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Homily of Cardinal Giovanni Angelo Becciu, prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, for the beatification of the martyrs Tullio Maruzzo O.F.M., and Luis Obdulio Arroyo Navarro (Morales, Guatemala, 27 October 2018)

The following is the homily pronounced by His Eminence Cardinal Giovanni Angelo Becciu, prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, during the Holy Mass for the beatification of the martyrs Tullio Maruzzo, O.F.M., and Luis Obdulio Arroyo Navarro (Morales, Guatemala, 27 October 2018):

Homily of H.E. Cardinal Giovanni Angelo Becciu

Dear brothers and sisters,

The consoling word of Jesus resonates in our assembly: “*Blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are the peacemakers, blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness*” (Mt 5: 3,9,10). These promises of beatitude were fully realized in the martyrs Fr. Tullio Maruzzo and Luis Obdulio Arroyo Navarro.

This is why today we honour them with the title of Blessed, and the whole Church in Guatemala celebrates! One was a Franciscan priest and religious, of the Friars Minor, and the other a faithful lay catechist, yet they shared the essential features of spirituality: the simple and happy lifestyle of those who are poor in spirit; the ardent zeal for the Gospel, which supports the peacemakers; the thoughtful care for the poor and the courageous defence of the least, which distinguish men of good will. These were traits that constitute for us a message that is still current.

The new Blessed achieved the goal of their Christian vocation not without going through the great tribulations of the world. Now we recognize them as participants in the eternal liturgy of heaven, described in the second reading, made up of a multitude “*from every nation, tribe, people and language ... standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands*” (cf. Rev 7: 9).

Blessed Tullio Maruzzo is a gift from God to your land; he is the good shepherd that the Father sent to take care of his flock, to the point of giving his life. He left his native village, Lapio di Arcugnano, in Italy, to be a witness of the Gospel among you.

An amiable but also determined character, he found inspiration and strength for his pastoral action in an intense inner life. As a witness remarked: *"Where did he find so much energy, Father Tullio, who seemed so fragile? He prayed, meditated ... It was enough to be with him a few days to realize that he was a man of strong apostolic dynamism, because he lived from the faith he preached"*. Not only that, but he also drew strength from living together with the confreres with whom he was always positive; he knew how to find in each of them the "golden straw", that is, the good. He said: *"How much does it cost to praise the good that a confrere does? Nothing! But the confrere will feel content and happy because someone appreciates and values his work"*. He was a good missionary, zealous and courageous; he had advanced into unknown and inaccessible places in the Apostolic Vicariate of Izabal to make known the word of God. He left no stone unturned: the formation of the catechists, the care of basic communities, love for the poor and for the sick. In short, the typical missionary who is guided by the creative imagination of the Spirit to carry out effective and generous pastoral action.

Blessed Luis Obdulio Arroyo Navarro was the faithful companion whom the Lord placed next to Father Tullio in the hour of martyrdom. It is the ripe fruit of your Church of Izabal, which you gather in the year when you solemnly celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Vicariate! He is the first Blessed martyr native to Guatemala! This Blessed also presents himself to us as a mild and obliging man. Witnesses remember him as a man who, without making a fuss, knew how to find the concrete solution to the problems of the community by making available his time and his abilities. He was always available to transport a wounded person or a woman in childbirth to the hospital by car, even at night; he volunteered to make small electrical and mechanical repairs; but his specialty was to be a driver for the Franciscan fathers and nuns when they had to reach the innermost villages of Quiriguá.

In his spiritual journey Luis Obdulio chose to be part of the Christian community in an increasingly committed way by joining the Franciscan Third Order and the *Cursillos de Cristianidad* movement. In this way he prepared himself for what would be the total gift of himself, in martyrdom. Alongside this profoundly evangelical dimension of service, what most characterizes the new Blessed is the Christian virtue of fortitude. We know exactly what his state of mind and his intimate decision were when dark clouds thickened over the Christian community. A witness says: *"Sabía que el padre (Tulio) corría peligro pero no mostró miedo. Cuando la familia lo advertía y le pedía que ya no saliera con el padre, el decía: "Prefiero morir a lado del padre Tulio y no a lado de un borracho en una cantina o en un bar"*.

The circumstances of the martyrdom of Father Tullio and Luis Obdulio are well known. Death was violently inflicted on them by their killers out of hatred of Christ and the Gospel. Father Tullio was sensitive to the suffering of the poor peasants who, oppressed by a few major landowners, were day by day dispossessed of their land, which they struggled to reclaim. He therefore chose to assuage the rampant poverty, console the disheartened and above all enlighten consciences to clearly reaffirm the rights of justice according to the teaching of Jesus. His pastoral action assumed the value of a prophetic and courageous denunciation of the abuses of powerful locals, and so his social work was considered subversive; but he continued to carry out his apostolic activity without fearing for his life. The painful epilogue came on the evening of 1 July 1981 when at the end of a day full of apostolic work, while returning to the parish with the faithful Luis Obdulio, the car they were travelling in was stopped and they were forced to get out; they were then beaten to death and abandoned at the roadside.

What, then, is the message left by the Blesseds Tullio Maruzzo and Luis Obdulio Arroyo Navarro? Firstly, in this month of October dedicated to the missions, it is natural to address a grateful and heartfelt thought to all the missionaries who, following the example of Fr. Maruzzo, have left their homeland and offered their lives to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus. Secondly, in the martyrdom of our two brothers, the prophecy of Tertullian is confirmed: the blood of the martyrs is the seed of new life! Shortly after the death of Fr. Tullio and Luis Obdulio, the faithful of Quiriguá, Los Amates and Morales, saw their fruits: the Christian awakening of the community, perseverance in hardship, unity and better organization of the parish groups, and new priestly and religious vocations.

This work of renewal of the Church, boosted by the testimony of the two new Blesseds, is necessary and urgent in our day too. You are called to preserve the good fruits ripened in the blood of these martyrs: their spiritual heritage belongs above all to you!

Today's Beatification constitutes for the Christian community of Izabal and of all Guatemala a singular moment of grace from which a more authentic conversion can be born. In this moment of your history you are committed, under the guidance of your bishops, to realize a profound spiritual renewal of your parishes, desired by your bishops. Remember that there is no change of structures without the conversion of hearts, and a parish is not a true parish unless it becomes a place of fraternal encounter among all its members. It must be a "home and school of communion" (see *Novo millennio ineunte*, 43-47), where everyone can have the concrete experience of mutual love and be a visible sign of the Kingdom that is already among us.

Never lose sight of the ideal for which Blessed Fr. Tullio and Blessed Luis Obdulio gave their lives: to show the face of a Church that is a sign of hope and rich in the love of God that embraces all, but above all the rejected and the oppressed.

Let us invoke their intercession, so that their martyrdom will foster in all the courage of Christian witness, consistency in life and unlimited giving to others.

Let us repeat together: *Blessed Fr. Tullio and Blessed Luis Obdulio pray for us!*
