

## *Spiritual Testament*

### *Christian de Chergé*

If it should happen one day - and today could be the day - that I become a victim of the terrorism which now seems ready to engulf all the foreigners living in Algeria, I would like my community, my Church and my family to remember that I have given my life for God and this country. I ask them to accept the fact that the One Master of all life was not a stranger to this brutal departure. I ask them to pray for me: for how could I be found worthy of such an offering? I ask them to associate my death with so many other equally violent ones which are forgotten through indifference or anonymity.

My life has no more value than any other. Nor any less value either. In any case, it no longer has the innocence of childhood. I have lived long enough to know that I am an accomplice in the evil which seems to prevail in the world, even in the evil which might blindly strike me down. I should like, when the time comes, to have a moment of spiritual clarity which would allow me to beg the forgiveness of God and of my fellow human beings, and at the same time forgive with all my heart those who would strike me down. Of course, I would never choose such a death. It seems important to me to stress this. How could I rejoice to see the people I love indiscriminately accused of my murder? It would be too high a price to pay for what will perhaps be called the "grace of martyrdom" to owe to an Algerian, whoever he might be, especially if he feels he is acting in fidelity to what he believes to be Islam. (...)

I am aware of the scorn which can be heaped on the Algerians indiscriminately. I

am also aware of the caricatures of Islam which a certain Islamism fosters. It is too easy to soothe one's conscience by identifying this religious behavior with the fundamentalist ideology of extremists. For me, Algeria and Islam are something different: it is a body and a soul. I have proclaimed this often enough, I think, in the light of what I have received from it.

I so often find there that true strand of the Gospel which I learned on my mother's lap, my very first Church, precisely in Algeria, and already inspired with respect for

Muslim believers. Obviously, my death will appear to confirm those who hastily judged me naive or idealistic: "Let him tell us now what he thinks of his ideals!" But those persons should know that my most avid curiosity will finally be set free. This is what I shall be able to do, God willing: immerse my gaze in that of the Father to contemplate his children of Islam with him just as he sees them, all shining with the glory of Christ, the fruit of his Passion, filled with the Gift of the Spirit whose secret joy will always be to establish communion and restore the likeness, juggling with the differences.

For this life lost, totally mine and totally theirs, I thank God, who seems to have willed it entirely for the sake of that joy in everything and in spite of everything. In this thank you, where everyone is included, from

*Christian de Chergé, was the superior of seven Trappist Monks who were murdered in Tibhirine (Algeria) on May 21 1996.*

This text has been taken from the web site:

[www.mariedenazareth.com](http://www.mariedenazareth.com)

now on, I certainly include you, friends of yesterday and today, and you, my friends of this place, along with my mother and father, my sisters and brothers and their families -- you are the hundredfold granted as was promised! And I also include you, my last-minute friend, who will not have known what you were doing. Yes, I want this thank you and this good-bye to be a "God Bless" for you, too, because in God's face I see yours. May we meet again as happy thieves in Paradise, if it pleases God, the Father of us both.

Amen! Inch'Allah!

Alger, December 1, 1993, Tibhirine, January 1, 1994