

Miguel Ángel Quiroga and the victims of violence

This Easter season reminds us that "there is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. "(Jn. 15, 13). When, on September 18, 1998, "Michel" defended a person from a paramilitary group and was shot dead, he was fulfilling the words of Jesus. Why does dying at 26 in such conditions make no sense? This question often comes from the relatives of the victims of violence. In the face of ongoing-armed conflicts with their attendant toll of victims, especially children, the issue is becoming a daily one.

Michel made the sacrifice of his life, of everything he had dreamed of achieving with his intellectual abilities, his commitment as a Marianist religious, his shared joy... everything collapsed in a few seconds. Why? When you are a Christian, giving your life has meaning. This gift joins that of Jesus, who freely gives himself up to the kiss of Judah, to the condemnation of the chief priests, to the hands of secular power, and to death on the cross. However, through this surrender, the risen Jesus becomes a source of eternal life for all humanity. The answer to our "why? "It is in Jesus' love for us, and in the example he sets for us."



Meeting of Colombian Marianist religious. Michel is the one in the center, at the bottom.

By giving his life, Michel, and so many others today, bear witness to the fact that a life offered, united to Jesus, is a life given out of love, and has meaning. It mysteriously

bears fruit and gives us the courage to continue our journey with the Lord, in communion with the martyrs of our time.

Let us pray again for all those who must answer for their faith in the face of violence, with the prayer Michel left us:

*Lord Jesus,
unite your life with my life, unite my life with your life,
unite our lives with those of others,
so that I can share and be a brother,
and that I build in this world
the Kingdom of God, our Father,
bringing justice, life and liberation to the poor and oppressed,
Following in the footsteps of the Risen Lord. Amen*