



Ján Havlík: the Power of Desire

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Abstract:

The article chronicles the life and beatification of Ján Havlík, a Slovakian seminarian (1928-1965) whose death was the result of torturous persecution under the communist regime in Czechoslovakia. Born into a modest family, Havlík demonstrated strong moral and religious values from an early age. Despite the regime's severe restrictions on religious freedom, he pursued his missionary vocation, showing resilience and faith. His clandestine theological studies and unwavering opposition to the regime led to his imprisonment and inhumane treatment. Throughout his trials, Havlík remained steadfast in his faith, exemplifying Vincentian virtues. His martyrdom, characterized by his commitment to faith and the Church, has been recognized as a testament to his sanctity and dedication to Christ. The article celebrates his life and the enduring power of his desire to serve God and humanity.

L'article retrace la vie et la béatification de Ján Havlík, séminariste slovaque (1928-1965) dont la mort a été le résultat d'une persécution torturante sous le régime communiste de Tchécoslovaquie. Né dans une famille modeste, Havlík a fait preuve de solides valeurs morales et religieuses dès son plus jeune âge. Malgré les restrictions sévères imposées par le régime en matière de liberté religieuse, il a poursuivi sa vocation missionnaire en faisant preuve de résilience et de foi. Ses études théologiques clandestines et son opposition inébranlable au régime lui ont valu d'être emprisonné et traité de manière inhumaine. Tout au long de ses épreuves, Havlík est resté fidèle à sa foi, illustrant les vertus vincentiennes. Son martyre, caractérisé par son engagement envers la foi et l'Église, a été reconnu comme un testament de sa sainteté et de son dévouement au Christ. Cet article célèbre sa vie et la force durable de son désir de servir Dieu et l'humanité.

El artículo relata la vida y beatificación de Ján Havlík, seminarista eslovaco (1928-1965) cuya muerte fue el resultado de una tortuosa persecución bajo el régimen comunista de Checoslovaquia. Nacido en el seno de una familia modesta, Havlík demostró desde muy joven unos sólidos valores morales y religiosos. A pesar de las severas restricciones del régimen a la libertad religiosa, prosiguió su vocación misionera, mostrando resistencia y fe. Sus estudios teológicos clandestinos y su inquebrantable oposición al régimen le llevaron a la cárcel y a sufrir tratos inhumanos. A lo largo de sus pruebas, Havlík se mantuvo firme en su fe, ejemplificando las virtudes vicencianas. Su martirio, caracterizado por su compromiso con la fe y la Iglesia, ha sido reconocido como testimonio de su santidad y dedicación a Cristo. El artículo celebra su vida y la fuerza perdurable de su deseo de servir a Dios y a la humanidad.

Keywords: Man of Desire, Clandestine, Martyrdom, Ján Havlik



The Congregation of the Mission and the Vincentian Family are now presented with an even richer panorama of models of holiness officially recognized by the Church.



We celebrate with joy the beatification of the Slovakian seminarian, Ján Havlík (1928-1965), whose premature death was due to the inhuman tortures inflicted on him by the communist regime that had been established in his homeland. This dictatorial and totalitarian regime was characterized by its fierce opposition to the Christian faith and its unappealable restrictions on religious freedom. Hence the fierce persecution unleashed against those who, with convictions that were supported by their professed faith and membership in the Church, did not bow to that ideology and its arbitrary procedures. Let us see, then, who Ján Havlík was and why the Church recognizes and proposes him as a martyr.

1. The first steps

Ján was born on February 12, 1928, in the town of Vlčkovany (then Czechoslovakia), now Dubovce (Slovakia), into a working family of modest means. He was baptized two days after his birth. He was the first-born of four siblings. His mother, Justina, was an obstetric nurse and his father, Karol, a state employee. Since salaries were modest and resources scarce, both supplemented their income with agricultural work. Indeed, those were particularly difficult times, marked by the consequences of World War II and the establishment of the communist regime in the country. This regime, under the influence of the Soviet model, lasted several decades in those lands, until 1989.

In the warmth of this family setting, Ján would find a favorable environment for his development and would receive a solid moral and religious formation. The family would gather to pray the rosary and attend Sunday Mass at the parish church. According to his mother's testimony, his First Communion left an indelible memory on little Havlík and would have a profound impact on his life as a call to ever closer friendship with Jesus Christ.

With a strong personality, from an early age Ján distinguished himself for his good school performance, his sociability and his leadership spirit. He attended primary school in the same town where he was born. In 1939, he attended school in another town, Holíč, traveling 16 kilometers each day (8 kilometers each way). He would attend secondary school in an even more distant town, Skalica, 18 kilometers away, a journey that the young Havlík would make on foot or by bicycle. It is clear that his youthful vigor helped him to carry out his desire to continue his education. In fact, Ján's studies were completed successfully, because they were carried out with seriousness and dedication.

St. Vincent de Paul, founder of the Congregation to which Ján Havlík was to be linked, reminded his seminarians that studies, while instructing us, should also strengthen our desire to be more and better, according to the will of God: *“If every time we enlighten our understanding, we also try to enkindle our will, we can be sure that studying will serve us as a means to go to God”* (CCD:XI:23). This is what we see in Havlík's journey.

2. The missionary vocation in the footsteps of St. Vincent

In 1943, under the guidance of his paternal aunt, a Daughter of Charity, Sister Modesta Havlíková, Ján Havlík entered the Apostolic School of the Congregation of the Mission in the city of Banská Bystrica. The following year, however, due to World War II and for security reasons, the superiors decided to return the young men to their homes. Ján and other seminarians continued their studies at a diocesan college in Trnava. The year 1949 was decisive: after completing the first stage of formation, Ján was admitted, together with five companions, into the Congregation and thus began the Internal Seminary. At first, the seminary was located in Ladce. A few months later, it moved to the former site of the Apostolic School in Banská Bystrica.

The Internal Seminary was the high point of Havlík's Vincentian formation. In that serene and fervent atmosphere – marked by prayerful recollection, fraternal sharing and intense studies related to the legacy of St. Vincent de Paul and the spirit of the Congregation founded by him – the seed of the missionary vocation planted by the Lord in the heart of Ján Havlík began to germinate and blossom. There his faith deepened and the most ardent desires of this young man of integrity and idealism matured. His willingness to give himself to God, configuring himself with Jesus Christ in his mission to evangelize the poor, giving himself entirely for the good and salvation of his brothers and sisters, was consolidated. He could then write in his diary: *“There is no greater gift than to give oneself unconditionally to God”*. In the years to come, we will see the strength and the concreteness that this dedication will have in Havlík's life.

Recalling the time spent in the Internal Seminary and the day he took temporary vows, then in use in the Congregation, Ján, according to the data collected by a colleague who would become his biographer, stated with great emotion:

“The most beautiful memories are those of the Internal Seminary. A profound peace. The noise of the world did not penetrate the walls of the Seminary. The mystery of God's presence was deeply experienced and the enthusiasm of the young men, ready to sacrifice themselves, grew. The days were filled with study and prayer ... they oozed happiness. The brightest day of my life was the silent solemnity celebrated in our little chapel when I took my vows. It is not easy to describe. Only those who have lived it know. A person no longer belongs to himself, but only to God. This awareness gives enormous strength”.

With those words, which flowed from his heart like a crystal-clear stream, Havlík offers us the clearest indication of his path to holiness: to belong to God alone in order to give himself to the mission with inner freedom and strength of spirit. Only a living faith and a contagious charity, as seasoned fruits of the grace received, can achieve this. And since grace presupposes nature and constantly perfects it, Ján Havlík attempted to develop himself as a person in order to mature as a Christian and to strengthen his vocation as a Vincentian missionary.

The testimony of his companions moves in the same direction: Ján's strong character and determined personality did not prevent him from being courteous in his manners, serene and cheerful in his daily life and attentive in his relationships. He was also a man of deep faith, a faith cultivated in the constancy of his prayer and reflected in his attitudes. He was helpful with regard to the needs that arose and punctual in fulfilling

the tasks entrusted to him by his superiors. He was appreciated for his rectitude and solicitude in everything that concerned community and apostolic life, from the most routine responsibilities to the most demanding ones, such as that of closely accompanying the young men who had recently entered the seminary. One of them stated that he was designated as their "angel", that is, the one in charge of guiding their first steps in the formation process:

"Ján was very kind, smiling, friendly and always gave good advice. During prayer he was very focused (...). He had a great desire to be a priest and he showed it outwardly in his behavior. I never saw him without a smile".

All of Havlík's efforts were energized and encouraged by his desire to become what the Lord was calling him to be. On one occasion, his sister, Maria, mentioned what her mother had told her about the missionary ardor that framed the youth of her firstborn: *"From my mother I know that, in his novitiate days, Ján wanted to be a missionary and go to Russia to teach Christianity to the children of Stalin".* A schoolmate also spoke about the apostolic aspirations of young Havlík: *"His classmates at that time already knew that he wanted to become a priest and go abroad as a missionary".*

It is clear: in his sincere desire to become a missionary and a priest – clothed in the spirit of Christ and in the light of what he had learned in the school of St. Vincent – in that desire dilated by faith, lay the driving force of Ján's fidelity to the vocation he had received, the encouragement of his generous dedication to his work and the profound joy that shone in his smile. All this will become even more palpable in the midst of the hard trials he will have to face, always keeping the flame of his purest and most beautiful desires burning, with the serenity of one who believes and the courage of one who loves. It comes spontaneously to mind what St. Vincent de Paul himself said to the first members of his Congregation, speaking about the expansive action of God's love in the person who allows himself to be inhabited and impelled by it: *"It is certain that, when charity dwells in a soul, it takes full possession of all its powers: it gives it no rest; it is a fire that is constantly active; once a person is inflamed by it, it holds him spellbound"* (CCD:XI:203).

3. Convinced clandestinity

The warm everyday life of Ján Havlík and his companions was numbered. Communist hostility towards the Church was growing ever more intense. In this context, the doors of the Internal Seminary were closed and its activities were abruptly interrupted. The year was 1950. In fact, the dispositions of the regime translated into an ever more extensive, rigid and invasive control of religious institutions and their members. As an ideological instrument, a bonus salary was established for clergymen who, disregarding freedom of conscience and relativizing their loyalty to the Church, accepted to swear an oath of fidelity to the State. For many priests, it became increasingly difficult to carry out any pastoral initiative, including the celebration of the sacraments, under threat of imprisonment and other penalties.

The Church, which for centuries had contributed enormously to the development of the nation, came to be considered *persona non grata* and an enemy of the homeland. In fact, in this context of tension and repression, a brutal operation was undertaken to eliminate the Orders and Congregations from Slovakian territory. Between 1948 and

1950, all educational institutions belonging or entrusted to the Church and the various Congregations were nationalized, including the expropriation of their buildings and the summary dismissal of their leaders and collaborators. The same happened with monasteries, convents, seminaries, houses of formation, etc. It was no different for the Daughters of Charity and the members of the Congregation of the Mission, who saw all their educational works liquidated: from orphanages and schools to seminaries. In successive raids, bishops, priests, nuns and seminarians were arrested, tortured and condemned. Dioceses and Congregations saw their goods confiscated, their archives and libraries burned and their buildings and land expropriated. The panorama was truly desolate and without the least possibility of recourse or intervention.

Thus, during the night of April 13-14, 1950, fifty-six communities of six different Orders or Congregations of men were assaulted and their members were deported to concentration camps run by the regime. A similar operation took place during the night of May 3 to 4 of the same year. Another 1,180 priests, seminarians and lay people joined the ranks of those condemned to the concentration camps. In this second attack, the Internal Seminary in Banská Bystrica, where Ján Havlík was located, was also attacked. The soldiers violently broke into the rooms of the candidates and their formators, ordering everyone to collect the minimum necessary and to gather outside, where police buses were waiting to take them to their grim destination: the so-called *re-education camp* (in reality, a political-ideological indoctrination camp), located in Kostolná. Two weeks later, all but the eldest were taken to the Puchov forced labor camp and were engaged in the construction of a dam. Afterwards, Ján was employed by a state enterprise in Nitra. He himself recounts his journey, answering the interrogation to which he was subjected on February 18, 1952:

“From 1944, I continued my studies in Banská Bystrica, at the Apostolic School, where I remained until May 5, 1950, when that institution was closed. Then I worked at the construction site of the Puchov youth reservoir until August 10, 1950, then I went to Nitra, where I was employed until October 15, 1950, and then I moved to the state enterprise Sitno, where I worked only five months, that is, until May 13, 1951”.

The communist ideology, markedly atheistic and materialistic, did not penetrate the conscience of Ján Havlík, whose Christian maturity was already firmly established. The same could be said of many of his seminary companions who were there, as well as of other Christians, men and women, subjected to the same conditions. On one occasion, precisely on the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, they all decided that they would attend Holy Mass ... and they did so, albeit under strict supervision and despite the risks they ran.

At the end of 1950, Ján and four of his confreres decided to continue their studies. However, they could only do so privately and clandestinely. Once again, the desire to pursue their missionary vocation towards ordained ministry prevailed. This desire gave courage to those young seminarians who, with the consent and cautious guidance of their superiors, began their theological formation. The main point of reference for the students was Fr. Štefan Krištin, CM, who acted as superior and bursar of the veiled seminary. In the above-mentioned interrogation of February 1952, Havlík gives an account of his bold commitment and leading role in this initiative:

“At the end of a three-month period while engaged in a work project, I expressed my intention to take a stand against the State and also my desire to go to Nitra to study, albeit clandestinely, with my brother Anton (...). I also convinced the other novice brothers of this idea”.

Ján Havlík's efforts did not stop there. He also attempted to provide the necessary material for further studies, collecting books in the clandestine seminars, sharing notes and transcribing texts of renowned authors (it is recorded that, at some point, he began to translate J. Maritain's *Humanisme Intégral*). All this sacrifice could have been avoided if Ján and his companions had joined a sort of state seminary, authorized by the government and created as a parallel structure in the absence of the pontifical authority. The managers and professors of this center were priests complicit with the regime, whose aim was to create a national Church independent of the Holy See. The seminary was called the Cyril-Methodius theological faculty and was located in Bratislava.

Through institutions such as these, the false idea was spread that the state did not repress religious practice or persecute its adherents, unless they were deliberately going against government regulations. To Havlík, however, this did not seem to be the consistent procedure or proper behavior for a son of the Church, much less for a member of a Congregation with a long and authoritative formative tradition. He stated:

“I did so because I considered the Cyril-Methodius faculty as an invalid body, since it had not been created by Rome. That is why I did not enter that school. After the dissolution of our Congregation, I decided to study illegally, knowing that a solid formation was part of the competencies of the Lazarists”.

On another occasion, he made his motivation even clearer:

“I wanted to become a priest of the Congregation of the Mission, even in these circumstances in which the Congregation had been dissolved by the State. That is why I did not recognize the dissolution and consciously and voluntarily did not respect the state order, that is, I did not want to become a “progressive” priest”.

Despite the circumstances and the enormous obstacles that he encountered, Ján showed a growing interest and a visible enthusiasm for studies, which made him increasingly impervious to the ideological impositions of the regime in force. He seemed to carry engraved in his soul the admonition of the prophet: *“Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who change darkness into light and light into darkness, who change bitter into sweet and sweet into bitter”* (Is 5:20). In everything he followed what his conscience (enlightened by faith and oriented towards what seemed to him just and necessary, true and good, according to the will of God) dictated to him. It is precisely this human integrity, this rectitude of conscience, this coherence of life, which crowns and ennobles the witness of this humble and courageous Vincentian seminarian. He had internalized the meaning of the words that St. Vincent addressed to one of his Missionaries of yesteryear:

“Remain faithful to God so as not to fail in what concerns him. Never betray His principles for any reason whatsoever and take great care not to spoil God's affairs by too much haste in them. Take his own good time and know how to wait for it” (CCD:III:280).

4. Arrest and first conviction

Considered illegal and harmful by the authorities, the clandestine formation of Ján Havlík and his companions led to their immediate imprisonment. This happened on October 29, 1951, due to the denunciation of a young man linked to the communist party, who reported his suspicions about the movement of those young people in a house in Nitra. In that atmosphere of usurpation of power, ideological obsession and curtailment of freedom, young people were particularly watched for their potential favorable or unfavorable to the government, that is, for their adhesion or subversion to the communist regime.

In the successive forced labor camps and prisons to which Havlík and his companions were taken, the humiliations and ill-treatment multiplied endlessly. The prisoners were subjected to vile treatment, physical punishment and psychological torture. The motivation for this ignominy was not explicitly stated. It was evident, however, that it was directly related to the regime's opposition to their professed faith and membership in the Church. In fact, the Christian condition led to a patent disagreement with a markedly atheistic, materialistic and corrupt political-ideological system, inhibiting civil and religious freedom, even if it was camouflaged with strategies and speeches that seemed to point in another direction. A colleague of Ján Havlík describes, in great detail, the daily life in prison and the tortures imposed on the prisoners, constantly exposed to hunger and cold:

“I have already mentioned that the inmates were forced to march all day; at night, the light was always on; the hands had to rest on the blanket; the prisoners were awakened at any hour of the night for interrogations, which often lasted until morning. No sleep was allowed during the day. Sleepless nights, days on the march, scanty food and low temperatures were very hard to bear. I am convinced that these tortures were inflicted on us by our persecutors to express their hatred of the Catholic religion we professed. Their aim was to break us and make us abandon the Catholic faith (...). During the day, they made us march in circles with our hands behind our backs; at night, they interrogated us; we slept under a spotlight that was always on; we had to keep our hands on the blanket all the time we slept. The punishment was the so-called ‘correction’, i.e. isolation in a dark room with small food rations. Some even had pins stuck in their fingernails; during interrogations, there were those who received severe blows to the ribs; one of them had a typewriter thrown at him. When they wanted to mistreat someone, they would gather up to nine of them and each one would ask questions with the objective of scolding, annihilating and humiliating the interrogated individual. On a psychological level, it was hard to bear. For those who knew they were innocent, it was psychologically hard to endure the stress of the inspectors’ numerous questions aimed at breaking their inner peace and sense of security. The inspectors wanted to prove, at all costs, that those being questioned were guilty of something. Another very negative factor was hunger”.

From all that can be gleaned from a testimony such as this, it is clear that when the name of God is crossed out of the horizon, the understanding of human dignity and the sacredness of life is narrowed to the point of vanishing, opening the way to the instrumentalization of the person and the violation of his most basic rights.

Because of his leading role in the affairs of the clandestine seminary in Nitra, Ján Havlík was considered to be an outright traitor to the regime, even a fanatic. When he had the opportunity to do so, Ján took full responsibility for exonerating his formators and colleagues, especially the priest-director who had supported the initiative of the young

seminarians and agreed to accompany and instruct them in their studies. Revealing an extraordinary human maturity, a vigorous conviction of faith and an indescribable strength of spirit, Havlík gave a glimpse of his vocation to martyrdom. Indeed, it is said that, writing to his mother on one occasion, he declared: *“I professed my faith in front of everyone, I was tortured and now I must die for it”*. One of his companions concluded his testimony about Ján's serenity and firmness before his interrogators with these words: *“He was standing there, looking very noble. How beautiful! Standing”*, aware of his innocence, preserving his dignity; with the *nobility* of good and upright men; *beautiful* as one who maintained integrity and transparency because he had nothing to be ashamed of or retract.

In March 1953, having once again been considered a traitor to the state regime and summarily sentenced to 14 years in prison and other sanctions (a fine, expropriation of his property and loss of citizenship for 10 years), Havlík was taken, together with some of his companions, to another forced labor camp (Ostrov, 140 km from Prague). He was to pass through other similar camps, exposed to the same environment of terror and subjected to pressure, deprivation and aggression. The inhuman conditions to which he was subjected from the beginning of his imprisonment relentlessly weakened Ján's physical and psychological health, as an eyewitness recounts:

“He was very pale, tired, exhausted by hunger and the aggressions suffered during the interrogations. Since then, his health condition was not good. However, he had to work, unless there was a frost that prevented him from doing so or he had visible open wounds. Less serious injuries were not a reason to excuse him from work”.

In the midst of so many atrocities, beaten by humiliations and weakened by mistreatment, certainly plunged in anguish known only to God, Ján's conduct was like a light shining in the midst of a dense and cold night, illuminating and warming, rekindling faith and hope in his companions. The inextinguishable flame of charity that burned in our young brother was the same that illuminated the others. In fact, one of the prisoners gave the following testimony about Havlík:

“Like all of us who lived and suffered in that environment, I think he also experienced some doubts and disappointments, but he never let anything show. On the contrary, he tried to be a friend to everyone, he encouraged others, he helped with his presence, understanding, hope, everything that obviously came from his faith. So he was a witness to the faith ... a faith that he also knew how to transmit to others”.

On March 13, 1953, a lawyer filed an appeal against the sentence condemning Ján Havlík and other detainees, asking that the seriousness of the alleged crime of which they were accused be reconsidered. In his testimony, Ján, who had already been in the Ostrov camp for two weeks, had emphasized the link between his activity and the provisions of the Church emanating from the Holy See, avoiding strident confrontations with his accusers in order to obtain what he wanted: a reduced sentence and, ultimately, freedom. With many reservations, on June 11, 1953, the Prague Supreme Court eventually mitigated Havlík's sentence, reducing it from 14 to 10 years. Earlier, however, at the end of April of the same year, he was assigned to another corrective labor camp, this time in the town of Bytíz (Příbram), where he would spend 5 years. There, says a companion, he

nourished his faith by participating every day in the Eucharistic celebration, which took place in secret thanks to the presence of imprisoned priests. The Eucharistic Jesus, through the mysterious power of his presence, sustained the faith and love of his followers. In fact, Ján will record in his diary what can be considered the route of his path to holiness:

“The whole world is as nothing to me if I do not have you, Lord, in my heart. If we want to speak from a firm perspective, we must surely speak of Christ. Everything else that we would like to touch or support is unstable”.

Serenity and courage are born where love rests. In the simplicity of words, but above all in the hidden oblation and the vehement witness of Ján Havlík, reverberates that fundamental intuition that opened the heart and accompanied the steps of St. Vincent de Paul ... words which he lived with evangelical vitality:

“Is there anything more reasonable than to give our lives for Him who has given His life so generously for each and every one of us? If our Lord loves us to the point of dying for us, why should we not desire to have this same disposition with regard to Him and to put it into effect, if the occasion were to present itself” (CCD:XI:335).

5. Condemned because of his faith

In the Bytíz camp, Havlík received a particularly grueling and dangerous assignment: he had to descend into the depths of the uranium mine to excavate vertical trenches and horizontal arteries. Once again, *homo faber* would join hands with *homo patiens*. The meager food and the freezing cold, combined with the strenuous effort required by this activity, significantly aggravated Ján's already weak health, especially with regard to the functioning of his heart.

Fellow inmates emphasize that, despite the precarious conditions, Havlík never missed an opportunity to pray together or to meet with others who wished to do the same. This was the case, for example, when, in the evening, they managed to pray the rosary together in a corner of the prison. In prayer he found the relief he needed to keep going, contemplating God's footprints on the rough roads of his journeys and feeling the touches of the Spirit's grace. Moreover, Ján never shied away from passing on the values of the Christian faith and addressing words of comfort and hope to his companions, especially those who were on the brink of desolation and despair. St. Teresa's words are perfectly accurate when she affirms that the hard trials of life require the strength born of friendship with the Lord: *“In hard times, strong friends of God”*. His first biographer, who was his companion in the seminary and in prison, attributes to Havlík the following words of remarkable spiritual significance ... words that reveal his deep rootedness in God, from whom he received the encouragement and vigor to continue his journey:

“Friends, one cannot live without God. Look how ugly the world is without God, how much injustice, how much violence and cruelty. We have been expelled from our communities. Violence is on the increase, as are divorces and betrayals. We must do something. God is visible in us. He who gives summer and winter, health and sickness, prison and freedom, life and death. But in the end, light, life and freedom will win”.

The inhuman and exhausting work in the mine continued to "undermine" Ján Havlík's health, leaving him with increasing and irreversible consequences. This vulnerability was noted in various medical consultations. Fainting spells during activities were recurrent. None of this, however, was enough to sensitize the guards and those in charge of the work camp. On the contrary, Ján's sudden fainting spells were punished by isolation in an unhealthy cell, the conditions of which contributed to his further deterioration, as evidenced by his increasingly emaciated physique and languid appearance. From 1954 onwards, the diagnoses became more and more conclusive, especially with regard to cardiac and respiratory pathologies. Hospitalizations were frequent. Many of his colleagues felt great sympathy for Havlík's situation and were often prepared to take over the heaviest work, but that was as much as they could do in that hostile environment.

The reason why Ján Havlík was still deprived of his freedom and subjected to forced labor was none other than the fact that his Christian conscience did not allow him to adhere to the communist ideology, nor to agree with the provisions of the system in force, with all that this entailed for his nation. Initially, the crime of which he was accused was that of continuing his priestly training according to the norms established by the Church, which denoted his resistance to the regime. Summoned for further interrogation in 1958, he was accused of political conspiracy and of promoting clandestine organizations within the camps through which he had passed, thus favoring the movement against the government. An additional year was added to the 10 years he was already serving. Ján was then transferred to a prison in Prague where he spent most of his time in solitary confinement. There, even his mental health was damaged due to the experiments carried out by a doctor and the inadequacy of the medication provided by the prison guards. Freed from these procedures, he overcame the psychological weakness that had plagued him.

In reality, what aroused the wrathful suspicion of the leaders of the regime was the power of Havlík's testimony, the diffusive force of his moral authority and the spiritual influence he exerted on those who benefited from his example, his advice and his enlightened word, especially during certain meetings. What St. Vincent once said applies here: *"God sometimes allows predestined souls to be like musk, which cannot be in a place without filling it with its pleasant fragrance"* (CCD:IX:155). However discreet he tried to be, Havlík never failed to communicate the consolation and fervor of the Christian faith. This in itself was considered a subversive activity.

When the young Ján began his journey in the Congregation of the Mission he had no idea who would be the concrete poor whom he would evangelize in word and deed. With the passage of time, he would soon discover that the poor whom he was called to evangelize and serve were his fellow prisoners. Therefore, he dedicated his best efforts to them even though he had to confront some of the greatest dangers he had ever known. Nevertheless, he was convinced that in this way he could carry out the mission that the Lord had entrusted to him and the works that charity inspired in him. Jan's Vincentian vocation urged him to transmit the Gospel with the truth of his life, as a humble Samaritan moved by mercy (cf. Lk 10:25-37). St. Vincent's exhortation to his Missionaries seems tailor-made for this young man: *"For the sake of their vocation they persevered and still persevere courageously in the midst of so many dangers and sufferings ... Vincent concluded: How fortunate they are to make use of this instant of time in our lives for the sake of mercy"* (CCD:XI:308-309). In his diary, Ján Havlík wrote:

"Is it not the task of the Missionaries to help those who have been thrown into the rubble of society? If we get 10 to 15 years in prison, we cannot talk about the provisional and think: I will study later, I will work later for the Kingdom of God. They need it now, even if they are weak. All the prisoners, the desperate, the ignorant, the apathetic, the murderers and the criminals need it. Manifest now what is inside you, if you are serious about the mission you have dreamed of since you were young. I feel the same as I do in the missions. I could not imagine a better and more challenging field of work. We must let everyone know that our love is Christ. To all the thousands of prisoners in Jáchymov, Příbram, Slavkov.... It is a program for our whole life. To put love in state affairs, in families, communities, schools, offices... to bring love to all our actions".

Because of his clinical condition, Ján Havlík could no longer undertake greater efforts and more demanding work, so he was sent to Valdice prison, a former baroque monastery where many religious, considered enemies of the homeland, were concentrated. He arrived there on May 7, 1959. His condition were increasingly compromising and irremediable. In this prison, Ján met men of remarkable evangelical fiber, such as the Salesian priest Tito Zeman (1915-1969), now Blessed (2017).

Once again, on March 4, 1960, Ján underwent another evaluation. The commander noted that, although his work was effective, his position vis-à-vis the regime remained the same ... and this was so despite all that he had already suffered. For this reason, he was often subjected to periods of isolation, so that his influence would not spread among his colleagues. The evaluation report concluded:

"Prisoner Havlík has not changed his attitude even after this further conviction. After his transfer to our NPT, he continues to reveal himself as a declared enemy of our system. He frequents prisoners of similar views, so that he must be isolated even during his confinement. His work conduct and behavior are adequate, as is his compliance with the daily schedule. The sentence of imprisonment, however, is not having the expected effect and the inmate is seriously disturbing the very purpose of the sentence of imprisonment".

Given the tenor of this report, it is not difficult to imagine why the Bratislava court, on July 6, 1960, excluded Ján Havlík from the amnesty granted by the president of the republic to some prisoners. A few days later, Ján filed an appeal against this decision, pointing out that the sentence imposed on him the previous year (one year's imprisonment) could not be compared with those imposed on those who had carried out subversive activities and who had nevertheless been granted the aforementioned amnesty. Months later, the appeal was summarily rejected on the grounds that no significant change in Havlík's behavior was noted. In fact, he continued to act as a *stubborn enemy of the socialist system*. The report concluded: *"It follows that, although there are no objections in terms of professional conduct and morality, the applicant seriously violates the efforts of re-education, i.e. the very purpose of punishment"*.

Transferred to the Pankrác (Prague) prison for the execution of sentences, in October 1960, he underwent another trial for parole. The final decision was another resounding refusal on the same grounds as above:

“Even after the sentence he received, the convicted Havlík has not changed and continues to oppose our socialist system. In view of the seriousness of the crime committed and the fact that he continues to engage in criminal activities, the convicted person is not recommended for parole”.

Another attempt, dated March 27, 1961, was rejected because of Havlík's persistent opposition to the political order ... rejected despite his self-sacrificing work performance. Meanwhile, Ján's dizzying physical and psychological decline was noticeable, now aggravated by painful leg edema and frequent expectorations of blood. In fact, already during his stay in the Bytíz camp, due to the harshness of the work, he underwent surgery on his right knee. Years later, in January 1955, an accident at work caused him to break the ligaments of his clavicle, and his convalescence was very painful. All this made him unable to work, as confirmed by the doctors who attended and evaluated him.

Ján Havlík's integrity and conviction with regard to his fundamental option for Christ and his religious and ethical stance aroused the antipathy and resistance of the regime's leaders and officials, which is why they did not give in to his requests for a reduction of sentence and did not grant him any benefits, despite the seriousness of his state of health. What St. Vincent said about the exemplary person of the young man, Peter Borguny, who was martyred in Algeria for his inviolable fidelity to the following of Jesus Christ, could well be applied to Ján:

“That is what a Christian is made of, and that’s the courage we must have in order to suffer and to die, when necessary, for Jesus Christ. Let’s ask Him for this grace and beg that holy young man to request it for us, he who was such a worthy student of such a courageous Master, and who, in the space of three hours, became His true disciple and perfect imitator by dying for Him” (CCD:XI:290).

6. Back to family life: the polished diamond

On October 29, 1962, after serving his sentence in the Ilava prison, Ján Havlík finally regained his freedom ... that was after exactly 11 years of imprisonment and hard labor, subjected to inhuman treatment and harsh deprivation, without having received any respite or benefit. During all this time, he saw the years slip away without being able to do anything to shorten the sentence imposed on him, or to mitigate the suffering that compressed his soul and ruined his body. In spite of this, the brainwashing imposed on him was unsuccessful. Opposed to the communist ideology, Ján never wavered in his adherence to Christ and his membership in the Church. He never renounced the faith that strengthened him, nor his desire to persevere in his vocation. His daily prayer is summed up in these words that he recorded in his diary: *“Lord, I accept my cross with love. Help me to carry it”.*

He could now return to the bosom of his family. However, the deterioration of his state of health and the precariousness of his physical condition continued to cause him severe restrictions and painful discomfort. In fact, the consequences of all that he suffered were great. Before his arrest, Ján was a healthy and active young man, free of chronic diseases, free of heart and respiratory problems, in perfect mental health, active in sports and hardworking. Particularly significant is the final report of the doctor who analyzed all the documentation on the development of Havlík's clinical outlook:

“After studying the documents and examining Ján Havlík's life and death from a medical point of view, we have confirmed a direct link between his heart disease and everything he suffered in prison. Ján Havlík died at the age of 37 from severe heart disease that developed as a result of the suffering inflicted on him in prison and the harsh conditions of incarceration. Due to continuous overwork and without the necessary care, the heart disease progressed very rapidly to chronic circulatory failure. Despite the advanced stage of the disease, he was not released until the end of his sentence, with severe chronic heart disease and no hope of cure. His heart was already irreparably damaged and surgery, which at an earlier stage of the disease would have changed its course, was no longer possible. Despite the help of his relatives and changes in treatment, the disease contracted in prison steadily worsened until it led to his premature death”.

According to his mother's testimony, the day he was released from prison, Ján could not even walk on his own. Indeed, it was only with immense sacrifice that he managed to reach the station where he was to take the train to his hometown. Medical reports detail the after-effects of those painful years, especially with regard to the functioning of his heart, liver and stomach. Respiratory and intestinal problems were not uncommon. Excruciating pain that spread throughout his body was his daily bread and butter. All this rendered him unable to work and forced him to be hospitalized regularly. The psychological impact on Havlík was also severe, but it did not cloud his lucidity or deprive him of his inner freedom.

Despite his delicate and painful situation, Ján did not give vent to his regrets, preferring to repel the bitterness of his sorrows, avoiding complaining about his problems and keeping silent about what he had lived and suffered during his long years of imprisonment. His serenity in the midst of suffering was striking, as well as his kindness and generosity in dealing with people. In fact, he was always very grateful for everything he received from those who made an effort to help him. Despite his limited strength, he always tried to do something for his family and for others. He did small domestic jobs, taught catechism to the children in his house, read and translated philosophical and theological texts. But he could not get very far in what he set out to do. He lacked energy. He had yet another form of punishment, imposed by the regime on the so-called enemies of the homeland: the loss of citizenship did not allow him to find a stable job and the disability pension had a more than derisory value.

In any case, the last three years of Ján Havlík's life with his loved ones would be characterized by the splendor of his virtues: his unshakable trust in the God who had called him and who sustained him with his providence; the oblation love that was expressed in his attitudes, gestures and words; the hope that did not let him sink into despair and kept his gaze fixed on the harbor of eternity; etc. Incidentally, the concept of hope formulated by Don Tonino Bello fits perfectly with Havlík's profile: *“Hope is the attitude of one who, while tribulations thicken behind him, does not let the song of his lips die out”* (*Con Cristo, sulle strade del mondo*, p. 115).

A person becomes more refined in the practice of virtues, especially when beset by adversity. From his correspondence with his aunt, a Daughter of Charity, who had helped him in his vocational discernment, Ján cultivated a balanced state of mind and a singular inner strength. He was happy to be free and to return home, and he surrendered himself unreservedly into the Lord's hands:

“Thank God, I'm home. But for how long? There is no answer to that question yet. Maybe for a long time, maybe just for a few days. It will be as God wills. I don't want to brag about my health, because it depends on the Most High and not on

me. However, subjectively, my state of health has improved. And that is enough. There is no need to investigate what the plans of Providence are, but to pray, not for my health, but for His will to be done. May the fiat and the magnificat resound on our lips every day".

Havlík's words, as well as the journey of his whole life, find a paraphrase in the content of a beautiful Italian song, which we venture to translate in this way:

"I have nothing in my hands, but I hope that you will take me in, Lord. I only ask to be by your side. I am rich only in the love you give me, and this is for those who have none. If you welcome me, my Lord, I will ask nothing more of you. And your way will always be my way. In joy, in sorrow, whatever you will, I will walk with my hand in yours. I ask you with all my heart, I know you will hear me: make my faith stronger than ever. Keep my light burning until the day only you know ... the day when with my brothers, I will go to meet you".

In reality, although he was comforted by his family's vigilance, Ján's condition remained delicate and painful. He was often confined to bed, although from time to time he stretched out under a bush in the garden. However, he did not want to worry his loved ones, so he tried to reassure them as much as possible, preferring to endure his ailments in silence, as this letter to his aunt shows:

"I am calm and peaceful, although the end is near. I have already been on my deathbed twice. Why am I talking about this? So that you will be happy and not worry so much about coming to visit me. When you are better, I will come to visit you in person".

It is clear that the approach of Havlík's final denouement did not rob him of peace and the joy of living. In fact, while the outer man was fading, the inner man was growing stronger. Ján could well say like the Apostle Paul:

"Therefore, we are not discouraged; rather, although our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to what is seen but to what is unseen; for what is seen is transitory, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:16-17).

In fact, the *fiat* and the *magnificat* that overflowed from his lips and pen reflected the fundamental attitudes that animated his weary steps: trust in the love of the Lord, gratitude for the benefits received and total self-giving, after the example of the humble Virgin of Nazareth, the Mother of the Lord. Those two words reappear in a letter of July 9, 1964: *"The daily 'fiat' and 'magnificat' are my motto in suffering! With God's help, one can do more than man can imagine".*

In the words that St. Vincent addressed to a young priest, describing his missionary vocation, one can discover a portrait of the virtuous man that Ján Havlík was and of the life project that he ardently desired to see consolidated in his life:

"We have been gifted with a great and an adorable a vocation as that of the greatest apostles and saints of the Church of God! Humility alone is capable of bearing this grace, and perfect abandonment of all that you are and can be, in exuberant trust in your Sovereign Creator. You will need generosity and sublime courage. You will also need faith as great as Abraham's and the charity of St. Paul. Zeal, patience, deference, poverty, solicitude, discretion, moral integrity

and an ardent desire to be totally consumed by God are as appropriate for you as for the great St. Francis Xavier” (CCD:III:279).

7. O dies natalis of a beloved disciple

Christmas 1965 arrived. Havlík had been hospitalized and returned home just the day before. He set about helping his mother with the preparations. On Christmas Eve, before dinner, he led the family prayer and delivered a short speech. According to his mother's account, the speech was an invitation to live the love brought to us by the Child Jesus, so that unity may reign among his own and that they may all be together again next year. He added: *"I will no longer be here"*. This is what he foresaw at that moment and what foreshadowed the progressive deterioration of his state of health. Despite the intense cold and wind, he wanted very much to participate in the midnight Mass ... after which he had to face a long walk home. His relatives tried to dissuade him. But Ján did not give up. He got ready and left. He missed participating in the Eucharist, he longed for that nourishment of life that he had so often received in secret during his imprisonment. It had been many years since he had gone to Mass on Christmas Eve. And so he did, not only on the vigil, but also on the following two days, December 25 and 26.

After a more intense malaise on the afternoon of the 26th, it seemed that his health problems had given him a respite, so he told his father that he would like to find a job so that he could help support the family. On December 27, 1965, Ján took a bus to the nearby town of Popudiny to see his doctor. From there he went to Skalica, taking a radio to be fixed. He would then go to the hospital for tests and, if necessary, admission. If it was still possible, he would visit his brother, Anton, who lived in the city, to spend New Year's Eve with him. However, that would be the last day of his earthly life. As soon as he arrived in the city, while walking down the street, just as he was in front of a doctor's house, he felt ill and leaned against a garbage can. Noticing the young man's condition, the doctor came over to help him, but in vain. Ján Havlík's weak heart had already stopped beating. The doctor did not know Ján, but his wife did. As a nurse, she had received him at the hospital during one of his many admissions and remembered his serenity and kindness.

Ján Havlík died at the age of 37, at the height of his human and spiritual maturity, from a serious heart disease triggered by the ill-treatment inflicted on him and the harsh conditions to which he was subjected during his 11 years of imprisonment ... and all this out of hatred for the faith (*in odium fidei*) professed by that young man, without bargaining or concessions¹. It was December 27, the liturgical feast of his onomastic, St. John the Evangelist, traditionally identified with the beloved disciple of the fourth Gospel, the one who was always closely united to the Master and Lord, in pain and in glory, on the cross and in the resurrection (cf. John 13:23; 19:25-27; 20:2-9). Ján died on his feet, on the way, filled with the liveliest desire to remain in Christ in order to produce the fruits

¹ Ján Havlík is not the first seminarian of the Congregation of the Mission who gave his life *in odium fidei*, victimized by injustice and violence. Although not officially recognized as a martyr, the first to do so was the Irish seminarian Thaddeus Lee (1623-1651). In a letter dated March 22, 1652, St. Vincent himself gives news of the tortures suffered by that young man to the point of death in front of his own mother: *"Poor Brother Lee, who was in his native place, fell into the enemy hands. They crushed his skull and cut off his feet and hands in the presence of his mother"* (CCD:IV:342). In the archives of the Congregation, it is recorded that Thaddeus Lee was born in 1623, in Tuogh, County Limerick. He entered the Congregation on October 21, 1643 and professed vows on October 7, 1645. Still a student, he was sent home. His assassination took place in 1651, when English troops seized Limerick, killing many Catholic Christians. As the documents relating to this young seminarian contemporary of the founder are very scarce, a cause for canonization could not be carried out. If they had, Thaddeus Lee would have been the first martyr of the Vincentian Family.

expected by the Father (cf. John 15:4-17), on the ground of a fidelity renewed day after day.

He was buried on December 29, 1965, in Dubovce. There was a large number of people in attendance. Some members of the national security guard were also present. The atmosphere was therefore tense. From then on, what was evident began to spread among his acquaintances: Ján Havlík had given his life for the faith he professed, moved by an authentic love for Christ and his Church, through a slow and progressive martyrdom, which was the cause of his premature death. As one of his companions said:

"Ján openly professed the faith in front of the guards. That's why they disliked him. They often punished him by locking him in solitary confinement. Ján believed in what he believed and it showed in his behavior. No one could weaken his faith".

It is clear: Havlík's cause was not ideological, just as his actions were not merely revolutionary. His opposition to the regime was a requirement of his faith, a consequence of his fidelity to the Gospel, of his belonging to the Church of Christ. His behavior was considered subversive for having consoled, sustained and encouraged his companions in the midst of the intense darkness of prison, praying with them, giving them advice, rekindling the flame of hope, despite their physical ruin and psychological weakness. In this way, Ján expressed his missionary and priestly vocation according to the charitable charism of St. Vincent de Paul. His death was, therefore, a consequence of his believing and living. At the end of his days, he was able to write: *"I am happy to have endured something for Jesus and to have defended the truth of God"*. The reason for his dedication and, at the same time, for his commitment, he states most emphatically: *"I am sure that having God is the greatest gift we can have. I want nothing more"*.

St. Vincent himself would not hesitate to say of this young missionary of his what he once said of the missionaries who, through an indeclinable option for God, gave witness to faith and charity with courage and perseverance in the most unforeseen situations to which they were exposed by the vocation they had embraced:

"To act in that way is to make known the truths and maxims of the Gospel not in words but by conforming one's life to that of Jesus Christ and witnessing His truth and sanctity to the faithful and to unbelievers; consequently, to live and die like that is to be a martyr" (CCD:XI:168).

Conclusion: the man of desire

Biblical tradition classifies the prophet Daniel as *"vir desideriorum"*, a man of deep and intense desires (cf. Daniel 9:23; 10:11,19), born of his trust in the Lord, desires capable of nourishing his hopes and encouraging his quests and efforts in the fulfillment of the mission conferred upon him.

And so it is. Human beings have always been driven by the desires they harbor and nurture. Desires belong to the volitional dimension, which drives a person to pursue and realize what his conscience shows him to be opportune because it is true and good. The clearer the conscience, the stronger the desire tends to be, just as the clearer the horizon, the clearer the road tends to be. St. Vincent de Paul recognized this dynamic in the daily practice of meditation, recalling that *"the will follows the light of the understanding and is led to do what is suggested to it as good and desirable"* (CCD:XI:360). For this, the conscience needs to be nourished by principles, to incorporate values, to allow itself to be enlightened by lofty ideals, to submit to the sieve of discernment. In this sense, the more upright and lucid the conscience is, the more sincere will be the desires it awakens, purifies and guides. The truth is that no human

being can live without the dynamic of desires ... and these are neither autonomous nor absolute, because they find their foundation and purpose in truth and goodness.

The most sublime desire that the human heart can harbor is the desire for fullness, for the absolute that faith allows us to call God. Sacred Scripture and the Christian tradition have translated in many ways this constant longing that beats within us. Psalm 63:2 says it best of all: *“O God, my soul thirsts for you like the earth parched, lifeless and without water”*. Commenting on Psalm 148, St. Augustine affirms that it is the desire for God that gives meaning to our existence and nourishes our hope: *“It is good to persevere in desire until the promise is realized; then groaning will cease and only praise will remain”*. St. Vincent invites the Daughters of Charity to an ardent desire for God, since, in reality, our desire for God is nothing more than a response to God's desire for us: *“We should have an ardent desire for him ardent, for God does not wish to be desired coldly, or lukewarmly, but with all the strength and ardor of our will, in the same way as He desires to communicate Himself to us”* (CCD:IX:265). In a conference to the Missionaries, Vincent de Paul himself let these words overflow from his heart, with all the savor of his mysticism: *“O Savior, you know what my heart wants to say; it turns to You, fountain of mercy; You see its desires; they tend only to You, they aspire only to You and they want only You”* (CCD:XI:208-209).

Therefore, from the confluence between this desire of God for us and our desire for him flows the desire to know and carry out His will, to embrace the vocation he gives us and to be faithful to him to the end. It is, then, the desire for holiness, *“the desire for great perfection”* (CCD:IX:32). The Founder recommends to the Sisters: *“All of you, say in your hearts: ‘Yes, my God, I desire with all my heart and I resolve to be a true Daughter of Charity, with the help of your holy grace.’ This is how interior acts, like those of faith, hope and charity are made”* (CCD:IX:14). Like a flame that spreads, one desire kindles another and so on. Indeed, it is proper to the desire for God to enkindle the heart of those who believe, hope and love, embracing their whole life and making them ever more receptive to the gifts from on High. In his *Treatise on the Love of God*, St. Francis de Sales stresses that *“the desire to obtain divine love makes us believe, the love obtained makes us contemplate”*. St. Vincent would add that *“the first and surest means of acquiring this love is to ask God for it and to have a strong desire to obtain it”* (CCD:IX:18). It is, then, the very structure of desire that expands the heart, arouses dispositions and encourages the steps towards the desired goal. It is not without reason, then, that the restless Augustine affirmed that to desire is already to desire what is hoped for:

“The Christian's whole life is a holy desire. By making us hope, God enlarges our desire. By making us desire, he enlarges the soul. By enlarging the soul, he makes it capable of receiving. If you desire to see God, you already have faith” (*Treatise on the First Letter of St. John*, 4, 6).

Why this praise of desire at the end of this profile of Ján Havlík? Because he too reveals himself, in likeness to the prophet Daniel, as *“vir desideriorum”*, a man of desire. A merely human view would lead us to say that Havlík's life was a failure because his most ardent desires could not be fulfilled. However, a very different view can be taken of his trajectory. Indeed, as Viktor Frankl wrote, after his terrifying experience in four Nazi concentration camps: *“The last of human freedoms is to choose how to live what we have to live”*. In this sense, there is no doubt that Havlík was a truly free man, whose desires were not ordered to success or mere personal satisfaction, but to fidelity to the greater Good from which all true goods in life come.

Ján's statements and the testimonies of those who knew him attest to his sincere and passionate desire to respond to the gift of the missionary and priestly vocation in line with the Vincentian charism, as a member of the Congregation of the Mission. To this end, he left his family home, entered the Apostolic School, attended the Internal Seminary and began his academic studies clandestinely, accepting the risks that this decision entailed. His seminary and prison companion, Fr. Anton Srholec, wrote:

“I am convinced that his cause and his persecution had an exclusively religious basis. Ján, in fact, wanted to become a priest, to live as a holy member of the Congregation. At that time of religious persecution, such intentions were qualified as political crimes. The communists saw religion as an expression of the Church's functionalism, which meant that, in their view, priests aspired to grow in their careers and functions. On the other hand, they saw religion as something only for old women destined to end their lives with that conviction. Ján Havlík, in his youth and with his uncompromising profession of faith, represented a real provocation for the communists. It clashed with their idea of religion”.

In fact, Ján's companions describe him as a man clearly identified with his vocation, to the point that he already had the traits of what he wanted to be, in response to the Lord's call: a Vincentian missionary and a priest. This esteem for his vocation was reflected in his virtues, in his spirit of faith, in his uprightness and generosity, in his kindness to all and in his austerity of life. We could say, using the words of the apostle, Peter, that the Lord also granted Havlík *“everything that makes for life and devotion, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and power”* therefore it was given to him *“to supplement faith with virtue, virtue with knowledge, knowledge with temperance, temperance with tenacity, tenacity with godliness, godliness with brotherly love, and brotherly love with charity”* (2 Peter 1:3,5-7).

It was the Spirit of God who was at work within this young man, weaving the fabric of Jan's existence with the threads of his grace, molding his desires according to the heart of Christ, to the point of being able to say: *“What shall separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or the sword? No, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us”* (Romans 8:35,37). Havlík's words leave no room for doubt ... in a letter written during the penultimate year of his earthly pilgrimage, he stated

“To live in the presence of the Lord! This is not only a great joy, but also a gift. Who could do it? Certainly no one. It is only possible with the help of the One who gives us strength, in whom we move and exist. Please remember me, so that I may always be a worthy child of God, full of patience and willingness to do God's will”.

In this way, the ardent desires of the first hour, guided by a conscience enlightened by faith, grew ever wider and, steeped in invincible fortitude and evangelical charity, converged in the direction of a growing conformity to Jesus Christ, the Lord, the Master, the Friend of all hours. Then Havlík's desires became one: to live and die for Christ, with Christ and in Christ, in the total gift of himself for the good and salvation of his brothers: *“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit”* (John 12:24). This was the diadem that grounded the most ardent desires of Ján Havlík's heart and constituted the reason for his living in time and eternity. *“The victory that conquers the world is our faith”* (1John 5:4). That is why today we proclaim him martyr and blessed.

“Food” for thought:

- Do I try to cultivate an upright conscience, enlightened by faith, capable of educating my desires and directing them in the direction of what is true, good and beautiful, according to God's will?
- Does the strength of desire impel me to persevere in the good, in my most sincere searches and in fidelity to my vocation, even in the midst of adversity and trials?
- Do I nourish noble and audacious desires that help me to be better: more focused in my spiritual life, more creative in the fulfillment of my duties, more generous in the mission, more fraternal in relationships, etc.?

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[Historical Documents and Archives:]

- The National Archives of Slovakia, records on the persecution of religious figures during the communist regime.
- Vatican Archives, particularly documents related to the beatification and canonization processes.
- Records from the Congregation of the Mission (Vincentians) on Ján Havlík's life and beatification.

[Testimonies and Personal Accounts:]

- Testimonies from Ján Havlík's family members, particularly his mother and sister.
- Accounts from fellow seminarians and prisoners who shared time with Ján Havlík during his imprisonment.
- Statements from Vatican officials and members of the Congregation of the Mission involved in the beatification process.

[Film and Media:]

- Documentaries and films on the life of Ján Havlík, available in Slovakian historical archives and online platforms.
- Interviews and biographical videos about Ján Havlík, accessible on platforms like YouTube and educational websites:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JWVlmkfddv4>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iSmFvEFk69E>

[Church Publications and News:]

- Vatican News articles on the beatification of Ján Havlík.
- Publications by the Congregation of the Mission detailing the life and martyrdom of Ján Havlík.
- Local Slovakian church bulletins and newsletters commemorating Ján Havlík's contributions and beatification.

[These sources provide a comprehensive overview of Ján Havlík's life, his commitment to his faith, his struggles under the communist regime, and his eventual beatification:]
<https://cmglobal.org/en/2024/02/20/rite-of-beatification-of-the-venerable-servant-of-god-jan-havlik/> (Accessed 15 July 2024). This website offers comprehensive details on the beatification process of Ján Havlík and other Vincentian martyrs. It covers his life, contributions, and the recognition by the Church of his martyrdom.

<https://www.janhavlik.sk/en/home-english/> and <https://www.janhavlik.sk/en/profile-of-jan-havlik/> (Accessed 15 July 2024). This website provides a chronological timeline of Ján Havlík's life, including his early years, education, vocational journey, and the persecution he faced under the communist regime.

<https://www.vaticannews.va/sk/vyhľadavanie.html?q=jan%20havl%C3%ADk&in=all&sorting=latest> (Accessed 10 July 2024). This Vatican website provides information on Ján Havlík.

[Vatican]. 2024. *Budúci blahoslavený mučeník Ján Havlík – misionár vo väzení (The future blessed martyr Jan Havlík - missionary in prison)*. Pápež František vo štvrtok 14. decembra pri stretnutí s prefektom Dikastéria pre kauzy svätých

kardinálom Marcellom Semerarom schválil dekrét o mučeníctve Božieho služobníka Jána Havlíka CM (Pope Francis approved the decree on the martyrdom of the Servant of God Jan Havlik CM on Thursday, December 14, during a meeting with the Prefect of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, Cardinal Marcello Semerara).

<https://www.vaticannews.va/sk/vatikan/news/2023-12/buduci-blahoslaveny-mucenik-jan-havlik-misionar-vo-vazeni.html> (Accessed 17 July 2024). This Vatican news informed the approval of Pope Francis to the beatification of Ján Havlik.