

Servants of God in the Desert: Tucson Carmelite Friars Martyred in the Spanish Civil War

- Blessed Fr. Lucas of St. Joseph (Tristany), O.C.D.
- Born: December 14, 1872 Su, Lerida, Spain
- Ordained priest: May 27, 1899
- Assignments: St. Joseph, Morenci, Mar.-Dec. 1914; Assumption of BVM, Florence Jan.-Aug. 1915; Holy Family, Tucson 1915-1919, 1920-1924; Santa Cruz, Tucson Feb.-June 1919
- Martyred: July 20, 1936 Barcelona
- Beatified by Benedict XVI October 30, 2007 Rome.



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"Ante Mi Crucifijo" Fr. Lucas de San José, C.D. Tucson, February 1924.
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I.

This image of the crucified Christ calls to mind his infinite goodness.

As I kneel before it, my spirit journeys to Calvary and another place in time. In this deep meditation, I am more consoled than sorrowful as I relive the scene of such violence. Although I was not present there, I am certain that in His suffering Christ saw me. Doctrine teaches that His divine vision encompasses every detail of past, present, and future time, and so he knew those of us who had yet to exist better than we now know ourselves.

In His infinite wisdom, He also loved us because He knew us. Yes, He loved us then as we are now. He thought of everyone and of each one; he prayed for each of us and died for us all.

Oh, yes! I am consoled by that Jesus surely saw and loved me as if only I existed in His universe. He loved me even as blood oozed from His body. As he died for our sins on the Cross, he pardoned our ignorance. As he left his Apostles in the Olive Grove and took on the task of saving the World, he said to his Eternal Father: "I ask this not only for these men, but also for those who through their words will believe in Me."¹

¹ John.17:1-20. [1] These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: [2] As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. [3] And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. [4] I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gave me to do. [5] And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. [6] I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gave them me; and they have kept thy word. [7] Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. [8] For I have given unto them the words which thou gave me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. [9] I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. [10] And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. [11] And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me,

Dear Lord, accept our most profound gratitude for the words of love and truth that for centuries have brought Consolation, Light and Hope to so many souls. Sweet Jesus, you loved me then, and now I humbly seek to reciprocate your infinite, unceasing love. So few among the multitudes at the Crucifixion loved you as you were dying, yet now many adore you through this symbol of your great love for the world.

Doubtless our love and faith in Your divinity should be deeper than those who witnessed Your death, since our belief in You as the son of God is strengthened by twenty centuries of testimony about You. All who had the good fortune to see You, heard you say: THE DAY I AM RESURRECTED FROM THE EARTH, I SHALL DRAW EVERYTHING UNTO ME.² They saw you elevated on the Cross, extended above them upon the highest crest of Golgotha. In your agony, sinners heard your words of goodness and forgiveness. Yet, only One among them lovingly and expectantly heard your last words. Though your followers heard the Holy Father, they could not see how completely your prophecy would be fulfilled.

These testimonies fortify our divine faith in You, so we who worship You on the Cross after two thousand years are perchance more fortunate than John and the Magdalene. We now see your Redemption as an act that encompasses the World. What

that they may be one, as we are. [12] While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gave me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. [13] And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. [14] I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. [15] I pray not that thou should take them out of the world, but that thou should keep them from the evil. [16] They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. [17] Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. [18] As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. [19] And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. [20] Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

² John.12:32. [32] And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

patch of Earth now touched by the Sun hasn't known the protection of your Cross? What profound chasm in the human spirit is not daily illuminated by one ray of hope in You?

Now, beautiful verses of profound and irrefutable truth in the immortal hymn first sung by your Apostles in the catacombs of Rome daily resound in hundreds and thousands of temples: You alone are Holy, You alone are Lord, You alone are most High, Jesus Christ."

Yes, sweet Redeemer. You alone are holy. No one is holy or virtuous who does not practice holiness and virtue according to your example.

You alone are Lord. Unlike empires of men that with time falter and weaken, Your kingdom alone expands and intensifies throughout eternity.

You alone are most High. Your love for humanity and obedience to the will of God led You to that summit with your arms extended and fixed on that Cross. You never faltered, and your benediction held each and every race of man throughout time in a single embrace.

In my heart and soul, Your unwavering wisdom is ageless. Your knowledge is unparalleled Virtue—like infinite Power; like transcendent Glory; like endless Love.

All this, still debated to your greater glory, still mystifies the unfaithful.

Other teachers undertook to construct academies to deny or desecrate your Testament. Many minds were distracted and no few hearts were corrupted. With time, their destruction yielded new ideologies that again shall meet the same end.

How many transgressions like the clouds of autumn have been unleashed against your Holy Cross? One moment, they threaten force, pain, or punishment; at the next they dim and subside. Once the storm has passed, the sunlight on the hillsides and the valleys

is completely beautiful and at peace. This divine and blessed Crucifix as well has been desecrated by those unfortunate souls who do not love it.

Men who dispute the power of the Cross and deny its deserved honor believe themselves to have prevailed against God and the Christ. Yet, they soon must acknowledge the dangerous audacity of that sort of human imperfection which would challenge an apparently helpless God suspended upon a wooden cross. My God, your abiding love for us led you to obscure your authority through that symbol of vulnerability and dishonor. Those who rose against you fell instead into eternal darkness. My crucified Lord Jesus, for this I adore you with all the love and veneration within me. I could not love you with greater intensity. Nailed to that Cross, I adore you as the immortal King of all ages. All honor and glory belongs to You alone.

II.

According to the Holy Testament,³ Human Malice once appeared disguised as rigid conformity to the rule of law and dogma and hurled accusations at Human Frailty, who stood as a humble penitent before Infinite Purity as a humble penitent.

The Redeemer refused to cast judgment. As the beloved Father, He already had defended the once-guilty heart that was now contrite. A just word and perceptive glance from the Teacher who knows the most angelic or evil chambers of the human spirit scattered those who passionately expected a sentence of execution from the Divine Judge. That once weak and sinful soul now changed by remorse and compassion into a daughter of infinite mercy found herself alone before Christ, and she heard these words of consolation: "Where are those who accuse you? No one has condemned you? Neither will I condemn you. Go, and sin no more."⁴

Divine Teacher, human malice and ignorance to this day also condemn You. Your divinity, your Gospel, your sacraments, and your Church stand accused by a process begun by Pilate and Califas,. They indict you still, yet nothing in You or of You can be condemned. No human law stands above divine law, since there is no just cause or convincing proof to condemn Christ, his teachings, and his Works. For this reason, these beliefs signal brutality, unbridled passion, and the scandalous interests of corrupted judges.

³ John.8:2. 2] And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them.

⁴ John.8:2. [10] When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? [11] She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

The tender and powerful voice of Jesus responds amid the chaotic din of His accusers: "Who among you sees my defects?"⁵

Enemies and accusers withdrew from His infinite divinity and the power of His word. Doubtless other accusers now come to renew old or invent new blasphemies against Christ and his teachings. Yet, men who deny the power, wisdom, and the spirit of God and the Gospel in truth spit against the wind. They challenge the kingdom of Christ. They erect thrones and altars to rival honors due no one but God, yet their fleeting glory lasts but one day: "I passed the place where I saw the nonbeliever exalted and he ceased to exist. I could not then recognize the place where he once stood."⁶ All their monuments crumbled like immense castles before the Crucified One.

Roman emperors who exacted tribute to prove their omnipotence and sought to drown the infant Christian Church in blood have long since crossed the veil. Rulers whose abuses and overarching ambition in the Middle Ages tried to bend her to their wills likewise passed into oblivion. Modern empires that once terrorized the world; that defiled the Testament and denied Christianity to intervene in their conflicts, now also die among the ruins.

The Cross that bears the Crucified Christ is the only fixed and unchanging presence amid so many monuments to antiquity and modernity.

Human genius invents many ideas that men embrace and later disregard. When it is sincerely and intently studied, only the Holy Testament generates ever more clear and holy forms of human consciousness.

⁵ John.7:46 VERIFY CITATION
⁶ Pss. 36:35 VERIFY CITATION

Amid all the deafening, disquieting words of assorted teachers, words of affirmation spoken in the name of the Crucified Christ are respected because Jesus preached justice and love for all humanity from the pulpit of the Cross.

The Holy Crucifix represents infinite, unchanging divinity in an inconstant, temporal World.

I therefore approach my Crucifix with love and faith. In times of uncertainty and conflict, I embrace Him so that he will sustain me like a pilgrim who seeks refuge in a storm. I seek the sustenance of my Crucifix because I know that all else quickly passes, like yesterday and tomorrow. My Crucifix and its substance survive because in two thousand years the world has yet to contradict a single syllable of these words of the Apostle: "Jesus Christ is as He was yesterday, today, and tomorrow."

I kiss His wounded feet, because I remember that they never tired of seeking out those the poor and confused among us.

In the eyes of my Crucifix darkened by the shadow of death, I see the eyes of my Savior, who still looked upon humanity with infinite tenderness to offer pardon and inspire trust.

I also see the lips of my suffering Lord on the Cross that finally and painfully parted to utter the last great lesson of Christian perfection that contains all the wisdom of the Testament, which is gentle submission to Divine will.

I seek repeated solitude with my Crucifix to remember who I am and in this way vanquish and calm my troubled soul. May I always recall that the Cross is the one true way to salvation and that self-denial and unceasing love for everyone else are attributes of Virtue that are absolutely vital to remain near to the Savior.

Near my Crucifix, I will calmly confront my vulnerability in order to remain unmoved by scorn.

I never fear condemnation, dear Jesus, as long as you do not censure me. May my daily prayers before Your holy image draw my spirit toward a peace that lasts the entire day. May I feel the comfort of knowing that You do not accuse me, and that when I need mercy, you are merciful. In this way, I do not offend you. In this way, I am always and in all ways grateful.

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III.

God bless men with a great capacity for prayer! Without knowing it, they are true friends of God. They are the strength of the world; they are the best and kindest of all humankind. They are modest, and God rewards them with His gifts. The Almighty, whose only law is His all-powerful Word, wanted these, his friends, to rule the World. He alone answers the prayers and honors the petitions of every pure and humble heart.

Though we all can and should pray, relatively few souls of the Church have received the gift of prayer. When we kneel to pray, many of us merely seek escape from its monotony.

Catholic doctrine lessens our indolence. Otherwise, this would be absolutely intolerable and disheartening. Fortunately, our prayers do not depend upon our personal merits, but instead upon those of Our Lord Jesus, who tells us: "I assure you, the Father will grant what you ask IN MY NAME."⁷ Christ's gifts to us radiate from the Passion on the Cross, where He died for us and for our salvation.⁸

The Passion of the Son of God is the source of our well-being. Grace and benediction spring from wounds and blood of the Redeemer.

Jesus lovingly and willingly assumed our sins for us on the Cross, just as he favored his most faithful servant, St. ^{Teresa}Theresa, who said: "That which is mine is also yours, and so I give you all the Works and pains I have suffered, and WITH THIS YOU CAN ASK OF MY FATHER WHAT IS YOURS TO RECEIVE."

⁷ John. 16:23 IDENTIFY AND VERIFY THIS CITATION
⁸ Colos. 2:14. IDENTIFY AND VERIFY THIS CITATION

These fine words inspire confidence in understanding souls. When in our prayers we share the suffering of Jesus Christ, we justly claim what is ours, since what we offer in return is worth more than our prayers. Commenting upon these words of the Lord, our Holy Mother Saint ^{Teresa}~~Theresa~~, says: "I have heard that we all participate in the sufferings of Jesus. When I see the Lord's suffering as my own, I now understand and feel a sense of profound abundance and relief."⁹

The suffering of our divine Redeemer belongs to Santa Teresa and to us. The great Saint had the good fortune to fully understand and embody this consoling truth. The wounds of Jesus are limitless sources of merit, grace, and forgiveness for everyone. Sincere humility of spirit and abiding faith are the only requisites to achieve these divine gifts and to refresh and renew ourselves in them. The holy Crucifix therefore means everything to those Christians who venerate it with faith and love. This sacred image unites us in spirit with the divine Redeemer who secured life for those who would seek it through Him.

I now know how to pray without weariness, without straying or drifting into my reverie. As I kneel before my holy Crucifix, it becomes my object of worship. May my prayer reach the entire World, since the spilled blood of my Savior is worth more than the Universe.

Following the example of a Spanish saint, I entrust each wound of my Redeemer to the special intentions of many people. I begin with His blessed feet, because when I kneel before my Crucifix, His feet are the first attributes that I see. Oh! The feet of Jesus have been kissed countless times by those weary souls who found God only after having

⁹ Relaciones, Relacion 51. IDENTIFY AND VERIFY THIS CITATION.

gravely offended Him. In the Holy Scripture, the feet symbolize those generous souls who spread truth and love. The holy prophet Isaiah said: "How beautiful His feet, this Man who in heaven announces and preaches peace, proclaims goodness and preaches salvation."¹⁰ Nahum added: "Look now toward the hillsides at the feet of the One who proclaims and propagates peace: Celebrate your feast, O Judah."¹¹ St. Paul echoed these ancient voices and exclaimed: "How beautiful the feet of those who preach peace and goodness."¹²

The feet of my Savior were beautiful to the holy Prophets and to the Apostle. Their strength and agility belongs to those fortunate to continue the work of the Divine Teacher. I will join all those blessed feet that even now proclaim goodness and truth along the path of humanity. I pray for them. For them, I offer up the sacred wounds that appear upon the feet of my Savior.

My Jesus, you entrusted your teachings to your Apostles and their ministers. Pray, support and guide all your servants who belong to your Holy Orders. In the name of the painful wounds upon your holy feet, look upon your Vicar, Our most Holy Father the Pope, the bishops, and also upon all your servants charged with the awesome responsibility of the priesthood. Yes, look especially upon us, your priests. Many of us are good; others of us are disgraced. We are all frail, since none of us are surefooted on

¹⁰ Isa. 52:7. [7] How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that brings good tidings, that publishes peace; that brings good tidings of good, that publishes salvation; that says unto Zion, Thy God reigns!

¹¹ Nah. 1:15. [15] Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that brings good tidings [and] that publishes peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.

¹² Rom. 10:15 [15] And how shall they preach, except they be sent? [A]s it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

the sullied roads of this life. We succeed only by entrusting ourselves to Your divine grace.

By Your wounded left foot, I pray for souls deprived of the divine gift of faith in the sacrament of Baptism or who lost faith after they were reborn in You. May Your most holy blood not have been shed in vain! Blessed feet of my Savior bloodied by love for us, continue to guide and invigorate the feet of your apostles. Good Shepherd, how can so many lambs have strayed from your protection after this priceless sacrifice? You still are not known or loved by them. May the precious blood of your blessed feet not have been shed in vain.

I commend the wounds on your right hand to the works of the Catholic apostolate. Heed this loving prayer. Help and inspire the infantry that continues Your work.

This vast and dedicated army of evangelical truth willingly gathers strength so as to spread goodness and light. From the Pontiff to prayerful secular priests, these soldiers in God's army dedicate their pens, physical power, and influence in service of the Testament. Soldiers, too, are heroic missionaries who carry the Cross into uncharted territories and all the humble religious who kneel before the sick and dying to speak the last, perchance only words of love heard by these poor souls redeemed by Christ's blood.

Truly, the world is conjoined by a vast network of the good works of many, assorted apostles of truth and charity. They glorify God by their works. By their works, countless souls live in peace and salvation. Yet, we must confess that this large Catholic apostolate scarcely satisfies its obligations to Jesus or meets the needs of the world. They receive their courage and skills from His divine blood. The World so benefits when a single generous and pure soul tenderly kisses the hand of my Savior and in this way

invokes His constant blessings upon every evangelist. As I kiss my Crucifix and join this apostolate, I humbly say: in the name of your wounded and shattered right hand, my sweet Redeemer, bless and aid all those who lovingly heed your holy cause.

God did not want us to lead disconnected, isolated lives. We also depend upon each other in the natural world, just as in the spiritual realm of our salvation. I myself cannot comprehend how intricately my actions or inaction affect the morality or salvation of those who somehow rely upon me. All my good or bad acts matter. Their spiritual import is immense and that responsibility is awesome. Clear, intuitive consciences that understand this concern for others likewise feel the oppressive, inundating weight that made David shout: "Cleanse my hidden sins and forgive your servant of those he is unaware."¹³ Indolent spirits do not feel of the gravity of responsibility for those around them. I invoke the wound on the left hand of my Savior to heal my spirit in the name of everyone who by Divine Providence might benefit from my acts.

With my loved ones, I also seek refuge in the gaping wound on the side of my Savior. I know that in His infinite goodness Jesus grants us the courage to rest our weary brows upon his living breast. He touches our human hearts with His divine heart and so gives us strength. Near to Jesus, I shall admit my human imperfections. In this way, I shall more confidently purify myself of them.

The Testament tells me that water and blood burst forth from the deep wound on His side after the soldier pierced Him with a lance. Humanity was cleansed and purified by the water and blood emerging from the open side of the Son of God. I also must purify myself. Lord: may this mystic water purify me; may this holy blood diminish my

¹³ Pss. 19:34. IDENTIFY AND VERIFY THIS CITATION.

sins. In the name of that mortal wound, may turbulence cease within me; may temptation become stilled within my body. By this wound received for humanity in the name of love, grant me humility and a pure and generous heart, so that each day I am more worthy to be near You.

Still, I should not content myself with being near my Savior. No one can feel oneself absolutely alone in the world. Family, friendship, and social relations unite and oblige us. My sweet Jesus, I desire constant union with my family, my superiors, and with those to whom I feel some sense of duty. I cannot forget my friends. Grant that I may reciprocate their warmth toward me, although their affection might last but one day, even if they weary of me or perhaps forget me. Their friendship is eternal in heaven, where the heart is neither weary nor full of doubts that afflict even the purest affections. You gave a benediction to friendship by weeping at the grave of your friend and with this act taught us that mutual affection is a sign of our union. In the name of your wounded side, bless everyone who if for only one day has been my friend. This open wound will be my sanctuary, my place of rest. There, I will learn to mend my faults and fortify myself. May I always find ways to be of service. Bless and keep those who remain in this place of struggle; exalt those who have left this place but have yet to reach their destinations. May your sacred blood, which is mine since you shed it for me, also be useful to the world. Grant me salvation. Sanctify me and those who Divine Providence has sent to me in this life.