

VINGENTIANA

**40th year-N°2:
March/April 1996**



**FEATURE:
John Gabriel Perboyre**

CONGREGATION FOR THE CAUSES OF SAINTS

CHINA

The Canonization

of Blessed

JOHN GABRIEL PERBOYRE

professed priest

of the Congregation of the Mission

a martyr

(1802-1840)

DECREE ON THE MIRACLE

Blessed John Gabriel Perboyre was born on 6 January 1802 in a place called Le Puech, in the diocese of Cahors, in France. Having entered the Congregation of the Mission of St Vincent de Paul he took his perpetual vows in 1820 and was ordained a priest in 1825 (1). Ten years later he received permission to go to China as a missionary, where he quickly got involved in the apostolate. When persecution of the Catholic religion broke out he was arrested on 15 September and horribly tortured. On 11 September 1840, in the town of Wu Ehang (2), he was sentenced to death and handed over to be hanged.

He was recognised as being a true martyr for the faith and shortly after his death the Cause for his canonization was begun, and on 10 November 1889 Pope Leo XIII declared him Blessed.

With a view to Canonization, the Postulator of the Cause (3) re-submitted for the judgement of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints the rejected extraordinary cure which took place in 1889 in the town of Heverlé, near Leuven in Belgium, and which was attributed to the intercession of the Blessed. The cure concerned Sister Gabrielle Isoré, a member of the Congregation of the Sisters of

Charity of St Vincent de Paul. In February 1889, at the age of 38, she began to experience pains in her feet. The following month these pains extended to her lumbar regions and then to her neck. They were not, indeed, continuous, but at times were so severe that they brought tears to her eyes and interfered with her sleeping and even her breathing. Her condition got worse, and eventually she was completely affected in the lower limbs and also in the upper right side, with trouble also beginning in the upper left side. Not only was the Sister unable to get up and stand, she could not even be turned round in bed. She also suffered from insomnia, constipation, retention of urine, mental confusion and great difficulty in eating. In September there was a short improvement, but then everything got worse and at the beginning of November the patient was in danger of death, even in the opinion of the doctor. The situation had gone beyond all hope from human effort. The Sister's superior therefore wrote to many religious houses of her Institute asking them to start a novena of prayer in honour of Blessed John Gabriel Perboyre asking for the cure of Sister Gabrielle. She also arranged for a priest of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary (Picpus) to celebrate a novena of masses. During the novena of prayer, in which she joined, the patient's condition worsened. But on 10 November, at four o'clock in the morning, when the patient woke up, she found herself, to her surprise, completely cured. So much so, in fact, that she was able to get up out of bed by herself and, without help, go to the chapel to receive Communion. That same day the Venerable Perboyre was being beatified.

The cure was immediately believed to be extraordinary, and in 1892 the canonical process concerning it took place in the Malines curia. The authority and import of this process were later recognised by the Congregation of Rites on 9 March 1896; a supplementary process of the same curia took place in the same year. In 1901 the Antepreparatory Congregation took place, and in 1903 the Preparatory Congregation in which affirmative, conditional and negative sentences were declared. After this there was a long period of silence. So, not very long ago the Postulator of the Cause, with a view to the canonization of the Blessed, asked the Holy Father that the rejected extraordinary happening be re-examined. On 17 November 1994 the Medical Council unanimously agreed that the cure of Sister Gabrielle Isoré's "ascending polyradiculoneuritis" had been instantaneous, total, permanent and inexplicable according to scientific knowledge. On 21 February 1995 the Special Congress of Theological Consultors took place and on the following 4 April the Ordinary Session of Cardinals and Bishops took place, with the Most Eminent Cardinal Edouard Gagnon as *Ponens* of the Cause. And at both meetings, that of the Consultors and that of the Cardinals and Bishops, an affirmative answer was given to the proposed question as to whether there had been a miracle worked by divine power.

When an accurate report on all these matters had been given to the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II by the undersigned Cardinal Prefect, His Holiness, acceding to the request of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, ordered that the decree on the above-mentioned extraordinary cure be drawn up.

When this had been duly done, the Cardinals were summoned today by the undersigned Cardinal Prefect who is also the *Ponens* of the Cause, and with me, the Bishop Secretary of the Congregation, and the others who are customarily called together, and in their presence, the Most Holy Father declared: *There is question of a miracle worked by God, through the intercession of Blessed John Gabriel Perboyre, a professed Priest of the Congregation of the Mission of St Vincent de Paul, in the matter of the instantaneous, total and permanent cure of Sister Gabrielle Isoré's "ascending polyradiculoneuritis".*

His Holiness wished this decree be published and be reported in the *acta* of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

Given in Rome 6 April A.D. 1995.

ANGELO Cardinal FELICI, *Prefect*

Seal + here

+ Edward Novak, tit. archbishop of
Luni, *Secretary*

(THOMAS DAVITT CM, translator)

Translator's notes:

1. There is documentary evidence that JGP was ordained in 1826, not 1825 as in the Decree.
2. The town where he was executed is Wu Chang, not Wu Ehang as in the Decree.

3. For the Latin *Postulatio Causae* I have used *The Postulator of the Cause* as there is no usual word in English for *postulatio* in this context.

Lent 1996

To the members of the Congregation of the Mission

My very dear Brothers,

The grace of Our Lord be always with you!

May I ask you to think about death. It is a delicate subject, I know, since death is the darkest, most fearful, of human mysteries. Few of us are eager to peer into its depths. But we must not avoid reflecting on it in Lent, since traditionally the season begins with the stark admonition: Remember that you are dust and unto dust you shall return. Simultaneously, the Church, in a sacramental gesture so characteristic of Catholicism, signs our foreheads with the cross, using a graphic symbol of mortality, ashes.

Death is one of the principal Lenten themes. The cross of Christ casts its shadow over the entire season as we prepare to renew our baptismal commitment. St. Paul reminds us straightforwardly about what that involves: "Are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life" (Rm 6:3-4).

Modern society seeks eagerly to flee from the thought of death. Television commercials suggest miraculous salves for wiping away the latest wrinkle and rinses for darkening graying hair. Modern languages creatively invent euphemisms to circumvent the mention of death. People pass away, they leave us, they move on. Yet the fact is: they die. All of us do. No one escapes the inevitable mystery of death.

But as Christians, we view death with resurrection faith. Death cannot be merely a mystery of darkness for us. It is, rather, the dawning of light. We believe that death is the door to life, a new beginning. It is the immersion of the human person in the transcendent mystery of God.

Two events, both connected with death, occupy my mind this Lent. May I ask you to reflect on them with me and offer you a practical suggestion in regard to each.

1. This year we meditate in a special way on the death of one of our brothers, John Gabriel Perboyre, whose canonization we will soon celebrate. In a few days I will be writing to you at greater length about this celebration. Four years before his

death, John Gabriel wrote: "We ought to be ready at any moment that our heavenly Father might want to call us. It is not wise to hope for long years, since a serious sickness or an unexpected death can always come upon us. Our whole life ought to be a continual preparation for a holy death."

John Gabriel recognized the truth that, even when we are living life to the full, we are always in the process of dying. He saw that it is crucial to confront inevitable death in a healthy way. Thus, the saints deal with death soberly. St. Vincent tells us that for the last 18 years of his life, he thought of, and prepared for, his death each day (Abelly, Book I, ch. 51, p. 251). St. Teresa of Avila once stated that we will never do anything worthwhile unless we resolve, once for all, to accept the stark reality of death.

My first suggestion this Lent is that each local community meditate and share its reflections on the death of Perboyre. He is so popular in the Vincentian Family because, it seems to me, his heroic martyrdom captured the imagination of so many of us from the time of formation. The people of China, some of whom I had the privilege of visiting just recently, continue to share in his passion today, as do countless others in Asia, Africa, and numerous countries throughout the world. Each of us too must one day come face to face with the relentless approach of death, even if in a less dramatic form than Perboyre's (my own, if statistics hold true, will occur within the next two decades).

2. This Lent we are publishing a new *Instruction on Stability, Chastity, Poverty, and Obedience in the Congregation of the Mission*. As you read it, I ask you to focus on the vows as a deepening of your baptismal commitment to enter into the dying and rising of the Lord. Our vows have many dimensions, but among the most striking of these is that they proclaim our faith in a transcendent God who raises the dead to life. In vowing to live simply and to share our goods with the poor, we recognize that the kingdom of God offers greater riches than material prosperity (cf. Mk 10:28-30). In freely forgoing marital intimacy and children, we profess our belief that God can multiply our offspring "like the stars in the sky and the sands on the shore of the sea" (Gn 22:17). In putting aside our own "self-determination" in order to serve the needs of others, we trust in a new order, in which "the one who loses his life will find it" (Mt 10:39). In making a life-long commitment to follow Christ as the Evangelizer of the Poor, we express our conviction that the world is, in a sense, upside down, that the poor are the rich in the kingdom of God, that they are first, our "Lords and Masters."

The faithful living of the vows surely involves much dying. It is not easy to remain true to our promised word: to renounce marriage and family, personal wealth, a portion of our individual freedom. To be a servant of the poor to the very end costs us, even if it also has great rewards.

My second Lenten suggestion is this. Meditate on each of the four vows this Lent. Speak about them with others, especially a spiritual director. Find concrete ways to live them more fully and joyfully.

Lent is here once again, with its vivid recollection of the dying and rising of the Lord. The saints, martyrs like Perboyre, and the bearers of the cross today in so many countries surround us as a "great cloud of witnesses" (Heb 12:1) calling us to renew our baptismal commitment, our vows, our missionary fidelity.

I ask you to pray for me, as I will for you, that our Lenten journey together will bring us a fuller share in the Lord's risen life.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.
Superior General

January 29, 1996

To the members of the Congregation of the Mission

My very dear Confreres,

May the grace of Our Lord be always with you!

Today Pope John Paul II officially announced the date for the canonization of John Gabriel Perboyre. It will take place on June 2 in St. Peter's Square. Three saints will be canonized that day. The others are: Egidio Maria di San Giuseppe (an Italian Franciscan) and Juan Grande Román (a Spanish brother of St. John of God).

When I wrote to you last April to say that the canonization process had reached its final phase, I asked that the provinces begin to make remote preparations. I am very grateful for all that has already been done. Almost all of our major Vincentian periodicals have prepared special issues on John Gabriel Perboyre. I have also been struck by how enthusiastically the members of our Vincentian Family throughout the world have responded to the announcement of the upcoming canonization. I have just returned from Taiwan where I had the opportunity to speak about Perboyre. The reaction of the people there, and on the mainland, is touching.

Last April I named a small committee to begin organizing the canonization. It has already met and has made a number of suggestions to the General Council. The committee's mandate includes: a) matters pertaining to the canonization itself (the liturgy, the music, etc.), b) other celebrations that will take place in Rome (there is usually a three-day program, including an audience with the Pope), c) press releases, d) providing information about possibilities of lodging for the many people who will be coming to Rome for the canonization. The members are: Frs. Roberto D'Amico, Giuseppe Guerra, William Sheldon, and André Sylvestre. Now that the date has been announced, we have expanded its membership and asked that it serve as a working committee that will be involved in the many details related to the proximate preparation for the canonization. The new members are: Frs. Mario Di Carlo, Carlo Braga, Luigi Mezzadri, and Srs. Manuela Latini and Nevia Delle Monache.

The date which the pope chose for the canonization coincides, unexpectedly, with that of the meeting of all of the Visitors of the Congregation in Salamanca, which we had announced more than two years ago. Some change in scheduling is, therefore, necessary, but I trust that any inconvenience the Visitors might have in readjusting will be more than counterbalanced by the opportunity to be present at the canonization! The Visitors' Meeting, therefore, will begin on the morning of

June 5, two days later than originally scheduled, but will still end on June 15 at supper. The Visitors will soon be receiving more detailed information about possible arrangements for their participation in the canonization and for the meeting in Salamanca.

Today, let me recall several of the objectives of this celebration, which I outlined in my letter of April 20, 1995:

1. I encourage you to use this occasion, in all the provinces, to call young people to the Vincentian missionary vocation of evangelization and formation. I ask each province to organize concrete pastoral projects, with this as their objective. In other words, I urge the popular mission teams, the seminary staffs, the parish priests, those working at vocational promotion, those teaching in our schools and universities, and those laboring in foreign missions to design programs, during the coming months, in which our missionary vocation is presented to the young.

2. I ask that every province organize an appropriate liturgical celebration, involving members of all the branches of the Vincentian Family, around the time of the canonization.

3. I ask too that, in all of the provinces, we make this an occasion to focus once more on our mission in China: recalling the sacrifices of those who labored there in the past, expressing gratitude for the fidelity of those who continue to live there and witness to Christ, and looking forward to a future work of evangelization in China, where the number of Christians is growing rapidly and where there are many candidates for the priesthood and community life.

There is a time for celebrating, especially within families. This is surely one of them. We rejoice that one of our brothers, who lived and died for the Lord, shares in Jesus' risen life. In canonizing John Gabriel Perboyre, the Church holds him up as a model. He is surely that for us since he fulfilled the purpose of the Congregation of the Mission in a heroic way, as he followed Christ the Evangelizer of the Poor. "This purpose," our Constitutions tell us, "is achieved when, faithful to St. Vincent, the members individually and collectively:

1° make every effort to put on the spirit of Christ himself (CR I, 3) in order to acquire a holiness appropriate to their vocation (CR XII, 13);

2° work at evangelizing the poor, especially the more abandoned;

3° help the clergy and laity in their formation and lead them to a fuller participation in the evangelization of the poor" (C 1).

John Gabriel lived out each of these three aspects of Vincentian life fully: he was recognized as a genuinely holy man, even before his martyrdom; he spent long

years in the formation of the clergy; he gave his life evangelizing the poor on mainland China. In short, he witnessed heroically to what the Congregation of the Mission is all about.

I am reading Perboyre's letters right now and have been struck by how much he loved the Company. "I would give a thousand lives for it," he wrote to his uncle on September 13, 1835. I hope that we can make this celebration an occasion for renewed love for the Congregation and for the missionary vocation that St. Vincent has handed on to us.

My prayer on June 2 will be for the whole Company, that we might be heroic witnesses to the following of Christ as the Evangelizer of the Poor and that we might live and die faithfully in that vocation.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.
Superior General

**Appointments and confirmations
by the Superior General**

DATE	NAME	OFFICE	PROVINCE
02/01/96	José Carlos Chacorowski	Director D.C. 1/6	Curitiba

John Gabriel Perboyre
John Gabriel Perboyre, C.M.
Martyr and first Saint of China

*By Joseph Chow Chihyi, C.M **

The great news of the Canonization of John Gabriel Perboyre is a source of rejoicing for us and invites us to give thanks to the good God, and also to our Holy Father, His Holiness John Paul II, whom God has inspired to canonize him. Let us sing a “Te Deum” because it is a great honour for all the Congregation, and in particular, for the Chinese Confreres and Missionaries of China.

I. The Blood of John Gabriel stimulates our zeal for souls

Let us imitate the zeal of John Gabriel who, with insistence, asked to be sent to China to save the infidels. Having prayed fervently, he went and prostrated himself at the feet of the Superior General, Fr. Salhorgne, to beg him for leave to go to China to save the heathen. It is zeal which enabled him to put up with hunger and thirst for the greater glory of God in his pastoral ministry. It is zeal for souls that drove him to be always ready, day and night, to hasten wherever his ministry called him. He thought nothing of weariness or lack of sleep.

* Fr. Joseph Chow Chihyi, born on 20 October 1907, was a seminary professor, then Visitor of Northern China from 1954 to 1963. He is now in Taiwan.

It is zeal for souls which enabled him to reply to the judge, “I shall refuse until death to deny my Lord, or trample the Crucifix under foot.” Finally, it is due to his zeal for souls that he underwent more than twenty interrogations, in the midst of torments and most cruel sufferings, kneeling bare-legged on iron chains. In a word, he endured every suffering without the slightest complaint.

He lived only 38 years on this earth. His time among us was short, but he accomplished a great deal. Born on 6th January 1802, he was martyred on 11th September 1840. His stay on earth passed like a lightning flash. His zeal for souls drove him to go to China to save the Chinese, and even the whole world; his charity for the pagans, and his ardent love for God, brought him to his martyrdom. “He who lacks zeal, is also lacking in the love of God,” says St. Augustine. And, St. Paul can say “woe to me if I do not preach the Good News.” Are we charitable and zealous enough to evangelise the poor as John Gabriel did? Are we worthy to be his confreres?

II. John Gabriel Perboyre, model of self-denial

Amongst the wonderful virtues of John Gabriel is the great self-denial which he showed in a spectacular manner when his superiors sent him to Paris in 1821 to continue his studies. On this occasion, he was allowed to visit his family, but despite his tender love for

them, he declined this very legitimate satisfaction, replying to the superior who made him the offer, “St. Vincent went only once to visit his family, and regretted doing so; with your permission I will offer this sacrifice to God.”

John Gabriel’s self-denial was demonstrated especially in China, where he lived alone in the absence of all human support, with no protection, except that of Providence, in a non-Christian country, surrounded by enemies. His energy was admirable, not only when falling into the hands of pagans, but during the long months of his captivity, and when the hour of his immolation struck.

III. China, country of many martyrs, seed of Christians

China, the land of martyrs and apostles, was rendered fertile by the blood of Vincentians and Daughters of Charity. As Tertulian put it, “The blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians.” It is for this reason that I wish to cite for you the names of the Vincentian martyrs and victims in China.

— Blessed Francis Regis Clet C.M., who set out for China in 1791. When, in 1818 persecution redoubled its violence, he was thrown into prison, condemned to death on 1st January 1820, and on 17th February of that year, died for the Faith, by strangulation at Outch’ang, Hubei. On 9th July 1843 he was declared Venerable by Pope Gregory XVI. On 27th May 1900, Pope Leo XIII proclaimed this martyr “Blessed.”

— In 1825, Francois Cheng C.M., prison companion of Blessed Francis Regis Clet was condemned to exile and massacred.

— In 1840, Blessed John Gabriel Perboyre was martyred at Outch’ang, Hubei. On 11th September he was attached to a gallows, a post in the form of a cross. He was beatified by Pope Leo XIII in Rome on 10th September 1889. He will soon be canonized by Pope John Paul II.

— In 1857, Fernand Montels was beheaded along with two Christian companions, because they persisted in proclaiming themselves priest and Christians.

— In 1870, Claude Marie Chevalier and Vincent Ou, both Lazarists, were choked to death at Tientsin.

— On 21st June 1870, 10 Daughters of Charity were massacred at Tientsin.

— In 1900 and 1901, during the Boxer Revolution, 3 confreres (Maurice Doré, Pascal d’Addosio and Jules Garrigues) were massacred and burned.

— In 1903, André Tsu C.M., a young confrere aged 28, was torn to pieces by the pagans. His chest was opened up in the shape of a cross.

— In 1906, Jean Marie Lacruche C.M., was massacred in the town of Nanchang, Jiangxi.

— In 1907, Antoine Canduglia was beheaded.

— In 1937, the massacre of Monsignor Francis Xavier Schraven C.M., Bishop of Tchengting, together with 8 others took place. On the evening of 9th September, about 7 p.m., after the visit to the Blessed Sacrament in the Bishop’s Residence, there were 40 of us priests in the refectory for the evening meal. Because of the Sino-Japanese war, we had been unable to leave the Cathedral of Tchengting after the retreat which had lasted from 19th to

28th August. Almost immediately after the soup was served, 9 Europeans were arrested by the Japanese. Only one, an old Trappist of Notre-Dame de Liesse, named Fr. Alberic, escaped the massacre. He had been dining in his room because of his age and infirmity. The 9 victims were Monsignor Schraven, the Bishop of the Vicariate of Tchengting, aged 65, a native of Holland; Lucien Charny C.M., French, aged 55; Thomas Ceska, Austrian, Assistant Superior, aged 65; Eugene Bertrand, French, aged 32, the Bursar of the Vicariate; Gerard Vouters C.M., a Dutch missionary, aged 28; Anthony Geerts C.M., a Dutch lay brother, aged 62; Vladislav Prinz C.M., a Polish lay brother, aged 28; Fr. Emmanuel, a French Trappist of Notre-Dame de Liesse, aged 60, as well as layman of Czech nationality, named Biscopich, who was in Tchengting to repair the Cathedral organ.

— In 1940, at Kao-cheng, Shing-An, in the Vicariate of Tchengting, Father Laurent Ch'enn, a diocesan priest, was buried alive, together with his catechist, by the Communists, half-way between Siao-kuan-yang and his residence. He had just come from giving the Sacrament of Extreme Unction to a dying man. They were killed because the priest had reprimanded a woman who had had dishonourable contact with Communists.

In 1945 at Tchengting, Louis Uao, a diocesan priest, was imprisoned and later condemned to forced labour, as a result of which he died.

In 1947, in Tchengting, Joseph K'ung C.M., a colleague of Monsignor Job Ch'enn C.M., was condemned to death by a so-called People's Jury, then executed on the pretext that he had collaborated with the Japanese during the Sino-Japanese War.

— In 1950, at Che-kia-Tch'oang, in the Vicariate of Tchengting, Jacques Chao C.M. and Jacques Ou, a diocesan priest, were condemned to death. Before the execution, they were shackled and forced into a lorry to form part of a parade of prisoners in the streets of the town. The two victims shouted loudly, "Long live the Catholic Church, the Pope and the Chinese Republic." They sang the Ave Maria in Latin and called out, "Down with Communists." They were then executed by beheading.

— In 1950, at Nanchang, Jiangxi, it was the turn of the arch bishop, Monsignor Joseph Chow T'si-che C.M., who taught Latin to Joseph Chow Chihyi C.M., in the seminary. During their occupation of Mainland China, the Communists proposed to Monsignor Chow that they would have him appointed "Pope of the Patriotic Church of Communist China," with the intention of separating this so-called "patriotic" church from the Roman Catholic Church. One day some insidious Communist leaders contacted him and made known their intention in visiting him. But, Monsignor answered them with marvelous, even piquant adroitness, as follows: "Thank you for your visit. Your idea is praiseworthy, but it is impossible for me to be Pope Communist China, since Communist China is too small to have Pope. If you could propose me as Pope of the Universal Church, would willingly accept. Otherwise, it is useless to discuss the matter". The Communists departed angrily; the archbishop was put under surveillance, and later imprisoned. He died in a forced-labour camp 1972, after 22 years of imprisonment.

— In 1951, in Beijing, Pierre Souen C.M., Director of the Beijing Seminary, was imprisoned. His chains were so tight, that his wounds became gangrenous. He died on 16th September 1951.

— Miracles. According to some people who came back from I Beijing after visiting relatives on the Mainland, some people prayed near the tomb of Fr. Pierre Souen, to obtain his intercession for a cure, which several of them did obtain, thanks be to God.

— Paul Tchang C.M. and Fr. Ignace Ts'i, a diocesan priest of the Beijing Diocese, were imprisoned on the same day as Fr. Souen.

— In 1952, in Tientsin, Jean Chao C.M., was condemned to the forced labour; since then there has been no news of him.

Finally, it must be stated that the most violent persecution took place between 1965 and 1967, during the great “Cultural Revolution.” At that time, the priests and people who remained faithful to Rome, was could not escape prison or forced-labour camps.

Having mentioned our Vincentian martyrs, or victims of persecution, I conclude this glorious record with that saying of Tertulian, mentioned already, “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of Christians.” May their blood be the seed of many vocations for the two families of St. Vincent de Paul. It is by means of the blood of Blessed John Gabriel, of Francis Regis Clet and all the other martyrs who died for the Faith that we have received those marvelous spiritual benefits listed in “The Vincentian Missions of China (14th year 1936-1937),” which I hope to bring to light in the following pages.

IV. Spiritual Benefits

a) Formation of Native Clergy by the Vincentians in the Fourteen Vicariates

The object of the following lines is to point out that the Lazarists never lost sight of the recommendations which St. Vincent used to make to his missionaries, when sending them to evangelise the poor country people, nor of the double objective given them by the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, when confiding to them the mission of China — this is, the conversion of infidels and the formation of a native clergy.

To start with, in 1721, Fr. Muneller C.M., had opened a seminary in Macao. Of the 8 seminarists, 3 were ordained priests, 2 becoming Lazarists. Fr. Muneller himself was teaching Latin. The 2 ordained Lazarists were Frs. Shu and Paul Sou.

In 1802, Fr. Chislain C.M., had been confirmed as Superior of in the Lazarist Mission of Beijing, in succession to Fr. Raux C.M. Being a competent physicist, he could have been a member of the Academy of Mathematics, but declined the offer made him on behalf of an other confrere. In fact, his preference was for continuing in the country mission field and, in particular, in the formation of Chinese priests, with the help of Fr. Ferreti C.M., and a Chinese Lazarist, Fr. Joseph Han, who was the Assistant Director of the Novitiate. Up to that point, the Lazarists had completed the formation of 25 young confreres. In his lifetime, Fr. Chislain saw 18 of his students ordained priests.

Up to the year 1746, only 2 Chinese had been ordained priests for the Community; by 1852, in the whole of China, there were 25 Chinese of the total of 43 Lazarists. In 1859, 29 of the total of 56 Lazarists were Chinese nationals. By 1873, of the 125 Vincentians in China, a total of 105 were Chinese priests.

To achieve the object of forming a native clergy, each Apostolic Vicariate under control of the Congregation had, by 1900, its own seminaries (both major and minor) as follows:

- A Regional Major Seminary in the Vicariate of Ningbo (until 1937) with 15 seminarists.
- A Vincentian Major Seminary set up in 1902 at Kianshin, Tchekiang, with 45 seminarists.
- A Vincentian Major Seminary founded in 1909 at Chala, Beijing, which from 1920 on became the Regional Seminary, with 90 major seminarists.

According to the statistics of “Missions Lazaristes” (1936-1937) there were 260 major seminarists throughout all 14 Vincentian Vicariates, with 875 minor seminarists, while 637 priests had been “formed” by the Lazarists in China, of whom 450 joined the Congregation.

On 24th June 1926, Pope Pius XI, appointed 6 Chinese Bishops, including 2 Vincentians, and a diocesan priest formed by the Vincentians. Monsignor Joseph Hu C.M., Bishop of Taizhou; Meichoïr Souen C.M., Bishop of Ankou, Hubei and Monsignor Philippe Chao, Bishop of Suan-hoa.

Fourteen priests trained by the Lazarists were raised to the episcopate, among whom the Vicariate of Tchengting contributed 3 arch bishops and 3 bishops.

b) List of Christians in the fourteen Vincentian Vicariates in China

These are the statistics from “The Vincentian Missions of China” (1936-1937).

a) In Hebei Province, comprising 7 Vicariates (Beijing, Tch engting, Yongping, Baoding, Tientsin, Ankuo and Shungtei) there were 226 diocesan priests, 174 religious priests, 607 minor seminarists with 83 in the major seminary. There were 21,666 adult baptisms, 12,209 baptisms of infants, with 542,874 Christians.

b) The Province of Zhejiang comprising 3 Vicariates (Ningbo, Hangzhou and Taizhou) had 80 diocesan priests, 74 religious priests, 81 minor seminarists, with 25 in the major seminary, 3,144 baptisms of adults, with 4,095 infant baptisms, and 100,236 Christians.

c) In Jiangxi Province, made up of 4 Vicariates (Nanchang, 56 Kiang, Yukiang and Ganzhou) there were 55 diocesan in priests, 93 religious priests, 185 students in the minor seminary and 16 in the major seminary, while there were 2,760 adult baptisms, 3,583 infant baptisms, making a total of 98,826 Christians.

c) Lazarists in Taiwan (Republic of China)

Four mission districts were handed over to the Lazarists in Tai wan since 1952. It was thus that the Dutch arrived in 1952 in the Diocese in Taipei, where they worked in 6 parishes. The Americans arrived next in 1953 in the Diocese of Tainan, where they run 5 parishes. After that, other Americans came to the Diocese of Kaohsiung, where they have 5 parishes. Finally, some Chinese confreres came to Sze-hu in Kiayi Diocese, where they have 4 parishes.

In 1963, Fr. William Slattery, Superior General, sent Fr. Joseph Chow Chih-yi, Visitor of the Province of Northern China, as delegate, to make a visitation of the Chinese confreres.

In 1965, St. Vincent's School was set up at Sze-hu for the purpose of recruiting vocations, and in 1987 an Internal Seminary was opened.

In our 4 districts of Taiwan, we have 16,248 Christians, 32 Lazarist priests, of whom 16 are Chinese with 1 lay brother.

V. Conclusion

My aim in making this presentation of the spiritual fruits of our mission in our 14 Vicariates in Continental China, and in Taiwan is to ask the prayers of readers on the occasion of the Canonization of John Gabriel Perboyre, and to thank the good God for the graces obtained by the blood of the martyrs and other Vincentian victims.

Finally, we would like the Vincentian Province of China to organise a pilgrimage to Rome in order to assist at the Canonization ceremonies, a pilgrimage in which both confreres and delegates from the parishes confided to us can participate and also, perhaps, priests from Taiwan who might volunteer to come.

Let us finish by singing "Haec dies quam fecit Dominus, exultemus et laetemur in ea," because we have a confrere who is the first martyr saint of China.

(Andrew Spelman, C.M., translator)

JOHN GABRIEL PERBOYRE

Thomas Davitt C.M.

John Gabriel Perboyre was born in 1802 on his father's farm, Le Puech, near the village of Montgesty about 70 miles north of Toulouse, the eldest of eight. His uncle, Jacques Perboyre, was a Vincentian who had survived the French Revolution and afterwards had established a boarding school for boys in Montauban. John Gabriel's father wanted some further education for his second son Louis beyond what was available in the local school, so he decided to send him to Jacques' school in Montauban. John Gabriel was the eldest son and was to inherit the farm, so it was not considered necessary for him to proceed beyond primary education. However, as Louis was only nine his father decided to send John Gabriel, aged fourteen, to Montauban to keep Louis company from November till Easter. After that he would be needed at home on the farm.

When his father arrived in Montauban to bring John Gabriel home he met with an unexpected reception. The teachers had suggested to Jacques that John Gabriel should continue his studies and enter the major seminary. Jacques passed on this suggestion to his brother and nephew; it was a surprise to both of them. After his father had gone home alone John Gabriel had time to think. On 16 June 1817 he wrote to his father:

My dear Father,

After you left town I thought over your suggestion that I should take up Latin. I prayed to God to know what life I should choose in order to arrive safely in heaven. After lots of prayers I came to the conclusion that I should study for the priesthood, so I've started Latin, but with the intention of giving it up if you don't agree with what I'm doing...

Jacques got him special lessons from a priest, who later wrote to him: "You were kind enough to hand him over to me for special attention. I had a good foundation to work on and he amazed me with his progress...". Thirteen years after his death Bishop Jean-Henri Baldus CM wrote:

I always thought him very intelligent, a deep mind capable of dealing with any sort of scientific, philosophical or literary subject; in such matters there were few confreres of his time, I think, who were his equal...

In his last year at school a mission was given in Montauban by the Vincentians and John Gabriel decided he'd like to join the Congregation. As the Congregation had been suppressed during the Revolution there was no internal seminary in France in 1818. His uncle's suggestion of starting one in his house in Montauban was accepted and John Gabriel was received there on 10 March 1818, two months after his sixteenth birthday, the first seminarist in France since the Revolution; two more were received later that year. During his time there he completed his secondary education, then began philosophy while teaching one of the junior classes. He took his vows in 1820 and then went to Paris to start theology. His uncle arranged his travel so that he could meet his parents, the first time since leaving home.

In October 1823 he was sent to Montdidier, between Paris and Amiens. The Congregation had a boys' boarding school there, and John Gabriel was given charge of the lowest class, with eight boys. In April 1824 he went back to Paris to be ordained sub-deacon, and returned to Montdidier to teach philosophy. In May 1825 he was back in Paris to be ordained deacon.

That year he was issued with an internal passport which has survived. It shows he was 1m 65cm (about 5'6") in height, with black hair coming down over the forehead, brown eyebrows, grey-black eyes, ordinary nose, small mouth, black beard (i.e. stubble), round chin, round face, ruddy complexion. He returned to Montdidier for another year's teaching.

On 24 August 1826 he wrote to his father:

In your letter of 9 June you give out to me for not writing to you and you urge me, both strongly and lovingly, to show a bit more diligence in this matter. After that I couldn't very well try to make excuses for myself for this further delay of two months. However, I'll say first of all that the reason for the delay is not forgetfulness, for since I got your letter not a single day has passed, I think, without my thinking of it. I could then add that lack of opportunity must take some of the blame. The day normally starts for us at four o'clock and never ends until nine or ten, and often what we have to do keeps us going till midnight. Above all, as the holidays draw near our work doubles, just as yours does at harvest time. A week ago I started a letter to Father Gizard and I'd no sooner started it than I had to break off, and it's only today that I got a chance to take it up again. Finally, my dear Father, I was putting off my reply so that I could tell you whether I'd be staying on in Montdidier for another year. I had some hope that I might be going to Montauban. My uncle made great attempts to get me but I now know that I'm not being appointed there. It seems certain, though that I'll be changed, and if little rumours which have reached me can be believed I may even be sent somewhere in the Quercy region. Be that as it may, I'll let you know my

new appointment before leaving Paris; I'm going to be there in a fortnight's time and don't expect to be leaving it until the end of September.

So, my very dear Father, the day isn't very far off when the Lord is to place on my shoulders the yoke of priesthood; that day will be the greatest of my life. What happiness for me if I could receive the priesthood with all the necessary dispositions! What a source of grace for myself and others! God's mercy must be very great for him to select such unworthy servants; you know how little I deserve such an extraordinary favour. Pray to our Lord, please, that I don't waste the graces he wants to give me.

In a month's time I'll be a priest, as I'm to be ordained on 23 September.

On 23 September 1826 he was ordained priest in the chapel of the Daughters of Charity in the rue du Bac, Paris. Many biographies put his ordination in 1825, but the above letter and several other documents show that 1826 was the year.

He was appointed to Saint Flour, less than 100 miles from his home, to teach theology. Shortly after his arrival he wrote to his father:

I'm very pleased with my new appointment. It looks as though the Auvergne climate will suit me just as well as that of Picardy; my health couldn't be better. I got here about three weeks ago; important work didn't leave me a moment to write to you before now; I hope you'll forgive me as you have done so many times before.

At the end of the academic year his uncle made another effort to get him for Montauban, but he was re-appointed to Saint Flour but to new work. In a letter to his brother Louis, who was in the internal seminary in Paris, John Gabriel describes his summer: Twelve days at home in La Puech, three in Cahors, twelve in Montauban, one in Toulouse, four or five in Carcassonne or Montolieu; the trip was long in distance but short in time, useful, pleasant and not too expensive.

His new job was to take charge of a boarding school for boys who intended to become priests. He held this post for five years and was later described as the man who put the place on a stable footing. Thirteen letters to his brother Louis have survived from this period. In May 1828 he told Louis that he was busier than Louis realised, with class every day, acting as "bursar, etc.", and being wanted by everyone, for everything at every moment. Louis is getting the letter only because John Gabriel neglected a cold and is in bed for a week. Louis was studying philosophy and had suggested a philosophical debate by correspondence. John Gabriel says he is no longer professor of philosophy, but suggests one on French grammar, and then lists all the grammatical errors in Louis' letter!

Louis told his brother that he wanted to go to China after ordination. John Gabriel suggests he take some courses in physics, as that subject would be useful there. Towards the end of the letter he writes:

Don't make so many demands on me. If you knew the state I'm in you wouldn't treat me so pitilessly. Although we still have only 100 boys I'm overwhelmed with work. I'm extremely tired mentally and physically. I don't know what the outcome will be of a general malaise which I've had for a long time and which is getting progressively worse.

Later he writes:

The Easter fortnight which for most priests is a period of much work is one of rest for me. The boys are on holidays. I needed this break. During the last six months I don't think I've had two days without my head splitting, aches in all my limbs and my blood all on fire. Nothing wears me down like the details of administration; nothing saps my strength like worry.

He never met his brother again, as Louis left for China after ordination and died at sea.

In his work at Saint Flour John Gabriel was influenced by the educational theories of Lamennais. In August 1832 Lamennais' ideas were condemned by Gregory XVI, and when John Gabriel returned to Saint Flour at the end of the summer holidays he found a letter awaiting him, appointing him Assistant Director of the internal seminary in Paris. In a letter at the time John Gabriel acknowledged that he accepted the decision of the Holy See on Lamennais.

The Director was a 65 year old pre-Revolution confrere, and the following year there were more than twenty seminarists, so John Gabriel had plenty to do. He was also appointed secretary of a sub-commission to study pre-Revolution community decrees.

One of the two confreres ordained with John Gabriel was Jean-Baptiste Torrette; he was immediately sent to China. In March 1834 John Gabriel wrote to him:

I used to flatter myself that I'd be able to go and join you later on but the precarious state of my health and, above all, my unworthiness seem to preclude for ever such a fine ambition. My position as Director of Novices enables me to compensate you amply for having failed you myself; I'll do my best to encourage any vocations for China which appear.

John Gabriel sent his uncle the Superior General's New Year letter of 1835, a quarter of which was about China. Three weeks later he sent him Part 3 of Volume I of the *Annales de la Mission*, also about China. These two documents reflect the thinking in the Mother House at the time, and it is not surprising that John Gabriel's thoughts also turned towards China. For the last half of 1834 he had been trying to get appointed to China but the Superior General and his council insisted that his health was not good enough. Finally they asked the doctor, and he gave permission. In February 1835 he wrote to his uncle:

I've great news for you. God has just granted me a very precious favour which I certainly don't deserve. When he was pleased to give me a vocation to the priesthood the main reason which made me answer his call was the hope of being able to preach to pagans the good news of salvation. Since then I've never really lost sight of this target, and above all the idea of the Chinese mission always made my heart beat faster.

After his death Antoine-François Peyrac, a late vocation who had been professor of philosophy in Saint Flour before entering the internal seminary, remembered him as Director:

He had a particular gift for going back to the truths of theology to seek out in depth the reasons for, and the meaning of, spiritual exercises and maxims of spirituality. He was especially attracted to the great masters, St Thomas and St Bonaventure, for example; he also thought a lot of Monsieur Olier. In order to heal more effectively he knew how to bide his time, turn a blind eye, go easy, when dealing with spiritual ills. His zeal was unhurried, never crude, and without bitterness; what he wanted to achieve he went for wisely, determinedly and with strength, calmly making use of the means available.

He sailed from Le Havre with two confreres, Joseph Gabet and Joseph Perry, in March 1835. They arrived the Portuguese colony of Macao at the end of August. In his first letter from Macao he says he has begun studying Chinese:

I think it will take me a long time to learn this language; going by first indications I won't be as successful as Fathers Gabet and Perry. It's said that Father Clet spoke it only with difficulty. May I, right to the end, be like that venerable confrere whose long apostolic life was crowned with the glorious palm of martyrdom...

Just before Christmas he left for the interior of China, a journey of 600 miles by sea, then 600 or 800 overland. He arrived at his destination in Ho-nan Province in mid-August 1836. He wrote twelve letters within a week of his arrival. In one of them, to a fellow-sufferer in Paris, he asks for "two or three trusses for an inguinal hernia of the right side", as he can't manage without one.

The twelfth is to his father, his first letter to him for two and a half years, and in it he wrote:

If we have to suffer martyrdom it would be a great grace given to us by God; it's something to be desired, not feared.

In spite of his protestations to the contrary it is clear that his health was a continuing problem. He was seriously ill in the autumn of 1836. Eight years after John Gabriel's death Bishop Jean-Henri Baldus CM took issue with something in Jean-Baptiste Etienne's obituary notice of John Gabriel. Etienne had written that John Gabriel got up regularly at four o'clock every morning:

I simply want to get the point across that our dear confrere couldn't get up at four without serious repercussions which would prevent his doing almost anything for the entire day. That's what he told me. So, even though it may be edifying to read the opposite in his Notice this latter, nevertheless, makes those who knew the facts stop for a moment for a bit of reflection. One sees in many notices, Annales de la Propagation de la Foi, and those of our own Congregation, statements which are so far from the truth as to be hurtful, and even cast doubt on the whole thing and reduce the value of reading them.

In December 1836 he preached in Chinese for the first time and then went on his first mission. After more than a year in China he wrote that anyone who had not personally experienced life there cannot understand missionaries' problems; for that reason he suggested that there should always be in Macao and Paris experienced confreres to act as intermediaries between the missionaries and the central administration.

Although he had specifically asked for trusses for a right-side hernia, those that arrived were for the left, and useless. The correct ones did not arrive till August 1839: Two lots arrived, as two different confreres ordered them, unknown to each other. He was criticised for the expense involved, and for things he had written about the administration. He apologised, but would not retract one point: the necessity of a confrere who had actually experienced missionary life in China being involved in administrative decisions in Macao and Paris.

From September 1838 till Pentecost 1839 he gave seventeen missions. He was then supposed to go on a round of visits to mission stations, but another confrere replaced him "out of pity for his poor legs". This meant that in September 1839 he was in Kou-tchen when a band of soldiers arrived. He was at breakfast with Giuseppe Rizzolati OFM and Jean-Henri Baldus CM. Rizzolati and Baldus ran off in one direction, John Gabriel in the opposite. The soldiers looted the house and set it on fire accidentally. John Gabriel was found in a wood the next day and arrested.

An account of his arrest was written later by Evariste Huc CM. In 1841 Baldus wrote to Paris pointing out that Huc's account had many errors, and that Huc had been nowhere near the place of John Gabriel's arrest at the time. Huc says that a catechumen met the soldiers, who explained that they were looking for the priest. According to Huc the catechumen asked what they would pay for information, and they said "Thirty taels". Then the catechumen pointed out John Gabriel. Baldus says this is incorrect; the soldiers so frightened the man that he betrayed John Gabriel through fear, and Huc's detail about an agreed price is "romantic and, at a minimum, very exaggerated". Baldus deals with this in another letter as well:

Secondly, the handing over, or betrayal, was brought about not by money but by fear, for Father Perboyre's supposed guide had been beaten up, according to the messengers from Hou-pé.

André Yang CM confirms this.

During the early period of his imprisonment he was treated very well, by orders of the mandarin. Later, however, another mandarin changed this, as Bishop François-Alexis Rameaux CM explained in a letter:

...he was interrogated and endured all the sufferings reserved for the worst criminals: he was made to kneel on iron chains, on pieces of broken crockery, and beaten in all sorts of ways, with the result that his flesh hung off him in strips.

This is confirmed by André Yang CM, who successfully passed himself off as a merchant who was studying the prison system and was able to visit the prisoner, bring him food and hear his confession. Many of the prison guards assured Yang that John Gabriel would be well treated.

The crime he was charged with was quite clear: he had entered China illegally to preach Christianity "and to deceive and seduce the people". He was, of course, guilty on that charge and was sentenced to strangulation on a cross-shaped gibbet, the sentence being carried out on 11 September 1840. Rameaux wrote:

...he was strangled in accordance with all the Chinese rules, that is to say in three stages, and a kick in the lower abdomen put an end to his sufferings.

A fortnight after the execution Baldus wrote to Jean-Baptiste Torrette CM, who was ordained with John Gabriel; only this part of the letter has survived:

If you were to ask me what's being said about Fathers Rameaux and Perboyre do you think I'd have nothing but praise to pass on from both Christians and confreres? Speaking only of Father Perboyre, on whom you counted so much in Macao and from whom you expected great things, I don't know what it was about him that displeased the Chinese, but of all the Europeans I have seen in China I haven't seen one who was less to their liking. His great merit would not have been appreciated here; he would have ended up not making a success of it. These are Father Rameaux' words, and he also used to say that if you haven't a better idea of how to get a move on you shouldn't come to China. In many areas the Christians showed great reluctance to have him, made great efforts and used many ruses to get someone else, some other European, but not myself. I know that the question of his physical appearance had nothing to do with it.

Alas! Perhaps I'm going too far, but I feel sort of bound to let you know. In my opinion, and I was there, and in that of all the other confreres, both European and Chinese, the reason for the persecution being so violent was because Father Perboyre was caught. If he was caught, then, humanly speaking, it was because he was a wet hen, and through his own stupidity.

There's no point in going into details. It wasn't just a question of having legs, but rather of being quick. Everyone agrees on this; the Christians are well able to repeat it; in a similar situation Father Rameaux would not have been caught. Our belongings, our vestments, would not have been destroyed. The other confreres counted on Father Perboyre, who had recently been appointed assistant superior. I saved only the money and myself.

Such happenings, when attributable to Providence alone, raise no problems for Christians, but when personal blame enters in there is always something which hurts.

Anyway, knowing Father Perboyre's personal holiness I'm quite convinced that he is not guilty in the sight of God, and I'd willingly change places with him...

THE HOLINESS OF J. G. PERBOYRE

André Sylvestre, C.M.

More than 150 years after his death, we are getting ready to canonize our confrere John Gabriel Perboyre. Some troublemakers might say: "*He was not holy enough for this!*" But we need to imitate the models that the Church gives us. Then they might say: "*He is hardly someone to imitate _ not everyone can be martyred in China!*" That is quite obvious. But even so I would insist that even if he were not a martyr, he would still merit to be honored as a saint.

I do not think that anyone could come to a voluntary acceptance of martyrdom without being prepared by a life of holiness. Heroism is desirable, but it cannot be improvised at the last moment _ requires long training. Anyone who weaves little failures into each day of life will not suddenly be transformed into a hero.

Some confreres have said to me, "*Your John Gabriel is so perfect I am driven to despair!*" They would probably prefer that he were like this monk I know at the Abbey of St. Mary of the Desert, about 20 miles from Toulouse. The dear man makes no secret of the years he has spent in prison for who knows what escapades. But, like St. Paul, he encountered the Lord who put his hand on his shoulder and transformed his life between one day and the next. Another confrere said to me: "*Now if John Gabriel had just spent some of his life carousing, like Charles de Foucault, we would be able to tell ourselves _ even if we did not do that sort of thing ourselves _ `Why could I not achieve a holiness like his?`"* St. Augustine, who did do that sort of thing, observed: "**Quod isti et istae, cur non ego?**" Why cannot I achieve what these men and women have?

To put it another way, John Gabriel would most certainly have done better to be a saint only because of his martyrdom, because the holiness that fills his whole life leaves an example that discourages us poor sinners, mere mortals that we are. But we remind ourselves of what Jesus has said: "*Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect!*" He knew how impossible that would be for us, but he also knew we needed that ideal shining before us, no matter how exalted, to light our footsteps. And if the divine perfection seems totally inaccessible, that of a saint who has lived a life like ours (except for the martyrdom) seems closer to us, even if it shines much brighter than the best of our modest abilities.

So I would like to tell you that even if John Gabriel had not died a martyr, his holiness would not be less dazzling, because it shines out in the different stages of his life.

Holiness: a family legacy

John Gabriel was born to a family with a deep faith. The holiness of children is shaped on a mother's or grandmother's knee and is nourished by the faith of their ancestors. One of John Gabriel's uncles, his father's brother, **Jacques Perboyre** (1763-1848), had become a Vincentian and contemplated going to China as a missionary. During the Revolution and under the Reign of Terror, he led the dangerous life of a fugitive, celebrating Mass and dispensing the sacraments in secret, always threatened by arrest and the death sentence that had already claimed some 20 confreres.

After the winter of those terrible years, a religious renewal gave life to a spring in which many flowers of saintliness blossomed. So it was in the home of Pierre Perboyre and Marie Rigal, who led their family in daily prayer on their knees. Of their eight children, six gave themselves to the Lord: three sons became Vincentians, two of their sisters became Daughters of Charity and a third was called to be a Carmelite.

A Precocious Holiness

Let us examine John Gabriel, who was the first to answer the Lord's call. He was the oldest child in the family, and his seriousness gave him an authority over his sisters and brothers and their playmates that all accepted. Their opinion of him took a step forward when the parish priest had to leave him in charge of a catechism class. His behavior at church was exemplary, to which his old classmates bore witness around 1845. The priest, who tested his understanding of the catechism, asking questions about more difficult points, used to say: "*Let us ask our little doctor!*" In light of his excellent aptitude, the priest let him make his First Holy Communion at age 11, well before the usual 14.

John Gabriel had an excellent memory, and on Sunday, when he got back home, he would repeat the message of the parish priest's sermon for any who could not attend Mass. This provoked his father's impressed surprise. His old playmates, talking about his life in Montgesty 40 years earlier, said that even then they called him **the little saint**.

Our little saint was not thinking about becoming a priest _ at least he never talked about it. It was quite by accident that he came to ask himself that question. When he was 15, his parents sent him for a few months as a companion to his little brother, the 10 year- old Louis, who was beginning his studies at the seminary in Montauban that their uncle Jacques had started. After three months, his uncle Jacques had observed such tendencies to spirituality and intelligence that he suggested John Gabriel continue his studies in preparation for the priesthood. He proposed this to his brother, the father of his two nephews. In this delicate situation, John Gabriel showed remarkable obedience to what seemed to be the Will of God, and at the same time, an admirable deference and availability towards his parents.

During his three and a half years at Montauban, he amazed everyone with his dedication and piety. One of his teachers said of him much later: "*I never saw in him*

the slightest foolishness or the least lack of discipline." He spent long periods in the chapel. He would voluntarily help anyone who asked him, and one of them said long afterwards: "*His willingness to help me was admirable.*"

After John Gabriel's death, a fellow novice at Montauban, Fr. Rossignol, wrote to Uncle Jacques:

His obedience was such that I do not believe anyone could have renounced himself more. He missed no opportunity to practice mortification.... You might think his virtue would make him austere or rigid. Not in the least _ he was happy and very pleasant during recreation.... This was a pure soul into which no breath of evil ever entered.

I was vexed to see him so perfect, and I can tell you I searched for ways to trip him up _ but I found him invulnerable. I would never have believed it possible for a novice to come so close to perfection.

He was most solicitous about the confreres of his house, and each one, when they said their farewells, kept affectionate memories of him.

John Gabriel went to Paris for his theological studies in January, 1821. Here, too, he left the reputation of a saint with his classmates. This is what one of them said during the enquiries after his martyrdom:

Around him you breathed the perfume of an edifying holiness. I never saw the slightest fault in him. He often accused himself of failures in kindness, but I could never figure out what those failings might be. You can say anything good on his account that you want, and I do not think you could exaggerate. I was amazed to find him perfect in everything and in every situation.

In the Work of Formation

After his theological studies, John Gabriel was sent for a while to be a professor at the Montdidier school in the diocese of Amiens. Everyone was won over by his gentleness and kindness.

Ordained a priest on September 23, 1826, he was appointed to the major seminary of St. Flour as a dogma professor. The seminarians liked him for his goodness and friendliness. A good number asked him to be their spiritual director. One of the other professors told the seminarians one day: "*Look to Fr. Perboyre, he is a saint. I believe he has preserved the innocence of his baptism.*"

He prepared for his classes by study, as one should, but especially by meditation. He himself said: "*The first and the last book that we should consult is the crucifix.*"

At the request of Bishop de Salamon of St. Flour, who had come to know and esteem him, he took responsibility for the minor seminary. Some of the diocesan clergy collaborated with him and later remembered his reputation for holiness. One of them witnessed this, saying:

He had every quality you would ask for in a good superior. He must have learned well how to obey, for he governed us without a single harsh word or bossy tone _ he treated us like the apple of his eye.

Another expressed the same opinion when he said:

If you asked me to list the faults I found in him, I would be very embarrassed, because I never saw even a shadow of an imperfection in him.

Those who worked in the house were full of admiration of him and said:

Ah, what a holy man! How pleasant it was to work for him. He really knew how to make us feel better when we were distressed! And what a touching interest he took in our welfare!

The door keeper went further in his testimony:

I used to have to bother him very often! I never once saw in his manner or in his words that he was in the least annoyed.

Fr. Perboyre did better at running the minor seminary than anyone could have hoped. Everyone, beginning with the bishop, ascribed this outcome above all to the holiness of the young superior, and the praise of the Vicars General on his behalf never ceased. The Vincentian superior of the major seminary, Fr. Grappin, passed this judgement on him:

Fr. Perboyre is the most accomplished man I know. He is a man of God, and never loses awareness of that Presence for even a moment.

The whole town of St. Flour felt disappointment when they heard of his departure for Paris in the autumn of 1832. The new Superior General, Fr. Salhorgne, sent for him to be an assistant to and perhaps even replace the elderly director of the novitiate. Fr. Salhorgne knew of John Gabriel's work at Montdidier and St. Flour, which is why he did not hesitate to call him to this delicate task: the spiritual formation of the candidates for the Mission.

We have two extraordinary witnesses to Fr. Perboyre's holiness during these next two and a half years, from the autumn of 1832 to the beginning of March, 1835. One is Fr. Girard, a 43 year-old diocesan priest who had joined the Company, and who was later the superior of the major seminary in Algiers. His knowledge of people is such that his testimony should be quoted at length:

The first time I saw him, he was with Fr. Étienne, who was then the Procurator General of the Congregation. They were standing side by side across from me. Fr. Perboyre looked so humble and modest that I took him for a brother of the Congregation, assigned the lowest tasks in the house. I was amazed that Fr. Étienne seemed to make much of him and be most considerate of him. This most poor and quiet confrere, who seemed so like our suffering Savior, keeps coming to mind and touches me the way a saint would.... After he left the room, I was stupefied when Fr. Étienne told me that this man, dressed like a poor person, was the director of the novitiate.. .. I, who saw in him only a serving brother, should have been trying to see him as master of the novices and to get him to speak, for he said nothing in our discussion.... I seemed to see in his person all the virtues I had read about in the lives of the saints.

For many years, I had wanted to meet a saint. It seems a great grace and a real help to my own sanctification that God has granted me this kindness. Everything I had seen until then did not take away the hope that I might be a saint. I think God strengthened my desire by seeing Fr. Perboyre. He was so holy that I did not see him stumble in word or action. And I watched him most deliberately during the six months I spent in very close proximity to him.... Holiness ran in his blood, and I do not know if anyone could have been holier. As I said several times to his confreres before he was martyred: "*You will see Fr. Perboyre canonized!*"

The other testimony was given by one of the young novices, who later became the pastor of St. Anne's in Amiens _ Fr. Aubert. This is how he describes what he often witnessed.

When I would serve his Mass, I saw his feet leave the ground several times _ sometimes more, sometimes less. I do not know whether they lost all contact with the earth. I can tell you that once his feet lifted so noticeably that I could easily see the soles of his shoes, and if he was still touching the ground it was only by the merest tip of his shoes, in a way I think would be physically impossible. Another time, in a similar situation, he called me over after the Elevation and said to me: "*Look carefully at the Host; do you see something there?*" I had to say "*No,*" and went back to my place. Our holy confrere very carefully hid from the public anything that might seem extraordinary, or might earn him others' esteem.

The testimony of these two clerics about Fr. Perboyre in exceptional circumstances is the proof of a holiness that did what it could to remain unnoticed. But its radiance was such that as notable a confrere as Fr. Étienne, when he wrote the life of the martyr some time after his death, declared:

It would be impossible to make kindness work harder than he did. You could justly apply to him the prophet's words that we apply to the Savior that "*he would not break the bent reed nor extinguish the smoldering wick.*" It is impossible to think of someone exercising more control over the self: always calm, he seemed undisturbed in the midst of events most able to upset us. An angelic serenity colored his every feature. No one could cite even one example in his life of a situation in which the slightest impatience showed in him. This virtue was, in his hands, the key that opened every heart, and the means he used to work the most difficult conversions. His kindness was perfect _ not one single one of the many pupils he taught could speak of one harsh word coming out of his mouth. Their affection for him was unchanging, and you can attribute that to the charm of his kindness.

John Gabriel always told his novices that Jesus is our light and the ideal we should imitate, and he put these words in Jesus' mouth: "*I have not given you the example of my virtues so you could admire them, but so you might imitate them.*" He would add, when preaching the Word, this example:

The saints in heaven are portraits of Jesus Christ risen up and glorious, just as on earth they were pictures of Jesus Christ suffering, humiliated and hard-working.... We should have our eyes always fixed on Jesus Christ, sharing his thoughts and imitating his virtues.

John Gabriel was teaching this conformity to Jesus Christ in this prayer which he wrote:

O, my divine Savior, by your great power and infinite mercy, change me and transform me into you. May my hands be the hands of Jesus! May my words be the words of Jesus! May all my senses and my body serve only to glorify you! But, above all, transform my spirit and all its abilities: may my memory, my intelligence, and my heart be the memory, the intelligence and the heart of Jesus! May my actions and my thoughts be like your actions and thoughts so that, just as your Father said of you: "*This day have I begotten you,*" God might say the same to me and add, as your heavenly Father did: "*This is my beloved son, the object of all my favor.*"

This prayer perfectly reflects the effort at total conformity to Jesus Christ achieved by Fr. Perboyre and proposed as the spiritual program to his novices.

Conformity to Jesus Christ was always the central element of his priestly spirituality. John Gabriel focused his entire life, day after day, to making his life conform to that of Christ. He could most honestly proclaim with St. Paul: "*It is not longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.*" He was given the grace to become a perfect imitator of Christ, even in his Passion and Death. We see him follow, step by step, and repeat in his own flesh the various phases of the Passion of Christ.

He shared this desire to imitate Christ even in his Passion with the novices when he showed them the habit Fr. Clet wore to his execution and the rope that strangled him. Fr. Perboyre said to them:

Here is the clothing of a martyr, the habit of Fr. Clet! Here is the cord with which he was strangled! What happiness for us if we come to the same end!

Once, as the novices were coming out of a room, he took one aside and said: "*Pray hard that my holiness will grow strong so that I can go to China, to preach Jesus Christ and to die for him!*"

After his brother, Louis, died on the trip out to China, John Gabriel was mystically certain that he would replace him. He lived by this conviction, and he wrote of his joy to his uncle.

The novices who knew of his desire were enthusiastic when they learned he was actually going to go, and some of them offered to go with him, so much did they love and admire him.

The goodbyes in the courtyard of the *Maison Mère* were addressed mostly to a confrere and friend, but also to the saint who was leaving for the place to which God called him, toward his missionary vocation which they had the premonition would be crowned with the martyrdom he desired. The Superior General, Fr. Salhorgne, was not the least moved of the confreres when he knelt on the pavement with all the others and asked of our hero a final blessing.

Towards the Heights

Our missionary took ship from Le Havre on Saturday, March 21, 1835. His companions, Mr. Gabet and Mr. Perry, were still deacons. This little group got along very well with the crew during the three-month voyage between Le Havre and Batavia. The radiance of Fr. Perboyre's holiness in the eyes of the officers and seamen was such that at the moment the missionaries left the boat after saying goodbye, the members of the crew shared their impressions, saying of John Gabriel: "**That one is a real saint!**"

They boarded an English ship in Batavia which took them first to Surabaya and then to Macao. When the French Vincentians in Macao, Frs. Danicourt and Torrette,

learned that Fr. Perboyre was coming, they wrote joyfully to Paris about this good news, for the reputation of the assistant director of the novitiate had already arrived: **"You have sent a real treasure to China!"**

The holiness of our hero did not prevent him from appreciating the pleasures of the voyage or the company of his confreres: a sad saint is a sad excuse for a saint. For example, at Surabaya, he went swimming with his shipmates. They also made several excursions on the rivers in Java and the nearby isle of Madura. During the time he was passing thru Macao and traveling towards his mission, he experienced the joys of friendship with a pleasure his letters make clear. In Macao, he met up with Fr. Torrette, an old schoolmate. On the trip to Jiangxi, he spent several days with Fr. Laribe, like himself originally from the Diocese of Cahors _ they spoke together in the language of their birth place, called "quercynol," swapping news and stories. Later, he spent some time with Fr. Rameaux, who was the same age and ordained the same year, 1826, but in Montauban, where he was well acquainted with Uncle Jacques Perboyre.

John Gabriel threw himself into apostolic work when he got to his mission. But, in the design of God, he had to fulfill in himself a most perfect resemblance to Christ his model. He was battered by two great tests. He had hardly arrived at the place of his apostolic labor when he was struck with a terrible fever that so wore him down that he was given the Last Rites. He was not up and about until November, two or three months later. Then a spiritual trial followed this physical test. He felt he was an obstacle to grace and was convinced of his uselessness. He went so far into this night of faith that he thought himself lost. These were weeks of real agony, from which Christ himself delivered him, appearing to him and reassuring him. A Chinese confrere, who worked with him for many years, did not share John Gabriel's opinion of himself, but used to say to any who would listen: **"He is a living Saint!"**

From the time of his arrival at his mission station in August, 1836, a series of events completed the extraordinary resemblance between our martyr and Christ, especially in the details of his Passion. His Holiness, Leo XIII, was pleased to emphasize them in the Brief of Beatification.

During one of the many interrogations his judges forced on him, he was made to put on the priestly vestments that had been confiscated from the mission. Seeing him dressed that way, filled with a prayerful majesty, the witnesses to the scene cried out full of admiration: **"He is the Divine Fouo; the Divine Fouo lives!"** _ calling him an incarnation of Buddha.

In prison, John Gabriel's patience and gentleness made such an impression on the other prisoners and the guards that they treated him with respect, and toward the end of his captivity they worked to surround him with care and kindness.

Jean Guitton, in his book, *Portrait of Marthe Robin*, says that

it would be good for the fundamental moment (which roots our faith, the Passion of Christ) to repeat itself. The story of the saints is this reproduction: it is good and wonderful that there are these occasional imitations of the Passion in our word... (p. 239)

John Gabriel achieved this perfection, imitating and bearing living witness to the Passion of Christ. No element was missing: the agony, betrayal for 30 pieces of silver, arrest, the back and forth between tribunals, the Cyrenean, abandonment by his own, denial by a trusted companion, a crown of thorns, the torture on a cross-shaped gibbet, the thieves, the sharing of his garments.

Passing through the region some time after the death of our martyr, Fr. Huc inquired about the facts and wrote:

When Fr. Perboyre was martyred, a large cross, luminous and very well-defined, appeared in the sky.... Many pagans saw this marvel and some of them cried out: "*That is the sign Christians worship.... I want to serve the heavenly Master....*" According to the inquiry made by Bishop Rizzolati, this cross was seen at the same place in the sky by a large number of witnesses, both Christian and pagan, in areas far distant from one another. The bishop carefully questioned the Christians who knew Fr. Perboyre, and every one of them said that **they always thought of him as a great saint....**

That our martyr appeared to be a great saint in the eyes of his Christians should not surprise us. The final years of his missionary life and the circumstances of his passion and death clearly demonstrated his holiness. But his whole life had been a movement toward that holiness as we have seen in the testimony of witnesses at every stage of this full life.

In Conclusion

The Little Company and the Diocese of Cahors will be able, when Fr. Perboyre is canonized, to honor this saint whose amicable holiness won every heart. Sometimes a saint can seem a little harsh. That was the case with Alain de Solminihac, whose beatification was promoted by the Diocese of Cahors and the Canons Regular. This friend of St. Vincent was one of the exemplary bishops of the 17th Century. However, St. Vincent wrote about him to the Daughters of Charity he was sending to Cahors: "*It is a matter of conscience for him to say even one indulgent word.... But this is a prelate **that everyone thinks is a saint!***" (Coste X, 578-580). His desire for reform at any price earned him the hostility of some of his priests. The present Vicar General said to me: "*When there was an idea of seeking his beatification, we searched the documents and the archives of the bishop, looking for a new and more pleasant image which might make him seem friendly, but could not put one together. Everything makes him look surly and not very engaging.*"

This was certainly not the case with John Gabriel _ everyone agrees that they found in him happy and friendly characteristics. Put simply, a holiness just like Christ's shone in him.

Thomas S. Krafinski, C.M., translator

The Cause for the Canonization of John Gabriel Perboyre

Thomas Davitt C.M.

John Gabriel Perboyre was executed in China on 11 September 1840. On 9 July 1843 a decree of Pope Gregory XVI authorized the introduction of the causes for beatification of forty-three martyrs, including Francis Regis Clet and John Gabriel. John Gabriel's cause was separated from the others, because of the amount of documentation, evidence of witnesses and graces received. On 10 November 1889 Pope Leo XIII beatified him. His liturgical commemoration was originally celebrated on 7 November, but in the last revision of the calendar it was changed to 11 September, the anniversary of his death.

In 1891 a decree was issued authorizing the resumption of the cause, with a view to canonization. At that time two miracles attributed to the intercession of the beatified person were required for canonization. In the case of John Gabriel the two allegedly miraculous cures both involved Daughters of Charity, Sisters Gabrielle Isoré and Joseph Destailleur. Medical experts examined the cures and gave their opinion in 1897. There were further comments, questions, and answers during 1900-1902, and then the revised medical opinion was submitted in 1902.

In correspondence between the Postulator General and the Superior General it was taken almost for granted that this would be accepted without any problems. In the old St. Joseph's, on Temple Road, Blackrock, Dublin, a stained glass window was installed with "St. John Gabriel Perboyre" on it. However, it is interesting to note that in the Superior General's New Year circular letters there is no indication of such a degree of expectancy. In the letter of 1900 it is said that the cause had received a momentary set-back, but that there was nothing to worry about. In that of the following year it was reported that the cause was moving forward. In the *Annales de la Mission* around that time there was no reference to John Gabriel's canonization in the immediate future.

The new *Positio* was discussed at a Preparatory Congregation on 28 April 1903, and objections were raised. There were 21 members voting and on the allegedly miraculous cure of Sister Gabrielle Isoré, the only one of interest now (see below), 9 voted affirmatively, 4 negatively, 6 abstained, and 2 abstained pending further expert medical opinion.

The reason for the negative votes and abstentions was a doubt as to whether the illnesses of the two Sisters were organic or functional. "Functional" would

mean the illness had a hysterical basis, and therefore the apparently instantaneous cure could be natural and not miraculous.

The result of the voting was presented to Leo XIII by the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation of Rites, Cardinal Serafino Cretoni. The Pope decided that two more experts should be appointed to undertake further investigation.

It seems that for many years after this disappointment no further move was made by the Congregation of the Mission. Once again it is interesting that neither in the Superior General's New Year letter of 1904, nor in the *Annales* of that year, is there any reference to the disappointment.

In 1943 new norms were promulgated about presenting alleged miracles, but at that time the war was still going on.

In 1959 the sponsors of the cause approached the Promoter General of the Faith with a view to moving the cause forward. He asked Professor Vincenzo Lo Bianco to re-examine the evidence. The professor's conclusion was that with the long lapse of time since the original diagnosis he could not, from the documents, make a "definite diagnosis".

In 1969 and 1983 there were new Apostolic Constitutions on canonization. The second one decreed that only one miracle was now needed for canonizing a beatified person.

In 1993 Fr. Giuseppe Guerra CM, the Postulator General, decided that of the two alleged miracles voted on in 1903 the cure of Sister Gabrielle Isoré had the better chance of succeeding as it was better documented. All the documentation on it was given by the Congregation for the Saints to two medical experts, Professor Franco De Rosa and Professor Cristoforo Morocutti for re-evaluation. The decision of the former was that the instantaneous cure of Sister Gabrielle merited discussion at a meeting of the medical commission, while that of the latter was that the cure was inexplicable. The medical commission discussed it at their meeting on 17 November 1994 and their unanimous opinion was that the cure was inexplicable according to current medical knowledge. The case was then passed on to the theologians and once again the decision was affirmative. Finally, on 6 April 1995 the decree for the canonization of John Gabriel, along with those for other beatifications and canonizations, was read in the presence of the Pope, and now (July 1995) all that remains is for a date to be set for the canonization ceremony, with late 1996 seeming to be the most likely time.

The cure of Sister Gabrielle Isoré, D.C.

Céline Isoré, according to the documentation of the cause, was born "in Quaid-Ypres in northern France" in 1851. In 1871 she entered the Daughters of Charity, and was known as Sister Gabrielle. Her first appointment was to the hospital in Nivelles, then to Ghent in Belgium for home care of the sick and then to Héverlé near Leuven to teach in a girls' school. During all this time she enjoyed good health. After fourteen years in Héverlé she began to get ill, in February-March 1889. She began to experience pains in her feet, then right up her back, intermittent at first but later continuous. Her movements became gradually restricted and eventually this necessitated her being confined to bed. The Sisters judged her condition to be rheumatic, and treated her accordingly. But her condition got worse, and the doctor, Joseph Boine, was called in for the first time in July. He was the only doctor who saw her during the period of her illness. She suffered also from insomnia, urinary and respiratory problems. From September she was also partially paralyzed in her lower limbs.

On 2 November her Sister Servant arranged with a priest of the Fathers of the Sacred Hearts (Picpus Fathers) for a novena of prayer and masses for Sister Gabrielle's cure through the intercession of John Gabriel Perboyre, to end on 10 November, the day on which he was to be beatified. On the 9th the doctor saw her as usual; he said later that he had by then given up all hope of her recovery and expected her to die soon.

On the 9th, at 11.30 in the evening, she fell asleep without any medication, and slept till 4.30 the following morning, something which had not happened before. When she woke up she had no pains, could move normally and was able to get up, dress herself and go down to the chapel. In the chapel she cried out "I'm either off my head or I've been completely cured". She stayed for mass with the others, then went to the refectory and ate a normal breakfast.

Diagnosis

Dr. Boine's diagnosis, which he put in writing for the Sister Servant, was that Sister Gabrielle was suffering from a severe form of myelitis. When the medical experts discussed the case in 1891-92, with a view towards the introduction of the cause for canonization, they came to the conclusion that she had suffered from ascending spinal leptomeningitis of a sub-acute form. Two other experts, though, tended towards accepting a hysterical basis for her condition. (She was still alive at that time; she died in 1906). At the voting on her cure in 1903 the eight members who abstained did so because they were not completely satisfied that her illness had been organic; they thought there was a possibility it had had a hysterical element. If the latter were true then her instantaneous cure could have been merely natural and not inexplicable.

In 1959 Professor Lo Bianco felt that after such a lapse of time he could not give a definite diagnosis from the evidence available to him.

In 1993 the documentation was once again submitted to medical experts, Professors Franco De Rosa and Cristoforo Morocutti. The former said the case was worth discussion by a medical commission, especially the instantaneous nature of her cure, the latter gave a positive opinion on the inexplicable nature of the cure.

Professor Morocutti first dealt with the possibility of hysterical illness. He decided that from what was known of the Sister before her illness a hysterical basis was unlikely. Also, it would be unusual for someone aged 38 to develop a such hysterical condition for the first time.

He did not agree with Dr. Boine's diagnosis of myelitis, as many of the symptoms associated with that illness were not mentioned in the documentation as being present.

He thought the diagnosis made in 1891-92 of spinal leptomeningitis was more probable. But here again he noted that in the documents there was no evidence of the presence of symptoms he would have expected if that were the correct diagnosis. Not only that, he also noticed reference to the presence of signs which should not have been there if that were the correct diagnosis.

He then gave as his final opinion that the most probably correct diagnosis of Sister Gabrielle's illness would be ascending polyneuritis, the Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS); more recently this has been called acute idiopathic polyradiculopathy.

His report was dated 9 June 1994. It was accepted by the medical commission on 5 December 1994.

Martyrdom in the History of the Church and that of Jean Gabriel Perboyre

by Luigi Mezzadri, C.M.

The life of the Church is lived under the sign of history. The people of God continually live their own exodus, which leads them to go forward, to evolve, to change. The change, however, is under the sign of continuity, of the *traditio*, not of rupture.

Such a principle is also valid for the history of sanctity.

In the first centuries the saint was the martyr or apostle. Then this gift was recognized for the heroic pastor or bishop, for the faithful virgin and the heroic monk. During the period when the nations of Europe were being converted, many holy kings and queens were numbered in the catalogue of saints. Then came the stage of saints of charity and humility, of holy priests, founders, and missionaries. Today lay sanctity, the sanctity of married people and young people, has a special value.

In this evolution, martyrdom is a constant. Every age has had its martyrs and it always will have.

1. The Word

The term martyrdom/martyr appears in the New Testament to designate a simple testimony to a fact, but also a specific testimony to the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. ¹ In itself it is the equivalent of announcement. Then there are texts that refer to a particular testimony paid with blood. In Paul's defense at Jerusalem, the apostle confirms that "*when the blood of your witness Stephen was being shed, I myself stood by*" (Acts 22:20).

It is clear that progressively, almost unwittingly, the Greek word that means testimony passed into Latin to signify a specific testimony, that of one who has shed his blood for the faith. Caught by the authorities, the Christians were forced to "confess" their faith. Their proclamation, like that of Polycarp, "*Jesus is Lord and not the emperor*" was similar to that of baptism. It was worthy of faith, because the judge "believed" in it. In this way the Christian became a privileged "witness" because death sealed his faith with his life.

In the process of July 17, 1580, at Carthage, the proconsul Saturninus said to the Christians brought to judgment, "*Give up this opinion.*" Speratus said, "*A wicked*

opinion is to commit murder, to give false testimony." The proconsul Saturninus said, "You do not want to be a party to this madness." Cittinus said, "We do not fear anyone except the Lord, our God, who is in heaven." Donata said, "We honor Caesar as Caesar, but we fear only God." Vestia said, "I am a Christian." Secunda said, "I want to remain what I am." The proconsul Saturninus said to Speratus, "Do you persist in wanting to be a Christian?" Speratus said, "I am a Christian." All the others subscribed to his words.

The death sentence that followed in the trial resulted from the confession of the name and not the confession of a crime. In other words, if they had not been Christians, they would never have been condemned.

The cause, therefore, is the faith in the person of Christ. The theological reason for the glorification of the martyr found in these words, "*he who loses his life for my cause will recover it*" (Mark 8:35). The martyr confesses Christ and give his life for him. He shows, that is, "*the greatest love,*" which is that which gives up life. "*The way we came to know love was that he laid down his life for us; so we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers*" (1 John 3:16).

There are, therefore, two essential elements for martyrdom.

1) *Material martyrdom.* The martyr must not die of illness or in jail or as a result of this, but he must die precisely because of this.

2) *Formal martyrdom.*

(a) On the part of the persecutor the "odium fidei" is necessary. The motive must be an attitude of hostility toward the Christian insofar as he is a disciple of Christ. His actions must show a hatred of God, Christ, his teaching, or his Church, or also the desire to compel the Christian to commit actions that force him to sin.

(b) On the part of the martyr it is not enough to die. It must be clear "how." In order that the martyrdom be recognized, it is necessary that he "give his life," not that they take it from him. It is not enough to die or suffer for the faith, it is necessary to "offer" for it, it is necessary to accept death for the love of the faith.

2. The Evolution of martyrdom in various eras: data and tendencies.

The concept of martyrdom has not always been the same. An early element begins to be clear beginning in the second century, the distinction between the one who dies (the martyr) and the one who simply suffers (the confessor).

After the Roman Empire became Christian, martyrdom apparently could be found only in its periphery. Saint Boniface, for example, was a martyr, but because he was killed by the "pagans."

Gradually it became clear how certain persecutions could have broken out even in a Christian environment, by Christian princes who were led to kill Christians out of hatred for the principles of the gospel.

This was the case of Saint Thomas Becket, at first chancellor of Henry II and later archbishop of Canterbury. The reason for his martyrdom was his defense of the "libertas Ecclesiae," the need to keep the Church free from the intrusion of the state. The king was a sincere believer (after the death of the archbishop he did public penance), but he sought to make the Church dependent on his will. When the king's four knights, FitzUrse, Brito, Trace, Moreville, entered the cathedral on Tuesday, September 29, 1170, asking in a loud voice, "*where is Thomas Becket, the traitor to the king and the kingdom?*," they established in fact the motivation: with his behavior as bishop, Thomas put himself at odds with the authority of the king. 2

In the case of the martyrs John Fisher and Thomas More (d. 1535), it appears to be found in reference to a matrimonial case. Fisher was the only bishop to take Catherine [of Aragon]'s side when all the others courageously sided with the stronger party. He had understood that by this the king was becoming the head of the Church. The separation from Rome, "*from that Church which has made us suffer so much*," as the bishop of Winchester, Gardiner, was to say, signified the creation of a national church. The unity of the Church was torn. 3

In the period of the French Revolution there was a question as to whether the martyrs were killed out of hatred for the faith or for other reasons, even of a political nature. A typical case was that of the ninety-nine martyrs of Angers. The insurrection in the Vendée (March-December 1793) provoked a terrible repression, which some authors called genocide. At Angers those killed were in the thousands. Not all were martyrs. Without excluding the possibility of other cases, only the sure and documented cases in which there was a religious motive, were taken into consideration. 4

A more delicate case is that of Monsignor Oscar Arnulfo Romero, archbishop of San Salvador, killed on March 24, 1980. 5 Was he a martyr?

Indeed the accusations advanced against Catholicism that it is involved on behalf of the lowest and the poor are well known. I believe that it is impossible to prove the accusations of "communism" against Monsignor Romero. A careful examination of his talks and deeds shows us how the bishop was dedicated to defending the poor in the name of Christ. Is it possible, then, to demonstrate the existence of the odium fidei in his executioners and their agents? Was it their intention to attack his political statements? or did they want to silence the prophetic cry of one who protested on behalf of the poor? In a lecture at Louvain, he said, "*The*

real persecution is directed against the poor people who today are the body of Christ in history. They are, like Jesus, the crucified people, the people persecuted like the servant of Yahweh.... For that reason when the Church is organized and unified, gathering together the hopes and sufferings of the poor, it suddenly has the same destiny as Jesus and the poor: persecution." 6

A martyr, then? I do not intend to anticipate the judgment of the Church. I think that it is possible to show the essential elements for formal martyrdom. 7

3. A note on the case of Perboyre.

We are well informed about Perboyre's case by the biographies concerning the life and tortures undergone by this missionary. 8

Still, it would be a mistake to consider only this aspect of the problem. This martyr has never been considered an extraordinary person but an ordinary man and missionary who lived his daily life and tried not to get caught. A person with fears and dreams, a person also with some defects, that a later apotheosis too often causes to be forgotten.

The martyrdom of Perboyre has often been likened to that of Christ. I prefer to find the likeness in the martyrdom of the first centuries.

1) Martyrdom in ancient times began with the arrest. In the case of Perboyre it began with the long voyage to reach China. Then came the apostolate, the burning delusions. Nevertheless, Perboyre was not one to seek martyrdom. The ostentation of the person who had the rashness to present himself before persecutors was always forbidden. The law of martyrdom is this: "*the Christian should not expose himself on his own to persecution, both to spare the unbelievers a crime and not to expose his own weakness, but when he finds himself face to face with the struggle, we should not escape. It is rash to expose oneself, it is cowardly to refuse.*" 9

The capture of Christians in the first centuries occurred in various ways. There were arrests carried out by police forces or legionaries. But at times there were popular riots that forced the authorities to intervene. At Smyrna it was the *irenarca*, a sort of justice of the peace, who went in search of Polycarp.

The search by the police was done with persistence. He was scarcely transferred to another small farm then suddenly those who were searching for him would suddenly arrive. Not finding him, they seized two slaves, one of whom, put to torture, betrayed him. As a result it was impossible to remain hidden when those of his own household betrayed him. The irenarca, whom fate decreed should have the same name as Herod, was in a hurry to take him to the stadium. Here he was to have met the same fate, becoming like Christ, and his betrayers were suddenly to have the same punishment as Judas. One Friday, at dinner

time, police and mounted men, with their customary arms, left, taking with them the young slave, as if they were going in search of a thief. They arrived in the evening and found him in a small house, seated at table on the upper floor. Even there he could have fled to another farm, but he did not want to and said, "May the will of God be done." Having learned that the soldiers had arrived, he went down and returned their greeting, while they were amazed, seeing his advanced age and dignified behavior, and were in wonderment at such concern for capturing such an old man.

2) A jail in antiquity was not a place of expiation but only of custody while waiting for trial. In the first two centuries the custody was brief. From the third century, on the other hand, an effort was made to force Christians to apostatize. Prison became, therefore, a place of torture and punishment.

During the time of imprisonment there were many moral and physical trials. In the martyrdom of Perboyre there was the terrible trial of the weakness of his own people, many of whom renounced the faith, to which was joined accusations of immorality in his own examinations.

3) Good or bad treatment in the first centuries depended in great part on the jailers. Prisons were often caves without light or air. In a confined space many ordinary criminals and Christians, men and women, were imprisoned. Sometimes chains were used, or, worse, the *nervus*, which consisted of adjustable stocks that became progressively tighter up to the fourth or fifth notch and as a result caused excruciating pain. The *lignum* was a wooden pole with some notches to which the condemned persons were chained. It differed from the *nervus* in that the prisoner was condemned to immobility. Hunger and thirst were common in the prisons.

The testimonies of the mistreatments suffered by Perboyre are consistent. He was deprived of everything, beaten, he must have suffered unspeakable conditions.

4) Torture was routine in ancient legal process and in that of the time of Perboyre. There was also torture in that process, but used not as a means of investigation but in order to compel the Christian to abjure. In the case of a virgin rape was a common practice (which also came to be used with married women). The tortures were varied: the scaffold, pincers, the spiked wheel, flogging, a torch, red-hot irons. For the virgins the outrage to modesty, that is, to be exposed to people's view, made the humiliation still crueler. What happened to Anna Kao was not much different from the practices of ancient processes.

5) With regard to penalties, much depended on the Roman official. In some cases there were episodes in which the martyr was *crucified*. That is what happened to the Apostle Saint Peter and to Saint Simon of Jerusalem. That is what happened to Perboyre. The external similarities to the martyrdom of Christ have been highlighted by very many writers.

Not enough consideration has been given to one of the external circumstances of Perboyre's martyrdom. Arrested on September 15, 1839, he was martyred on September 11, 1840. It is important not to isolate the local persecution from the general context. Indeed, in the small history there is a reflection of a larger history.

In 1839 the first Opium War broke out, 10 caused by the confiscation and destruction of large quantities of that narcotic through the work of the imperial commissary, Lin Zexu to the detriment of the smugglers, who were almost all English. England intervened and its ships easily got the best of the Chinese coastal defenses. In the treaty of Nanking (1842) China ceded Hong Kong to Great Britain and opened five ports to western commerce.

Now, between the condemnation and the execution it was necessary to wait for imperial confirmation. By the time this arrived, the Europeans were at war with China. Did that fact not have some consequence for the martyrdom? We think that it is possible to isolate one: for killing Perboyre it was not just China but also a structure of sin built by the colonial powers. In this case by England. For killing the martyr it was not just the cord of the hangman but also the hypocritical commerce in opium and those who managed it.

Stafford Poole, C.M., translator

Notes

1) On martyrdom: There are four works that deal specifically with the question. P. SINISCALCO-C. LEONARDI-A. GALLAS-M. TOSCHI, *Martiri. Giudizio e dono per la Chiesa*, Torino 1981; L. BOUYER-L. DATTRINO, *La spiritualità dei padri (II-IVsecolo). Martirio, verginità, gnosi cristiana*, (Storia della spiritualità, 3/A), Bologna 1984; C. NOCE, *Il martirio. Testimonianza e spiritualità nei primi secoli* (La spiritualità cristiana. Storia e testi, 1), Roma 1987; A. MANDOUZE (ed.), *Storia dei santi e della santità cristiana. II: Il seme dei martiri* (33-313), Milano 1991. For the literary genre of martyrdom, see: G. LAZZATI, *Gli sviluppi della letteratura sui martiri nei quattro secoli* Torino 1956; R. KNOPF - G. KRUGER - G. RUHBACH, *Ausgewählte Martyrerakten*, Tübingen 1965; H. MUSURILLO, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs. Introduction, Text Translation*, Oxford 1979; D. RUIZ BUENO, *Actas de los Mártires*. Madrid 1974; C. ALLEGRO, *Atti dei Martiri. Introduzione, traduzione*, Roma 1974; G. LANATA, *Gli Atti dei martiri come documenti processuali*, Milano 1973. Important are: P. TESTINI, *Le catacombe e gli antichi cimiteri cristiani in Roma*, Bologna, 1966. With regard to the reaction of the pagans: P. DE LABRIOLLE, *La réaction paienne*, Paris 1934. E. R. DODDS, *Pagani e cristiani in un'epoca di angoscia*, trad. ital., Firenze 1970, p. 113. In addition the biographies of Julian the Apostate should be consulted.

For the problems related to hagiography: C. LEONARDI, *I modelli dell'agiografia latina dall'epoca antica al Medioevo*, in *Passaggio dal mondo antico al Medio Evo. Da Teodosio a San Gregorio Magno*, Roma 1980; M. PELLEGRINO, *Le sens ecclésial du martyr*, in RSR 35 (1961): 151-75; L. MEZZADRI, *Le due corone. Martirio e Verginità nella Chiesa antica*, Piacenza 1993.

2) KNOWLES, *Thomas Becket*, London 1970; T. CORFE, *Archbishop Thomas and King Henri II*, Cambridge 1975; P. AUBE, *Thomas Becket*, tr. it., Milano 1988.

3) On Fisher: E. E. REYNOLDS, *St. John Fisher*, London 1955; E. SURTZ, *The Works and Days of John Fisher*, Cambridge, Mass. 1967; R. ROUCHAUSSE, *John Fisher; humaniste, évêque, réformateur, martyr, 1469-1535*, Angers 1973; B. BRANDSHAW-E. DUFY (eds.), *Humanism, Reform and the Reformation. The Career of Bishop John Fisher*, Cambridge 1989. On More: G. MARC'HADOUR, *L'univers de Thomas More*, Paris 1963; R.W.CHAMBERS, *Thomas More*, 2 ed., London 1976; W. NIGG, *Tommaso Moro. Il santo della coscienza*, Roma 1980; R. MARIUS, *Thomas More: A Biography*, London-Melbourne 1985; E. E. REYNOLDS, *Il processo di Tommaso Moro*, tr. it., Roma 1985. V. BARRIE-CURIEN, *La Réforme anglicane*, in *Histoire du Christianisme*, VIII, *Le temps des confessions (1530-1620)*, Paris 1992, 183-221.

4) B. PLONGERON, *Conscience religieuse en Revolution*, Paris 1969; A. LATREILLE, *L'Église catholique et la Révolution française, I (1775- 1799)*, Paris 1970; T. TIMOTHY, *La Révolution, l'Église, la France*, Paris 1986; P. PIERRARD, *L'Église et la Révolution, 1789-1889*, Paris 1988; P. CHRISTOPHE, 1789. *Les prêtres dans la Révolution*, Paris 1986; L. MEZZADRI, *La Chiesa e la rivoluzione francese*, Cinisello Balsamo 1989; C. CHAUVIN, *Le Clergé à l'épreuve de la Révolution (1789-1799)*, Paris 1989.

5) TOSCHI, *Oscar Arnulfo Romero martire del Vangelo del Signore nella comunione con i poveri*, in *Martiri. Giudizio e dono*, 75-103.

6) Ibid., 98.

7) There is an important precedent: the case of Saint Maximilian Maria Kolbe, beatified as a confessor and canonized as a martyr.

8) The letters: J. VAN DER BRANDT (ed.), *Lettres du bienheureux J. G. Perboyre, Prêtre de la Mission*, Pekin 1940. Biografie e studi: [J.B. ÉTIENNE], *Notice sur la vie et la mort de J.G. Perboyre prêtre de la Mission par un prêtre de la même Congrégation*, Paris 1842; [M. VAURIS], *Vie du Venerable Perboyre*, Paris 1857; *Vie du Bienheureux J. G. Perboyre*, Paris 1889; [E. BINDI], *Vita del Beato G. Gabriele Perboyre*, Roma 1889; J. DE MONTGESTY, *Témoin du Christ, le Bienheureux J. G. Perboyre*, Paris, 1906; *La Congrégation de la Mission en Chine*, III, Paris, 1912; A. THOMAS, *Histoire de la Mission de Pékin*, Paris, 1925; L. CASTAGNOLA, *Missionario martire*, Roma 1940; A. CHATELET, *Jean Gabriel Perboyre martyr*,

Paris, 1943; O. FERREUX, *Histoire de la Congrégation de la Mission en Chine (1699-1950)*, in *Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission*, 127 (1963); J. P. GAUTHIER, *Du Cantal au Kiang Si*, Paris 1981; J. CHARBONNIER, *Histoire des chrétiens de Chine*, Paris 1992; A. SYLVESTRE, *Jean- Gabriel Perboyre, prêtre de la Mission, martyre en Chine*, Moissac 1994. There is still no biography that meets the criteria of scientific history.

9) Gregorio Nazianzeno, *Orazione XLIII*, 5, 6.

10) The monopoly of this plant's cultivation belonged to the East India Company, while the transportation was in the hands of private individuals. In the nineteenth century opium was the principal means of advancement in the English colonial administration in India. Toward 1880 the monopoly on opium, cultivated in the Ganges valley, produced between 6,000 and 8,000 metric tons of the drug, which was smuggled into China.

The Canonization of John Gabriel Perboyre and the Missionary Commitment of the Congregation

by Corpus Juan Delgado, C.M.

In a letter addressed to all the members of the Congregation of the Mission (April 20, 1995), the Superior General spoke about the decree of Pope John Paul II which finalizes the canonization process of Blessed John Gabriel Perboyre.¹ In the same letter, Fr. Robert P. Maloney, together with the General Council, expressed their desire that we truly live this event.

By this process of canonization, the Pope solemnly declares that John Gabriel, *"enjoys the vision of God; that his intercession before God is efficacious; and that his life models the characteristics of an authentic Christian."*² This certainty motivated the church, from the beginning of time, to venerate martyrs (and later, other saints), to invoke their intercession and to celebrate their memory in the Eucharist.³

What, then, does the canonization of our missionary John Gabriel Perboyre mean for the Congregation of the Mission and for ourselves as missionaries?

I. John Gabriel Perboyre inspires us with the example of his life

*"The saints make holiness real for us. They enflesh sanctity. I exhort all the members of the Vincentian Family to meditate, during the coming months, on the life of this great man."*⁴

*"The saints inspire us with the example of their lives."*⁵

1. John Gabriel, a missionary...

¹ Robert P. Maloney, *Vincentiana*, (1995), 66-67.

² Molinari, Canonization, *Sacramentum Mundi*.

³ This explains the Church's reasoning concerning canonization. Since 1234, this process, with all of the details that it involves, has been reserved to the Holy Father.

⁴ Robert P. Maloney, *ibidem*.

⁵ Preface of the Saints.

When John Gabriel was sixteen years old, the Vincentians preached a mission in the town of Montauban, the place where John Gabriel was studying. At this early age he clearly expressed his desire: "*I want to be a missionary.*"⁶ Is this simply an expression of youthful enthusiasm?

John Gabriel entered the Novitiate of the Congregation of the Mission at Montauban (December, 1818). Later he continued his theological studies in Paris. At the completion of his studies, he was sent to the school at Montdidier to teach philosophy and, since he was not of age, to await ordination. On September 23, 1826, he was ordained and sent to the major seminary at Saint Flour. In 1835, he became the assistant director at the Novitiate of Saint Lazare.

Commenting on the martyrdom of Father Clet, John Gabriel exclaimed: "*What a beautiful death for Father Clet; I ask God to take my life in the same way.*" Later, when Fr. Clet's relics arrived in Paris, he told the seminarians: "*Here is the robe of a martyr, the robe of Father Clet; here the rope which strangled him. Happy are we if we should share the same lot.*" He then asked one of the seminarians: "*Pray that I may recuperate my health, and be able to go to China and preach the Good News of Jesus Christ and die for Him.*" To another seminarian he said: "*Fourteen years ago I asked to go to China...I came to Saint Lazare for this reason only, to minister in China.*"

The death of John's brother Louis, who died on his way to China, only strengthened his resolve to be a missionary, "*even though I feel unworthy to take his place.*"

On February 2, 1835, John Gabriel's doctor withdrew his objection and the way was opened for him to go to China.

From 1836-1840, John Gabriel centered his missionary activity in the provinces of Ho-nan and Hu-pe. During these four and a half years, he preached and catechized the Christians who were persecuted and poor and separated from one another by great distances.⁷

Like the other missionaries, John Gabriel lived as an outcast, exposed to continual dangers and obliged to travel disguised and hidden. "*Heaven is obtained through the sweat of the brow.*"

2. ...Identified with Christ

⁶ The biographical details of John Gabriel's life and the texts that are cited in this work are taken from: John Gabriel Perboyre, prêtre de la Congrégation de la Mission, Lazariste. Puech-Montgesty. Cf. Vie du Bienheureux John Gabriel Perboyre. Paris, 1889; and J. Herrera, Alter Christus, Vida del Beato Juan Gabriel Perboyre, Madrid, 1942.

⁷ Cf. A. Piras, I martiri crocifissi: Clet e Perboyre, in Annali della Missione (1988), 53-66.

The biographers of John Gabriel Perboyre have highlighted his identification with Christ: *Alter Christus*, with reason he has been called another Christ.

Several writings of John Gabriel have been preserved, writings in which he expressed his identification with Jesus Christ:

"I AM THE WAY: What way? The way of humility, charity, obedience, patience, perfection, happiness and the glory of heaven. If we wish to be perfect, if we wish to obtain the happiness and the glory of heaven, it is necessary to walk in this way. To persevere in this way we need a torch to enlighten the way. Christ serves as this torch because he is the truth. Jesus tells us that those who follow him no longer walk in darkness but rather have the light of life. At the same time we need strength to sustain us on the way; strength that will enable us to continually follow the Master. Again Jesus solves the problem: He is our strength. He wants to be our nourishment and to give himself to us in the Eucharist. For this reason he said: I AM THE LIFE."

"Jesus Christ is the great teacher of knowledge; only Jesus gives the true light. All knowledge comes from him and whatever does not lead us to Jesus is vane, useless and dangerous. Only one thing is important: to know and love Jesus Christ."

"We can only attain salvation through conformity to Jesus Christ. After our death, we will not be asked if we were scholars, if we held prominent positions, if we have had people speak favorably of us in the world. But we will be asked if we busied ourselves with the study and imitation of Jesus Christ."

John Gabriel, in an inspired prayer, writes the following:

"O God, through your power and mercy, may I be totally transformed and converted. May my hands and tongue be like those of Jesus. May my understanding, my memory and heart be identified with the understanding, the memory and the heart of Jesus. May I act as Jesus acted. O heavenly Father, speak to me the same words you spoke to your Son: 'Today I have begotten you; this is my beloved in whom I am well pleased.'"

Jesus Christ is the person who attracts John Gabriel with such strength that he is willing to abandon everything to follow Jesus. Jesus is the central figure in the process of evangelization.⁸

3. Death, death on a cross

John Gabriel lived this identification with Christ unto death, death on the cross.

⁸ John Gabriel chooses martyrdom as a grace from God, even though "in China, where there are few priests, the glory of God would be better served by living rather than by dying."

He wrote to his father: *"If we have to suffer martyrdom, God will give us this special grace; it is something to be desired, not feared."* To the Superior General he wrote: *"I do not know what the future holds for me. Surely many crosses, for the cross is the daily bread of the missionary."*

John Gabriel participated in the cross of Christ from the time of his arrival in China: difficult journeys, persecution, ... and finally, betrayed by one of his catechumens in exchange for thirty taels.⁹ He suffered a long passion as he was taken from one prison to another.

Father Rizzolati had him write a letter to his confreres from prison. The paper, stained with blood, says in latin:

"The present circumstances do not allow me to write with great detail. From the time of my arrival in Kou-tcheng-sien (where I have been treated well by the assistant warden during all this time), I have undergone two interrogations; during one of these I spent half a day kneeling on chains and hung on han-tse.¹⁰ In Ou-tchang-fou I have undergone more than twenty interrogations and various tortures, because I did not say what the Mandrins wanted to hear. If I had spoken, persecution would have broken out throughout the province. My sufferings in Siang-yang-fou have been due to my religious beliefs. In Ou-tchang-fou I received 110 lashes because I would not trample on the cross...."

John spoke the following to a catechist who visited him in prison: *"When you return to your village, greet all the christians in my name. Tell them not to be afraid of persecution and to trust in God. I will not see them again, nor will they see me. I will be condemned to death. But I am happy to die for Christ."*

On September 11, at the age of 38, John Gabriel died, tied to a cross. The words of the young student took on new meaning: *"Ah, how beautiful is the cross planted in the land of non-believers and stained with the blood of the Apostles of Jesus Christ."*

The witness of his life inspires our missionary commitment

The life and death of John Gabriel ought to renew us in our missionary commitment.

1. Love of our missionary vocation:

⁹ A local coin.

¹⁰ A torture instrument.

Saint Vincent de Paul, reviewing the missionary activities entrusted to the Congregation, exclaimed:

*"to make God known to the poor, to announce Jesus Christ, to tell them that the Kingdom of God is near and that this kingdom is for the poor.....what great reason to praise God, my brothers, and to thank God constantly for this grace."*¹¹

The witness of John Gabriel's life enables us to proclaim the excellence of the missionary vocation. His canonization is an opportunity for us to grow in the love of our vocation and to live our vocation with joy.

2. A desire to grow in holiness:

John Paul II writes in his Encyclical *"Redemptoris Missio"*:

*"A missionary is really such only if he commits himself to the way of holiness..... What is needed is the encouragement of a new 'ardor for holiness' among missionaries and throughout the Christian community..... the true missionary is a saint."*¹²

The recognition of the holiness of John Gabriel's life strengthens us as missionaries to advance in the way of holiness.

3. Identified with Christ:

The Common Rules of the Congregation of the Mission remind us:

*"If the Congregation, with the help of God's grace, is to achieve what it sees as its purpose, a genuine effort to put on the spirit of Christ will be needed."*¹³

The General Assembly of 1992 states:

*"As we attempt to identify ourselves with Christ, the evangelizer of the poor, we must clothe ourselves anew in His spirit."*¹⁴

The canonization of John Gabriel, *alter Cristus*, reinforces our decision to live in Christ and to make Christ the rule and the center of our life and ministry.¹⁵

11 SVP, xi, 387.

12 *Redemptoris Missio*, 90.

13 Common Rules, I, 3.

14 Letter of the General Assembly of 1992.

15 Constitutions, 5.

4. Participation in the cross of Christ:

According to Saint Vincent, our identification with Christ ought to be total:

*"Remember, my confreres, we live in Jesus because of the death of Jesus; our life has to be hidden in Jesus and full of Jesus. To die like Jesus, it is necessary to live like Jesus."*¹⁶

The ecclesial recognition of the martyrdom of John Gabriel assures us that he was an authentic disciple of the Master. Identification with the cross of Christ gives authenticity to our missionary commitment.

5. Ready to endure all in love:

Saint Vincent, aware of the demands of the missionary vocation, invites us to be prepared for everything for the sake of the mission:

"To risk one's life, crossing the oceans for the love of God and the salvation of one's neighbor, is a type of martyrdom, even though there is no actual shedding of blood. It is a martyrdom of the will, for one leaves everything and risks everything."

"Is it possible that we are such cowards, and think so little of ourselves that we would abandon the Lord's vineyard, where we have been called by his divine majesty, just because four or five or six people have died?...Let us say 'There is nothing that can make us abandon this resolution.'" ¹⁷

The witness of John Gabriel's martyrdom, his participation in the cross of Christ, sustains our commitment in face of the inherent adversities of the missionary endeavor.

In this way the words of Saint Vincent will become a reality:

"Missionaries ought to feel happy in becoming poor because of their charity to others. They should not fear being poor in this way....what happiness my brothers, to be able to respond: it has been charity that has made us poor."¹⁸

The witness of John Gabriel's martyrdom helps us discover that the commitment of the missionary is measured by charity in following the Master who gives life to all.

16 SVP i, 320.

17 SVP xi, 297-298.

18 SVP xi, 767-768.

II. John Gabriel Perboyre helps us with his intercession

*"Today I join with you in asking John Gabriel, our brother, to inspire us to live our missionary vocation with greater generosity."*¹⁹

*"The saints help us with their intercession."*²⁰

The identification of the martyr with the death of Christ is also a participation in self abandonment.²¹ The death of John Gabriel shares in the sacrificial and redemptive character of Christ's death. His canonization is the ecclesial recognition of the importance of his martyrdom for the communion of saints. For this reason John Gabriel helps us with his intercession.

1. Through the intercession of John Gabriel we ask for a generous missionary spirit for each and everyone of the members of the Congregation of the Mission and the members of the Vincentian Family.
2. Through the intercession of John Gabriel, we ask, more concretely, for blessings upon the newly acquired missionary commitments of the Congregation of the Mission as a result of the General Assembly of 1992 and the appeals of the Superior General to the confreres and the provinces.²²
3. Through the intercession of John Gabriel, we ask especially for blessings for our mission in China, *"remembering the sacrifices of those who have worked there in the past and giving thanks for the fidelity of those who continue living there, being witnesses of Christ, and waiting with hope, for a future work of evangelization."*²³

(Charles T. Plock, C.M., translator)

¹⁹ Robert P. Maloney, *ibidem*.

²⁰ Preface of the Saints.

²¹ O. Semmelroth, *Martyrdom*, Sacramentum Mundi.

²² The General Assembly approved the following statute: "The Superior General and his Council have in reality, the power to urge the Provinces to participate in international missionary ministries (works, commitments)." The Superior General wrote to all the priests and brothers of the Congregation (October 9, 1992): "I have decided, with the unanimous support and consent of the General Council, during the six years of my office, to establish each year a new mission *ad gentes*, involving the participation of the international community."

²³ Robert P. Maloney, Letter of April 20, 1995.

Bibliography

Erminio Antonello, C.M.

Guillaume Pouget (1847 - 1933)

Testimone del rinnovamento teologico all'inizio del secolo XX

Published by Glossa (Series Mediolanensis 1), Milano, Italy - 1995 (287 pages)

This work of E. Antonello is dedicated to one of the most extraordinary personalities of the theological movement at the beginning of the century: Guillaume Pouget. The book is a doctoral thesis in theology from the Theology Faculty of Northern Italy in Milan. Jean Guitton has written the preface.

The celebrity of our confrere G. Pouget is also due to a famous book written by Jean Guitton, *Portrait of Monsieur Pouget* (39 printings from 1941 to 1962). Guitton says in the preface to the present work: "In the course of my long life, I became acquainted with many important people in various ways. But I never knew anyone like Fr. Pouget. There was in him an enormous difference, almost scandalous, between appearance and reality."

That is enough to indicate the calibre of the personality whose thought E. Antonello retraces. Fr. Pouget belonged among the great minds of his period. Accused of modernism, he was forbidden to teach in public, but not forbidden to teach privately in his room. This study tends, in particular, to make known the writings of Fr. Pouget and contributes to a deeper understanding of the history of modernism, into which Pouget entered as a "moderate progressive." The research of E. Antonello, without overlapping on the portrait by J. Guitton, touches directly on the work of Pouget, in great part unpublished, and thus fills a vacuum in the historical-religious literature of the period. (Italo G. Zedde, C.M.)

Robert G. Simons, C.M.

Competing Gospels

Public Theology and Economic Theory

Published by E. J. Dwyer Pty Ltd, Unit 13, Perry Park, 33 Maddox Street, Alexandria, NSW 2015, Australia - 1995 (231 pages)

This book is an exercise in placing Christian doctrine in dialogue with economic theory and history in the public realm. It does this from the bridging perspective of anthropology. The anthropological focus is used to gather in and consolidate a number of perspectives from Christian doctrine, as well as to highlight

assumptions on the human person and community which are found in both capitalist and socialist economic theories.

H. De Mayer and P. Wynants
Les Vincentiens en Belgique 1842-1992

Published by University Press (Coll. Kadoc-Studies), 14. Leuven,
Belgium - 1992 (405 pages)

This book, which is the fruit of the collaboration of Belgian historians, gives an overview of the history of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul during 150 years in Belgium. The first section offers a panorama on the national level of the historical evolution _ organization and ideology _ of the Society. The second section tackles its development in several large Belgian cities. These accounts are illustrated by numerous photos and documents of the epoch.

Various Authors
Reavivemos le espíritu vicenciano
XXII Semana de Estudios Vicencianos

Published by CEME, Salamanca, Spain - 1995 (519 pages)

The volume gathers together the conferences, papers, and workshop texts from the "22nd Salamanca Week," which was held August 21-25, 1995. It is comprised of three parts: the first contains nine conferences, the second has seven papers, and the third has 14 workshop texts.

Reading this volume will help the members of the Congregation of the Mission, the Daughters of Charity, and others who compose the Vincentian Family to reanimate the Vincentian spirit.

It can be obtained from: Editorial CEME, Apartado 353, Salamanca, Spain

Carlo Riccardi, C.M.
Il pensiero filosofico e mistico di S. Caterina da Siena

Published by Cantagalli, Siena, Italy - 1994 (163 pages)

The two themes treated, one philosophical and the other mystical-theological, could seem to be improperly united in one single volume. Nevertheless, in reading it, one becomes aware that the second treatise is only fully intelligible in light of the first.

God is "he who is" and man takes his being from God. Man is created and maintained in being by God through love; he is provided with an intellect, will, and memory, powers directed toward God; he finds his perfection in the union of his will with God, the peaceful sea of beauty and infinite happiness. The union reaches its summit _ even though always perfectible _ in the mystical union, which is described in all its aspects. (Msgr. Mario I. Castellano)

Carlo Riccardi
Caterina da Siena e l'Eucaristia

Published by Cantagalli, Siena, Italy - 1995 (235 pages)

Fr. Riccardi has proposed as the purpose of this study to "gather together the Eucharistic thoughts of St. Catherine of Siena under all their aspects, presenting them, if possible, in a substantially complete manner." In 11 chapters he treats of the ministries of the Eucharist, of the desire of Christ to give himself to us in food, of the angelic food, of the Eucharist as our comfort, of the Eucharistic pledge of eternal life, of some of the aspects of the Eucharistic theology of St. Catherine, of Eucharistic communion, of good and holy communion, of the Eucharist and of love for the brothers, of the Eucharist and its miraculous effects of charity, and finally of the Eucharistic wonders in the life of Catherine. (Msgr. Mario I. Castellano)

Luigi Chierotti, C.M.
Il beato Gian Gabriele Perboyre (1802 - 1840)
"Lo strangolarono ad una croce"

Published by Cooperazione Vincenziana, Genoa, Italy - 1995 (60 pages)

This book is a short life of John Gabriel Perboyre published in the collection, "Piccola Biblioteca Vincenziana." It is intended for a general audience and contains many photos and engravings.

Franc Sodja, C.M.
Vincencijeva Oporoka (Vincent's Testament)

Published by The Provincial House of Slovenia - 1995 (267 pages)

This book, in the Slovenian language, presents 130 short meditations and practices taken from selected texts of St. Vincent.

Anton Pust, C.M., Zdravko Reven and Bo_idar Slapšak
Palme Mu_eništav (The Martyr's Palms)

Published by Mohorjeva Dru_ba, Celje, Slovenia - 1995

This book, in the Slovenian language, deals with the priests and religious, as well as some laity, who were killed or massacred during the years from 1942 to 1962 in Slovenia. Among these were 5 priests, 5 brothers, and 5 students of the Congregation of the Mission.

Anthony Dean, C.M.
Responding in Love
Reflections for Sunday readings - Years A•B•C

Published by ST PAULS, Society of St Paul, 60-70 Broughton Road, P.O.
Box 230,
Homebush, NSW 2140, Australia - 1995 (232 pages)

This book provides a brief commentary on the first reading and the gospel reading for each Sunday of the liturgical year and for the major Feasts occurring on a Sunday for the complete three-year cycle. The commentaries, based upon biblical scholarship, endeavor to explain major aspects of the biblical passages with a common theme identified for the readings of the day.

André Dodin, C.M.
Presenta a Luis Robineau
Le Señor Vicente, visto por su secretario Luis Robineau, C.M.

Published by Fe y Vida, Via San Fernando 1, 44002 Teruel, Spain - 1995
(256 pages)

This book is a translation from the French, *André Dodin présente Louis Robineau. Monsieur Vincent raconté par son secrétaire.* It contains 339 brief articles which highlight the actions and words of St. Vincent on 12 general themes.