

## The Chinese Martyrs

**We need to be reminded daily:** The mission goes on. And so does the struggle. Chinese Catholics today are still being persecuted. Authentic Catholicism is essentially an underground religion in China. And yet there is such great fervor, and devotion. We need to pray, to the Blessed Mother under her title of Queen of Martyrs, for all the martyrs of the world—and for those facing persecution on the other side of the world. We ask that the patroness of that great country, Our Lady of China, watch over them.

The Chinese Martyrs suffered greatly. But we carry in our hearts the beautiful words from the letter of St. John: *The victory that conquers the world is our faith,*” he writes, “...and who indeed is the victor over the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? Friends, that belief transcends all fear, soothes all sorrow, and gives hope to despair.

### Prayer for the Intercession of the Chinese Martyrs

Almighty God, we give you thanks for choosing many Chinese faithful to witness for Christ by giving up their lives. We pray that we may follow the example of these Chinese martyrs by remaining strong in faith, hope, and charity; overcoming fear of hardship and sacrifice; and boldly proclaiming our faith. May the gospel of Jesus Christ be spread throughout China, and may Chinese people in all parts of the world receive the light of faith and the grace to follow Christ each day, so as to enter your everlasting kingdom. We ask this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

### For Reflection:

- What stood out to you about the Chinese Martyrs?
- In learning about some Ann and Chi, what would your response be to hearing their ‘cry of faith’?
- What can we learn from the story of the Chinese Martyrs?

**Socials with the Saints – PILGRIM CENTER of HOPE**

*Guiding People to Christ*

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**Died:** 1648-1930

**Canonized:** 2000 in Rome

**Feast:** July 9

The Church was built on the blood of the martyrs. Nowhere is this more evident than in Rome, the Eternal City, with its Coliseum consecrated by the blood of the early Christians.

Rome is a living testament to the holy sacrifices of men and women who have died for Christ and for the truths of his Church.

Not far from St. Peter's Basilica in Rome is the Church of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, where honor is given to those who gave their lives far from Rome. Jesuit missionaries brought the Catholic faith to China in the 16th and 17th centuries in a manner that was highly respectful of Chinese culture. And early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century; there were martyrs in China. Like Rome's soil – China is crowned with the blood of Christian martyrs, many of whom faced their violent deaths singing the *Te Deum* (*We praise thee, O God: We acknowledge thee to be the Lord*).

### 1898-1900 – in these two years:

Approximately 30,000 Christians are massacred during an uprising against foreigners and Chinese converts to Christianity called the “Boxer Uprising.”

**On October 1, 2000**, Pope John Paul II canonized 120 of them:

- 87 Chinese which included clergy, catechists, parents, children ranging from ages 9 to 72.
- The 33 foreign-born martyrs were mostly priests or women religious, - they were from religious orders such as the Paris Foreign Mission Society, Dominicans, the Jesuits, Franciscans, and Salesian.
- Among this foreign group were: bishops, priests, consecrated religious, seminarians, & lay persons.

**The 120 martyrs in this group died between 1648 and 1930.**

Perhaps the best way to communicate the spirit of China's missionary saints is to tell a couple of the many stories.

One was a 14-year-old Chinese girl named **Ann Wang**, who was killed during the Boxer Rebellion when she refused to apostatize, she refused to leave the Catholic Faith.

She bravely withstood the threats of her torturers, and just as she was about to be beheaded, she courageously said: "The door of heaven is open to all," and repeated the name of *Jesus* three times.

Another of the martyrs was 18-year-old, **Chi Zhuzi**, who entered the Church when he was seventeen after witnessing the piety of the other Catholics in his village.

When the Boxer Uprising grew, his parents objected to him attending Mass. During the Chinese New Year, Chi refused to worship the clan idols and as a result was exiled by his family.

He had to find shelter among the Catholics of his parish. Once the Boxers began more violent persecution of the Catholics in his area, Chi's parents ordered him to return home so they could watch over him. But on his way home, he was caught by Boxers who commanded him to worship the idols in a temple. Chi said he was a Catholic and refused to kneel before the idols. And so the Boxes cut off his arm and were to flay him alive - when Chi yelled out: *Every piece of my flesh, every drop of my blood, will tell you that I am Christian.*

Villagers who witnessed his execution ran to notify his parents, who couldn't save him. Soon after his death, his family, too, became Catholics.

**Augustine Zhao Rong was the first native Chinese priest to become a martyr.** He served as one of the soldiers who escorted Bishop John Gabriel to his martyrdom in Beijing.

The witness of the bishop led Augustine to seek baptism at the age 30. He was ordained a priest five years later and was martyred in 1815.

**By June 1900**, the Chinese Boxers were gathering into large guerilla-military units. They were motivated by their disrespect for foreign intrusion into China. Their belief was in deities, whom they thought would help them be invincible against foreign bullets.

The Boxers directed the bulk of their aggression toward Christian missionaries and converts.

They formed societies such as the Big Sword Society, which their intent on getting rid of foreign culture and religion.

**In early June** the seven sisters, two priests, two bishops, a small group of seminarians, and several lay converts were taken into custody by the governor of Shanxi to be tried in the local court.

They were detained for four days in an old Chinese estate and summoned to appear before a tribunal. On the way there, they were bound and the bishops were repeatedly struck on the head. Witnesses of their march to martyrdom recalled that the sisters calmly sang the *Te Deum*.

The Boxers, numbering around 3,000, rushed forward and hacked randomly at this group Catholics, cutting off arms and legs before finally decapitating them. One of the nuns, Sister Marie was heard saying: *I am happy to suffer, because suffering detaches me from the world. By it, God wants me to prove that I love him above all things.*

Holy Mother Church is indeed built upon the blood of the martyrs, and we do well to remember and honor those whose blood has built her foundation, of which China is a part.

**At their canonization in October 2020, John Paul II said:**

*Chinese men and women of every age and state, priests, religious and lay people, showed the same conviction and joy, sealing their unflinching fidelity to Christ and the Church with the gift of their lives. ...*

*Today, with this solemn proclamation of holiness, the Church intends merely to recognize that those martyrs are an example of courage and consistency to us all, and that they honor the noble Chinese people.*