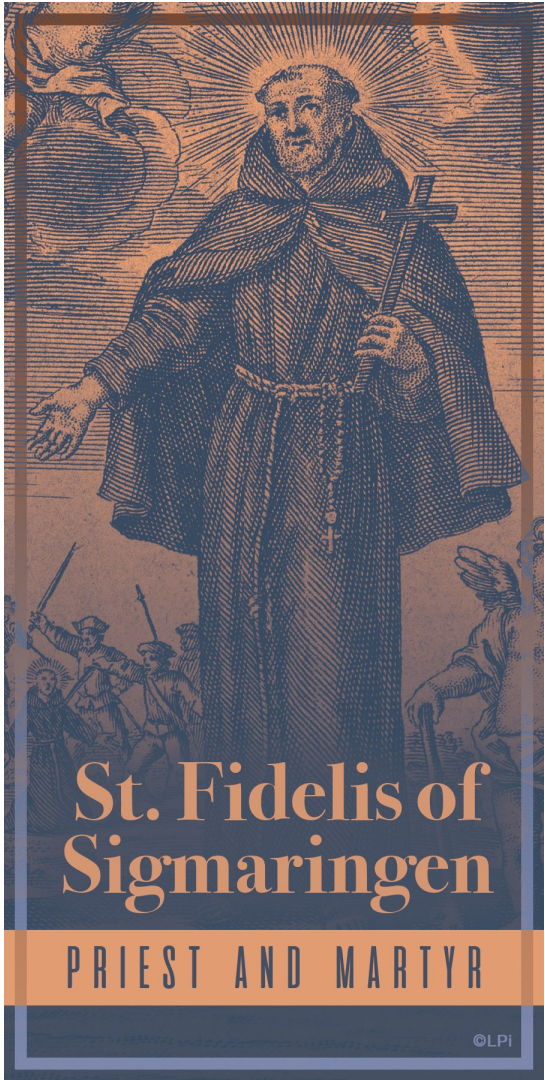


FROM FR. JASON



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Lord, who never tires of calling us to walk with Him, places before us on Friday, April 24, the figure of St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen. In the “today” of our journey, this Capuchin martyr reminds us that the Christian life is not a comfortable path but a radical following of the Crucified and Risen Lord, even to the point of shedding blood for the Gospel.

Mark Rey was born in 1577 in Sigmaringen, Germany. As a lawyer he earned the name “the poor man’s advocate” because he defended the oppressed without counting the cost. Yet the more he saw the vanity and injustice of the world, the more the Lord drew him to a total conversion. He left his profession, gave his goods to the poor and to future priests, and entered the Capuchin Order, receiving the name *Fidelis* – “Faithful.” That name is not a decoration; it is a prophecy. It echoes the words the risen Christ addresses to the Church of Smyrna: “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

Sent by his superiors to Switzerland during the bitter years of the Counter-Reformation, St. Fidelis preached the fullness of the Catholic faith in lands dominated by Calvinist heresy. He did not speak with human eloquence alone, but with the power of the Word made flesh. He lived in poverty, wore a hair shirt, fasted, and visited the sick, showing that the Gospel is credible only when it is embodied. Many hearts opened to the truth. But the same Word that converts also provokes opposition. On April 24, 1622, in the village of Seewis, a furious mob attacked him while he was announcing Christ. They beat him, stabbed him, and left him for dead. His last witness was the very name he bore: faithful unto death.

Why does the Church set this saint before us in our own time? Because the same hostile spirit that killed Fidelis is still at work – not always with swords, but with a secular culture that mocks fidelity, ridicules the Cross, and wants to reduce the Gospel to a private opinion. I hope that we are journeying precisely to rediscover what the first Christians lived: the power of Baptism that makes us new creatures, the Word of God that forms us, the Eucharist that nourishes us for martyrdom, and a parish community that sustains us when the world rejects us.

St. Fidelis shows us that the true lawyer is the one who defends the truth of Christ before the tribunal of history. He shows us that the real poor man’s advocate is the one who gives his life so that others may know the riches of the Paschal Mystery. His martyrdom is not a sad end but the perfect fulfilment of his name: faithful unto death.

Let us ask him, in this “today” of the Church, to intercede for us so that our community may become a place where the Kerygma is proclaimed without fear, where the poor are welcomed, where the Word is listened to and lived, and where we learn to be faithful – not with our own strength, but with the strength of the Holy Spirit who raised Christ from the dead.

May the Lord grant us all the grace to hear again today the voice that called Saint Fidelis: “Follow me... even to the end.”

Peace,