



*"bending knees and stretching out empty hands
are the two gestures proper to a free man"*

"These words of Alfred Delp", recalled the young Joseph Ratzinger, "remained impressed in my memory for many years. Often we meditated on them as they gave impetus to our life and our priestly ministry".

Alfred Delp, S.J., was hanged for high treason in Berlin-Plötzensee at the age of 37. He had been condemned to death only a few months before the end of World War II, after a mock trial. The execution took place just after three o'clock in the afternoon of Feb. 2, 1945. It was the feast of the Presentation, one of the days when Jesuits traditionally profess their final vows. At Hitler's command, Delp's ashes were scattered to the winds.

On Saturday 20th August 2011, I was in Madrid, at a Prayer Vigil, during the World Youth Day, on the large esplanade of the Cuatro Vientos Airport, together with a million young people! It was in the evening, the darkness growing thicker as Pope Benedict xvi began his speech. We all knew that at the end of his speech the Pope was going to consecrate all of us, young people, to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

At one point, a veritable hurricane of rain and wind blew in. The lighting and sound systems stopped working and many of the tents on the edge of the esplanade collapsed. The situation was truly dramatic. The Pope was urged by his staff to move away and take shelter, but he would not. He remained seated in his place on the open stage, protected by a simple umbrella flapping in the wind. We all remained silent and waited patiently. After some time, the storm quieted down, the rain stopped and a great and wholly calm took over.

The Pope finished his speech and the wonderful monstrance from Toledo Cathedral was brought for Eucharistic adoration. The Pope knelt in silence before the Blessed Sacrament and behind him, in the darkness, the immense assembly joined in prayer at length in absolute silence. "Dear friends, may no adversity paralyze you. Be afraid neither of the world, nor of the future, nor of your weakness. During this prayer vigil, I urge you to ask God to help you find your vocation. How beautiful is to know that Jesus seeks you, looks at you, and with his unmistakable voice, says to you: "Follow me!".

Joseph Ratzinger, Pope Emeritus Benedict xvi, R.I.P.

fr. Ivano

Father Ivano