

Today's Martyrs

Resources for understanding current Christian witness and martyrdom

Document

Homily by Cardinal Robert Sarah

August 12, 2017

This evening, we offer the sacrifice of the Mass for the repose of the souls of all of the volunteers of the Puy-du-Fou who have died since the beginnings of this beautiful work, 40 years ago.

Every night, all of you who are gathered here, awaken the memory of this place through your work. The castle of the Puy-du-Fou, with its hurting ruins, abandoned by man, seems to rise like a cry towards Heaven. Its ripped entrails remind the world that faced with the hatred of the Faith, a people stood up: the people of the Vendée!

My dear friends, by giving life to these ruins every night, you are giving their life back to the dead! You are giving life to all these people of the Vendée who died for their faith, for their churches and for their priests.

Your work arises from this earth like a chant that carries the remembrance of the martyrs of the Vendée!

You give life to these 300,000 men, women and children who fell victims to the Reign of Terror”!

You give a voice to all those the “Terror” wanted to silence, because they refused the lie of atheistic ideology!

You honor those whom it wanted to drown in oblivion, because they would not allow the liberty to believe and to offer Mass to be stripped from them!

I say this to you solemnly: your work is just and necessary!

Through your art, your chants, your technological prowess, you are at last offering a worthy grave to all these martyrs whom revolutionary hatred would leave without burial, abandoned to the dogs and the crows!

And so your work is much more than a mere human accomplishment. It is much like a work of the Church.

Your work is necessary! For our times seem to have been numbed! As we face the dictatorship of relativism, as we face a new thought terrorism that once again seeks to rip God from the hearts of children, we need to rediscover the freshness of mind, the joyful and fervent simplicity of these saints and these martyrs.

When the Revolution sought to deprive the Vendéens of their priests, a whole people stood up. Faced with cannons, these poor people only had their staffs! Faced with rifles, they had only their scythes! Faced with the hatred of the terrorist columns, they had only their rosaries, their prayer, and the Sacred Heart sewn on their breast!

My brothers, the people of the Vendée simply put into practice that which the readings of today teach us. God is not in thunder and lightning, He is not in the power and the clamor of arms. He is hidden in murmur of the breeze!

Faced with the planned and methodical onslaught of the “Terror”, the Vendéens knew full well that they would be crushed. Nevertheless they offered their sacrifice to the Lord, chanting. They were that murmuring breeze, a breeze that appeared to be swept away by the powerful storm of the infernal columns.

But God was there. His power revealed itself in their weakness!

History – true history – knows that deep down, the peasants of the Vendée were victorious.

Through their sacrifice, they stopped the lie of ideology from reigning supreme. Thanks to the Vendéens, the Revolution was forced to drop its mask and to reveal its true face: its hatred of God and the faith. Thanks to the Vendéens, priests did not become the servile slaves of a totalitarian State, they would remain free servitors of Christ and of the Church.

The Vendéens heard the call Christ makes in today's Gospel: "Courage! It is I, be not afraid!" When the storm raged, when their boat took on water from all sides, they were not afraid: such was their certainty that beyond death, the Heart of Jesus would be their sole homeland!

My friends, we Christians need this spirit of people of Vendée! We need their example! Like them, we must needs leave our sowing and harvesting, leaving there our furrows, in order to wage battle, not for the interests of men, but for God!

Who shall stand up today for God? Who shall dare to confront the modern persecutors of the Church? Who shall have the courage to arise, armed only with the rosary and the Sacred Heart, to face the columns of death of our times, as are relativism, indifferentism and the contempt of God? Who shall tell this world that the only liberty worth dying for is the liberty to believe?

My brothers, just like our Vendéen brothers of old, we are called today to witness, which means martyrdom!

Today in the East, in Pakistan, in Africa, our Christian brothers are dying for their faith, crushed by the columns of persecuting Islamism.

And you, people of France, people of the Vendée, when will you at last stand up with the peaceful weapons of prayer and charity to defend your faith?

My friends, the blood of martyrs runs through your veins, be faithful to it!

Spiritually, we are all sons of the martyred Vendée! Even we Africans who have received so many missionaries from the Vendée, who came to die in our lands in order to proclaim Christ!

We owe it to ourselves to be faithful to their heritage!

The soul of these martyrs surrounds us in this place. What are they telling us? What do they want to pass on to us?

First of all, their courage! When it comes to God, there can be no compromise! The honor of God is not open to discussion! And it must start with our personal life of prayer and adoration. It is time, my friends, for us to revolt against the practical atheism that is stifling our lives! Let us

pray as families, let us leave the first place to God! A family that prays is a family that is alive! A Christian who does not pray, who does not leave room for God through silence and adoration, will end up dying!

From the example of the Vendéens we must also learn to love the priesthood. It is because their “good priests” were threatened that they went into revolt.

As to you, the younger ones, if you want to be faithful to the example of your elders, love your priests, love the priesthood! You must ask yourselves the question: as to me, am I also called to be a priest, following the footsteps of all these good priests who were martyred by the Revolution? Will I also have the courage to give my whole life for Christ and for my brothers?

The martyrs of the Vendée also teach us the sense of forgiveness and mercy. Faced with persecution and with hatred, they kept alive in their hearts the care for peace and forgiveness. Remember how their chief, Bonchamp, ordered 5,000 prisoners to be released a few minutes before dying. Let us be able to confront hatred without resentment and without bitterness. We are the army of the Heart of Jesus, and as He, we want to be full of sweetness!

Finally, we must learn from the martyrs of the Vendée a sense of generosity and of gratuitous giving.

Your ancestors did not fight for their interests. They had nothing to gain.

Today, they give us a lesson in humanity.

We are living in a world marked by the dictatorship of money, of benefits, of riches. The joy of gratuitous giving is everywhere despised and trampled.

But only love that is generous, the disinterested gift of one’s own life can vanquish the hatred of God and of men that is the matrix of all revolutions. The Vendéens have taught us to resist against all these revolutions. They have shown us that facing the infernal columns, as when facing the Nazi extermination camps and the communist Gulag, facing the barbarity of Islamism, there is only one answer: the gift of self, of one’s whole life. Love only conquers the powers of death!

Even now, perhaps more than ever, the ideologues of the revolution want to annihilate the natural place for gift of self, of joyful generosity and of love! I am speaking of the family!

Gender ideology, the contempt of fruitfulness and of fidelity are the new slogans of this revolution. Families have become the new Vendées to exterminate. Their disappearance is being methodically planned, as was that of the Vendée in the past.

These new revolutionaries are worried by the generosity of large families. They mock Christian families, because these embody everything that they hate. They are ready to attack Africa with new infernal columns in order to pressure on families and to force on them sterilization, abortion and contraception. Africa, like the Vendée, will resist! Families everywhere must be the joyous spearheads of revolt against this new dictatorship of egoism!

It is now in the heart of every family, of every Christian, of every man of goodwill that an interior Vendée must arise!

Every Christian is, spiritually, a Vendéen!

Let us not allow generous and gratuitous giving be stifled within us. Let us learn, as the martyrs of the Vendée, to draw this gift from its source: in the Heart of Jesus.

Let us pray that a powerful and joyful interior Vendée may arise in the Church and in the world!

Amen!

Cardinal Robert Sarah

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<http://www.famillechretienne.fr/eglise/vie-de-l-eglise/cardinal-sarah-nous-sommes-tous-spirituellement-des-fils-de-la-vendee-martyre-%21-223025>

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