

The Martyrs of the Vincentian Family in the 20th Century

Presentation (R. D'Amico)

I. Chinese Martyrs

1. The Boxer Rebellion (1900-1907)

Introduction (R. Delagoza)

Martyrs of the Congregation of the Mission

2. The Sino-Japanese War (1937 and 1942)

Introduction (R. Delagoza)

Martyrs of the Congregation of the Mission

3. The Communist Period (1934 and 1941-1972)

Introduction (H. O'Donnell)

Martyrs of the Congregation of the Mission

II. Latin American Martyrs

1. Mexico (1917)

Introduction, (J. Prager)

Martyrs of the Association of the Children of Mary Immaculate

2. Panama (1989)

Introduction, (J. Prager)

Martyr of the Congregation of the Mission

3. Brazil

Martyrs of the Company of the Daughters of Charity

III. Eastern European Martyrs

1. Poland (1943)

Martyrs of the Company of the Daughters of Charity

2. The Communist Period (1951-1978)

Introduction (M. Šášik and A. Stres)

a. Martyrs of the Congregation of the Mission

b. Martyrs of the Company of the Daughters of Charity

IV. Spanish Martyrs

Introduction (J. M. Román)

1. Martyrs of the Congregation of the Mission

- a. Alcorisa, in the Diocese of Teruel
- b. Guadalajara, in the Diocese of Sigüenza-Guadalajara
- c. Oviedo and Gijon, in the Diocese of Oviedo
- d. Rialp, in the Diocese of Urgel
- e. Diocese of Madrid
- f. Diocese of San Sebastián
- g. Diocese of Barcelona
- h. Diocese of Valencia
- i. Diocese of Gerona

2. Martyrs of the Company of the Daughters of Charity

- a. Diocese of Madrid
- b. Diocese of Valencia
- c. Diocese of Barcelona

3. Martyrs of the Association of the Children of Mary Immaculate

4. Martyrs of the Association of the Miraculous Medal

5. Martyrs of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul

Presentation

On the occasion of the celebration of the Jubilee of the year 2000, Pope John Paul II has on several occasions stressed the importance of martyrdom in the life of the Church:

“As in every century of the Church’s history, ours has likewise provided numerous saints and blessed and especially many martyrs” and it has been judged that this circumstance (of the jubilee) presents a favourable moment for drawing up a ‘contemporary martyrology’ which would take account of all the individual Churches in an ecumenical dimension and perspective.” (Discourse at the Fifth Extraordinary Consistory on 13 June 1994).

And in *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, # 37, the Pope writes: “*In our century the martyrs have come back, often unrecognised, almost the ‘unknown soldiers’ of God’s great cause. In so far as it is possible, their witness should not be lost to the Church.*”

Again in his pre-Angelus reflexions of 26 December 1994, the Holy Father repeated: “*All throughout its two thousand years of existence, and in a special way during this century, the Church has been constantly strengthened by the contribution of the martyrs.... And so the Christian people cannot forget the gift they have*

received from these chosen members: they constitute a patrimony which belongs to all believers.... ”

Everyone knows of the great persecutions the Church has experienced in the course of this century: one has only to think of the religious persecution in Spain or of that which raged in communist countries and especially in China.

It is true that many regimes did not bring about martyrdom in the strictest sense of the term because, before the martyrs died they put them out of prison and allowed them to die a natural death, after having made them endure interrogations and torture for several years. Or else as in Latin America where numerous missionaries and catechists were killed by unofficial assassins acting under the orders of persons hostile to the preaching of the Gospel.

The Holy Father, in the context of the Central Committee for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, named a commission for the “new martyrs” which has the task of preparing the new contemporary martyrology which will have its place in the celebration of the “Ecumenical Commemoration Day for the New Martyrs,” fixed for 7 May 2000.

On 2 October 1995, Fr. Camilo Maccise, OCD and Sr. Giuseppina Fragasso, ASC, as presidents of the Unions of Superior Generals and members of the above commission, sent an invitation to all the religious families requesting, for the month of April 1996, their community martyrology of the 20th century.

Our Postulator General for causes of saints sent a letter in November 1995 to all Visitors and Visitatrices asking them to send by Easter 1996, notifications on the martyrs of their provinces and of other groups of the Vincentian Family. In the month of February 1996, the Visitors and Visitatrices had sent in almost all their replies.

After careful evaluation and checking, and an initial listing in May 1996, the definitive version of the 20th century martyrology of the Vincentian Family was sent on 8 June to the commission for “The New Martyrs.”

As we know, martyrdom means giving one’s life for the Gospel and the Reign of God, to the extent of shedding one’s blood “in odium fidei.” And so, for this reason there has been excluded from this collection of names certain confreres and sisters who were killed for motives which do not correspond with this criterion. For example: Fr. Giuseppe Morisini of the Roman Province, condemned to death in 1944 by the Gestapo; Frs. José Tejada, Alfonso Saldana, José Fernández, José Aguirreche, Prisciano Gonsalez and Aniano Gonzalez and the lay brothers Marcos Antolin and Valentin Santidrian, who died in the Philippines in 1944 as victims of the war against the Japanese. Likewise, in the case of the Daughters of Charity, no mention will be found of the numerous sisters who died in their service of charity during epidemics.

A branch by branch summary of the 20th century martyrs of the Vincentian Family gives us the following statistics:

The **Congregation of the Mission** possesses 81 martyred confreres: 22 in China; 56 in Spain; two in Slovakia; one in Panama

The **Company of the Daughters of Charity** possesses 35 martyrs: 30 in Spain; one in Poland; one in Slovakia; one in the Czech Republic; two in Brazil.

The **Association of the Children of Mary Immaculate** gave 13 martyrs to the Church: two in Mexico; 11 in Spain.

The **Association of the Miraculous Medal** in Spain has 69 martyrs.

The *Society of St Vincent de Paul* has in Spain 586 martyrs according to the list which can be seen on the walls of the church of St. Robert Bellarmine, the national sanctuary of the Society in that country.

In this issue of *Vincentiana* we wished to make known the martyrs of the Vincentian Family of this century by classifying them according to regions of the world and periods of persecution, with brief historical introductions aimed at situating them in the context in which they gave their lives for Christ and the Gospel.

Regarding a certain number of them for whom we possess abundant documentation and witnessing, diocesan investigations have been opened with a view to future beatification and canonisation. This is the responsibility of the members of the Congregation of the Mission in Spain, the Company of the Daughters of Charity in Spain and the Association of the Children of Mary Immaculate in Mexico. With regard to the others, we are likewise sure that their names are inscribed in heaven and that they will remain present in our mind and for our veneration. In the “heavenly mission,” with the palm of martyrdom in their hand, according to the vision in the Apocalypse, they will praise forever the Lamb that has been slain.

Such is the tribute of blood paid by the Vincentian Family in the course of this century to bear witness to the Gospel, to the Church and to the love of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Accompanied by so many brothers and sisters who have lived and died for Christ, we are heading towards the third millennium of the Christian era, with its weight of suffering but also with the strength and witness value which emanates from them.

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