

BLESSED MICHELE TOMASZEK AND ZBIGNIEW STRZAŁKOWSK
PRIESTS AND MARTYRS

Zbigniew Strzałkowski was born in Tarnów (Poland) in 1958. He emitted his vows in the Order of the Friars Minor Conventual in 1980 and was ordained to the priesthood in 1986; after serving as formator in the seminary of Legnica he opened a mission of the Order in Peru. Michele Tomaszek was born in Łękawica (Poland) in 1960. He emitted his vows in the Order of the Friars Minor Conventual in 1981 and was ordained to the priesthood in 1987; after having served as in the parish of Pieńsk he departed for the mission in Peru. In the large parish of Pariacoto, in the diocese of Chimbote, which had been entrusted to the Order and in which they ministered for almost two years, they sought to realise a Franciscan community which put itself at the service of the people, visiting the villages in the Andes, and giving themselves in pastoral and charitable ministry. On the evening of 9th August 1991, after a rushed trial, they were killed a short distance from the town by guerrilla fighters.

From the Common of Several Martyrs, with psalms from the Psalter

Collect

O God,
who have called the blessed priests Michele and Zbigniew
to follow Christ after the example of Saint Francis of Assisi,
and have strengthened them with your Spirit
even unto the complete offering of their life
for the good of those entrusted to them,
grant us, through their intercession,
to grow in love of you
and in loving service towards the most humble.
Through Christ our Lord.

Office of Readings

Second Reading

From a homily by Blessed Zbigniew, priest and martyr

(Legnica, 5th June 1988: Krakow, Provincial Archive, OFMConv.)

In the priest Christ is present amongst men

Dear brothers and sisters, united in a single community of God, in the one priesthood of Christ, by the same faith, and the same religious vows.

Joy is a feeling and a state which cannot be closed in on itself, but needs to find an external expression, or rather needs to share itself with others. It is precisely the priesthood of Christ which gives freedom to man and to the world, by freeing from sin and giving us hope, the hope of eternal life. These gifts for mankind and for the Christian come to us from the cross of Christ since he is the one high priest. The priests, who throughout the centuries have marked the history of mankind on earth, are simply those upon whom has rested the power of the priesthood of Christ. Through them Christ is present in man's life and in the history of the world. Each and every priest has a share in the life that Christ lived. Each and every priest experiences in union with his Master what he endured for our salvation. In turning the pages of the Gospel, listening to the inspired Word read in Church, we contemplate Christ the priest in his solitude. In fact, when he brought the good news to the chosen people and the whole human race he met with incomprehension. The only one who understood him was his heavenly Father. Christ the priest, in virtue of the love he bore towards the Father and towards man, came to offer sacrifice, a gratuitous sacrifice, the supreme sacrifice, since it was the offering of his very self.

Christ the priest, in announcing the good news, experienced weariness and fatigue, and so will every priest who accepts Christ's priesthood and decides to faithfully follow, his Master, Christ, step by step.

A most important aspect of St. Francis' religious experience was how he looked upon the priest, his attitude towards and concerning priests. In the instructions addressed to the friars, he said categorically and unequivocally that in the

person of the priest we must above all honour Christ who is present among men.

Christ is in our midst, in the person of the priest, he is in the midst of us to continue, through the mouth of the priest, to proclaim the Good News. To say to us, the faint-hearted: "Have courage"; to tell us: "Come to me, you who are weak and oppressed, and I will give you rest"; to announce to each of us, afflicted and plagued with doubts: "My grace is enough for you."

Responsorial

Jn 12:24-25; 18:8.9

R/ Unless a wheat grain falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest. * Anyone who loves his life loses it; anyone who hates his life in this world will keep it for the eternal life.

V/ If I am the one you are looking for, let these others go. Not one of those you gave me have I lost. * Anyone who loves his life loses it; anyone who hates his life in this world will keep it for the eternal life.