

- 1 On this day in 1944 occurred one of the worst-ever train disasters - over 500 people were killed. It wasn't a crash, and the train wasn't even moving when the people died.
- 2 The passenger train had many carriages and a steam engine at each end in case one broke down, but there was no communication system between the two engines.
- 3 The train had entered the El Toro Tunnel in Leon, in northern Spain, when the front engine stopped and the train came to a halt. The engine at the back had just entered the tunnel. Presuming that the front engine was no longer able to pull the train, the engine at the other end started up, ready to back out of the near end of the tunnel.
- 4 At the very same time, the front engine managed to start up again. Each engine was then trying to pull the train in opposite directions within the tunnel, neither realising that the other engine had started up. Both drivers simply thought that more power was needed to pull the lengthy train, and so put more and more coal into the furnace of each of the steam engines. Gases from burning the coal, of course, left the funnel of each of the engines. The gases - particularly carbon monoxide - built up in the tunnel as the two engines opposed each other. The gases soon poisoned and killed over five hundred passengers.
- 5 In our prayer we can bring to mind people who experience stress and tension in their daily lives, feeling pulled in different directions:
  - families that are torn apart;
  - countries where there is civil war, and neighbours who fight each other;

- those who have to consider different viewpoints and then make decisions that will affect many people;
- those people whom disaster, trauma and difficulties have torn apart.

6 *Let us pray:*

**If the word "compassion", Lord, means "to suffer with", lead us to be ready to stand beside those who suffer. Amen.**

This is an excerpt from the page of this date in  
*'Praying Each Day of the Year'*  
a 3-volume book  
by Nicholas Hutchinson, FSC.

For details:

<http://www.matthew-james.co.uk/>

Could make use of a search engine  
to research this topic further.

This material is part of  
the prayer and education website  
of the De La Salle Brothers  
in Great Britain:  
[www.prayingeachday.org](http://www.prayingeachday.org)