

24 May

CÁNDIDO CASTÁN

- COMMITMENT-

Birth : 5 August 1894

Baptism : unknown

Marriage : 4 June 1919

Death : 24 July 1936

Buried in : unknown

Biblical texts:

1 Cor 7:29 -31

Eph 5:25-29

Rom 1:11-16

Mt 7:13-14,21.

Meditation

Cándido Castán San José is the layman who died with the Oblates. He was 41 years old when he was killed and was married with a son and a daughter. He did not have a close relationship with the Oblate Congregation, but he knew them well because his daughter attended the school where the Oblates were chaplains and he also went to the parish where the Oblates used to collaborate. Above all, it was the fact of having shared martyrdom with the Oblates that definitively united this layman with the Sons of St. Eugene.

His life can surely be a source of inspiration for so many lay people who struggle to live and witness to Gospel values in the midst of civil society. His social and political commitment was very generous and admirably courageous throughout his life. It is worth getting to know him better.

At the age of 14 he met his future wife, Francisca, with whom he immediately fell in love. As they were so young, they began a courtship that lasted 11 years, because due to Cándido's father's work, which forced the family to move, he could only see "Paquita", as they called his girlfriend, during the holidays. Despite the distance, the relationship remained faithful, and despite their great desire to be together, their relationship was always chaste, as those who knew them remember.

The atmosphere of the family was extraordinary, because they educated their children in a climate of love and in a climate of religiosity, where in the family, they were taught to pray and to love God above all things and to do works of charity.

Candido was a railway worker. He never missed a single day of work, despite the many commitments to which his passion for bringing the Gospel ideal to the world of the workers led him. A consistent Christian, militant Catholic, he was President of the National Confederation of Catholic Workers, an organisation that had more than 60,000 workers, and which sought to improve the living conditions and development of the country based on Catholic doctrine. This passion for living the Gospel in the world of work led him to a long list of activities:

- Railwayman with the Compañía de Ferrocarriles del Norte de España.
- Member of the Sindicato Católico Ferroviario.
- President of the Madrid-Section of the Sindicato Ferroviario.
- Vice-President and later President of the National Confederation of Catholic Trade Unions.
- Member of Madrid City Council.
- Member of the Spanish Parliament.

His struggles and efforts over the years to apply the Gospel in the world of work led him to literally risk his life on many occasions. For this reason, the press of the time came to call him the "champion of social Catholicism". Even then, almost twenty years before his martyrdom, Cándido was aware that his publicly manifested Christian commitment had its risks in that atmosphere of violence. And all this without ever leaving his job as a humble railway worker and without ever neglecting his family obligations.

Where did Cándido get the strength to do all this? Being a worker and a family man, where did he find the time and, above all, the strength to be involved in so many areas?

"It is clear that Candide was a dynamic man, a fighter, who did not give up easily, and with great energy. However, his "secret" was his deep inner life, nourished by the Eucharist, his devotions and in particular his prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. Proof of this was his membership and active participation in the Association of Nocturnal Adoration. Every evening he visited the Blessed Sacrament in a church, prayed the rosary every day and was very devoted to the Virgin Mary, the Sacred Heart and the Archangel Raphael.

On 23 July, around midday, the militiamen went to Cándido's house to arrest him and take him away. Only he and his daughter were at home. Cándido gave her his wedding ring and the keys to the house, telling his daughter to give them to her mother. During the journey, a little over a kilometre long, escorted by the militiamen, like a criminal, Cándido met Francisca, his wife. She asked him where they were taking him and they replied that they were taking him to the Oblates. God had given them the opportunity to say goodbye to each other for the last time. The militiamen forced him to continue walking, while Francisca looks at them as if paralysed. The gazes of the two spouses meet intensely. It is a brief, intense greeting, full of anguish, which brings back memories of their constant

meetings and farewells when they were sweethearts, separated by Cándido's father's changes of destination. Forced by the militiamen, Cándido is forced to continue his march. Once he has recovered, Cándido continues to walk upright, with a composed step, like the gentleman he always was.

Cándido knew some of the fathers well, especially Fr José Vega, who worked with the Catholics on the Pozuelo railway. Together with 7 Oblates, he was executed for his faith in the early hours of 24 July 1936 in a forest between Madrid and Pozuelo de Alarcón.

Prayer

Blessed Cándido CASTÁN SAN JOSÉ,
you were never silent or indifferent in the face of injustice,
Your evangelising zeal led you to try to attract many people
to Catholic circles,
in which you identified the best way to serve society.
Your honesty and your trust in the human being
led you to dialogue with everyone,
regardless of political opinions,
in order to fight for the common good.
Your convictions made you always state
what you considered to be the truth,
with respect but without fear,
and following the indications
of the ecclesiastical hierarchy of your time.
Your love for your family led you to always seek the best
for your dear wife and children.
Your fidelity and spousal love
were rewarded by the Lord
with a sweet moment of farewell to your wife and your children
in your personal Way of the Cross.
The Lord crowned your whole life with the glory of martyrdom,
lived in adoration of Christ in the Eucharist, family and work.

Together with your martyr companions,
grant us abundant vocations to Oblate life,
as consecrated and lay Oblates.

May our families be a seedbed
of people committed like you
in living the Gospel with passion and love,
so that everywhere
Christ may reign in hearts and in the world.

Together with you and with all the Oblate martyrs of Spain
we ask this grace from God
through Jesus Christ our Lord
who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
Amen.