religious, especially those of the Holy Family of Bordeaux. He brings them some food and Holy Communion.

When he was warned that he could not risk so much by making these visits, he simply replied that he had an obligation to save something more precious than his life.

On one of these outings, he was arrested and Fr. Francisco Esteban declared without seeking any subterfuge that he was a priest and a religious. Such sincerity prompted one of the officials to tell him: "But man of God, say that you are a teacher or something else, but not a priest". He was even released. However, after a few weeks, he was caught again, along with the other Oblates.

In prison, he tried to pray the rosary clandestinely when they were walking in the yard or in the cells. And he continued to take care of the Oblates. One person brought him a coat to the prison because of the cold temperatures in the Madrid winter. Father Francisco, seeing that an Oblate was cold, immediately gave him the coat.

On 15 November, he was transferred to the Cárcel de San Antón, a Piarist school that had been converted into a prison. He was taken from there on November 28, 1936, to be martyred with 12 other Oblates at Paracuellos del Jarama.

When the group of Oblates was arrested, Father Francisco courageously said, obediently confessing his faith in the Lord: "I answer for all these. They are Oblates of Mary Immaculate and they are with me. I am their superior, a Catholic priest. We are here because we have been expelled from our convent." On November 28, 1936, before the guns and the open grave, he said again in the name of all: "We know that you kill us because we are Catholics and religious; we are. I and my companions forgive you with all our hearts, long live Christ the King!"

## **Prayer**

Blessed Francisco ESTEBAN LACAL,  
Faithful soldier of Christ committed to your duty  
to God and to your brothers,  
you sought God's will  
in all the events of your life,  
and you always fulfilled it  
with admirable fortitude of spirit,  
You show us that obedience nourished you,  
making you capable of serving all,  
thus maintaining the bonds of love  
with your brother Oblates and with all people.  
Together with your companions in martyrdom,  
intercede so that new young people  
may discover and embrace the evangelical freedom  
which the vow of obedience gives us,  
and become Oblates of Mary Immaculate  
giving themselves unreservedly to the fulfilment  
of the divine plan of salvation.

Together with you and your martyr companions,  
we ask this grace of God  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who lives and reigns for ever and ever.  
Amen.