

## THREE MODELS OF JOHN OF GOD SANCTITY AT THE SHRINE OF SAINT JOHN GRANDE AT JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA

*“Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (Jn 15:13).*

*Worthy of special consideration and honour are those Christians who, following more than closely the footsteps and teachings of the Lord Jesus, have voluntarily and freely offered their life for others and persevered with this determination unto death. Certainly the heroic offering of life, inspired and sustained by charity, expresses a true, complete and exemplary imitation of Christ, and thus is deserving of that admiration that the community of faithful customarily reserves to those who have voluntarily accepted the martyrdom of blood or have exercised Christian virtues to a heroic degree.*

(Apostolic Letter issued ‘motu proprio’ by the Supreme Pontiff Francis “Maiorem hac dilectionem” on the offer of life, 2017).

### 3 June – Saint John Grande (Pecador): A Martyr Of Charity

John Grande approached the poor and the sick in the manner of Jesus: with kindness and compassion. Shouldering the burdens and sufferings of our neighbour is typical of those who have personally experienced the merciful love of God. Compassion is not a mere sense of sympathy for our neighbour, but an attempt to take on the pain and suffering of others: this was embodied in John Grande. He was born in Spain, in Carmona, around 1544. His father was an artisan working with textiles. They were not short of money and John received a good and Christian education in his parish. When this bright young boy lost his father, he learned the weaving trade which brought in a good income. But his life appeared meaningless to him.

He wore a rough habit and retreated to a hermitage. Enlightened by grace, he understood that he had

to put himself at the service of the least, the people marginalised by society at large. He immediately began to put his vocation (inspiration) into practice by welcoming an abandoned married couple into his home. To support them he begged for alms. An inner voice prompted him he move to Jerez de la Frontera (Andalusia) to dedicate himself to prisoners, prostitutes, orphans, the incurably sick people rejected by hospitals. He opened a small infirmary with a few beds, where he embarked on his work of providing care.

He eventually became very well known, respected and appreciated by the citizens who trusted and admired him for his example. Everyone helped him and so John, who no longer called himself ‘Great’ (Grande) but ‘Sinner’ (Pecador), founded a proper hospital, dedicating it to Our Lady. He later joined



Saint John Grande,  
Marcello Sozzi 1853, Isola Tiberina

the ‘Fatebenefratelli’ Hospitaller Order founded by Saint John of God in Granada and opened hospitals in the other cities in Andalusia. John “Sinner” did not spare himself. He



also found the time to teach catechism to poor boys and he took the wayward women off the streets, finding them honest husbands or having them welcomed into good families. When an epidemic broke out in Jerez, John was the first to come to the aid of the sick people who had been abandoned in the streets and to care for them in their wretched homes. He never missed an opportunity and never hesitated to write a harsh complaint letter to the local authorities for failing to act to deal with the health emergency. Brother John was listened to and, thanks to his determination, the health service improved. He died on 3 June 1600 in Jerez de la Frontera at the age of 54, struck down by the plague while he was battling against the terrible epidemic. His body is venerated in the Shrine in Jerez dedicated to him. He was beatified by Pius IX on 13 November 1853 and canonised by John Paul II on 2 June 1996, and was proclaimed Patron Saint of the diocese of Jerez de la Frontera in 1986.



Shrine of Saint John Grande

## BLESSED MANUEL JIMÉNEZ SALADO Novice



He was born on 29 October 1907 in Jerez de la Frontera (Cádiz), to Miguel and María de los Ángeles, “an honest and Christian working couple”; he was the sixth of eight children: six boys and two girls. He was baptised two days after his birth in the parish of San Miguel, receiving the name Manuel, and was confirmed on 25 November 1927. While still very young, he attended the kindergarten of the Daughters of Charity and then went to the local state schools, and when he was a little older, he took evening classes at the De La Salle College in Jerez.

He was taken on at the age of fifteen or sixteen as an errand boy and butler by the González del Villar family, an occupation that suited his character and lifestyle, and in which he worked as a trusted person for around fourteen years. With the help and support of the same family, he was able to complete his cultural and religious education. He was related to Brother Cruz Ibáñez, then an almoner in Jerez (1927), who was also martyred in Valencia (4 October 1936). The young Manuel, attracted by the example of the Brothers of St John of God at the Santa Rosalía (now the San Juan

Grande) Hospital, he embraced the Hospitaller vocation as a postulant at Cienpозuelos in 1930, but shortly afterwards he went back home. A few years later, more mature and resolute, he asked to be readmitted to the Order, entering the hospital of San Boi de Llobregat, Barcelona, where he took the habit on 7 December 1935, taking the name Brother Manuel. In March 1936 he was transferred to the novitiate in Calafell to continue his formation and entrusted to the novice master, Blessed Braulio María Corres.

On 23 July 1936, militiamen entered the hospital with the aim of expelling all the Brothers. There was great tension in the Calafell hospital, a facility that cared for poor children. The Brothers of St John of God had to leave their daily work. On 30 July, Mass was celebrated very early in the morning and everyone received communion, among them Manuel Jiménez; holding up the Host, Blessed Braulio María Corres encouraged the Brothers, preparing them for the fate that awaited them. Brother Manuel tried to escape to save his life, but failed. Helped by the Novice Master, he serenely accepted the fate of mar-



Tomb of Blessed Manuel Jiménez, beneath the altar of St John of God



tyrdom together with the Brothers. The militiamen offered to let him to stay in the hospital with a group of Brothers to look after the children, but he preferred to go to face martyrdom. Blessed Manuel Jiménez went to Calafell station with Blessed Corres, and as they waited for the train, they were arrested and taken to the nearby village of Vendrell, where the fourteen Brothers were lined up against a wall to be threatened and insulted. They were loaded into a truck and taken to the Corral del Rio farm, where they were riddled with bullets. Brother Manuel Jiménez was twenty-nine years old and a novice when he died. The people of Calafell collected the bodies that same afternoon and took them to the cemetery, where they were all buried together the following day, 31 July 1936. On 23 June 1940, each of them was placed in an individual urn and transferred to the crypt of the Calafell Hospital Chapel. In October 2002, for the 75th anniversary of the foundation of the San Juan Grande Hospital in Jerez de la Frontera, Cádiz, his mortal remains were moved to the Sanctuary of San Juan Grande under the altar dedicated to Saint John of God.

## BROTHER ADRIÁN DEL CERRO

was born in Retamoso de la Jara (Toledo) in 1923, he entered the novitiate of the Hospitaller Order of Saint John of God in Ciempozuelos in 1950. He made his temporary profession in 1952 and solemn profession in 1955. In 1952, he was assigned to the alms service in Jerez de la Frontera; Brother Adrián tirelessly walked the streets of the city begging for alms for the needy. His life of faith in God, committed to serving the poor and begging in the streets, fields and countryside of Jerez, made him a brother to all.



Day after day, Brother Adrián, dressed in his black habit, his simple bag that he always carried with him and his inseparable cap, travelled to every corner of Jerez seeking help for the disadvantaged, especially for the support of the Santa Rosalia (now San Juan Grande) Hospital. The area helped by the alms donated extended to other cities in the province of Cádiz, Ceuta and Melilla, as well as Morocco, from where many children suffering from the after-effects of polio had been treated at the hospital. The life of our Brother, recognised as a 'little' giant of charity, a true son of Saint John of God, could be summed up in terms of the core values that animate our Order: Hospitality, Responsibility, Respect, Spirituality and Quality. These attitudes were the daily bread that nourished Brother Adrián's life of charity. His life lived in daily simplicity, but with a deep Christian spirit of true Hospitality, made him "famous" because he had

made himself a brother and father to all. He was so convinced that doing good not only does good to those who do it, but it also sows goodness and beauty; one of his sayings was, "If you are sowing without knowing what you will reap you will feel that what you are sowing is of little value, but God is not content to give you a little reward, he takes the little to give you much." He died in Jerez de la Frontera, in the Hospital of San Juan Grande on 8 August 2015, at the age of 92 years and 63 years of Religious Profession, famed for his holiness. His body is interred under the altar of Our Lady in the Shrine Saint John Grande, in Jerez de La Frontera. The General Postulation, has begun an in-depth investigation and research to gather the necessary testimonies and then to initiate the Cause of Beatification and Canonisation of our Brother. On 17 and 18 May 2022, at the Assembly of Bishops of Southern Spain, Mgr José Rico Pavés, the Bishop of Asidonia-Jerez, presented the request to open the Cause of Beatification and Canonisation of Brother Adrián Del Cerro, obtaining a favourable opinion. We are now awaiting the Nulla Osta from the Congregation for the Causes of Saints to be able to officially open the Cause.



Tomb of Brother Adrián, under the altar of Our Lady