

Blessed José Olallo Valdés

12 FEBRUARY 2022

WITNESS AND GUARDIAN OF HOSPITALITY

Born in Havana, Cuba, on 12 February 1820, he made his Religious profession in the Hospitaller Order of St John of God at the age of 15. He entered the Hospitaller Community of Camagüey as a young man and remained there for 54½ years, faithfully living out his consecration to Hospitality in the face of enormous difficulties. He drew his strength to live faithfully and consistently by practising charity from his contemplation of the Crucified Jesus. His “beloved brothers” were the homeless poor, slaves and prisoners, abandoned children and the aged, the sick, lepers and the dying. During the cholera epidemic, he generously dedicated his energies to caring for cholera victims without ever contracting the disease himself. He led a humble life of poverty, but a life steeped in virtue and radiating apostolic testimony. He returned to the Father’s home on 7 March 1889 in Camagüey. Pope Benedict XVI proclaimed him Blessed, and his beatification was celebrated on 29 November 2008 in Camagüey. His mortal remains are venerated in the hospital chapel.



450
1572-2022
LUBILLAEUM
LICET EX DEBITO

“Like all beginnings, our Order’s early days were not easy after the death of our Founder Saint John of God. It was the originality, tenaciousness, charismatic depth and the testimony of Hospitality of his first followers, our first Brothers, who overcame many obstacles to entrench our Institute in the Church, like ‘the flower that was missing from the garden of the Church’, as St Pius V put it, adding, ‘Let us thank our Lord that in our own age such a greatly needed Institute has come into being in the Church’. It is the flower that gives beauty and generates the fruits of Hospitality in the Church”.

Brother Jesús Etayo, Superior General



GENERAL POSTULATION



He expressed his profound spirituality in his tender and loving care of the sick, devoting himself above all to the poor and marginalised. He led a life of absolute poverty, living on alms, always standing by the side of those he cared for. It was out of humility that he decided to forgo priestly ordination in order to be able to remain close to those most in need. He practised the virtue of Christian fortitude, firmly opposing the government orders to discriminate against the sick eligible for hospital care.



- 1** Inside the Church of St John of God
- 2** Tomb of Blessed Olallo
- 3** St. John of God Hospital in Camagüey - Cuba

The life of Brother José Olallo is still topically relevant today: a man who lived through particularly turbulent and difficult times, but who knew how to keep faith with his mission by focusing entirely on the human person, regardless of race, social status, political ideology or religious beliefs. His staunch faith fuelled his energy to respond, day after day, to meet the needs of many poor, sick, orphaned and marginalised people. At his death, a chronicler at the time wrote: “He arrived alone and without a name at the gates of that Hospice; as he was lowered into his grave, the people were already calling him the ‘Father of the Poor’, an immortal title commemorating his virtues”.



“We are not only passing through an age of change, but a change of age, in a very real sense. The ways we thought, acted and lived in our immediate past are becoming obsolete and anachronistic; old methods and institutions are losing their effectiveness. The legacy we have inherited from John of God must not therefore only be welcomed with veneration, but it deserves to be expressed in new ways, lived with new cultural forms, and felt with a new zeal”.

The Spirituality of the Order

PRAYER

O God, omnipotent Father, who in the life of Blessed José Olallo Valdés has offered us an admirable example that manifests your mercy towards the sick and needy; grant us, through his intercession, that, inflamed by your charity, we can imitate the Lord Jesus, the Good Samaritan. He is God, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever.

Author: Fra Dario Vermi, e-mail: postulazione@ohsjd.org
website: www.ohsjd.org

Editorial Support: Press and Communication Office FBF Rome, e-mail: ufficiostampafb@gmail.com