



CURIA GENERALIZIA DELLA COMPAGNIA DI GESÙ

Beatification of Fr. Emilio Moscoso Cárdenas, S.I.

2019/27

TO THE WHOLE SOCIETY

Dear Brothers:

On November 16, Fr. Emilio Moscoso will be beatified in Riobamba, Ecuador, the city where our brother bore the ultimate witness to his faith on May 4, 1897.

The new Blessed was born in Cuenca, Ecuador, on April 21, 1846. Even as a child, Emilio showed a solid religious life shaped by a profoundly Catholic social and family environment. In 1864, at the age of 18, he entered the novitiate of the Society of Jesus in his native city.

The Jesuits of Ecuador were at that time a “mission” dependent on the Province of Castile in Spain. Emilio Moscoso studied humanities and philosophy in Quito (1866-67) and taught at the national colleges of Riobamba (1867-68) and Guayaquil (1868-72). Even as a young religious he was oriented toward service, faithful to the Gospel and to our Institute, serene and peaceful, almost timid. He pursued his theological studies at the Colegio de la Inmaculada Concepción in Pifo, near Quito. He was ordained a priest in 1876 and was sent for tertianship to Manresa, Spain, during 1878-79. There he was able to drink from the very sources of the spirituality of Saint Ignatius as he was trained in the school of the *Exercises* and the traditions of the Society.

Returning to the Americas, Fr. Moscoso was missioned to Lima, Peru, where he worked both in the Society’s residence and in the Colegio de la Inmaculada. He made his final vows on September 8, 1879. The young priest remained in Peru until 1882 and was then transferred to Quito. In 1889 he was assigned again to Riobamba, where he worked at Saint Philip Neri College as minister of the community, spiritual director, professor of logic and metaphysics, and director of the Apostleship of Prayer. In 1893 he was named rector of the college and superior of the community. The new blessed was thus one of the thousands of 19th century Jesuits who dedicated themselves to the evangelizing ministry of education. It was a service he performed in exemplary fashion.

In 1895, when the liberal revolution prevailed in Ecuador and legislation was passed restricting the Catholic Church, a new era began in the country. Ecuadorian Jesuits were at the front lines in the defense of the Church. They promoted, among other practices, devotion to the Heart of Jesus and to Mary Immaculate, devotions that had already for some time been fostered by the Society. In the small city of Riobamba, 1896 was a year of tribulation because of the harsh conditions imposed by the anticlerical regime. The situation grew worse at the end of April 1897 when the authorities arbitrarily imprisoned the bishop, Monsignor Arsenio Andrade, accusing him of conspiring against the government.



Under pressure from the regime, the easy option would have been to close the college and abandon the city, but Emilio Moscoso and his companions stood firm in their commitment to serve the youth of Riobamba. The testimony of fortitude in the Spirit offered by the rector of Saint Philip Neri College in the days before his death was extraordinary. The liberals openly persecuted the Redemptorists and the Jesuits working in Riobamba. On May 2 Fr. Moscoso was imprisoned along with other companions. He showed great serenity as he consoled his brothers who were threatened with expulsion. Almost all the prisoners were released by mid-afternoon on May 3 as a result of pressure from the citizens of the town, but four were kept as hostages. When Emilio Moscoso was released, he tried to calm the angry crowds who were protesting the arrest of the Jesuits; returning to the college, he tirelessly sought the liberation of his companions still in prison.

At dawn on May 4, 1897, while repelling an attack by a rebel group, government forces violently profaned the Eucharist in the college chapel. They then went after the religious; two officers found the rector in his room praying on his knees before the crucifix, with the rosary in his hand, and they shot him at point-blank range. The people of Riobamba lamented and protested the profaning of the Eucharist and the murder of their beloved Fr. Moscoso.

The simple life and brave martyrdom of this brother of ours teaches us many lessons: the joy and austerity of his dedication; his deep devotion to the Eucharist and to Mary; his witness of poverty and obedience as he faithfully fulfilled his daily obligations; the simple and orderly community life of his day; his bravery in defending the faith and the Church; his steadfast solidarity with the citizens of Riobamba, remaining with them in the most difficult times; his care for the body of the Society as he visited his companions in prison and returned to the college to share the fate of his community. After many years dedicated to teaching and the apostolate of prayer, Emilio Moscoso came face to face with persecution. After his death the dean of the cathedral recalled that “the genius of his governance was his kind and holy soul.”

A few years ago, General Congregation 36 desired to address a special message to Jesuits working in zones of war and conflict. Calling to mind the martyrdom of Fr. Moscoso and many other companions of times past and present, the letter read: “[The] struggle for justice, peace, and reconciliation brings us back to our Jesuit roots in the *Formula of the Institute*. It has been reiterated in recent General Congregation and is as relevant - and as urgent – today as it was when our First Companions founded the Society of Jesus. This mission at the frontier of war and peace is a mission that touches us all whether we are Jesuit novices, scholastics, brothers, priests (...).”

On the occasion of the beatification of our brother, I desire that all of us, strengthened by the Eucharist as he was, may show ourselves to be in solidarity with those living with conflict, especially with the most vulnerable and disregarded of our society.

May the new Blessed and Our Lady intercede for us that the Lord may confirm and drive forward our mission.

Arturo Sosa, S.I.
Superior General

Rome, 8 November 2019
(Original: Spanish)