Help Others This Lent...

Dear Friend,

The season of Lent will soon be upon us. In these sacred days, may you know that the Lord is closer to us than ever. May you also know that you are able to touch him. You do this whenever you respond to the needs of His people.

Let me share with you some of the responses made through Carmelite Missions because of your prayers and generosity:

- Training of catechists in many countries who share the GOOD NEWS of Jesus.
- Establishing of soup kitchens which serve nearly 1,000 children daily in the barrio area of Jose Galvez, Peru.
- Supporting the home for abandoned children and teens where parents are imprisoned in Torreon, Mexico.
- Providing aid for desperately poor priests who minister in remote areas of the Philippines.
- Educating young Carmelites in El Salvador who will serve as priests in many parts of Latin America.

With your Lenten gift to Carmelite Missions, our missionaries can continue to be the compassion and caring of God our Father, the hands and heart of Jesus to the fragile, forgotten and forsaken. Have a joy and peace filled Lent!

With my love,

Director of Carmelite Missions
Today.

Life could serve as a prophetic witness to our country.

The story of his native Chile. It is not as well known in the United States, which is especially lamentable because his life could serve as a prophetic witness to our country today.

Padre Hurtado, as he is known in his land, was born in Vina del Mar, Chile, just after the turn of the century. An alumnus of the Colegio San Ignacio in Santiago, he joined the Jesuits in 1923 and became a priest in 1933. Three particular features of his apostolic life are worthy of attention and, ultimately, defined his path toward sanctity: his vivacious attentiveness to the material needs of the poor, his fervent commitment to justice for workers and his passionate prayer life.

The Needs of the Poor

Father Hurtado had a pickup truck, and with it he would journey out at night in search of people in need. He went down to riverbeds, ducked under bridges and traveled the streets of the metropolis. The plight of countless homeless children moved him. He would clothe them, give them food and set them up with a place to stay. These uncoordinated and spontaneous efforts, however, did not satisfy the priest. Father Hurtado was a deep thinker, and he knew that systemic problems need systemic solutions.

To address the immediate needs of so many women, men and children without a roof, he founded the Hogar de Cristo, or Home of Christ, in 1944. It grew into a network of dozens of shelters for the homeless throughout Chile. Mostly laywomen ran—and still run—these homes, but their founder never stayed away for too long. Even after his direct connection to this apostolate had waned because of other assignments, people report that Father Hurtado would wander off into the night, the occasional sound of his rumbling truck and the coughs of new guests announcing his presence at the Hogar de Cristo.

In the U.S. church, we often make a distinction between charity and justice. Charity refers to the corporal works of mercy that address the immediate needs of the suffering, whereas justice refers to work that changes structures of oppression or inequality. Father Hurtado practiced both.

His Commitment to Justice

In 1947, with Catholic college students and labor leaders, he launched the Accion Sindical y Economica Chilena (Asich), a Catholic workers’ union. Father Hurtado was steeped in Catholic social teaching. He knew well the papal encyclicals that called for the just treatment of workers. The Catholic community in the United States needs an apostle of the Church must be on their side.

A Man of Prayer

An intimate spiritual life was the source and summit of Father Hurtado’s service and activism. A serious sense of Christ’s oneness with the poor energized his projects. In support of the Hogar de Cristo, he would say: "Christ doesn’t have a home! Don’t we want to give him one?" Father Hurtado saw Christ in the poor, and, at the same time, he yearned for Christ to return explicitly to the everyday experience of the thousands of poor Chileans who had abandoned their faith because of the scandal of the church’s apathy to their suffering.
When one combs through the spiritual writings of Father Hurtado, one phrase appears like a mantra: ser otro Cristo, "to be another Christ." Christ is present in the poor, but Christ is also present in the one who stands in solidarity with the poor. Pope Benedict XVI said of Father Hurtado: "The objective of his life was to be another Christ. He experienced the pain of others as his own, and this propelled him toward a greater dedication to the poor." To contemporary ears, Father Hurtado’s expression may seem arrogant or unattainable. For him, however, the goal of being another Christ was simply a doctrine of the faith. Christ became human so that we could become divine. Divinity, however, looks nothing like worldly greatness. It is being like the poor and suffering Jesus. It means sacrificial love, expressed both in charity and justice. For father Hurtado the culmination of the sacrificial love was the Mass. The people whose burden he carried, the dreams for justice he longed to achieve, the pains of the illness by which he died an early death, all of these experiences found expression when he raised the host and chalice over the altar.

The Catholic community in the United States needs an Albert Hurtado, many Father Hurtados. Like Pope John Paul II, we wonder, "Can the Spirit raise up apostles of the stature of Father Hurtado in these our days as well, men who show the vitality of the church by their self-sacrificing witness?" We need disciples of Christ who serve and accompany the poor, both personally and structurally. We need a renewed sense of the Mass as something meaningful, as an offering to God for the sake of the sufferings of the poor we carry inside us. We need to be another Christ.

By: David J.W. Inczauskis, S.J.

*This article first appeared in America Magazine, May 27, 2019.*

*It is reprinted with permission.*
Lord, there are so many who suffer
In today’s world
And so few who know
To forget their sorrow.

I want to be Light
Reflecting your Lamp
And good leaven
To raise up souls.

I thank you Lord
Because you have risen from the dead.
And you put to death in my soul
The anguish of sin.

If you ask my life,
I want to give it to you content.
If you don’t want me to die,
I want to live smiling.

I want to laugh,
I want to dream,
I want to give to everyone
The joy of loving.

This prayer is displayed beside one of St. Hurtado’s relics in Mendoza, Argentina.