



Brother German Martinez, S.D.B.

Born: April 11, 1948

Professed: August 15, 1968

Died: July 1, 1973

Sacred Heart Juniorate
Ipswich, Mass. 01938

Dear Confreres:

Bro. Germán Martinez died on Sunday, July 1, 1973, as a result of the accident that occurred on Saturday, June 23rd.

He had gone to Brooklyn, New York, to visit his brother for a few days before making his annual retreat. While riding a bicycle, he was involved in a fatal accident from which he never regained consciousness.

Germán Martinez was born in Bogotá, Colombia on April 11, 1948. When he was six years old, he came to the United States. He studied in the parochial grammar schools of the diocese of Brooklyn, New York, and then completed his high school work at Salesian Junior Seminary in Goshen, New York.

After making his novitiate and obtaining his degree from Don Bosco College in Newton, New Jersey, he was assigned as assistant to our novices in Ipswich, Massachusetts. Previously he had worked in our summer camps and with the boys of Mary, Help of Christians Parish in New York City.

The faith which guided Bro. Germán's whole life could be traced to his parents who gave proof of their deep spirit of faith by the manner in which they accepted the loss of their son. When they were informed of their son's accident, Mr. and Mrs. Martinez flew into New York from their home in Puerto Rico. The prayer that they offered when they saw their unconscious son so near to death was: "We thank God that we got here in time to see our son alive."

It can truly be said that Bro. Germán was a Salesian who had a strong and solid piety balanced with a wonderful spirit of cheerfulness and work. Confreres who knew him would say that he was a person who was happy, outgoing, self-sacrificing, dedicated and who had a great love for boys, especially the poorer ones.

As assistant to the novices, Bro. Germán showed a great spirit of dedication and self-sacrifice. The Master of Novices had great confidence in him and was able to entrust him with many delicate responsibilities.

An example will illustrate his deep spirit of piety. After a full days work as assistant to the novices, when the novices had already retired, he would often be seen alone in the chapel before the Blessed Sacrament keeping company with his Divine Friend. What a wonderful example he was to both novices and confreres!

What served as a break for him from the regular routine was the opportunity to attend a prayer meeting. On occasion he would ask permission to leave after supper to attend the meeting of a prayer group in the neighboring town. He would spend several hours in prayer, and the following day he would tell the confreres what an uplift that visit was for his spirit.

All of this was done in a spirit of obedience, and he would always make sure that his absence would not put a burden on anyone else. He was truly a Salesian to be admired and imitated.

Bro. Germán had a very delicate conscience regarding his vow of poverty. He possessed just the bare minimum of personal belongings. He had no cassock suitable for his own burial. We had to obtain one for him from a confrere who was his size. Mr. Martinez said that Germán would never ask for anything for himself. On occasion he would write home and ask if the family could spare something for the poor boys for whom he worked because they had no shoes!

And how he endeared himself to his confreres, especially his fellow companions! They all agree in saying that anyone who knew Germán had him as a friend, a very close friend. And they will tell you why. It was because he saw Christ in others, and others saw Christ in him.

One companion of Bro. Germán's said that if he himself succeeded to obtain his college degree, it was due in great part to the encouragement and assistance of Bro. Germán who would go far out of his way to help, to explain and to encourage him in difficult times. Germán made himself constantly aware of the needs of his companions and did what he could to help and uplift their spirits.

Bro. Germán's devotion to Our Blessed Lady was truly exemplary - manly, strong and solid. While he lay there on his deathbed in that hospital ward in Brooklyn, the brown scapular that he always wore around his neck was a reminder to all of the tender devotion he always had toward Our Lady. While that respirator pumped air into his lungs, that scapular resting on his chest, seemed to keep time with his breathing as if he were saying:

Mary, my Mother, I trust in you.

Mary, my Mother, I hope in you.

Mary, My Mother, I love you.

I was able to say Holy Mass for the Martinez family each day that I was there at the hospital. Every morning we would gather together around the altar in the chapel of the hospital where Bro. Germán was lying unconscious and very near to death. Somehow through his suffering this confrere and son was drawing us closer to each other and was uniting us to Christ in His Sacrifice.

The words of St. Paul to the Romans had so much meaning for us: "Both in life and in death we are the Lord's." "Father, I put my life in your hands." We said those words over and over again in the responsorial psalm. The scriptures gave us so much strength and consolation.

Mr. Martinez told me that the Mass we offered together was what gave the family the strength in faith that they needed during that week-long ordeal before their son died.

Bro. Germán Martinez is gone from this world. The Lord took him from us. I think this happened because this confrere was too good

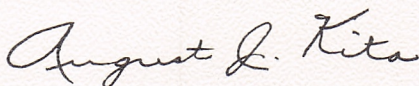
for this earth! He was all ready for heaven. For those who love God all things work out unto good. I would not say we lost a confrere; I would rather say we gained an ally, a friend in heaven.

I sincerely believe that because of the sacrifice our province has made to add a new citizen to the kingdom of heaven, we are going to be blessed with many a young man of the calibre, courage, and stamina of Germán Martinez, to take his place, to walk in his footsteps, really close to Christ, in the spirit of Don Bosco, with zeal and dedication, with courage and joy, with genuine sacrifice and true love of God and his fellow man.

The good we do on earth never dies. It has repercussions throughout all eternity.

May the life and example of this wonderful Salesian, Germán Martinez, be the source of the vocations we need to carry on Christ's work in our province, in this part of the Lord's vineyard entrusted to us.

Sincerely yours in the Lord,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "August J. Kita". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Rev. August J. Kita, SDB
Director