

A Reading on Charles de Foucauld (Brother Charles of Jesus)

Charles de Foucauld was born in Strasbourg, France on September 15th, 1858. Orphaned at the age of six, he and his sister Marie were raised by their grandfather in whose footsteps he followed by taking up a military career.

He lost his faith as an adolescent, his taste for easy living was well known to all and yet he showed that he could be strong willed and constant in difficult situations. He undertook a risky exploration of Morocco (1883-1884). Seeing the way Muslims expressed their faith questioned him and he began repeating, "My God, if you exist, let me come to know you."

On his return to France, the warm, respectful welcome he received from his deeply Christian family made him continue his search. Under the guidance of Fr. Huvelin he rediscovered God in October 1886. He was then 28 years old. "As soon as I believed in God, I understood that I could not do otherwise than to live for him alone."

A pilgrimage to the Holy Land revealed his vocation to him: to follow Jesus in his life at Nazareth. He spent 7 years as a Trappist, first in France and then at Akbès in Syria. Later he began to lead a life of prayer and adoration, alone, near a convent of Poor Clares in Nazareth.

Ordained a priest at 43 (1901) he left for the Sahara, living at first in Beni Abbès and later at Tamanrasset among the Tuaregs of the Hoggar. ***He wanted to be among those who were, "the furthest removed, the most abandoned."*** He wanted all who drew close to him to find in him a brother, "a universal brother." In a great respect for the culture and faith of those among whom he lived, his desire was to ***"shout the Gospel with his life"***. ***"I would like to be sufficiently good that people would say, "If such is the servant, what must the Master be like?"***

On the evening of December 1st 1916, he was killed by a band of thieves who had encircled his house.

A Prayer of Abandonment

Father, I abandon myself into Your hands.
Do with me what You will.
Whatever You do, I will thank You.
I am ready for all. I accept all.
Let only Your will be done in me, as in all Your creatures,
And I'll ask nothing else, my Lord.

Into your hands I commend my spirit;
I give it to You with all the love of my heart,
For I love You, Lord,
And so need to give myself, to surrender myself into Your hands
Without reserve and with boundless confidence
Because You are my Father.