

## **BLESSED STEPHEN SÁNDOR, martyr**

Stephen Sándor was born in Szolnok (Hungary) on 26 October 1914. As a boy he felt drawn by the Salesian charism and in 1940 he made his first religious profession as a Salesian Brother. He was distinguished by commitment to education among young apprentice printers, for his love of the house of God and in the animation of various youth groups. He made his perpetual profession in 1946. With the advent of communism, he chose to remain in Hungary and to devote himself secretly to the education of young people. In 1952, during the persecution, he was arrested and sentenced to death. His faith in God and his love for young people were sealed with his life when he was executed in Budapest on 8 June 1953.

*From the Common of Martyrs: For one martyr, with psalms of the day from the Psalter.*

### Office of Readings

#### **SECOND READING**

From the letters of Blessed Stephen Sándor, martyr, to his parents.  
(*Positio on martyrdom*, pp. 287-288, 290-291)

*Your suffering will be turned into joy*

"I pray for you every day and I remember you as I attend Holy Mass. We are required to bear pain with patience and without complaint, and not to speak a single word of protest against God for giving us that suffering. We all have to suffer, the rich as well as the poor. No one can escape it. Even Jesus Christ and his Virgin Mother suffered. They were without sin – for whom did they suffer?

The suffering of the Lord Jesus began at his birth and lasted until Calvary, and so also for Our Lady. How much patience the heavenly Father has shown! How much we can learn from the Way of the Cross! Should we not feel ashamed, knowing that Jesus Christ was scourged, crowned with thorns, mocked and spat upon? He was not afraid on seeing the cross, but he embraced and kissed it, though he foresaw the torments that awaited him. Yet he had no one with him, except the Virgin Mother.

He was abandoned even by the apostles he had trusted. He seemed abandoned by all, even by his heavenly Father, so much so that he cried out on the cross, "My God, why have you forsaken me?" The people around him insulted and reviled him, yet He prayed for them: "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." Jesus Christ suffered for us, to gain for us a place in heaven, but we do not want to suffer for the sake of our souls, yet the only way to heaven is by accepting suffering. We should take courage from the torments of the Lord Jesus. If life is difficult and full of woes, we need only turn to him. He will comfort us and give us the strength and grace we need to bear our suffering. We should remember that our sufferings will be turned into joy which will last forever. The saints tell us that heaven is worth enduring every pain.

Unfortunately I have a failure to confess. Perhaps it may seem that I have forgotten the birthday of my dear father. I have certainly not forgotten it in my prayers, and at Holy Communion, and I believe that this is worth more than an expensive gift. I have gone back home in spirit and there I felt the affection that filled my heart, thanking him for all the good he has lavished on me. In fact, looking back on my past life at home, I have to say that my father loved me as if I were his only son and he had nobody else but me. And when, one morning in Advent, he

gave his consent for me to follow my vocation, I could see the pain of separation in his fatherly heart. He was ready to make that sacrifice because of the love he had for me, and because he wanted his son to be happy.

Now father may have already forgotten that day, but it often comes to my mind. I know that when he reads this letter now, he will feel a secret pain in his loving heart, but he should also find some consolation. The greater the sacrifice, the more it is dear to God. I could almost say that my father forced God's hand by giving him something so great and with such a spirit of self-denial. Few parents would be capable of it, for he offered to the Lord Jesus the thing he held most dear. My father's sacrifice is similar to that of Abraham, whom God asked to sacrifice his son's life. But what my father did is more deserving, because God did not allow Abraham to sacrifice his son. In fact, he sent an angel to tell him to sacrifice instead the ram he found in a bush. And if father still feels some pain he will have to offer it for me, because the greater his sacrifice, the more I will improve as a religious. I cover my father's hands with kisses, and pray that God will enable him to live according to his will, so that together we can achieve happiness in heaven, and worship Him in eternity. Our present separation will not cause us pain, but will bring us ineffable happiness for eternity. May I become a religious pleasing to God and devoted to his Sacred Heart."

## RESPONSORY

Gal 2, 19-20

**R /.** I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. \* He loved me and gave himself for me.

**V /.** This life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God

**R /.** He loved me and gave himself for me.

## Prayer

Almighty and eternal God, you gave the blessed martyr Stephen the strength to meet trials and persecution with faith, and the grace to offer his life for the sake of the young. Grant, through his intercession, that we may always work in the service of truth, and bring the gospel of joy to all. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.