



WITNESSES OF THE FAITH

IN THE ORIENT



Dominican Martyrs of Japan, China, and Vietnam

WITNESSES OF THE FAITH IN THE ORIENT

Dominican Martyrs of Japan, China, and Vietnam

By a team of Dominican Fathers

Under the Direction of

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HONG KONG

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PRESENTATION

To present a book such as this gives great pride to each member of the Dominican Order, especially to the sons and daughters of the Province of Our Lady of the Rosary. So must it be for St. Dominic himself— he who dreamed of going to pagan mission fields and longed for martyrdom!

St. Dominic's dream was not fulfilled, but his spiritual children did not forget it. Many of them also dreamed of the missions and of martyrdom. Since Paul of Hungary and his companions died for the faith in Poland in 1241, the Order has never been without missions and the missions have never been without martyrs.

The Province of Our Lady of the Rosary was specifically founded in 1587 for the missionary apostolate envisioned by St. Dominic. The then Master of the Order, Father Hyppolytus Mary Beccaria stated: "The Province incarnated the authentic spirit of St. Dominic." This is why there has never been a lack of martyrs in the Province since its founding.

History testifies to the abundance of them — thousands of them in various areas of its missionary field. The martyrs have been of many nationalities and from all social classes. Unfortunately, for many of them no records exist; only their names are known. Those whose biographies are contained in this volume are among the better known and documented. They contain an important Dominican Martyrology of the Far East. Some of the martyrs in this collection are from the Province of Our Lady of the Rosary, but many others come from other Provinces of the Order.

The Province of the Rosary has the honor of presenting this Martyrology — on the occasion of the celebration of the IVth Centenary of its founding — to the entire Dominican Family and to all others who treasure the missionary vocation.

In the early centuries of the Church it was said that the blood of the martyrs was the seed of Christianity. Let us pray that the examples of courage and strength of the martyrs will preserve the faith of God's people in the places where they evangelized. We hope, too, that our apostolic commitment will likewise be strengthened and that the seeds of missionary vocations will flourish.

GUILLERMO TEJON, O.P.
Provincial
Province of Our Lady of the Rosary
Hong Kong, 10 June 1988

PROLOGUE

On the occasion of the IVth Centenary of the founding of the Dominican Province of Our Lady of the Rosary, we present short biographies of the martyrs in its missionary territories of Japan, China, and Vietnam. Innumerable lay Christians suffered martyrdom for the faith in those countries, along with many foreign and native missionaries. There were Lay Dominicans, members of the Confraternity of the Rosary, innkeepers, benefactors, and other faithful from every walk of life and social stratum. They gladly followed their shepherds to death in witness to the Gospel. Of the one hundred and seventy-four of them who have been officially beatified by the Church, 76 have been canonized.

From the opening of the first mission in Japan in 1602 by Father Francis Morales and his four companions, up to 1637, the Christian religion struggled to spread the Gospel. Many priests and laypersons followed the example of the first Dominican martyr, Father Alphonse de Navarrete, who was executed in 1617. The torments suffered by the Japanese faithful were especially painful and cruel. During the period following the official suppression of the missionaries in 1637, the faith went underground. Thanks to the organization and evangelization activities of the Japanese faithful, it was possible to keep the seeds of the “good news” alive, albeit in hiding, until the “hidden Catholics” were able to come out in public around Nagasaki in 1865.

The evangelization of China was begun in 1626 by Father Bartholomew Martínez, who preached north of Formosa — and later, in 1631, by Father Angel Cocci who spread the good news in Fukien. Since the death in 1648 of the protomartyr of China, Father Francis de Capillas, many priests and faithful have shed their blood for the faith in the 17th and 18th centuries.

In Vietnam, the Dominican missionary effort was started by Fathers John of Santa Cruz and John of Arjona in 1676. The mission flourished rapidly but before long it too suffered increasing persecution. In 1745, Fathers Francis Gil de Frederich and Matthew Alonso de Liciniana were the first to be martyred in Vietnam. Rapidly, innumerable native and foreign Christians sprinkled Vietnam with their blood until 1862.

In this book, we have attempted to sketch the biographies of all the martyrs of the Dominican Missions of the Far East, not only those who have been beatified. We believe that all of them, even those whose biographical facts are not known, deserve to be mentioned as prominent witnesses of the Gospel. We do not pretend however, to “create martyrs” artificially. Nor we we prejudge the authority of the Church in those cases yet to be officially decided for beatification.

Four hundred years have gone by since the 21st day of July 1587 when Father John de Castro and fourteen other Dominicans arrived in Manila to begin the missionary

endeavors of the Province of Our Lady of the Rosary. During these 400 years, the fruits most worthy of mention are the valiant apostolic labors of the men and women who sealed the testimony of their faith with their blood. We are convinced that the powerful example of their witness is one of the strongest motives for the continuation of the Province's missionary work in the Far East.

This book has been written with the collaboration of four Dominican priests, under the supervision of the Provincial Secretariat of Missions. Two have written the biographies of the Japanese martyrs, another has condensed the lives of the Chinese martyrs; and still another one has depicted the lives of the Vietnamese martyrs. To these authors and to all who have helped materially or through moral support, we express our deepest gratitude.

In celebrating our IVth Centenary, we dedicate this work to all the religious of this Province. We hope that through the intercession of Our Lady of the Rosary, our Father Saint Dominic, and of our many martyred brothers and sisters, God will bless our task of evangelization as the fifth century of our Province's work continues.

CEFERINO PUEBLA, O.P.
Provincial Secretary of Missions
Hong Kong

Permission to update. . .

“Dear Father Christian: -

This is to inform you that the council of the Province of Our Lady of the Rosary, in its session held on 21 May 2005, has granted your request concerning the re-edition of the book WITNESSES OF THE FAITH IN THE ORIENT. Therefore, you are herewith authorized to re-edit the work and publish it in the web page and in any other form. . .”

Fr. Bonifacio García Solis, OP

Provincial

FOREWORD

It gives me great pleasure to welcome the appearance of the updated work: WITNESSES OF THE FAITH IN THE ORIENT — our brothers and sisters in Saint Dominic, edited and revised by Father George G. Christian, O.P., of the Province of St. Joseph. Before being expelled by the Communist regime, a number of Fathers and Brothers from our Province served the Church in the Fukien area of China and ministered to the faithful there.

May the biographies of these holy martyrs inspire us to deepen our faith and to follow it more generously, each according to his calling.

V. Rev. D. Dominic Izzo, OP, Provincial
Dominican Friars, Province of St. Joseph
New York, NY

April 2006

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Grateful thanks are tendered to the authorities of the Patriarchal Convent of St. Dominic, Bologna (Italy), for permission to use many of their published illustrations of the martyrs. - *GC, Editor.*

I

MARTYRS OF JAPAN

By José Delgado García, O.P.



INTRODUCTION

The growth and dramatic eclipse of Christianity in Japan during the period 1549-1640, called “the Christian Century,” manifest without a doubt one of the most fascinating episodes in the history of Christian evangelization in the Far East. In the midst of this, the Dominican mission of Japan during the first part of the 17th century constitutes one of the most important chapters in the missionary history of the Province of the Holy Rosary. It is a chapter written with heroism and blood, and signed with the martyrdom of numerous priests, professed religious, lay Dominicans, and laypersons.

The politico-geographic structure of Japan in the 16th and 17th centuries was almost identical to what it is today. The Empire of the Rising Sun, east of China and Korea, consisted of an extensive archipelago of more than 3000 islands, grouped around four major ones: Kokkaido, Honshu, Kyusu and Shikoku. The geographic area of Japan is 377,484 square kilometers. Its population in the 17th century was 20 million, while today [1988 - Ed.] it is 120 million.

Christianity was brought to Japan in 1549 by St. Francis Xavier, S.J. The religious make-up of the country at that time was a mixture of Shintoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism.

Shintoism, the native religion of the country, is a mixture of animism and worship of nature and ancestors. Since the 6th century, Shintoism has undergone a great transformation because of additions from Buddhism and Confucianism. Buddhism in the 16th century was composed of a great variety of sects which were contending to win and conserve their preeminence in a volatile political and social ferment as the country moved toward unification.

The political organization of Japan in the era of our martyrs at the beginning of the 17th century was characterized as a military government headed by a “Shogun” who ruled the country for a figure-head Emperor, secluded in his palace in Kyoto. Five cities of the empire were under the direct control of the “generalissimo” of Shogun: Kyoto, Tokyo, Osaka, Sakai, and Nagasaki. Each city was run by a “Bugyo” or governor, personally appointed by the Shogun. Since 1616, Nagasaki also had a personal representative of the Shogun, called “Daikan,” who was responsible for all the profitable business transactions with foreign ships. The rest of the empire was divided into fluid “kingdoms” which were governed by “daimyos” or feudal lords. The daimyos functioned with more or less autonomy, depending on their economic independence and on the number of their warriors or “samurai.”

The three great Shoguns who were able to unify Japan were Oda Nobunaga (1573-1582), Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1582-1598), and Tokugawa Ieyasu (1603-1616). Oda Nobunaga was the famous Shogun who started trade with foreign countries and who had a policy which favored Christianity. His successor, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, disagreed with this policy and in 1587, published an “Edict of Expulsion of All Missionaries.” Because of disobedience to this edict, in 1597, the first crucifixion of Christians was held in Nagasaki. Later, in 1614, Shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu, a fervent Buddhist who was very jealous of outside influences, promulgated “The Edict of Total Persecution” against Christianity. This edict was carried with full force for 20 years and completely erased all public Christianity in Japan. The succeeding Shoguns, Tokugawa Hidetada (1616-1623) and Tokugawa Iemitsu (1623-1651), intensified the persecution against Christians, who were killed by the thousands. Among these martyrs are all those described in this book.

The causes of this terrible persecution were many and complicated — and have been extensively analyzed by historians. We summarize the most important ones in these words: the anti-Christian attitude of the powerful Buddhists; the intrigues by and quarrels with foreign dominations; the deceitful and underhanded campaigns by Protestants against Catholics; certain imprudent acts of foreign navigators; and the fear of the Shoguns of being dominated by foreign nations, by means of religious influence, during a critical period of unification of the country.

Of course, all of this turmoil does not take anything away from our martyrs, who died in defense of the faith. In the year 1617, four European religious were executed, among them [Saint] Alphonse de Navarrete. The persecution spread throughout the country, even though it was concentrated on the island of Kyushu, and was most furious and bloody in Nagasaki. The second stage (10 September) is called the “Great Martyrdom.” During this one, many of our Dominicans lost their lives.

From then until 1637, the persecution increased in furor. The deaths of many martyrs were frightful. Crucifixions, beheadings, and slow burnings were accompanied by other more refined tortures. One such was known as *regurgitated water*. The victims were forced to drink large quantities of water, after which their abdomens were beaten with great violence, forcing the water out of their mouth. The brutal striking of the abdomen naturally caused internal organs to rupture, entailing terrible hemorrhages and gripping pain. There was also the sticking of needles and sharp pieces of slivered cane under the nails and into other parts of the body. To top it all, there was the torture called *gallows and pit*, in which the persons were hung upside down from a gallows with the upper half of the body hanging into a fetid hole. The opening was then tightly enclosed with boards, like a trap around the waist. Sometimes a gash was made on the head to extend the length of time it took to suffocate. At times, it took days for death to come. These were some of the methods by which many of our martyrs perished as they witnessed their faith.



The ordeal of “needles”

became more and more intense from 1616 on, these Japanese lay Christians did prodigious wonders of evangelization in support of the missionaries. Many of them died for the faith; at times, whole families gave their lives, thus writing one of the most beautiful chapters in the history of Japanese Christianity, as we shall see later.

In 1637, with the martyrdom of the last group of missionaries, there ended the Dominican presence in Japan in the 17th century. In 1640, the country was completely sealed off from the exterior world, not to be reopened until 1854. Dominicans of the Province of the Holy Rosary finally returned to Japan in 1904, opening the second stage of Dominican evangelization in the islands — which continues to the present time.

In this book, we present the Martyrs of Japan in three chapters: -

A. A group of 20 priests and professed Dominican religious martyred during the years 1617-1628. All were beatified by Pope Pius IX on 7 July 1867.

B. A group of 19 priests, professed, lay Dominicans and laity who were martyred during the years 1629-1637. Sixteen of them were canonized by Pope John Paul II on 18 October 1987.

C. Dominican laity, catechists, innkeepers, benefactors and members of the Confraternity of the Rosary who were martyred during the years 1602-1628. Seventy-two were beatified by Pope Pius IX on 7 July 1867.

CEFERINO PUEBLA, O.P.

A

**MARTYRS OF JAPAN
(1617 - 1628)**

Beatified by Pope Pius IX
on 7 July 1867

By José Delgado García, O.P.

CHRONOLOGICAL INDEX OF MARTYRDOM

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* Canonized.

SAINT ALPHONSE DE NAVARRETE

Dominican Priest

(1571-1617)



The protomartyr of the Dominicans in Japan was born in Logroño, Spain, on 21 September 1571, and was baptized the same day. He was raised and educated in a very Christian family renowned for several famous personages. While still very young, he enrolled at the Priory of St. Paul in Valladolid. After his ordination, he volunteered to be a missionary to the Far East. In July 1585, he boarded a ship bound for the Philippines via Mexico. Father Navarrete landed in Manila in July 1595 and was assigned to St. Mary Magdalene de Patta, a Dominican House in the province of Cagayan. In 1600, due to poor health, he was sent to the Priory of St. Dominic in Manila. After his apparent recovery, he returned to Cagayan in 1602. It wasn't long before he fell ill again, returned to Manila, and obtained permission from his Superiors to return to his original Priory of St. Paul in Valladolid, Spain, to recuperate.

In 1607, the Provincial wrote to him from Manila, reminding him of his mission while in Spain, namely, to recruit more missionaries. Immediately, overlooking the illness from which he had not yet completely recovered, Father Navarrete went off to Rome and then to Madrid. There, he gathered a sizable group from the Dominican Priors in Spain to accompany him to Manila and to the Far East. All of them arrived in Manila in 1611.

During that same year, Father Navarrete was assigned to the House of the Holy Rosary in Miyako (Kyoto, Japan). 1612 found him back in Manila for the Provincial Chapter. Then, he returned to Japan, having been assigned to St. Dominic House in Nagasaki. Two years later, on 6 November 1614, he and the rest of the missionaries were exiled. By a stroke of luck, he boarded a ship that was on its way to Usuki, Bongo, in the province of Oita (Japan), accompanying an Augustinian missionary, the Vicar of the Augustinians, Father Hernando de Ayala. Thus, he succeeded in remaining in Japan indefinitely, in pursuit of missionary work.

Early in the summer of 1615, Father Navarrete was named Vicar Provincial. When Father Francis Murayama, a diocesan priest, died in the spring of 1615, Father Navarrete combined the Confraternity of the Cross (which had been founded by Father Murayama to aid Christians during the persecution) with the Confraternity of the Holy Name of Jesus,

and the Confraternity of the Rosary. The three organizations became one: the Confraternity of the Rosary of Number, to which the fervent Christians of Nagasaki belonged.

In the spring of 1616, Father Navarrete also encouraged the spread of the devotion to the Rosary in the regions neighboring Nagasaki.

In collaboration with the Major Superiors of the Franciscans and the Augustinians, he also established the Confraternity of Charity which was dedicated to the care of the sick, the orphaned, and the abandoned — as well as to the pariahs from the suburbs of Nagasaki.

When Father Peter of the Assumption, a Franciscan, and Father John Baptist Tabora, a Jesuit, were martyred in May 1617, Father Navarrete noticed that the faithful from the region of Omura became very fervent. But the Christians from Nagasaki were quite downhearted and unwilling to manifest their faith openly; they even murmured because their priests hid and did not seek the palm of martyrdom publicly. For that reason, Fathers Navarrete and Ayala decided to launch their ministry out in the open. Both of them left for Omura on 25 May 1617, there to resume public ministry. Four days later, Father Navarrete was arrested and imprisoned in several places around the Bay of Omura. Finally, he was beheaded on the island of Takashima on 1 June 1617.

Father Alphonse de Navarrete appears third on the official list of the 205 Martyrs of Japan beatified by Pope Pius IX on 7 July 1867. He was canonized on 1 October 2000 by Pope John Paul II.

WRITINGS

— Eleven *Letters* written in 1617 to different Friars and civil personalities.

(These letters were transcribed by Father Francis Morales, O.P., in his *Report on the martyrdom of Father Alphonse de Navarrete, O.P., Vicar Provincial of Japan and Father Hernando of St. Joseph, Augustinian Vicar Provincial, also in Japan 1617*. This work is preserved in the *Archives of the Province of the Holy Rosary [APSR], Manila, Ms. vol. 301, fos. 1-30*).

BLESSED JOHN MARTÍNEZ OF SAINT DOMINIC

Dominican Priest

(1577 - 1619)



John Martínez was born around 1577 to John Martínez and Mary Cid in Manzanal de los Infantes, Zamora (Spain).

As a youth, he became a student at the University of Salamanca, after which he entered the famous Dominican Priory of St. Stephen there. He made his profession on 24 December 1594. After ordination to the priesthood, he volunteered to be a missionary to the Far East. After leaving Spain on 21 June 1601, he arrived in Manila (Philippines) via Mexico on 30 April 1602.

Shortly after his arrival, a Provincial Chapter was held at the Priory of St. Dominic in Manila. Father Martínez was assigned to the House of St. Dominic founded in 1588 at Abucay, in the province of Bataan. After ministering there for six years, he returned to Manila. In 1610, he became Superior of the newly-founded House of San Juan de Letran in Manila, while holding the position of Commissary of the Holy Office.

In 1612, he was assigned to St. Thomas of Mangaldan House, in the province of Pangasinan, where the missionaries were very active.

In order to preach in his new mission, John had to learn a new dialect, very different from that of Bataan. He soon mastered it and zealously continued his missionary activities.

In 1614, he began studying a complete new language: Chinese. This he deemed necessary since he had been appointed to minister to the Chinese of Binondo, located just outside of Manila. There, he lived in the House of St. Gabriel, to which another House and Church had been annexed. But the Provincial Chapter of April 1616 reappointed him to St. Dominic's in Manila only to reassign him to St. Gabriel in the following year.

It was at this time that the Province of the Holy Rosary decided to open a mission in Korea. This venture was entrusted to Father Martínez as superior along with two friars.

After extensive preparations, the three left Manila on 15 July 1618 and, after a rough voyage, arrived in Nagasaki on 13 August.

Arrangements for continuing on to Korea began at once but because of disagreements regarding freight charges the journey was cancelled and this particular mission never materialized. Because of this unsuccessful attempt, the two companions decided to return to Manila, while John decided to remain in Japan where there was a shortage of missionaries due to the horrifying persecution of Christians. With the help of a catechist, he and an Italian Dominican, Father Angelo Ferrer Orsucci, began to study Japanese.

At midnight on 13 December 1618, their residence was attacked by some persecutors. The two priests were taken prisoner and brought before the governor of Nagasaki. With them were also arrested the owner of the house and his neighbors, as well as the catechist and one of the servants who worked for the Dominican Fathers. The governor sentenced the priests to imprisonment in the infamous prison of Suzuta in Omura, and the others to the common jail in Nagasaki.

The prison where the priests were confined was a large foul smelling building. The unwholesome surroundings and appalling conditions soon had a deteriorating effect on Father Martínez' health, leading him to become depressed. Before long, horrible pessimistic thoughts and fear came over him. Had it not been for the depths of his solid faith, the experience could have brought him to despair. We have proof in his writings that, despite his personal anguish, he was resigned to everything, as coming from the will of God.

Ultimately, he fell ill and died in prison on 19 March 1619. He is the ninth of the 205 blessed martyrs of Japan who were beatified on 7 July 1867 by Pope Pius IX.

WRITINGS

- ◆ Four of his Letters, written between 1618-1619 to different religious and civil persons, are preserved.

(Three of these letters may be seen in *Misiones Dominicanas*, Avila, 1923, 1924, and 1925. The other letter is transcribed in *Historia de la Provincia del Santo Rosario de la Orden de Predicadores en Filipinas, Japón y China* by Diego Aduarte, O.P., vol 1, Madrid, 1963, p. 135.)

BLESSED LOUIS FLORES

Dominican Priest

(1563 - 1622)



Louis Flores was born in Antwerp, Belgium around the year 1563. Between the years 1565 and 1570, he received his early education in Ghent, the city of Charles V, Emperor of Germany and King of Spain. Later, his family moved to Spain and then to Mexico. It was there that his father changed the original family name [Frarijin / Fraryn / Floryn] to Flores.

Louis entered the Dominicans at the Priory of St. Dominic in Mexico. By 1597, he had already become a professor at the Priory. In that same year, he transfiliated to the Province of the Holy Rosary of the Philippines. He joined the band of missionaries who formed Mission VI of that Province and left Acapulco in February 1598, heading for Manila.

Upon his arrival, Louis was first assigned to St. Mary Magdalen de Patta House, in the province of Cagayan. There, he quickly and easily learned the language of the region. His assignments included: St. Thomas of Tulag in 1600; New Segovia or Lal-lo in 1602; St. Vincent of Daludu in 1606; St. Paul of Pilitan in 1608; and St. Vincent of Tocolana in 1610.

In 1612, because of failing health, Louis received permission to return to the Priory of St. Dominic in Manila, to enjoy a much needed rest.

Four years later, in 1616, he was made Superior of the House of St. James of Iguig in Cagayan. In 1617, he was named Vicar Provincial of Cagayan and resided in New Segovia where the principal house of the region was located. At the Provincial Chapter of 1619, he was elected third Diffinitor. It was at this time that he requested to leave the missionary apostolate for good. His petition having been received favorably, he was reassigned to the Priory of St. Dominic.

Subsequently, he was very much inspired by reports of his Dominican brothers in Japan, many of whom he knew — especially Father Alphonse de Navarrete. Both of them

had served in Cagayan. Animated by a revived missionary spirit, Louis approached the Provincial and expressed his desire to work in Japan. After unceasingly repeated requests, he was finally allowed to go. In 1620, he left for Japan in the company of an Augustinian priest, Father Peter de Zúñiga.

On 5 June 1620, both priests left Manila on a Japanese ship under the command of Captain Joachim Díaz Hirayama. While on the high seas off Formosa, the ship was captured by English and Dutch pirates who held the two priests captive until arrival at the port of Hirado, Japan.

The Japanese captain of the captured ship immediately denounced the pirates because his ship had an official license to engage in trade between the ports of Japan, Macao and Manila. For their part, the Dutch pirates alleged to the Japanese officials that they had found papers belonging to two banned Catholic missionaries aboard the ship. In consequence, the Japanese government presented the case to the Daimyo or Landlord of Hirado and to the governor of Nagasaki for a decision.

While the authorities were investigating all the circumstances of the case, the Dutch pirates viciously tormented Fathers Zúñiga and Flores. They confined the two in a dark, prison-like cell where they used various tortures and threats to force them to confess that they were priests.

On 30 November 1621, a disgraceful trial was conducted during which Father Zúñiga was forced to admit that he was a priest and missionary. Father Flores, on the other hand, was almost rescued by a plan devised by some Christians of Nagasaki, led by Dominican Father James Collado. The plan failed, however, and on 6 March 1622, Father Flores decided to declare freely that he too was a missionary and a priest.

The two priests were first imprisoned in the prison on the island of Ikinoshima. From there, they were transferred to Nagasaki where they were burned alive on 19 August 1622.

Fathers Louis Flores and Peter de Zúñiga, listed among the 205 Martyrs of Japan, were declared “blessed” by Pope Pius IX on 7 July 1867.

WRITINGS

- ◆ There is only one known *Letter*, written in 1622 from Hirado, Japan.

(It has been transcribed by Diego Collado, OP, in *Suplemento a la Historia de la Cristiandad de Japón del P. Jacinto-Orfanell, O.P. Madrid, 1633, chap. 67.*)

BLESSED FRANCIS MORALES

Dominican Priest

(1567 - 1622)



Francis was born in Madrid on 14 October 1567, the son of a lawyer and auditor of the Royal Supreme Council of Castile. He entered the Order at the Priory of St. Paul in Valladolid, and studied philosophy and theology at St. Gregory College in the same city.

Morales became a professor of philosophy at St. Paul Priory. It was then that he decided to become a missionary in the Far East. In the early summer of 1597, after completing his studies, he left for Manila, arriving there in

the middle of May of the following year. He became lecturer in arts and also Master of students in the newly instituted House of Studies at the Priory of St. Dominic. By 1600, he had also become lecturer in Theology and preacher to the Spanish population of Manila. The following year, he was elected Prior of St. Dominic.

Father Morales was elected first Diffinitor to the Provincial Chapter of 1602 and was the founder of the first mission to Japan. He was also appointed Vicar of the Japanese missions. His co-founders were: Fathers Alonso de Mena, Thomas Hernández, Thomas de Zumárraga, and Brother John de Badia.

The five missionaries set sail for Japan on 1 June 1602. Traveling along the islands, they landed at Koshiki in the western part of the province of Kagoshima on 3 July. After setting up the first Dominican Community in Japan, they went to greet formally the Landlord of Satsuma, returning to Koshiki by early November. Unfortunately, the Japanese house they had chosen to as residence proved to be very inadequate; as a result, they suffered greatly from the cold, not to mention from hunger and many other hardships.

It took years for the four to get firmly settled, after building a new house and a church which were finished in July of 1606. The house was located in the city of Kyodomari, the port of the actual Sendai of Kagoshima. All of this was accomplished with the help of the Landlord. Many fruitful missionary works were carried out from this new location.

Surprisingly, while the Landlord was publicly helping the Christians, he was scheming to eliminate them from his territory. One day, he ordered Father Morales to visit the Shogun of Japan. During the priest's long absence — from the summer of 1608 to the spring of 1609 — the Landlord ruthlessly carried out his plan to persecute the Christians by exiling the principal ones. In May of 1609, the missionaries were also exiled. Father Morales went to Nagasaki, where in 1610 he founded the house and church of St. Dominic in a place called “New Nagasaki” [Sotomachi].

Before very long, Sotomachi became the leading spiritual center of the region. Because of his leadership, Father Morales was one of the missionaries expelled from Japan on 6 November 1614, and exiled to Manila. With the help of some Japanese Christians, he was rescued from the high seas and returned to Nagasaki.

There, because he was one of the better known and venerated missionaries, he was welcomed and sheltered by the eldest son of the governor, Andrew Tokuan Murayama.

In June 1617, Francis was named Vicar-Provincial; as such, he became responsible for the direction of all clerical, religious and lay Dominican foundations. His first priority, however, was to care for the needs of the imprisoned missionaries and Christians.

On 15 March 1619, Francis was arrested in Tokuan's house. At first, he was detained in the local district court of Nagasaki, but on the 25th, he was transferred to a small island between Kyushu and Korea called Ikinoshima. On 8 August 1619, he was taken to the prison of Suzuta, in Omura, where missionaries and their leaders were held.

During his confinement in all of these places, he was able to carry out priestly ministry through intermediaries and by correspondence. Finally, on 10 September 1622, he was slowly burned alive on the hill of Nishizaka, a notorious place of martyrdom in Nagasaki.

Father Morales was in a group of 25 missionaries and 27 Japanese Christians who are included in the 205 Martyrs of Japan raised to the altar [“blessed”] by Pope Pius IX on 7 July 1867.

WRITINGS

- ◆ Eighteen *Letters* written in the years 1617-1621 to different civil authorities and Religious (cf APSR, Ms, vols. 19 and 301).
- ◆ *Reports to the Provincial Chapter of 1604 in Manila* (published by J. Lôpez, *Historia de Santo Domingo y su Orden*, fos. 268-269).
- ◆ *Report on the two martyrs of Hakata in Japan, Joachim and Tome* (cf. APSR, Ms. Col. 19, fos. 289-290).
- ◆ *Report on the glorious martyrdom of Father Alphonse de Navarrete, O.P., Vicar Provincial of Japan and Father Hernando of St. Joseph, Augustinian Vicar-Provincial, also in Japan, 1617.* (ASPR, Ms. Vol. 301, fos. 1-30).
- ◆ *Report on the imprisonment of Father Francis Morales, 1619* (in APSR, Ms. vol. 301, fos. 93-95).
- ◆ *Report on some disputes with the gentiles, 1619* (in APSR, Ms. vol. 301, fos. 97-104).
- ◆ *The beginnings of the Order of our Father Saint Dominic in Japan, 1620* (in APSR, Ms. vol. 301, fos. 85-91)
- ◆ *Report on Andrew Tokuan and his imprisonment and martyrdom, 1620* (in APSR, Ms. vol. 301, fos. 105-108).
- ◆ *Report on Toan, Governor of Nagasaki* (in APSR, Ms. vol. 301, fos. 306-312).

BLESSED ANGELO FERRER ORSUCCI

Dominican Priest

(1575 - 1622)



Michael Ferrer Orsucci was born on 8 May 1575 in Lucca, Tuscany (Italy), to a family of noble lineage. When he joined the Dominicans at the Priory of St. Roman, he took the name: Angelo.

He completed the study of philosophy in that priory, then theology at St. Mary of Quercia in Viterbo. Ordained in 1597, he continued his studies at the Priory of St. Mary of Minerva in Rome. While there, he requested permission to transfer to the Priory of Preachers in Valencia, Spain, there to engage in preparatory studies for missionary work in the Far East. After a year of preparation, he sailed for Manila, arriving on 30 April 1602.

Angelo was assigned to St. Mary Magdalen de Patta House, in the province of Cagayan (Philippines) where he learned the language and worked among the natives. In 1604, he was transferred to St. Thomas of Tulag, then superior of the House of St. Raymond of Lubo, with responsibility for the Churches of Piat and Pipi, attached to it in 1606. Two years later, he was in residence at St. Dominic House in New Segovia.

Around this time, Angelo's health began to deteriorate, moving his superiors to send him to a better climate in the province of Bataan. There, he regained his health and learned the local dialect.

From 1610 to 1612, he was Vicar-Provincial in Pangasinan. The Provincial Chapter of 1612 assigned him as Superior of the Hospice of St. Hyacinth of Mexico. In 1615, he returned to Manila with a large group of missionaries.

In 1616, since he would not consent to be elected Provincial, he was instead elected Diffinitor. He was assigned as Superior of St. Dominic of Abucay in Bataan, with a voice in the Provincial Chapter.

Although the following Chapter did not give him any assignment in the Philippines, nonetheless his name appears in the section "Ordinances" in the Acts of the Chapter which

ordered him under formal precept to erect in Cádiz (Spain) a Hospice like the one in Mexico. Since this work was never carried through, Angelo remained in the Philippines. He felt a compelling desire to go to Japan, to fill the post left vacant by the martyrdom of Father Navarrete on 1 June 1617.

Very quickly obtaining permission from the Provincial, Angelo boarded a ship heading for the Japanese mission with Father John Martínez of St. Dominic on 15 July 1618. The two landed in Nagasaki on 13 August, when the persecution raged furiously. As a result, Angelo dressed in Spanish lay clothes to avoid being recognized as a missionary. At the beginning of October, he hid himself in the home of one of the Christians, Cosmas Takeya, where he began the study of Japanese. Thomas of the Rosary, a catechist, and Dominic of the Rosary, a servant, helped him in his study. But it was primarily Father John of the Angels Rueda who guided the study of the language.

In spite of their great precautions, they were discovered on 13 December 1618. The home where they were staying was raided: Fathers Orsucci and Martínez, their helpers, the owner of the house and all the nearest neighbors were arrested.

The group was taken to the District Court where the Governor sentenced the missionaries and their helpers to the prison in Suzuta, and all the others to the common prison in Nagasaki.

In prison, Father Orsucci endured many sufferings and hardships, and all the while his desire for martyrdom grew. With him was Jesuit Father Charles Spinola, a friend on whose shoulder he could lean. Angelo expressed his loving care and reverence to his Dominican brothers, and sent many letters and reports to Manila and other places, detailing the needs of missionaries.

On 10 September 1622, he was slowly burned alive. Pope Pius IX beatified him on 7 July 1867 together with 205 others who appear in the roster of martyrs in Japan.

WRITINGS

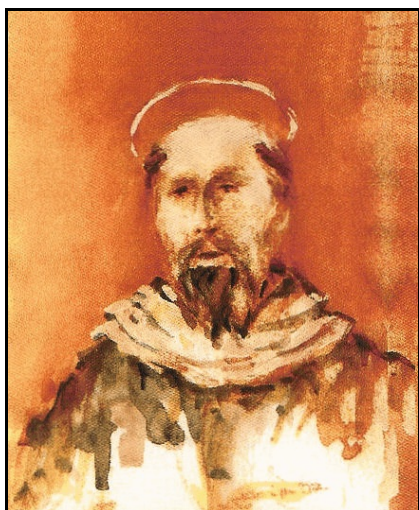
- ◆ Thirty-two *Letters* written in the years 1592-1622 to his family, Friars, and lay friends.

(These letters can be seen in: 1. *Archivo di Stato, Lucca*, Collectione Orsucci. 2. Tomaso Masetti, O.P.: *Lettere edificanti dei Frati Praedicatori martirizzati nel Giappone*, Rome 1868. 3. APSR, Ms. vol. 19).

BLESSED ALONZO DE MENA

Dominican Priest

(1578 - 1622)



A first cousin of Alphonse de Navarrete, Alonzo [Alphonse] de Mena was born on 3 February 1578 in Logroño, Spain. Like his cousin, he was baptized in the Church of St. Mary the Imperial.

An uncle was a priest and honorary Canon of the Cathedral of Salamanca; young Alonzo soon became his favorite nephew. In his youth, Alonzo was sent to Salamanca where he joined the Dominicans at the Priory of St. Stephen. After two years of novitiate, he became a professed member of the Dominican Order on 23 March 1594.

In 1697, even though his studies had not been completed, he left for Manila to prepare himself as a missionary to the Far East. Assigned to the Priory of St. Dominic in Manila, there he completed his theological studies and was subsequently ordained.

Alonzo's first mission was to serve the Chinese of Binondo, outside of Manila. On 1 June 1602, he was sent to Japan with Father Morales and three other friars to found a Dominican mission there. Since he had the ability to speak fluent Chinese, he was one of the group sent to Shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu, to greet him in the name of all the Dominican missionaries. Because of the very favorable impression they made on the Shogun, they obtained legal permission to remain in Japan. In view of this very successful visit, the Landlord of the region of Satsuma [Kagosima] asked the Dominicans to send Father Mena to Manila to initiate commercial relations with his territories. Father Mena completed the task and arranged for a ship to land at the port of Satsuma. Although the commercial venture ended in failure, nonetheless the Landlord was kind enough to allow the building of a church and residence in Kyodomari. Thus, a vast field of apostolic endeavor was opened to the Dominicans.

Toward the end of August 1606, Father Mena opened a new missionary territory in the kingdom of Hizen [Saga]. Around that time, he went to Nagasaki where he learned that

a Spanish ship had landed at the port of Fukahori. He approached the captain of the ship, Francis Moreno Donoso, who introduced him to the local Lord. They then paid a courtesy visit to the principal Landlord of the region of Hizen. The visit was so cordial that the latter granted the missionaries the necessary authority to preach the Gospel in his territories. The Dominicans also had the freedom to build churches in the towns of Hama, Kashima, and Saga. This new apostolate area gained by Father Mena was a veritable paradise for the dynamic missionary endeavors of the Dominicans. Soon, however, because of disruptive political competition between Christian Landlords, the Shogun ordered the missionaries to leave Hizen. Sadly, they left for Nagasaki on 8 November 1613.

In mid-November, a disguised Father Mena returned to visit the Christians of Hama, Kashima and Saga. He strengthened them in the faith and administered Baptism to the catechumens who had proved their fidelity during the persecution.

In Nagasaki, he attended to the needs of the exiled Christians from Hizen, who were known as members of the “Association of Father Mena.” For several years, he lived with John Chuan, the third son of Governor Toan Murayama. Serving as chaplain to this family, he had the opportunity to preach in the regions of Hizen, Chikugo and Chikuzen. With the help of many loyal Christians, he brought back many apostates in those regions.

It was in Nagasaki that he was arrested in the home of the Christian John Shozayemon, after having been betrayed by a spy. On 14 March 1619, he was taken to the District Court for a hearing. On the following day, he was joined by Father Francis Morales. On 25 March, they were both taken to the prison on the island of Ikinoshima, then on 8 August, they were transferred to the prison of Suzuta.

While Father Mena suffered many hardships and illnesses in prison, he was nonetheless able to write many letters and reports. Then, on 10 September 1622, he was slowly burned alive in Nagasaki. He was in the group that was declared “blessed” by Pope Pius IX on 7 July 1867.

WRITINGS

- ◆ Seven *Letters* written in 1605 to his family and to several friars.

(These can be seen in: 1. Léon Pagès, *Histoire de la Religion Chrétienne au Japon, Annexe*, Paris, 1870. 2. Thomaso Masette, O.P.: *Lettere edificanti dei Fratri Predicatori . . .*, Rome, 1868. 3. APSR, Ms. vol. 19).

- ◆ *A short report on the persecution of 1614 and what caused it and how well the Christians of Hizen endured it, 1614* (in APSR, Ms. vol. 301, fos. 109-128).

- ◆ *The martyrdom of two Japanese saints, Peter and Paul, martyred for the faith in 1617 in the kingdom of Chikugo, 1617* (in APSR, vol. 301, fos. 135-137).

- ◆ *On the martyrdom of some holy men who gave their lives for the faith in 1618 in the Kingdom of Buzen in the month of February, 1618* (in APSR, Ms. vol. 301, fos. 139-140).

- ◆ *Report on the martyrdom of the saintly Father Alphonse de Navarrete, O.P., beheaded for the faith in 1617 on the island of Japan, 1618* (in the General Archives of the Order of Preachers [AOP], Rome, X, 163, fos. 218-236).



Mt. Fuji

BLESSED HYACINTH ORFANELL

Dominican Priest

(1578 - 1622)



Peter Orfanell was born on 8 November 1578 in the town of Jana, Castellón de la Plana, Spain. He made his profession as a Dominican religious, taking the name Hyacinth, in the Priory of St. Catherine Virgin and Martyr in Barcelona on 1 March 1601.

Hyacinth studied theology in Tortosa, Tarragona. After ordination, he immediately volunteered to go to the Far East as a missionary. He left Spain in 1605 but was

detained in Mexico for two years because of sickness, and so did not arrive in Manila until May 1607.

Upon their arrival, Father Orfanell and his companion Father Salvanés were assigned to Japan. They lived in the House of Our Lady of the Rosary in Kyodomari, the port of the present-day city of Sendai in the province of Kagoshima. On 22 July 1608, Father Orfanell baptized the famous samurai, Leo Shichizayemon Saisho who belonged to the military aristocracy of Feudal Japan. A few months later, on 17 November, Shichizayemon became the first martyr in the region of Satsuma in Kagoshima.

Since wide-spread persecution was imminent, from the summer of 1608 through the spring of 1609, Father Orfanell traveled through all the towns and villages of the province, encouraging and fortifying the Christians. Many of the leading Christians and missionaries were exiled during these months.

At the beginning of May 1609, Father Orfanell was assigned to a new mission in Hizen, Saga, where his labors bore great success. In 1613, he and other Dominicans from Saga were exiled to Nagasaki.

In November 1613, he left Nagasaki and became an itinerant missionary in the territories of Hizen and Omura, and later of Arima, Higo [Kumamoto] and Bungo [Oita]. Finally, by virtue of the Decree of Persecution against Christianity, he was arrested in Bongo, taken back to Nagasaki, and was one of the many who were exiled from Japan on

6 November 1614. With the help of some Christians, however, Orfanell was rescued from the high seas and returned to Nagasaki.

From that time on, he had to continue his missionary work in secrecy and with the greatest caution. Even under such difficult conditions, he was able to carry on a very successful apostolate. From 20 to 23 November 1614, he preached in Arima, Kuchinotsu, and from December 1614 to April 1615 in Nagasaki.

Once again, he was sent as an itinerant missionary in the regions of Chikugo, Chikuzen, Bungo, Buzen, and Hyuga [Miyazaki]. During Advent in 1615, he went back to Nagasaki where he remained for three years. Now, he actively collaborated with great religious movements, supported by the wise and timely Association of Christians. In 1616, the Confraternity of the Rosary had become a movement with great influence on Christianity in Japan.

Toward the end of October 1618, Orfanell again visited the regions of Koga and Omura, avoiding Nagasaki until 1619. Upon returning, he initiated a new activity by writing the *Report on Events and Occurrence of Christianity in Japan since 1602*. This was a very important work which would later be the basis for his famous *History of Christianity in Japan, 1602-1620*.

Once he finished his historical work in the spring of 1621, Orfanell went to Omura for apostolic purposes. While returning to Nagasaki on 25 April 1621, he was taken prisoner by local officials in the town of Yagami, just a few kilometers outside the city. On the following day, he was taken to prison in Omura where he stayed until his martyrdom. On 10 September 1622, Father Orfanell was slowly burned alive in Nagasaki, along with several companions.

Hyacinth Orfanell was declared “blessed” on 7 July 1867 by Pope Pius IX.

Writings

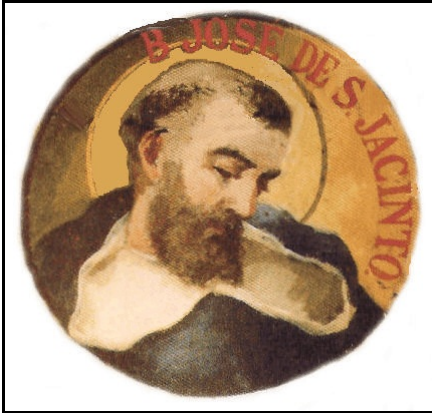
- ◆ Nine *Letters* written in the years 1609-1622 to his family and to different Friars.
- ◆ *Short Report on the martyrs of Japan for Fr. Baltasar Fort. Persecution in Arima, Ariye and Cuchinots, 1615* (in APSR, Ms. vol. 19, fos. 346-349).
- ◆ *Report on things that happened in the persecution in Japan, 1619* (in APSR, Ms. vol. 301, fos. 110-132). This report constitutes the basic text of the *Historia Ecclesiàstica de la Cristiandad de Japón*, [published by Diego Collado, O.P., in Madrid, 1633].
- ◆ *Report of matters in Japan for Father Francis Hurtado, 1620* (in APSR, Ms. vol. 301, fos. 132-133).
- ◆ *Report to Father Provincial, Father Melchior de Manzano, O.P., 1620* (in APSR, Ms. vol. 19, fos. 350-351).

– All these writings can be seen in the book by José Delgado, O.P., *Beato Jacinto Orfanell, O.P., mártir de Japón (s. XVII), Cartas y Relaciones*, Valencia, 1984.

BLESSED JOSEPH OF ST. HYACINTH

Dominican Priest

(1580 - 1622)



Joseph of St. Hyacinth was born on 11 March 1580 in Villarejo de Salvanes in Madrid, Spain. Understandably, he was nicknamed “Salvanés” by his friends.

Having felt a strong calling to the Dominican Order, Joseph entered the Priory of St. Dominic in Ocaña, Toledo in 1597. At the time, that house belonged to the Province of Spain. After making his profession, he was sent to the Royal Priory of St. Peter Martyr, in Toledo, where he pursued ecclesiastical

studies and was duly ordained. Without returning to his home priory, he volunteered to become a missionary in the Far East. He left Spain for Manila by way of Mexico in July 1605. Because of illness, he had to remain in Mexico for two years. Restored to health, he left for Manila where he arrived in May 1607.

By June of that same year, he and Father Orfanell were sent to Japan and assigned to the House of St. Dominic and the Church of Our Lady of the Rosary in Kyodomari. In August 1608, he was appointed Superior of the House, even before he had time to learn the Japanese language. The whole area of Satsuma [Kagoshima] was agitated with persecution against Christianity. In order to avoid the catastrophe that was fast approaching, Joseph contacted many important and influential persons for help, but his efforts proved futile. By the end of April 1609, many native Christians were exiled, to be followed in the next month by the Dominican missionaries with their Superior, Father Francis Morales.

Joseph was sent to Kyoto, the capital of Japan, to exercise his ministry. There, he steadfastly continued his round of preaching and obtaining conversions. On 25 January 1610, he founded the Church of Our Lady of the Rosary of Miyako [Kyoto]. On 6 July, he founded another church under the patronage of St. Dominic in Osaka.

In 1612, Joseph was accompanied in his apostolic travels by Father Thomas of Zamárraga and briefly by Father Alphonse de Navarrete.

Missionary activity in Kyoto was hampered by many obstacles and contradictions. Joseph tried to overcome them by frequent explanatory visits to Shogun Tokugawa Hidetada and his father Ieyasu. He also contacted many persons of influence, both Christian and non-Christian. While working with people of all classes, he focused especially on those involved in commerce at the port of Osaka.

A violent persecution eventually erupted throughout the regions of Osaka and Tokyo, due to the scandals caused by some local corrupt Christians. Both Fathers Joseph and Thomas were obliged to take refuge in Nagasaki.

In November 1614, Father Joseph succeeded in eluding the orders of banishment issued against missionaries by disguising as a Spaniard; this allowed him to return secretly to Kyoto, there to continue ministering to his flock.

During the spring and winter of 1615, the battles against the Fortress of Osaka — among many other preoccupations — were responsible for Father Joseph's weakening health. Soon, he was suffering from tuberculosis and had to retire to Nagasaki for complete rest.

In May 1619, in spite of his illness, he was named Vicar-Provincial, thus inheriting the heavy burden of this important office. The Christians of Omura desperately begged for missionaries. With no one else to send, he himself went to help them.

By the end of July 1621, Joseph was in Nagasaki on official business, all the while bringing comfort and aid to the Christians there. It was then that he was arrested on 17 August. After spending one night in prison, he was taken to the port of Nagayo, surrounded by a huge crowd of curious onlookers. From there, he was taken to the infamous prison of Suzuta on 18 August 1621. From his cell, he continued to encourage and direct the Christians.

On 10 September 1622, he bravely suffered the torment of being slowly burned to death, with a number of companions. He was beatified on 7 July 1867 by Pope Pius IX.



Father Joseph being burned alive

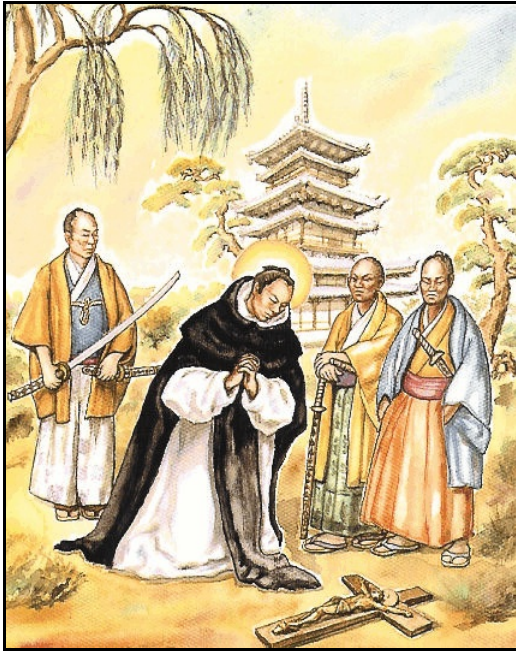
WRITINGS

- ◆ Eight *Letters* written in the years 1609-1622 to the Friars and his lay Christians. (They are preserved in: 1- Diego Collado, O.P., *Suplemento a la Historia Eclesiastica de la Cristiandad de Japón del P. Jacinto Orfanell*, Madrid, 1633. 2- APSR, Ms. vols. 19 and 301).
- ◆ *Report on the martyrdom of Blessed Leo Shichizayemon, Japanese, killed on 17 November 1608* (in APSR, Ms. vol. 301, fos. 331-332).
- ◆ *A short report on what happened after the ships left last year in March 1619, 1620* (in APSR, Ms. vol. 19, fos. 337-339).
- ◆ *Letter-report over the imprisonment of Father Joseph of St. Hyacinth, sent from the jail of Suzuta, 1621* (in APSR, Ms. vol. 19, fos. 342-343).

BLESSED DOMINIC OF THE ROSARY

Dominican Cooperator Brother

(1601 - 1622)



John Magoshichiro Nagata was probably born in Omura around 1601. In his youth, he was in the service of the Dominican missionaries in Nagasaki. They affectionately called him “Ko- John” [*ko: little one*], roughly equivalent to our “Little John” or “Johnny.”

From the time the Dominicans were expelled from St. Dominic’s Prioory in Nagasaki to the end of October 1614, John voluntarily stayed with them and continued to help them in any way he could. When the Vicar-Provincial, Father Alphonse de Navarrete, left his hiding place to preach publicly in the city of Omura, he was arrested. John received permission from the persecutors to accom-

pany him and his companion, Father Hernando de Ayala, the Vicar-Provincial of the Augustinians. In fact, John was prepared to die with them, but on 31 May 1617, the eve before their martyrdom, he returned to his home town. This he did, in obedience to the Landlord of Omura who wished to prevent John’s testimony on their behalf, and to keep him from obtaining some of their belongings as relics.

In Nagasaki, John placed himself at the service of the Vicar-Provincial, Father Morales. At first, he was entrusted with the task of making necessary local connections and to carry messages. In October 1618, after realizing his devotion and competence, Father Morales gave him the responsibility for the material needs of Fathers Angelo Ferrer Orsucci and John Martínez. These two missionaries had arrived in Japan in August 1618, and had been moving about in Nagasaki disguised as Spaniards, while looking for a refuge in some Christian home. Under John’s tutelage, they began studying the language.

At midnight on 13 December 1618, the two missionaries and John were arrested and were taken to the Governor. Moved with compassion for the youthful John, the Governor decided to use the same strategy he had attempted with Thomas of the Rosary — to save him from death and free him from prison as well. He urged John to say that he merely knew the two priests as Spanish merchants and never as missionaries. But John refused and confessed that he knew the men as missionaries, and helped them in that role. The Governor had no choice but to send him, together with the missionaries, to the same prison at Suzuta.

It was there that John, because of his perseverance, fidelity and exemplary life as a Christian, was received into the Dominican Order as a Cooperator Brother and given the name: Brother Dominic of the Rosary.

Enduring the severe hardships and sufferings of prison life with an admirable and edifying spirit, Dominic made his religious profession the following year. In fact, the prison resembled a monastery as the number of religious grew every day. All of them joyfully prepared for their martyrdom.

On 10 September 1622, Dominic and 24 companions were taken from the prison to Nishizaka Hill to be martyred. Seeing 25 stakes prepared to burn them alive, he and Brother Thomas of the Rosary stepped up to be tied to the ones they thought were for them. But after checking the official list, the executioners learned that Dominic and Thomas were to be beheaded, not burned. They were untied and told to leave the stakes, but they refused, confessing that they too were religious and leaders of the Christians. Finally, they were forcibly dragged from the stakes to the place where those to be beheaded were awaiting impatiently.

Brutally, the executioners beheaded Dominic and Thomas, who bravely embraced their martyrdom. Both were beatified on 7 July 1867 by Pope Pius IX.

BLESSED THOMAS OF THE ROSARY

Professed Dominican Clerical Student

(1602 - 1622)



Born about 1602, Thomas was a young orphan wandering the streets of Nagasaki when he was rescued by the Dominican Fathers. Bereft of parents, Thomas joined the missionaries and lived with them for thirteen years, receiving a well-grounded secular and religious education. He became such an out-standing student that he was soon appointed leading catechist.

When many seminarians were forced to leave Japan in November 1614, Thomas offered his services to the Vicar-Provincial, Father Thomas of Zumárraga. He wanted to help all the priests who were in the area, in disguise or in hiding. On 25 May 1617, Thomas went to meet Father Alphonse de Navarrete and the Augustinian Superior, Father Hernando de Ayala. He was allowed to accompany them aboard a ship as they were moved from place to place around the harbor. On the eve of 1 June 1617, the day set for the martyrdom of Father Navarrete, Thomas was sent ashore so that he could not witness the execution and would be unable to collect any relics.

Saddened by his inability to remain with Father Navarrete to the death, he returned to Nagasaki to help the few remaining Dominican Fathers there. Upon his arrival, he became very ill and had to be bedridden. When Father Zumárraga was sent to Omura, Thomas could not accompany him. As soon as he was well and learned that Father was imprisoned in Suzuta, he went to him. Thomas was able to locate the priest by repeatedly jumping up to peer over the fences and thorn bushes that surrounded the prison. He then went to the Governor and begged to be imprisoned as well. Governor Hikoyemon, however, refused to grant him his wish and ordered him to leave because he was not going to put him in prison.

Once more, Thomas returned to Nagasaki to help the Vicar, Father Morales. In 1618, he was assigned to help the new missionaries, Fathers Angelo Ferrer Orsucci and John Martínez. When these two priests were arrested on the night of 13 December 1618, Thomas was also taken prisoner. During the hearing, the Governor, seeing that Thomas was so young, tried to release him. To accomplish this, he suggested that Thomas say simply that he did not know the prisoners as missionaries but as Spanish merchants only. Thomas freely answered that he indeed did know them as missionaries, Catholic Dominican missionaries. He also told the court that he had gladly been helping them for years. As a result, the Governor was forced to send him with the missionaries to the same prison in Suzuta. To his great joy, Thomas was reunited with Father Zumárraga.

During his imprisonment, Thomas continued to be an exemplary Christian. When the priests saw the virtue and talent of this youth, they offered him the choice of becoming a Dominican religious — they had heard rumors that all the Japanese in prison were going to be killed. Thomas joyfully accepted the invitation to become a Dominican and was admitted into the Order as a clerical novice. In 1622, he made his profession and took the name: Thomas of the Rosary.

On 10 September 1622, he and 24 other companions from prison were taken to Nishizaka Hill [the major site for executions - Ed.] in Nagasaki. Thomas threw himself onto one of the stakes, thinking that he would have the privilege of being burned alive for the faith. His name, however, was not on the list of those chosen for this fate. The executioners tried to pull him away from the stake to which he held on tightly. Thomas refused to let go, saying that he too was a Dominican religious. Finally, they dragged him away to be beheaded with a group of 31 other prisoners. Father Collado wrote of him that he was “an elegant Latinist” because he had learned Latin very well in prison and spoke it very eloquently up to his death.

Brother Thomas of the Rosary was declared “blessed” by Pope Pius IX on 7 July 1867.

BLESSED THOMAS OF ZUMARRAGA

Dominican Priest

(1577 - 1622)



Thomas was born on 9 March 1577 in Vitoria, the Capital of Alava Province in Spain, and baptized on the following day. He received his early education in the towns where he lived alternately: Vitoria, Salinas, and Léniz. At age 16, he entered the Priory of St. Dominic in Vitoria and made profession on 19 January 1594. He was then transferred to the College of St. Gregory in Valladolid, to complete his priestly education. In 1600, when only 23 years old, he was ordained priest.

While continuing his studies at St. Gregory, he volunteered to go to the Far East as missionary. In 1601, he left for Manila via Mexico and arrived there on 30 April 1602.

The Provincial Chapter, in session when he arrived, immediately directed him to go found a new mission in Japan.

On 1 June 1602, Thomas sailed from Manila with four companions, under the leadership of the Vicar-Provincial, Father Francis Morales. One month later, on 3 July, they disembarked at the small village of Nagahama, located on the small archipelago of Koshiki, just to the northwest of Satsuma [Kagoshima].

On 28 November, Father Zumárraga was sent to Manila to inform the Superiors about the progress of the new foundation. He failed to reach them, however, because the ship he was on was forced by storms to land in Cochin-China. When he finally returned to Japan in September 1603, he took time to aid those persons infected with the plague on a Japanese ship.

In early October of 1605, Thomas was sent to Kyoto, the imperial capital, there to found a church. It proved impossible, however, for him to start a foundation during the political turmoil of the time. Accordingly, he stayed with Father Mena for a month and

helped in attending the needs of the Christians of Omura and Hirado in the province of Nagasaki.

In 1606, Father Zumárraga was named Superior of the Dominican House in Kyodomari, the port of the actual city of Sendai, in the province of Kagoshima. His apostolate there was very fruitful.

In April 1608, he went to Manila to take part in the Provincial Chapter, remaining there until July 1609, then returned to Japan.

After spending several months in the mission of Hizen in Saga, he was assigned to Our Lady of the Rosary in Miyako, Kyoto. Under the leadership of his Superior, Father Joseph “Salvanés,” he continued to work energetically among the people until the middle of October 1613. It was then that a sweeping anti-Christian persecution broke out, forcing the missionaries to retreat to Nagasaki.

The infamous decree prohibiting Christianity and expelling all missionaries from Japan was published on 27 January 1614. Two months later, Father Zumárraga was named Vicar-Provincial over all the Dominicans in Japan. That spring, he was one of the missionaries who promoted and guided the widely-acclaimed religious movement in Nagasaki. When the missionaries were finally exiled in November 1614, he managed to stay in Japan — in hiding — so as to continue ministering to the persecuted.

In the summer of 1615, Zumárraga was relieved of his responsibility as Vicar-Provincial, and assigned to Kyoto to help “Salvanés,” who had fallen sick. While there, he set up a hospice for the missionaries in neighboring Fushimi. Soon, the persecution began to create havoc in that region also, forcing him to return to Nagasaki in March of 1617. In June, he went to the region of Omura to carry out his ministry among the local Christians; these were very fervently living their faith, following the example of their recently martyred missionaries. Soon, he and a group of catechists and other helpers became completely exhausted from working day and night. Zumárraga was finally arrested on 23 July 1617, and imprisoned in Suzuta, Omura. Nevertheless, he continued his apostolic ministry from prison, where he remained for five years.

On 12 September 1622, Father Zumárraga and seven other Christians were burned alive in Hokobaro, Omura. He was declared “blessed” by Pope Pius IX on 7 July 1867.

WRITINGS

- ◆ Twenty-one *Letters* written in the years 1605-1622 to his family, religious friends and civil authorities.

— These can be seen in: 1. Juan López, O.P., *Historia de Santo Domingo y su Orden*, Valladolid, 1625. 2. APSR, Ms. vols. 19 and 301.

- ◆ *Report on the situation in Japan in regard to the geographic and political status and on the first years of the Dominican Order in Japan, 1608* (in APSR, Ms. vol. 301, fos. 237-238).
- ◆ *Report given to Father Joseph of St. Hyacinth "Salvanés" for Father Francis Herrera, O.P., Commissary of the Holy Office in the Philippines, 1619* (APSR, Ms. vol. 19, fos. 252-254).
- ◆ *Report given to Father Joseph of St. Hyacinth "Salvanés" for Father Francis Hurtado, O.P. of Manila, 1619* (in APSR, Ms. vol. 19, fos. 243-244).

BLESSED MANCIO OF SAINT THOMAS

Professed Dominican Clerical Student

(1600 - 1622)

Very little is known about Mancio's family and his youthful years. He appears to have been born around 1600 in the kingdom of Higo, in the province of Kumamoto.

What is known is that he was a very active and effective catechist working with Father Thomas of Zumárraga in the region of Omura in 1617.

Mancio and Thomas were arrested on 23 July 1617 and imprisoned at Suzuta. While there, Mancio carried on such an active apostolate that he succeeded in converting the son of the prison's cook, and some of the prison guards. These guards helped him by carrying letters to and from the missionaries still in freedom. His companion in prison, the Italian Jesuit priest, Charles Spinola, wrote in one of his letters that Mancio was "a good young man."

The Dominican Fathers imprisoned with him recognized his vocation and accepted Mancio into the Order after he had persistently begged for this privilege. In the spring of 1621, he became a Dominican clerical novice, receiving the name: Mancio of St. Thomas. On his profession day, a year later, Father James Collado said of him: "The first Japanese to whom was given the habit was Mancio of St. Thomas. He studied Latin while in prison and had already become a preacher and a catechist. Being a Dominican and the companion of Father Zumárraga is the main reason he was arrested." (*Supplement to the History of Christianity in Japan by Father Hyacinth Orfanell*, at the beginning of chapter 60).

Brother Mancio was strongly encouraged to prepare himself to the best of his ability to become a Dominican priest, in the event that one day he was freed. He thought, however, that the possibility of priesthood in the future was very dim in comparison with the imminent privilege of giving his life in martyrdom. He was diligent in sharing his Christian faith, in order to give better testimony as a Christian and a religious whenever that day came.

On 9 September 1622, the doors of the prison were thrown open; Mancio thought that the special day of his liberation was at hand, and that he could now offer his life in the experience of martyrdom. But it was not yet to be. The executioners called out a list of 25 prisoners who were to be taken to Nagasaki. Brother Mancio, Father Zumárraga and his cook Dominic, the Franciscan Superior, Father Apolinar Franco and four of his religious companions — 8 persons in all — were left puzzled in their prison cells.

The reason for the separation of prisoners that day was due to an order of the Governor of Nagasaki. He had decreed that the missionaries arrested around Nagasaki were to die in that city, while those who were arrested in the region of Omura were to die in Omura.

The Great Martyrdom in Nagasaki took place on 10 September 1622. Two days later, Mancio and his companions were led to the traditional place of execution in Omura, called Hokobaru, presently very close to the airport of Nagasaki. There, the eight prisoners were burned alive, in a blazing fire, much more intense than the slow fire which had been used in Nagasaki. No spectators were allowed to watch in Omura, while in Nagasaki, thousands had been permitted to look on, even from as far away as the harbor of Nagasaki.

Brother Mancio of St. Thomas was beatified by Pope Pius IX on 7 July 1867.

BLESSED DOMINIC OF HYUGA

Layman

(— 1622)

Nothing is known about the place and date of Dominic's birth. He is listed under the name: Dominic of Fiunga, which corresponds to the spelling: Hyuga, the name of an ancient Japanese kingdom, located in the province of Miyazaki on the island of Kyushu.

It is clear from the outset that Dominic was not strictly a member of the Dominican Order but that he was in the service of Dominican missionaries. Nevertheless, because he was arrested and chose to suffer martyrdom for having served Father Zumárraga, he has been included in the roster of Dominican martyrs in Japan.

In effect, when Zumárraga was sent to minister in the region of Omura at the beginning of 1617, Dominic accompanied him to serve principally as a cook. Later, they were both apprehended and interned in the infamous prison of Suzuta.

Dominic was confined for several months, but was set free with the majority of Japanese prisoners at the beginning of 1618.

After a while, he was finally allowed to return to prison after incessantly begging for this favor, along with another Japanese Christian who had been serving the Franciscan priest, Father Apolinar Franco. Both continued to prepare food for the missionaries.

Later, the conditions in prison worsened when the number of prisoners increased dramatically. At that point, the prison had its own cook and helpers with the result that Dominic's services were no longer needed and he became just one of the prisoners, many incarcerated for proclaiming their faith in Christ. Like the rest of the Christians there, he was disposed to go all the way, that is, to martyrdom.

On 8 September 1622, twenty-five of the prisoners were taken out. Among them were both missionaries and Christians who had been interned in Nagasaki. All were martyred there on the next day.

Left behind in prison were Father Apolinar with the four Japanese who had been his helpers, Father Zumárraga, Brother Mancio of St. Thomas and Dominic of Hyuga. But on the 12th of September, all of them were taken to Hokobaru in Omura. There, they were burned alive before few outsiders, given that spectators had been prohibited by official orders.

Biographers of Dominic of Hyuga have called him catechist or Dominican Brother. According to the testimony of Father James Collado, then Vicar-Provincial, Dominic was a "Japanese layman." Although not a professed Dominican, he had nonetheless been included among Dominicans who gave up their lives and were declared "blessed" by Pope Pius IX on 7 July 1867.



The Road from Kyoto to Nagasaki

BLESSED PETER VASQUEZ

Dominican Priest

(1590 - 1624)



Peter was born in 1590 in the county of Monterrey, part of the modern-day province of Orense in Spain. As a youth, he studied in Monterrey then left for Madrid where he entered the Dominican Order at the Priory of Our Lady of Atocha. There, he made profession on 30 April 1609.

He studied philosophy in the Royal Priory of Holy Cross in Segovia, then theology at the Priory of St. Thomas in Avila. He was still

residing in Avila as a young priest when, in 1613, Father James Aduarte arrived to recruit missionaries for the Far East. Peter immediately submitted his name and left Spain with Aduarte in the same year. They sailed via Mexico and arrived in Manila at the end of April 1615.

Peter's first assignment was in the province of Cagayan in the Philippines. He learned the regional language at Lal-lo in New Segovia. After mastering the language, he exercised his apostolate far and wide in the area, serving in St. Hyacinth of Camalaniugan in 1616; Our Lady of the Rosary in Fotel and St. Peter Martyr in Masi in 1619. He was then assigned to St. Vincent in Balunguei, where in 1621, he was appointed Superior by the Provincial Chapter.

Peter was not happy, however, in this apostolate. This is why, especially from 1619 on, he repeatedly asked to be allowed to go to Japan. The martyrdom of Father Navarrete had made a profound impression on him.

Ultimately, his superiors granted his request. On 11 July 1621, he left Manila to arrive on 11 July at the port of Nagasaki. Because of brutal and widespread persecution, he did not find a home to hide in while he learned the Japanese language until 21 October. On moving in with a reliable family, he took the Japanese name: Ichizayemon. Because of the desperate circumstances of the time and the lack [shortage] of missionaries, he quickly threw himself into the apostolate in the spring of 1622. On 14 August, he disguised himself

as a bailiff and with a pair of swords fastened in the sash around his waist, he entered the prison of Nagasaki. He marched boldly through three sets of doors guarded by sentinels to reach the Christians who were imprisoned there and administer the Sacraments to them. One of the Christians renounced his faith and unmasked Father Vasquez, who escaped miraculously.

After this episode, Vasquez became one of the missionaries most wanted by the official persecutors. Nevertheless, together with his brother Dominicans, he continued the intense labor of preparing many Christians who — they believed — would be martyred before long. The time came in August, September and October. Vasquez and his fellow missionaries were able to witness the cruel executions.

In early November of 1622, when Father James Collado, the Vicar-Provincial, had to leave Japan, he appointed Father Vasquez acting Vicar-Provincial in his place.

The Provincial Chapter of May 1623 confirmed Father Vasquez in that position. As the Chapter members voted, they were unaware that he was already imprisoned in Nagasaki. Before his arrest, Peter had been working with Father Castellet, ministering to the Christians in Arima, Omura, and Nagasaki. During Holy Week, April 1623, he was in great danger of being arrested, but managed to evade capture.

After his escape, he met Castellet in Fuchi before proceeding to Inasa, a village in the mountains, where he was unexpectedly arrested on April 27. He was then taken to the Courthouse for a hearing on the matter of his illegal activities. After the trial, he was sentenced to prison in Nagasaki. On 15 June 1623, he was transferred to the prison in Kuwara, Omura.

Due to the burdens of deprivation and of harsh treatment, twice he became seriously ill while in prison. In a state of extreme weakness, he hobbled to the port where he boarded the ship that would take him to the place of martyrdom, Hokobary, Omura. There, on 25 August 1624, Peter and the well-known Father Louis Sotelo along with some other missionaries were burned alive and gave up their lives for the faith.

Peter Vasquez was a member of the group declared “blessed” by Pope Pius IX on 7 July 1867.

WRITINGS

- ◆ There are four known *Letters* written during the years 1622-1624 to several religious.

(These can be found in Diego Aduarte, O.P., *Historia de la Provincia de Santo Rosario de la Orden de Predicadores en Filipinas, Japón y China*, vol II, Madrid, 1864, chaps. 24, 25 26.)

- ◆ *Report on the great necessity there is for missionaries in Japan and the great opportunity there is for priests to work in the apostolate, in spite of the rigors and grave persecution* (in Diego Collado, O.P., *Suplemento a la Historia Eclesiástica* . . . Madrid, 1633, chap. 68, fo. 156.)

BLESSED LOUIS BERTRAN EXARCH

Dominican Priest

(1596 - 1627)



Louis Bertrán was born on 14 June 1596 in the ancient city of Barcelona, Spain, and was baptized the next day. The name: Bertrán was added as his religious name when he entered the Priory of St. Catherine Virgin and Martyr. His patron was St. Louis Bertrán, a relative of his father. After making his profession the following year, Louis remained at the Priory to study philosophy. For theological studies, he was sent to the Patriarchal College of Orihuela in Alicante. After ordination, he volunteered to go to the Far East as a missionary, to preach the Gospel. He left Spain in July 1617, paused a while in Mexico, then

arrived in Manila in June 1618.

In the Philippines, he was assigned to the oldest Dominican House in Bataan, St. Dominic of Abucay. After participating in the Provincial Chapter of 1623, he was permitted to go to Japan with Father Dominic de Erquicia and Luke of the Holy Spirit.

The group left Manila on 23 May 1623 and arrived in Nagasaki on 14 October, after suffering from violent storms and other hardships entailed so as not to be discovered as missionaries. Unfortunately, a few days later the Japanese Government ordered all Spaniards to leave the country. On 24 November, the three new missionaries were forced to leave aboard a Macao ship but were quickly and secretly returned from the high seas by a friendly vessel. All this took place through the successful measures of Father Castellet, the Dominican Vicar-Provincial in Japan, helped by other Christians.

During the Lent of 1624, Louis enthusiastically gave himself over to the missionary apostolate in the region of Omura. The native Christians saw him as an angel come down from heaven to give them guidance. In fact, he did not disappoint them: his preaching and Christian witness strengthened them in their faith in spite of the many dangers.

Louis was not content just to give them the Sacraments but took great care to form them solidly in Christian and evangelical life. In this, he emulated the spirit of his relative, St. Louis Bertrán.

Louis was also responsible for the great spiritual growth in the Dominican Order by promoting membership to the Lay Dominicans. The spiritual growth of the Lay Dominicans was clearly exemplified by the holiness of Marina of Omura, martyred on 11 November 1634 and canonized on 18 October 1987 by Pope John-Paul II.

The Superior of the Dominicans was warned of the great likelihood that Father Louis would be taken prisoner, so he was sent away from Omura for the time being. Before long, he was sent back to the same place. He quickly realized that the religious climate in Omura had greatly changed in his absence because the persecution had been severely intensified by order of the Central Government. Undaunted, Father Louis continued his missionary ventures throughout the villages: hearing confessions, encouraging the Christians and reconciling the renegades. Fleeing from the persecutors, he took refuge in a home for women lepers as the safest place to hide. Nevertheless, on 29 June 1626, the enemies broke into the home, without fear of the lepers, and took Father Louis, his two helpers and the three Christian lepers and imprisoned them at Omura.

While in prison, Louis set up a spiritual program to prepare everyone for the last stage of the martyrdom which they were already suffering.

A year later, on 29 July 1627, they were all taken out of prison and brought to Hokobaru, the traditional place of martyrdom in Omura — a site very close to the present airport of Nagasaki — where they were burned alive.

Father Louis Bertrán and his two helpers, who had been admitted to the Dominican Order, are numbered among the 205 martyrs beatified on 7 July 1867 by Pope Pius IX.

WRITINGS

- ◆ One *Letter* to Father Anthony of the Rosary, O.P., written in 1626 (cf. Diego Aduarte, O.P., *Historia de la Provincia del Santo Rosario*. . . , vol. II, Madrid, 1964, pp. 274-275).

BLESSED PETER OF SAINT MARY

Dominican Cooperator Brother

(1610 - 1627)



Peter was born in 1610. In a letter dated 26 August 1626, Blessed Louis Bertrán described him as a “very devout young man, 16 years old, who is like an angel.”

When he was thirteen, Peter’s relatives entrusted him to Father Bertrán to serve as a catechist. He proved to be very capable in this position and soon became a bridge between Father and the Japanese Christians. Not only did Peter instruct those who wished to become Christians, but he also helped renegades to reconcile with the Church. He promoted the practice of pious exercises to strengthen the faith of baptized Christians so

that they could receive the Sacraments more fruitfully.

Peter accompanied Louis Bertrán on his apostolic travels throughout Omura. Along with Louis, Peter was arrested in the little shack where the three lepers: Martha, Beatrix and Joanna lived — a place located between the villages of Segi and Kawata. Manacled hand and foot, Peter, Mancio and Father Louis were locked overnight in the miserable shack. On the following day, 29 July 1626, the three were taken before the Governor of Omura who ordered them imprisoned in a jail for Christians in Kuwara (Omura).

While in prison, Peter begged Father Louis to allow him to be received into the Dominican Order. He wanted to offer his life to God, his Lord and Creator, from then on, and to prepare himself with dignity for martyrdom. Mancio also begged for his reception. Louis gladly granted them their desire: he knew them both very well and realized that they were worthy of this honor. Both were admitted to the Order as Cooperator novices with the names: Brother Peter of St. Mary, and Brother Mancio of the Cross.

From then on, the three lived a most austere monastic life as religious of the Dominican Province of the Holy Rosary, preparing for their martyrdom.

After almost a year of imprisonment, they were joined in prison by the three women lepers. These were just as eager as the men to join in the Dominican way of living. Soon, the prison was nearly converted into a monastery of strict observance.

The persecutors had sent these women to prison because they had given hospitality to Father Louis and his two companions, and because they had shown much Christian fervor. The women were martyred with the missionary and his faithful collaborators on 29 July 1627.

Knowing the exact day of their martyrdom, Father Louis offered his last Mass with extraordinary devotion. During the celebration, he received the profession of Brothers Peter and Mancio. Afterward, he gave Holy Communion as Viaticum to the newly-professed Dominicans and to the three heroic Christian lepers.

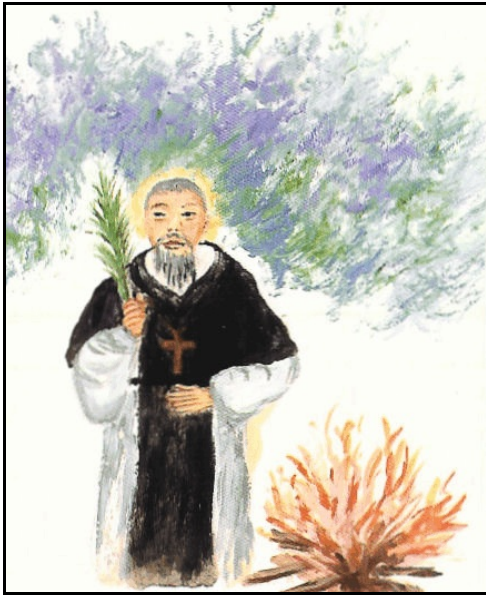
After Mass, the six prisoners were transferred to the infamous place of martyrdom for Christians in Hokobaru. There, after they were tied to stakes, the executioners set afire the wood that had been stacked at their feet. First, the thick smoke made them lose consciousness and then an intense burst of flames consumed their bodies in a perfect holocaust.

Brother Peter of St. Mary, along with his companions Brother Mancio and Father Louis Bertrán, is numbered in the group beatified on 7 July 1867 by Pope Pius IX.

BLESSED MANCIO OF THE CROSS

Dominican Cooperator Brother

(? - 1627)



The date and place of Mancio's birth are unknown. In a letter of 26 August 1626, Father Louis Bertrán wrote of his companion: "He is an old Japanese who has for years served as a guide for the Dominican Fathers."

From the spring of 1624 until the day Father Louis was imprisoned, Mancio had been at his side in faithful service. His life story parallels that of Peter of St. Mary. He too, with Peter and Louis, lived in the miserable shack that belonged to the Christian leper Martha. On the night of 28 July 1626, the old man was arrested and imprisoned with the missionary, Peter, and

the three lepers: Martha, Beatrix and Joanna. The next day, the three men were taken to the prison in Kuwara (Omura). A year later, the three lepers joined them in the same prison.

Once incarcerated, Mancio begged Father Louis to admit him into the Dominican Order. Since Father had special privileges from his Superiors to admit candidates, Mancio's wish was readily granted. He was greatly deserving of the privilege because of his virtuous Christian life and his long and meritorious service to the Dominican Fathers.

Accordingly, he was admitted as a Cooperator novice, with the name: Mancio of the Cross. This title was chosen by Mancio himself, to serve as a constant reminder of a great event that he had seen with his own eyes. One day, when one of the Christians of Omura split a stick for firewood, there appeared in the two halves two perfectly-formed crosses that had not been carved by human hands. The awed Christian immediately took one of the crosses and gave it to Father Louis. The other cross was passed reverentially from hand to hand in the area until it reached a Franciscan Missionary, Father Francis of St. Mary. As he received the cross, he took it to mean that he would soon be taken prisoner

— which in fact happened. When Louis learned that Francis had the second cross, he was overjoyed. He too had the presentiment that they would both be the first to fall into the hands of the persecutors.

Since Mancio was an eyewitness to this marvel, he was profoundly impressed and adopted the designation “of the Cross” when he became a Dominican.

While in prison, he added other mortifications to those already practiced by Dominicans: special prayers, penances and spiritual exercises. When Father Louis was able to obtain the necessary materials to celebrate the Eucharist, this became the center of his life in prison.

As noted above in the short biography of Brother Peter of St. Mary, the religious life that was lived in prison by the Dominicans and the three lepers reflected strongly the life of the primitive communities in the Early Church.

Brother Mancio pronounced his religious vows during the last Mass celebrated by Father Louis Bertrán on 29 July 1627. Hours later, he was taken to the killing ground in Hokobaru, there to be burned alive. He was declared “blessed” on 7 July 1867 by Pope Pius IX.

BLESSED DOMINIC CASTELLET

Dominican Priest

(1592 - 1628)



Francis Castellet was born on 17 October 1592 in Esparaguera, Principality of Catalonia, now the Province of Barcelona. He was given the name: Dominic when he entered the Dominican Order on 23 October 1608 at the Priory of St. Catherine Virgin and Martyr in Barcelona. The following year, he made profession and began philosophical studies at the priory. During his later theological studies at the Royal Priory of the Holy Cross in Segovia, his missionary vocation to the Far East developed. In 1613, he left Spain for Manila via Mexico and arrived there by the end of

April 1615.

In the Philippines, he engaged in apostolic work in the province of Cagayan. Once he mastered the local language, he exercised his ministry more widely among the new Christian communities. He was assigned to St. Mary Magdalen de Patta from 1616 to 1617, to Our Lady of the Rosary in Fotol from 1617 to 1619, and to St. Raymond of Nalfotan from 1619 to 1621. On 11 July 1621, he was sent to the Japanese mission with Father Peter Vásquez; both landed in the port of Nagasaki on 22 July.

On 21 October, Castellet began to study the Japanese language while hiding in the region of Arima. Aware of the great need for priests during the time of severe persecution against Christianity, he began his energetic apostolate in March 1622, together with the two Dominican priests still active, Fathers James Collado and Peter Vásquez.

From early August until October 1622, severe waves of persecution swept through the country. Castellet had to expend more energy and make greater sacrifices to bring about the spiritual preparation of many who, though not imprisoned, were nonetheless in constant danger of martyrdom. These faithful were pursued for their connections — strong or limited — with the missionaries or the Christian leaders already in jail.

In November 1622, Father Collado left Japan, leaving only Fathers Castellet and Vásquez to share in the taxing ministry to the Christians of Arima, Omura, Nagasaki and neighboring regions. When Vásquez was captured on 27 April 1623, inevitably the full weight of the whole Dominican apostolate fell on Dominic.

Dominic Castellet was the only Dominican friar still valiantly serving in Japan for several months until new missionaries, Fathers Dominic de Erquicia, Louis Bertrán and Luke of the Holy Spirit arrived to share the responsibilities.

The Provincial Chapter of 1625 removed Castellet from the burdensome office of Vicar-Provincial and named Erquicia to replace him. At the end of October, however, Erquicia resigned and went to minister in the area around Kyoto. Accordingly, the Chapter of 1627 again appointed Castellet as Vicar-Provincial.

As time passed, the persecution continued to spread and got even more fierce and cruel. A large number of Christians fled from Nagasaki to seek refuge in the nearby mountains and hills. Local officials saw to it that these Christians would have no chance to return to the city, planning to let them die out slowly, completely separated from the rest of the population. Christian leaders and those who held positions of importance in the city were fired from their posts. The government of Nagasaki was bent on searching for and exterminating any hidden missionaries as well.

For his particular task and priority, Castellet chose the care of Christians who secretly remained in Nagasaki, while Luke cared for those who had fled to the mountains.

At last, on 15 June 1628, Dominic Castellet was arrested and taken to Kuwara, Omura. On 7 September, he was transferred to the prison in Nagasaki. The following day, he was burned alive at the infamous Nishizaka Hill, the site of execution for many Christian martyrs. He was declared “blessed” on 7 July 1867 by Pope Pius IX.

WRITINGS

- ◆ Three *Letters* written in the years 1623-1628 to Friars and friends. (Two of these can be found in Diego Aduarte, O.P., *Historia de la Provincia del Santo Rosario*. . .vol. II, Madrid, 1964, chaps. 24 and 25. The other is in Léon Pagès, *Histoire de la Religion*. . . , Paris, 1870, Annexe 102).
- ◆ *Letter-Report to Fr. James Collado, Vicar-Provincial after he left for Rome and Madrid on business for the Christians there, 1623* (in Gaspar Vicens, O.P., *De cosas varias y notables, succedidas en estos tiempos*, vol. II, University Library of Barcelona, Ms. 1009).
- ◆ *Report on the great necessity there is for missionaries in Japan and the great opportunity there is for priests to work in the apostolate, in spite of the rigors and grave persecution*. (This Report is signed by Blessed Peter Vásquez as well. It was published by Diego Collado, O.P., in *Suplemento a la Historia Eclesiástica*. . . , Madrid 1633, chap. 68, fo. 156).

Blessed Thomas of St. Hyacinth

Dominican Cooperator Brother

(1598 - 1628)



Thomas was born in 1598, but the exact date and place are unknown.

From his early youth, he helped the Dominicans as a catechist. When Father Castellet started his ministry in Nagasaki and its environs in 1622, Thomas became his helper. Castellet was so pleased with his faithfulness and service that he admitted Thomas to the Order as a Cooperator Brother. He and another catechist named Anthony were received in 1627, taking the names: Thomas of St. Hyacinth and Anthony of St. Dominic, respectively.

At that time, the Governor of Nagasaki, Mizuno Kawachi, returned from Edo (Tokyo) with his colleague, Suetsugu Heizo, with orders to intensify the persecution of Christians with greater relentlessness and cruelty. This was the second time that the central government of Japan had urged severity in the persecution against Christianity in Nagasaki and Omura. Both governors immediately applied those orders from Edo. The two novices failed to escape and by July 1627, they were arrested and kept in the Omura prison, and not in Nagasaki, as some historians have erroneously reported.

The persecution raged on until it reached unexpected limits, as we learned in the letters of Father Castellet. The latter was taken prisoner on 15 June 1628, and imprisoned in Omura where he joyfully met his two novices, Brothers Thomas and Anthony. A short time later, the brothers made their profession and became full members of the Dominican Order. Historians are correct when they describe the penitential austerities these three imposed on themselves in addition to those imposed on them by their jailers. This conduct was contagious; soon all the Christians imprisoned there as well as the Lay Dominicans and Franciscans were doing the same.

The fact that they were kept in prison at Omura and not in Nagasaki is attested to by letters written by Castellet and by some Franciscans from Omura, dated 6 and 7 September 1628, only a day or two before their martyrdom.

On 7 September, the prisoners were transferred to Nagasaki. On the following day, they were taken to the traditional place of martyrdom, Nishizaka, escorted by soldiers in elaborate uniforms.

Together with their twenty-one prison companions, they were divided into two equal groups: one of the missionaries and the leaders, and the other, of the collaborators. In order to frighten the missionaries, the executioners beheaded the other group before their eyes. Finally, the remaining were tied to stakes and burned alive with slow fires. Among them was Brother Thomas of St. Hyacinth; he offered his life as a complete holocaust. Accordingly, he was declared “blessed” by Pope Pius IX on 7 July 1867.

BLESSED ANTHONY OF SAINT DOMINIC

Dominican Cooperator Brother

(1608 - 1628)



From all indications, Anthony was born in 1608 in Nagasaki to very Christian parents. At his baptism, they named him Anthony; during his early years, they gave him a good Christian formation and education.

In his early youth, Anthony dedicated himself to helping the Dominican Fathers in the administration of the Sacraments and in the teaching of Christian Doctrine. Together with Brother Thomas of St. Hyacinth, he put himself at the service of Father Castellet during those most difficult times of the anti-Christian

persecution in Nagasaki and its surroundings.

Castellet was very grateful to him for his invaluable help in the apostolate, in the midst of many dangers. Anthony showed a profound religious spirit during the time of hardships. When he asked to be admitted into the Dominican Order, Father Castellet received him as a Cooperator Brother and gave him the name: Anthony of St. Dominic. In 1627, he and Brother Thomas were arrested and imprisoned in Kuwara, Omura.

In 1628, Castellet, the Vicar-Provincial of all the Dominicans in Japan, was brought to the same prison where the two novices were. He was joyfully received by them because they realized that they could spend their last days with him, and that they could be received as Dominicans. During their novitiate year, they continued to live the religious life with fidelity, sacrifice and much prayer. As soon as the novitiate year was over, they made their profession.

The two brothers lived a life commensurate with the spirit of the Dominican missionary Province of Our Lady of the Rosary, as the best preparation for their martyrdom.

On 7 September 1628, Brother Anthony was informed that he was included in the list of twenty-four Christians to be executed on the next day. He prepared as best he could to offer the holocaust of his life as a Christian martyr. The date was the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary, to whom as a Dominican he had a great devotion.

The twenty-four prisoners were divided into two groups of twelve. Anthony was placed in the first group with the missionaries and leaders. After they witnessed the decapitation of the first group — whom they encouraged with words and prayers, they were slowly burned alive on Nishizaka Hill in Nagasaki.

Anthony is listed next to Father Castellet and Brother Thomas, his constant companion, in the catalog of martyrs beatified on 7 July 1867 by Pope Pius IX.

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B

MARTYRS OF JAPAN (1629 - 1637)

Canonized by Pope John-Paul II
on 18 October 1987

By Pedro González Tejero, O.P.

CHRONOLOGICAL INDEX OF MARTYRDOM

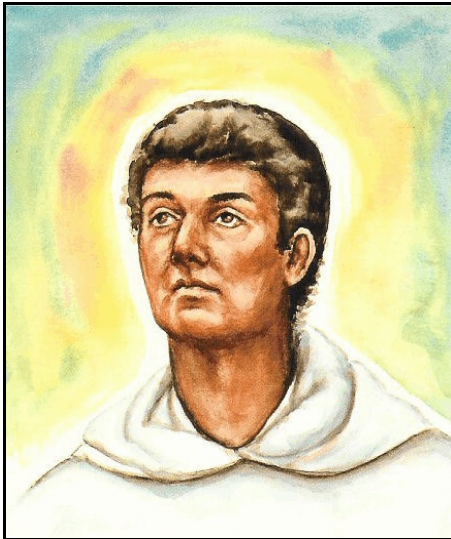
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SAINT DOMINIC IBAÑEZ DE ERQUICIA

Dominican Priest

(1589 - 1633)



It was May 1611; the city of Manila vibrated with enthusiasm at the news that the *Galleon of Acapulco* was entering its harbor. This was the most eagerly-awaited happening of each year.

Thirty-one of the passengers who disembarked were distinctly Dominicans. They were led by Father Alphonse de Navarrete, who was later martyred in Japan. Among the noisy group, a tall, handsome young man stood out; all affectionately called him “the Biscayan.” This was Dominic Ibañez de Erquicia, born in the town of Régil, Guipúzcoa (Spain) in early February 1589.

At age 16, he entered the Dominican Priory of St. Thelmo in San Sebastián. The following year, he made his profession and dedicated his life to God forever. He completed his studies with brilliance, thereby winning the admiration of his fellows. He had only one more year of study before his ordination when his personal life drastically changed course. This happened after he heard a vibrant and eloquent talk by Father James Aduarte, O.P., who invited all to join the Province of Our Lady of the Rosary, if they felt the zeal and calling to evangelize in the Philippines, Japan and China. Dominic immediately and unconditionally submitted his name, and was soon on his way to Seville to board the next ship for the Philippines via Mexico.

During the long and arduous sea journey, everyone, including Ibañez “studied, preached sermons, and gave conferences to each other and to all the passengers; they also spent long hours in prayer.”

After his final year of studies in the Philippines, Dominic was ordained a priest. A few days later, he was assigned to the Dominican mission in Pangasinan. There, he ministered for four years, giving of himself for the good of souls. The spiritual fruits and benefits of his apostolate were abundant. He baptized more than 10,000 children. The

abundant conversions were astonishing and were attributed to the special intercession of Our Lady of the Rosary, who was venerated at the Shrine of Manaoag

When his four-year stay ended, Ibáñez was sent to the Chinese parish of Binondo in Manila. Due to his outstanding intellect, he was appointed examiner of confessors. He was also an excellent preacher and professor of theology at the University of Santo Tomas — founded in 1611 for “the formation of preachers and teachers of religion to the natives.”

At the end of the year 1622, the sad news about the terrible crisis that beset the Church in Japan reached Manila. A cruel and ever-growing persecution was threatening to erase Christianity from the face of Japan. As proof of this, only two Dominican priests remained in Japan: Fathers Peter Vásquez and Dominic Castellet. The letters that arrived in Manila were full of heartbreaking requests for immediate help to save Christianity.

After serious consideration, the superiors of the Province of Our Lady of the Rosary decided to send four of their “best sons” to Japan: Fathers Dominic de Erquicia, James Rivera, Luke of the Holy Spirit, and Louis Bertrán. They were to be joined by four Franciscans and two Augustinians.

From departure to arrival in the seaports of Japan, the journey experienced the most varied and dangerous incidents of any such trip. Worst of all, Father James Rivera lost his life close to the Chinese coast.

The missionaries finally reached the port of Satsuma on 19 June 1623 and entered Nagasaki on 14 October of the same year.

Hardly had they set foot on their mission territory when the Shogun Tokugawa Hidetada issued a public order prohibiting Spaniards from remaining in Japan, as well as cutting off all relations, both commercial and political, with the Philippines. In the face of such a terrible state of affairs, Father Erquicia devised a brilliant and unheard-of strategy to remain in Japan at all costs. He and his companions left Japan with the approval and pleasure of the authorities. But they had traveled only about eight leagues when a small boat sent by Father Castellet intercepted them and brought them back to land. This marked the beginning of ten years of hiding, in constant danger of falling into the hands of the persecutors.

Through the correspondence that Erquicia kept up with his superiors and friends in Manila, it is possible to visualize the kind of life the missionaries led during those ten years of incessant running when martyrdom was common. Those years resembled the life of St. Paul, filled with danger and suffering. They were years of constant Calvary when they were hunted like wild animals, as they hid in caves, grave sites, and mountains of straw — fleeing by night from place to place, enduring the cold and the heat — ministering under the stress, anxiety and danger of being caught. After darkness fell and the guards barred the

street gates, the missionary labors started. Mass was celebrated, the Sacraments were administered and the spirits of the Christians were revived, in spite of the trials they were undergoing. Father Erquicia found it very painful to learn that some of the Christians had denied their faith under fear of torture. His spirit, however, was filled with joy when he saw how thousands of Christians from all social classes, even children, sacrificed their lives rather than give in to favorable promises or dreadful threats and fall into apostasy.

Erquicia suffered much at seeing how, one by one, the missionaries — Augustinians, Jesuits, Dominicans and Recollects — were captured. He also saw how bravely those who had accompanied him to Japan had died; he knew that sooner or later his turn would come. When one of the Christians, under torture, betrayed his hiding place, he was ready. Indeed he was arrested with his faithful catechist, Francis Shoyemon.

On 13 August 1633, these two servants of God were put to the torture of the *gallows and pit*. Their passion lasted for thirty hours, in horrible suffering. On the following day, they finally died in peace, with a prayer of forgiveness for all their persecutors.

WRITINGS

- ◆ — Fifteen *Letters* written in Japan during the years 1623-1633. They were written to his superiors, civil personalities and his family.

(All of these can be seen in F. Villaroel, O.P., *Dominici Ibáñez de Erquicia . . . POSITIO super introductione causae et martyrio ex officio concinnata*, Rome, 1979, pp. 94-122).

SAINT FRANCIS SHOYEMON

Dominican Cooperator Brother

(? - 1633)



Father James Aduarte, in his *History of the Province of the Holy Rosary*, describing the martyrdom of the holy Father Dominic Ibáñez de Erquicia, says: “He did not go alone into the presence of God, but took with him a member of the Order, Brother Francis, who had walked the same path that they had both started in missionary life and would not now be separated by death.” With such facts, it is easy to reconstruct, even though only partially, the life and martyrdom of this Servant of God.

It is certain that the Christian name of this devoted and faithful catechist was Francis. His Japanese name was Shoyemon. Shortly after Father Erquicia arrived at the Mission in Japan, Francis became his devoted helper. This faithful catechist was indispensable to the success of Father Erquicia’s endeavors because under the severe persecution, it was almost impossible to learn the language. Thanks to Francis’ help, Erquicia was able to bring his message to the people. Besides acting as Father’s guide and preparing the places where he was to go, Francis instructed the catechumens, helped Christians prepare for the reception of the Sacraments, and in many cases, preached the Word of God. In all these activities, Francis was not only a helper but also a true collaborator in the apostolate. Together, the two of them hid, fled, suffered from extremes of cold or heat, and endured as well the frightening experiences of being continually hunted. Both shared that spiritual zeal and solicitude for the Church that was being greatly persecuted. It can certainly be said that without the help of his faithful catechist, Erquicia would never have accomplished his missionary labors under the existing difficult circumstances. “In life they walked together, and in death they were not separated.”

The date and place of Francis’ birth as well as other details of his early life are not known, though it seems that he was born in Nagasaki. One thing we are sure of: he was arrested with his spiritual father in Nagayo on 4 July 1633. Both of them suffered the severe hardships of prison, first in Omura and later in Nagasaki. It was during those long hours in prison that Father Erquicia dedicated himself to the careful formation of Francis who would soon be a glorious martyr for Christ. The prison was transformed into a novitiate experience

for Francis. There, he was formally received as a Cooperator Brother by Father Erquicia, in his role as Vicar-Provincial of the Dominicans in Japan.

On 13 August 1633, Francis was condemned to death for professing the Christian faith. Besides he and Father Erquicia, there were fourteen other Japanese Christians — including three women and one child — who shared their martyrdom in various ways. For Brother Francis and Father Erquicia, the torment of *gallows and hole* was reserved. When they arrived at the place of torture, they were hanged from the gallows by their legs with the head and half of the body in a hole. Little by little, they began to bleed from the mouth, nose and ears. Without uttering one complaint, they sang psalms and praised God as they slowly died, expiring on the following day. Francis' body was quartered and burned, with the remains later thrown into the sea, so that Christians would not be able to gather the ashes for veneration.



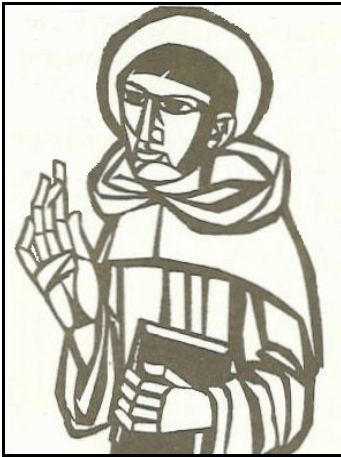
Gallows and Pit Torture

SAINT JAMES OF SAINT MARY

(Kyusei Gorobioye Tomonaga)

Dominican Priest

(1582 - 1633)



Around the middle of 1624, a Japanese native living in Manila came to the door of St. Dominic Priory. Father John Rueda of the Angels, who had been a missionary in Japan for many years, answered the door. The stranger had come to recruit missionaries for the Church in Japan to replace the many lost in the anti-Christian persecution.

Kyusei explained to Father Rueda that he himself wanted to become a Dominican and a missionary. On various occasions, he had tried to join other religious groups but without success. Now that the Dominicans had finally opened the doors of the Priory to Japanese vocations, he presented himself as a candidate. Father Rueda was impressed with the deep spiritual development he saw in Kyusei, and called this to the attention of the Prior, Father Melchior Manzano. In turn, the Prior also examined Kyusei. “I am pleased with his excellent spirit and so I promised to give him the habit, and told him to get ready.”

On 15 August 1624, Kyusei and another Japanese youth named Thomas of St. Hyacinth were clothed with the white Dominican habit and were welcomed with enthusiastic hugs by their future brothers in the Dominican community. Kyusei took the name: James of St. Mary.

James was born into a noble family in Kyushu, Japan, in 1582. His family had long been Christian and was known for exemplary living and firm Christian convictions.

When Kyusei was twelve years old, he enrolled in the Jesuit school in Nagasaki to study to become a catechist. When he completed his formation, he began teaching and preaching the faith. He did it with such zeal and fervor that he distinguished himself as a “renowned preacher.” During the many years of his activity, he converted many and strengthened many of the Christians who were suffering and frightened because of the persecution. It was said of him: “He was an exemplary man, chaste, moderate, and

temperate.” He was currently in Manila because he and many others had been deported for having collaborated in the Catholic cause. Besides, he came over to become a priest.

During his novitiate, James grew in virtue and prayer and developed an intense desire to give himself completely for the good of the most needy souls. He made his profession as a Dominican on 16 August 1625, and was ordained the following year. He carried out his priestly apostolate on the island of Formosa until 1632. It was then that he received permission to return to his native land, to work amidst the dangers of the persecution.

On his return journey — a journey of unending adventures and dangers — , Father James traveled with missionaries of many different Orders. It took them five months to arrive in Japan; it seemed as though they would never get there. James jokingly wrote to his Superiors in Manila that he had finally arrived in his native country, “white-headed and without a single black hair, though he had boarded the ship without one white hair.”

Upon arrival at the port of Nagasaki, James stepped off the ship dressed in Japanese garb “with sword, in the day’s fashion.” Thanks to this prudent move, he was able to get to Father Erquicia, who was in hiding, without too much danger. He placed himself under his direction and dedicated himself to the work that he had loved all his life. The Japanese Church was in dire straights at the time.

Being Japanese, James was able to reap much fruit from his missionary work in spite of the perilous times. It was said of him: “He worked well administering the Sacraments to the most afflicted Christians.” His labor was also shared by his faithful catechist, Michael Kurobioye.

In vain were the efforts of the newly-arrived missionaries to remain hidden from the authorities. The police were experts in locating them each day. When found, they were martyred one by one.

By early July 1633, the soldiers of Shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu captured Michael Kurobioye. He valiantly suffered the horrible torture of *regurgitated water*, but finally was forced to reveal where Father James was hiding. For quite a while, the government had been searching relentlessly for the priest. A few days later, Father James and Michael were imprisoned together in Omura. Asked why, being Japanese, they had allied themselves with a religion that was not traditional, they bravely answered that the religion they now professed was the true one and that their only desire was that all their countrymen be converted to the faith of Christ. They added that, if this was a crime, they were disposed to die for their faith. They told their captors not to waste their time making promises because they would not listen.

They were sentenced to death on 15 August 1633. Father James, catechist Michael, an Augustinian priest and nine Japanese Christians were paraded through the streets of Nagasaki with ropes around their necks and the sentence of death printed on their backs. When they arrived at the hill of martyrdom, they were hanged upside down with the upper half of their bodies lowered into a fetid pit. Father James's death was slow and painful, lasting fifty hours. As long as he was conscious, he sang psalms and prayed, offering his sufferings for the Church and for his beloved country. He suffered his Calvary on 15 August, the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin and the anniversary of the consecration of his life to God by profession to the religious life and of his ordination to the priesthood. His life ended on 17 August, after which his body was consumed by flames and the ashes thrown into the ocean.

WRITINGS

Fr. James Kyusei of St. Mary, O.P., in collaboration with Fr. Hyacinth Esquivel, O.P., translated into Spanish the *Vocabulary of the Japanese Language*, published in Portuguese by some Jesuit priests in Nagasaki, in the years 1603-1604. The Spanish translation included an extensive *Appendix of Terms* and was published at the Dominican printing shop in Manila in 1630.

The original title and printing description of the book are as follows:

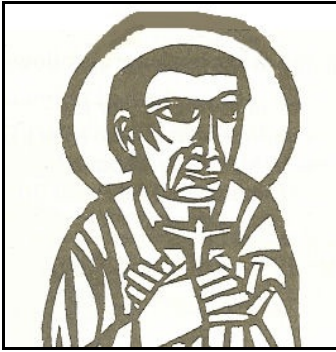
- ◆ *Vocabulario de Japón, declarado primero en portugués por los Padres de la Compañía de Jesús de aquel reyno, y agora en castellano en el Colegio de Santo Tomás de Manila.* With license in Manila by Thomas Pinpin and Hyacinth Magaurlua. Year 1630, 4to. 315 numbered fols., plus 301 unnumbered fols.

(A copy of this work was made by the Library of Tenri, Nara, Japan, in 1972. Shodo Press, Tokyo).

SAINT MICHAEL KUROBIOYE

Layman

(? - 1633)



On the morning of 15 August 1633, the streets of Nagasaki were teeming with people. No one wanted to miss the parade of twelve Christians who were passing by, going to their deaths. Each one had a rope tied around his neck and on his back a board held an announcement written in large letters stating the reason for their sentences: “For having followed the Gospel, for having proclaimed the Christian faith.”

The offenders walked slowly, one behind the other. Their faces glowed with joy and satisfaction. From time to time, their eyes met those of Christian friends along the way; at this, they would smile happily and look up to heaven with emotion. The hissing mob yelled at them and insulted them, but there was not one gesture of protest or disgust from any of the condemned. They continued to look heavenward, murmuring prayers and psalms and asking God to give them the strength to endure their martyrdom.

Among the twelve there walked a resolute Michael Kurobioye. While in prison with Father James of St. Mary, he had recovered his strength, lost through the torture of *regurgitated water*. When he stood before the judges, he had answered a thousand times that he repented of that moment of human weakness he had suffered and that he would not accept any promise or bribe. Now all he wanted to do was to spill all his blood for the faith that he loved and in which he had lived for so long.

As he walked through the streets of Nagasaki thousands and thousands of memories flooded his mind. Surely it was the hand of God that had chosen him to be Father James’s catechist. The three months that he had exercised this responsibility had been the happiest of his life. It is true that the work had been very hard but he had seen miracles of faith. He knew now that all was possible with faith in Christ. What a joy to see the recently-converted Christians remain steadfast and to see those Christians who had denied their faith come back to follow Christ crucified. Michael gave thanks to God for all the graces that he thought he did not deserve.

When the parade reached the hill of execution, Michael asked his spiritual father to give him a blessing. Like a lamb, he allowed his executioners to tie his feet and suspend him from the *gallows*. His upper body was lowered into the smelly dark *pit*. This martyr began his agony with a generous spirit and unflagging courage. Having been prepared by Father James for this final moment, Michael felt united to the pains and sufferings of Christ on the cross and asked Him constantly for the grace of perseverance. He died on 17 August 1633. His body was consumed by fire with the ashes then cast into the sea.



Martyrs of Nagasaki

SAINT LUKE ALONSO-GORDA

[Saint Luke of the Holy Spirit]

Dominican Priest

(1594 - 1633)



Luke was born on 18 October 1594 in Carracedo de Vidriales, Zamora (Spain). After his early studies in Trianos, León, he attended the famous University of St. Gregory in Valladolid. At age 16, he had entered the Dominican Order at the Priory of St. Dominic in Benavente, Zamora, of the Province of Our Lady of the Rosary.

On 25 April 1617, “the feast day of St. Mark,” the community of the Priory of St. Gregory of Valladolid was gathered in the community room to bid farewell to the young clerical student, in religion, Luke of the Holy Spirit. He had answered the missionary calling and was now

setting out for Seville then the Philippines.

The crossing was long and dangerous. Thanks to prayer and the daily singing of the Salve to the Blessed Virgin, all the difficulties were overcome.

In Mexico City, the missionaries completed their studies in theology under two professors. In a few months, Luke was ordained to the priesthood. The missionary group had been reduced to 26 when it left Acapulco for Manila. During the subsequent journey, they had ample time to evangelize the crew and inscribe many of them into the Confraternity of the Rosary before arriving in Manila.

Father Luke’s first assignment in the Philippines was in the Cagayan Valley. After some time, he was sent to Manila where he was made Lecturer of Arts at the University of Santo Tomas. At that point, he was 29 years of age.

In March 1623, a very moving letter was read to the community of St. Dominic in Manila. The message was that the Church in Japan was profoundly hurt by the “Great Martyrdom” of 1622 and was in danger of being exterminated. In difficult circumstances of this magnitude, the Superiors decided to come to its aid. Father Luke was one of those

chosen to go to Japan. Upon arriving there in June 1623, he lived in a village with Fathers Louis Bertrán to learn the language of the country. Fathers Luke and Erquicia along with other companions ostensibly departed when an unexpected order went out that all Spaniards were to leave Japan. They were secretly returned to shore by some of the Japanese Christians. The authorities thought that the missionaries were well on the way back to Spain and far from the shores of Japan.

This was the beginning of ten years of an underground apostolate such as in the days of the catacombs. The shadows of night were their protective cloaks. Thanks to Father Luke, the missionaries had continued to nourish the life of the greatly oppressed Christians. Nonetheless, little by little, all the missionaries were arrested and eventually martyred.

In 1627, Father Bertrán lost his life in a glorious martyrdom. The only ones remaining were Fathers Luke and Erquicia. It was impossible to lift each other's spirits because the persecution was so intense. In fact, the area in which Luke ministered was noted for its fierceness. On various occasions, he was forced to hide in the dense forest with no food to eat but the leaves of wild radishes boiled in water. At one time, this situation lasted for "40 days." The same misfortune fell on some of the Christians who were hunted like wild beasts. At this juncture, Luke's primary mission was to console and encourage them. The letters that he wrote to Manila reflected the great passion that the Church was then experiencing, 1628-1630. Christians were executed by "beheading, crucifixion, being burned, buried alive, plunged in freezing water, and sawed apart with sharp canes."

In the summer of 1628, Father Luke was sent to Kyoto to replace Erquicia, who had recently been appointed Vicar-Provincial of the Dominicans in Japan. Luke remained in Kyoto and Osaka until 1633.

In February 1633, fearing that his death was near, Luke began an apostolic journey which lasted six months. He covered many kilometers, encouraging and strengthening the Christians.

Upon his return to Kyoto, he was joined in his apostolate by Brother Matthew Kohioye and Father Anthony of Sousa, a Jesuit. In order to get the Japanese authorities to stop killing Christians who would not reveal the hiding places of the priests, the group decided to get into a small boat and wait to see what would happen. They were soon captured. Luke put on his Dominican habit, knelt down and humbly allowed himself to be tied. His faithful servant and catechist, Dominic Kakusuke, chose to die with them. They were all arrested in Osaka on 8 September 1633.

As he walked toward the prison, Luke sang the *Te Deum* in thanksgiving. In the prison, a very emotional scene took place: Fathers Luke and Sousa washed each other's feet, while reciting the words from the Gospel of St. John — doing what Jesus had done with his disciples. Since there were also two Franciscans there, the prison was converted into a place

of prayer and of hymn-singing. As punishment for these Christians actions, Luke had his hair and beard plucked out.

On the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, the Calvary of all began. The priests were put through the *regurgitated water* torment, which all of them withstood with patience and fortitude. After the ordeal, Luke said: “It is hard to know whether patience is needed more to suffer the torment than to experience the joy that will follow.”

With planks hooked to their feet and tied around their necks, the prisoners were taken by boat to Kobe and then to Kokura. From there, a “great procession” was held, passing through the villages and cities until it reached Nagasaki. On his back, Luke bore a sign stating: “The worst malefactor.” From the prison in Nagasaki, he wrote his last letter in which “he asked for pardon for all the times he had given bad example, and entrusted himself to the mercy of God.”

On 18 October 1633, Luke was subjected to the torture of *gallows and pit*. After a few hours, he was taken out of the hole and offered great rewards and high offices if he renounced his faith. When his tormentors saw that he would not budge, they again subjected him to the torture. After long hours of suffering, Luke gave up his soul on 19 October 1633.

WRITINGS

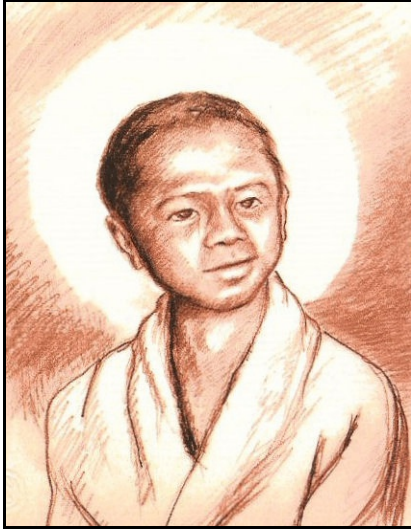
- ◆ There are three known *Letters*, addressed to his Superiors. Two of them were written in 1630, the other in 1633, shortly before his death.

(These can be seen in F. Vallaroel, O.P., *Position . . .*, pp. 216-223 and 245-249.)

SAINT MATTHEW KOHIOYE OF THE ROSARY

Dominican Cooperator Brother

(1615 - 1633)



The letter written by Father Luke from prison in Nagasaki, gives us some outstanding facts about Matthew Kohioye, along with some details about the apostolate and the martyrdom for the faith of this heroic and holy youth

Matthew was a native of Kyoto, born to a Christian family in 1615. At the age of 17, he joined Father Luke of the Holy Spirit [Alonso-Gorda] in his apostolate, to become his catechist and companion in all his missionary journeys. Matthew was received into the Dominican Order as a cooperator brother. He took the religious name: Brother Matthew of the Rosary, in memory of the

Church of Our Lady of the Rosary in Kyoto, founded by the Dominicans in 1610.

On 15 August 1633, Father Luke arrived in Kyoto after having completed the last of his missionary rounds in the various provinces of Japan. His joy was great when he met once again, his spiritual brother in the Order. After a fraternal hug, Matthew told him that he would never leave him again and was determined to suffer even martyrdom with him, if necessary. This was a moment of great satisfaction and emotion for Luke, as he realized Matthew's spiritual growth in depth and scope.

On the day Fathers Luke and Sousa decided to wait for their persecutors in a boat in the middle of the Yodogawa River, both of them tried to persuade Matthew and their other helpers to return to their homes, to avoid being captured and put to death. These faithful Christians answered unanimously that "inspired and led by the Holy Spirit, freely and spontaneously they wanted to die for Christ in lieu of living in a world subject to so much misery, sufferings and persecutions. They were encouraged by the example of so many martyrs whom they saw broken and turned to ashes every day.

The priests and catechists were captured in Osaka. All of them were bound very tightly and taken to prison. A triumphant entry awaited them: all the imprisoned Christians and missionaries joined in singing the *Magnificat* as a welcoming song for the future

witnesses of Christ. The Christians experienced indescribable feelings, many of them crying for joy and gratitude.

In a few days, Brother Matthew and the other catechists were called to appear before the tribunal in Osaka to give an account of their conduct as Christians. The judges offered them bribes of gold and silver if they would renounce their Christian faith. They all answered that they had no intention of apostatizing and that they were disposed to die for their faith.

By order of the Shogun, Fathers Luke and Sousa, Brother Matthew and nine other servants of God were taken to the prison of Nagasaki. Their departure generated an even more emotional atmosphere than their arrival. A chorus of voices again intoned the *Magnificat* asking God to fortify these athletes of Christ so that they would soon testify for Him. From Kobe they went by boat to Kokura. The parade was impressive with the gaudily-dressed soldiers armed with swords surrounding the singing servants of God who dragged heavy wooden planks tied to their feet. They reached Nagasaki on 24 September 1633, where the death sentence awaited them. When they heard it, they were overcome with joy, for they knew that the end of their Calvary was near.

On 18 October 1633, Brother Matthew and seven companions were paraded through the streets of the city to the hill of torture. Large posters were placed everywhere stating the reason for their condemnation. They were sentenced to death because they had preached the Christian religion. They were hanged upside down at the *gallows* and lowered into malodorous *pits* up to their waist. They suffered with great fortitude and patience. Brother Matthew rededicated his life to God as he had done in his youth. He died on 19 October 1633. His body was burned and the ashes cast into the sea to prevent the Christians from venerating his holy relics.

SAINT MAGDALENE OF NAGASAKI

Lay Dominican

(1610 - 1634)



The life and martyrdom of Magdalene of Nagasaki is like a mirror image of the life and martyrdom of the virgins of the first centuries of Christianity. Magdalene was born near Nagasaki in 1610. At age 22, she observed how her good parents died gloriously for their faith. After that, Magdalene felt a strong desire to become one day a martyr like her parents. Conscious that she was of the “breed of martyrs,” she presented herself to Father Jordan of St. Stephen [Hyacinth Ansalone] and asked him to be her spiritual director. She opened her heart to him and placed herself humbly under his guidance. Then, as St. Theresa of Avila had

done earlier, she went before a statue of the Blessed Virgin and promised that “she would never have another mother but her.” She then made the vow of perpetual virginity.

From the very beginning, Father Jordan believed that Magdalene possessed a privileged soul. Although the persecution did not make it easy to find time for much direction, he took every opportunity to help his charge, especially to prepare her for martyrdom. Seeing in her an inclination toward contemplation, he advised her to become a Lay Dominican. When the time came for her to be professed, Father Jordan was taken prisoner. But this was not an obstacle for the enterprising Magdalene. As a strong and fearless woman, she placed herself under the direction of the Holy Spirit and continued to deepen her spiritual life with prayer and penances inspired by what she read in reputable spiritual books of formation.

In addition, Magdalene did not hesitate one instant to approach the authorities and admit that as long as she practiced the same faith as Father Jordan, there was no reason why she should not receive the same treatment. The guards were stupefied at her disclosure. With good reason, they told her to return home because “she was just a weak young woman” and that she should no more think of suffering so horrible a plight.

Magdalene was not satisfied with this advice. Without hesitation, she appeared before the judges of the city. This time she obtained what she asked for; she was thrown into prison for her arrogance and challenge in proclaiming that she was a Christian. For Magdalene, this became a time of growth in heroism and generosity — when she truly believed that the blood of martyrs flowed through her veins. She had already been proven in the virtue of suffering for she had lived in the hills with other Christians. Having consecrated herself to God in her vow of chastity and deeply desiring to shed her blood for the faith, she was ripe for the hour of sacrifice.

Her Calvary began with persuasions, bribes and promises of a good husband and family, prosperity and well-being. For her, all these had no meaning; they were but empty promises. Following the example of the virgins in the Early Church, she confidently rejected all that had been offered to her. She had already made her decision; she was ready to die for Christ.

As a second step, the judges applied punishment. At first, they suspended her from a beam by her arms, thinking that because of her natural weakness she would soon succumb. But Magdalene held her ground firmly and bravely. In talking to the executioners, she told them not to treat her as though she were a child, for she was ready to suffer greater and worse torments. Acceding to her request, they took sharpened pieces of cane, drove them under her nails and made her scratch the floor. With her eyes raised to heaven and with fervent supplications to the Blessed Virgin for help, she was able to endure heroically this first torment. There were times when the executioners looked surprised at the strength of this woman whom they had considered weak.

In the third round, the executioners slowly submerged her head into a pail of water. When she showed signs of drowning, they jerked her out. This was repeated several times. Then they submitted her to the torment of *regurgitated water*. Magdalene survived all these tortures successfully with never a change of mind.

At her return to prison, she received a triumphant welcome from the priests and Christians who had prayed that the strength she needed would not fail. She herself gave thanks to God and to her companions; together, they all promised to remain faithful to the end.

Her death sentence was pronounced in October 1634. First, all those condemned were lined up to march through the streets of Nagasaki. Heading the group and mounted on a horse, Magdalene bore a rope around her neck with her hands tied behind her back. On her back hung a large placard that stated the reason for her condemnation. The rest of the Christians followed her on foot. Their steps were firm and determined for they believed that their triumph was near.

The torment of the *gallows and pit* would bring about the death of Magdalen and several other Christians. She was hanged upside down from the *gallows* with the upper half of her body in a fetid *pit*. She lived through 13 days of this torment, following upon her promise to follow Christ and give up everything for her faith. But the executioners lost patience in so long a wait; one of them hit Magdalene on the head with a club, leaving her unconscious. That night, torrential rains fell, drowning Magdalene. She had gone to meet her parents and her Divine Spouse who had crowned her with the palm of martyrdom. The date was about 15 October 1634. Magdalene's body was cast into the ocean.

SAINT MARINA OF OMURA

Lay Dominican

(? - 1634)



There are few facts known about the birth, baptism and family of this renowned martyr of Japan. A biographer stated that: “she was an example to all the Christians of Omura.” He also reports that her charity was such that her home was a refuge not only for the missionaries but for many persecuted Christians as well. Persons who were close to having their faith tested as well as those who needed to recover their courage and strength were sent to her.

Marina’s house was the small domestic Church where the mysteries of the faith were celebrated and where the faithful gathered to be nourished and strengthened to go on. Marina was like a guardian angel; her presence and greatness

of spirit were always the best remedy for those who were tempted to vacillate and fall into apostasy. This is why writers call her: “the valiant woman of Japan.”

The secret of this extraordinary fortitude in one of the so-called “weaker sex” lies in Marina’s being full of God’s strength. No one knew her better than her spiritual directors Fathers Louis Bertrán and Jordan of St. Stephen, who came to appreciate the greatness of this chosen soul. A biography of Marina, written by Father Jordan, was unfortunately confiscated by the Japanese and burned.

Following the advice of Father Bertrán, Marina became a Lay Dominican and made her profession either in 1625 or 1626.

In 1634, when the government became aware of Marina’s help in furthering the missionary apostolate, an order went out for her arrest. Interrogated before the tribunal in Omura, she confessed that “she was a Christian and that she had used her house to give hospitality to missionaries and Christians.” Asked if she was prepared to suffer torture, she

answered without hesitation that, with the grace of God, she was determined to do so. She added that, on account of her consecration to God through her vow of chastity, her body and her soul were clean and were the abode of the Holy Spirit. Although the judges were not fully aware of what this meant, they decided to torture her in a way that would hurt and humiliate her the most. They ordered that she be paraded completely naked throughout the villages of Omura, with her hands tied behind her back. Like the virgins of the Early Church, Marina suffered this patiently without weakening. She was strong in the belief that her body was the dwelling place of God and that nothing could stain it. Accordingly, she went up and down the streets of the village with a remarkable spirit of modesty.

Upon her return to prison, she was informed of her transfer to Nagasaki, there to die by burning.

On 11 November 1634, all the Christian prisoners — a large group — were lined up to take part in their “march of death.” This included Marina as well as Fathers Jordan of St. Stephen and Thomas of St. Hyacinth. When they reached the hill, they all prayed and encouraged each other in the hope that they would soon be in heaven, in peace and in joy. Sister Marina was tied to a stake and surrounded with wood that was to burn her to death slowly. While she was being consumed, she prayed constantly, not forgetting to ask pardon for her executioners. Her ashes were thrown into the sea.

SAINT THOMAS OF SAINT HYACINTH

(Hioji Rokusayemon Nishi)

Dominican Priest

(1590 - 1634)



Hioji was born in Hirado, Kyushu (Japan) in 1590. When he was ten years old, he saw his parents martyred bravely confessing Christ. He never forgot the scene. In 1602, at the age of 12, he enrolled in the Jesuit College in Nagasaki to become a catechist of the Christian religion. In school, he was very popular because of his natural goodness, sense of responsibility and great love for religion. It was said of him that “It seemed as though he never sinned.”

When he completed his studies, he devoted his life to the missionary apostolate. At age 30, he arrived in Manila intending to “study the Arts and Theology and receive the religious habit.” He went to the Priory of St. Dominic and presented himself to the Superiors. He had “a most profound desire to consecrate himself to God in the religious life.” His petition was accepted, and the decision was made that, as a first step, he should study philosophy at the University of Santo Tomas under the direction of the renowned teachers, Fathers Dominic González and Francis of Paula. His progress and exemplary conduct were so outstanding that he was given the Dominican habit after two years. Hioji took the religious name *Thomas of St. Hyacinth* because of his great admiration for the Angelic Doctor and of his desire to imitate the missionary spirit of St. Hyacinth of Poland.

The years of novitiate forged him firmly in virtue and austerity. His favorite personal devotion was to the Rosary of Mary, with which he had seen his parents die. After making final profession on 16 August 1625, he studied theology and was ordained on 15 August 1626.

Thomas was aflame with desire to return to his motherland and dedicate himself to the ministry of his people. Shortly after his ordination, he was sent to Formosa with his final destination: Japan. This series of events had the character of an “odyssey” at times. But the servant of God finally achieved what seemed unattainable.

Thomas finally arrived in Japan on 10 November 1629, the eve of the feast of St. Martin [of Tours - Ed.]. He could not have arrived at a more critical or dangerous time. The Governor of Nagasaki was determined to uproot completely from his region the Christian faith. In two letters — one to Formosa and one to Manila — Thomas described a picture of the desolation in the Church of Nagasaki. Terrorized by the numerous martyrdoms, many of the Christians had apostatized. The gates of the city were constantly guarded and all who entered or left were watched so as to capture any follower of Christ. Augustinians and Jesuits lingered in prison, awaiting the sentence of death. The Dominicans were in hiding wherever they could but were always in danger of being discovered. Despite these tremendous obstacles, Father Thomas, being Japanese, could move about with some freedom, and thus was able to help in invaluable ways. Through him, the martyrdoms of Father Erquicia and his companions became known. He also reported on the relentlessness of the police and that they offered great sums of money to anyone who would denounce the followers of Christ. In such trying circumstances, the hiding of missionaries in the homes of Christians was becoming more difficult and inconvenient. Everyone was living in fear and anxiety; one did not know where to go or whose side to take. The persecutors searched especially for Father Thomas; some Christians suffered martyrdom for not revealing his whereabouts.

When Father Thomas learned that Father Jordan of St. Stephen was gravely ill, he lost no time in looking for him. There and then, he went to his side to console and comfort him with the sacraments. Just as they were preparing to celebrate the feast of St. Dominic in company with some of the Christians, they were caught and manacled.

Dressed in their Dominican habits, they were paraded through the streets of the city. The mobs jeered and insulted them, seeing them as traitors to Japan. Then the prisoners were taken from tribunal to tribunal where Father Thomas confessed that he was a Japanese Christian. He was thrown into prison and kept in a latticed cage for three months where, by prayer, he prepared himself for martyrdom.

On 11 November 1634, the martyrdom began with the *regurgitated water* torment, and continued to the *sharp canes* torture. Finally, there came the horrors of the *gallows and pit*. This was the “reward” Thomas received for preaching the truths of Christ on Japanese soil. Before he was hanged on the gallows, he bid farewell to his companion, Father Jordan, proclaiming in a loud voice his fidelity to the faith in the same way his parents had done many years before. During his long, slow agony, Thomas consoled himself with psalms and prayers, asking God to help him persevere to the end. He died on 15 November 1634. The persecutors took his body out of the pit and burned it completely so that no one could take any relics for veneration.

WRITINGS

- ◆ Five *Letters* are preserved, written in the years 1629-1633 to Friars and religious superiors. (They can be seen in F. Villaroel, O.P., *Positio*. . . , pp. 303-308.)
- ◆ Report, dated 28 September 1633, about the persecution and martyrdom of Dominic de Erquicia, Francis Shoyemon and others (cf. F. Villaroel, *Positio* . . . , pp. 151-156.)



**Monument in honor
of the protomartyrs of Japan**

SAINT HYACINTH ANSALONE

(Jordan of St. Stephen)

Dominican Priest

1598 - 1634)



Around the middle of August 1615, the Dominican Priory of Agrigento, Sicily (Italy), was celebrating a feast. A group of young men had received the Dominican habit and were starting to live the communal religious life. Among them was a 17-year old called Hyacinth Ansalone. He was of “noble lineage,” from a family with a glorious tradition in religion and politics. He took the religious name *Jordan of St. Stephen* because of his great devotion to Blessed Jordan of Saxony, the successor of St. Dominic, and to St. Stephen, the protomartyr of the Church. Hyacinth was born on 1 November 1598, in Santo Stefano Quisquina, Sicily.

During his years of formation, Jordan felt a great restlessness. He was afire with religious ideals and had a great desire to accomplish great and noble deeds. Having heard inspiring stories from Japan, where thousands were bravely dying for the faith, encouraged these thoughts. Jordan was electrified by the idea that perhaps he too, like the first witnesses of Christianity, could one day become a martyr in Japan. Thus was born in him a strong desire to go to Japan, to offer his life for Christ. He soon received permission from his Superiors and went to the Priory of Trujillo, Cáceres (Spain), where he completed his studies. The members of the Priory recalled that he was a faithful, observant, courteous and very mature religious. Once ordained, Jordan waited for the voice of God which he believed he heard through the invitation of Father John of St. Paul, as the latter visited all the priories in Spain. Father John invited one and all to join the Province of Our Lady of the Rosary. The reports and stories he recounted “enkindled in Jordan the love of God, and he was resolved to leave everything in Europe for the service of Christ.”

In 1625, after an emotional farewell, Jordan boarded a ship bound for the Philippines. During the long voyage, he met and conversed with other missionaries on their way to the Far East. He found them very well versed in theology and virtuous as well. These encounters strengthened his plan to pursue his ideals. While at a stopover in Mexico, he was asked if he wished to return to the tranquility of his former priory; he answered: "I am not the Jordan that goes backward; even if it costs me my life, I am going to finish what I started."

Jordan's first appointment in the Philippines was in the Cagayan Valley. After that, he ministered at St. Gabriel Hospital for the poor and for the Chinese community in Manila. He preferred the apostolate to the sick; it was said of him: "He was a perfect minister of the Gospel."

Jordan was also gifted with the ability to learn languages quickly. He soon knew how to read and write Chinese characters well; he even learned "Chinese classical music," a feat few others had achieved.

He was busy in this ministry when a notice was secretly passed around that the religious orders in Manila were planning to send some missionaries to Japan to take the place of the many who had been martyred. Fathers Jordan and James of St. Mary believed themselves fortunate to have been chosen to go. The dream of Jordan's life would now become a reality. Three Jesuits, two Franciscans, two Augustinians and two Recollects were going with them. The hardships they endured before reaching their destination were countless. The missionaries reached the coast of the peninsula of Nagasaki on 12 August 1632. After giving thanks to God, they speedily dispersed to their respective destinations. Father Jordan was sent to Kyoto to assist Father Luke of the Holy Spirit in his ministry.

The first task for the newcomers was to learn the language. Father Jordan "accomplished this in a short time and started his ministry to the needy and afflicted." In no time, word reached the authorities that eleven missionaries had arrived in Japan. The police started a search which forced the missionaries to hide in the forests during the day and to work under the protection of the night. Father Jordan wrote: "There is no place for the pigeon to land."

His last year of ministry brought him to the outskirts of Nagasaki and the region of Omura. There, he was seen as the angel that God sent to the Church that had been so afflicted and diminished. "Always malnourished and gravely weakened from lack of sleep, working in one village after another," he still found time to write the life of Sister Marina of Omura, the Lay Dominican, a report on the martyrs, and a treatise *De Divinis Judiciis* (On Divine Judgment).

On 4 August 1634, the only two Dominicans left in Japan and a few Lay Dominicans and other Christians gathered to celebrate the feast of their founder, St. Dominic [de Guzman]. They were ready to begin when they were informed that the police were closing in on the house. All of them were captured and escorted through the streets of Nagasaki on their way to prison. There, they were enclosed in a cage, then exposed to the raw weather.

When they were called to testify, they were offered freedom in exchange for apostasy. Their refusals triggered the torment of *regurgitated water*; this was followed by sharpened slivers of cane stuck into their genitals. During the long ordeals, the fortitude and courage of the victims were incredible.

On 11 November 1634, their sentences were pronounced. Fathers Jordan of St. Stephen and Thomas of St. Hyacinth, Sister Marina of Omura and many other Christians were paraded through the streets of Nagasaki, as a symbol of ridicule. When they reached Nishizaka Hills, the site for executions, Father Jordan bent down and kissed the ground then asked his companions to bless him as he made the profession of faith. He was then suspended from the *gallows* and suffered for seven days before finally dying on 17 November 1634. His body was burned and the ashes thrown into the ocean. He was only 36 years old.

WRITINGS

- ◆ Two *Letters* written in 1633 and 1634, in which he tells of his voyage to and experiences in Japan (cf. F. Vaillaroel, *Positio . . .*, pp. 297-298).

SAINT ANTHONY GONZALEZ

Dominican Priest

(1593 - 1637)



Anthony Gonzalez was born around 1593 in the city of León, Spain. At age 16, he entered the Priory of St. Dominic Priory in his native city. After completing his studies of philosophy and theology, he was ordained priest. Because of his gifted intelligence, he was allowed to pursue higher studies. He was sent to the Priory of Piedrahita in Avila where he taught theology and was responsible for the formation of young men aspiring to become Dominicans.

At the time of Father Anthony's arrival, the Priory of Piedrahita was renowned as a very active center in the renewal of Dominican spirituality. The reform of the Order, already begun in several priories in Italy, spread to some in Spain — this being one of them. It was here that Gonzalez started to rid himself of all impediments to his perfection, choosing the road of prayer and intimacy with God. He balanced spiritual activity with a strong regimen of penance. From this religious enthusiasm was born "a burning desire for martyrdom." When he celebrated Mass and lifted the Host and the chalice, he begged fervently for martyrdom. His favorite saint was Peter Martyr of Verona, whom he admired for his courage in professing his faith at the cost of his life.

During his remaining years in Piedrahita, Gonzalez alternated between teaching and preaching throughout the villages of Spain. He traveled in such humility and poverty that the example of his holy life was more convincing than his preaching.

One day in Piedrahita, a letter was read inviting those who felt a calling to the missions in the Far East to make themselves known. Gonzalez and 35 other aspirants, animated with a zeal for the salvation of souls, left for Mexico in 1631. As a result of the hardships they suffered in going across to Mexico, six of the candidates died. The rest of the group finally made it to Manila by the end of May 1632.

Father Anthony made it clear that he wished to proceed to Japan as soon as possible. At that time, his petition was not granted. While waiting, he worked both as a teacher and an administrator at the University of Santo Thomas in Manila. He had a premonition that his missionary calling would require his giving a testimony under very difficult circumstances. To prepare for this, during his stay in Manila he disciplined himself by prayer and penance. The spiritual profile that his biographer describes for us is that of a man of God, united with Him in prayer and radically following Christ. There were occasions when Father Anthony preached fearlessly against the abuses of civil authorities and brought upon himself the anger of the powerful and the guilty. But for him, truth and justice meant more than congeniality and earning the favors of the mighty of this world.

On 10 June 1636, Anthony finally had the clearance to depart for Japan with three other Dominicans and two laymen. At the end of the month, they touched the coasts of the islands of Lequios (Okinawa today). The precautions they took to remain undiscovered were of no avail; shortly after they landed, they were captured.

Although we lack the details of all that happened following their imprisonment and stay in Okinawa for almost a year, it is not difficult to conjecture. Anthony had been appointed Superior of the small group so that he was both its teacher and its servant. The group would gather around him to be nourished spiritually; the weak especially would depend on him. The martyrdom of these six witnesses to the Gospel is understandable only if one realizes that their strength came from the light of faith and from grace, and that their community, a miniature Church, was sustained by its unity in prayer and by its support of each other. Those who were weak and afraid were strengthened by seeing the example of the strong and generous ones. They became confident in their growth in faith and courage to the point that they were able to give all bravely for Christ.

On 21 September 1637, at ten o'clock in the morning, Father Anthony Gonzalez, Lawrence Ruiz, a Filipino, and Lazarus, a Japanese leper, were brought to the Port of Nagasaki. Anthony proudly wore his Dominican habit and walked with great dignity into the presence of the judges. He declared that he was wearing the habit as proof that he had come to Japan to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Expecting that his spirit would weaken, they tortured him with *regurgitated water*. Forcibly spewed out of his mouth, the water was mixed with blood as it spilled onto the floor of the room. In answer to the promises of the executioners, he said that he preferred to die rather than renounce his faith. When he was asked to step on a picture of the Blessed Virgin, he threw himself upon it and covered it with kisses and acts of veneration.

Anthony survived this ordeal so weak and broken that he had to be carried back to his cell. Together as a community again, they all joined in prayer and strove to fortify the wavering faith of Lazarus by their example and encouraging words.

At the dawn of 24 September 1637, Anthony was found dead in his cell. The torment of regurgitated water had ruptured his lungs causing severe hemorrhages. He died comforted by the prayers of his companions who promised that they would faithfully arrive at their goal of martyrdom. Anthony's body was delivered to the flames and his ashes thrown into the ocean.

SAINT WILLIAM COURTET

Dominican Priest

(1590 - 1637)



When young William Courtet was pursuing the study of the Humanities in the College of the Dominican Fathers in Béziers, France, some of his Professors told impressive stories of the martyrs who were dying gloriously in those days in Japan. William listened with great interest and, in his youthful imagination, he could see himself offering his life for Christ in the same way. The truth is that from childhood “the desire to become a missionary was enkindled in his heart.”

William was born in Sérignan, France, of noble parents in 1590. Upon reaching his 17th birthday, he asked permission from his parents to enter the Dominican Order. On 15 August 1607, he prostrated himself before the Prior of the Priory of Albi, asking for the mercy of God and to be admitted to the novitiate. The following year, he made profession. After having successfully completed ecclesiastical studies, in 1617 he received the sacrament of Holy Orders. Gifted with strong intellectual qualities, he was awarded the degree of Lecturer in Theology, a position which he discharged with brilliance at the College of St. Maximin.

Years later, he was elected Prior of the Priory in Avignon, France. The hope was that, due to his prudence and religious fervor, he would carry out the reform of the community. His term completed, William felt the call from God to go to missionary lands and consecrate his life to the propagation of the faith. After obtaining his Superior’s permission, he set out on foot for Spain, willingly enduring the sufferings and cold of the journey. In Spain, he stayed at the Priory of St. Thomas in Madrid. There he was revered by the whole community for his example of virtue and religious spirit.

In 1634, Father Courtet and 20 other priests and three Cooperator Brothers set sail from Seville for the Philippines. He was to fulfill his childhood dreams. There were hardships of all kinds during the voyage to Manila. There was even a partisan group that enlisted followers with the intention of splitting the Province of Our Lady of the Rosary. Courtet showed signs of great prudence and discretion in dealing with them.

In Manila, he was appointed professor of theology at the University of Santo Tomas. He became famous as teacher and “saint.” He nurtured his spiritual life very carefully, dedicating long hours to prayer and asceticism. Little by little God’s plans became apparent when the Church of Japan insistently begged for helpers because of the horrors of persecution. The Superiors decided to send four religious, proven in the life of the Spirit, and two laymen. Father Courtet, happy and grateful that God had chosen him, was among the group sent in June 1636.

Trusting in the hands of Providence, the group reached the coast of Okinawa, hoping that soon they would be able to enter Japan. The plans of God, however, moved down other paths. Not one month had passed when some soldiers found them and put them in prison. They remained in prison in Okinawa for a whole year. Little do we know of what transpired there, but knowing the quality of the men, one can be sure that their days were not spent in vain. Aware of what awaited them, they consciously prepared for martyrdom. This they did in a collegial spirit, helping each other so as to form a well-knit and united community, based firmly on prayer and faith. The stronger ones sustained the weaker ones, encouraging each other to remain faithful until the end. When the order came for them to be transferred to Nagasaki, they showed the temper of true athletes of Christ, ready to face what was to come.

It was on 13 September 1637 that Fathers William Courtet, Michael of Aozaraza and Vincent Shiwozuka of the Cross were placed in cages as though they were animals and taken to the city of Nagasaki. When interrogated, they answered that they had come to Japan solely for the purpose of preaching Christian truth — the only one that could save mankind. As a “reward” for these answers, they were subjected to tortures on three consecutive occasions. The first was that of *regurgitated water*, in the hope of obtaining important declarations from them. For the second, they suffered the anguish of *suffocation*. Their heads were submerged for a few minutes in pails of water; when they appeared to be drowning, they were forcefully pulled out. This was done repeatedly. The last torture was the deep embedding of metal needles beneath the nails of their fingers.

Surely, without the grace of God, they could never have sustained so many and so horrible torments. God was near them and gave His witnesses the strength to endure such horrors with an unbreakable spirit. It was said that the more painful the torture, the louder Father Courtet raised his voice in praise of God and of the Virgin of the Rosary.

Inasmuch as these servants of God were unwavering in their faith and were not attracted by the money or honors being offered to them, the judges finally decreed the sentence of death on 27 September 1637.

In the procession through the streets of Nagasaki, the five servants of God walked single file. They prayed and encouraged each other continuously. Upon arriving at their mount of Calvary, they were suspended upside down from the *gallows* with their head and torso in malodorous *pits*. Father Courtet took so long to die that the executioners decided to take him out of the hole and beheaded him. Thus, on 29 December 1637, ended the life of this renowned martyr of Christ. Before his death, Courtet thanked God for bringing the dream of his youth to reality — the wonderful privilege of being able to give his life for the love of Jesus Christ.

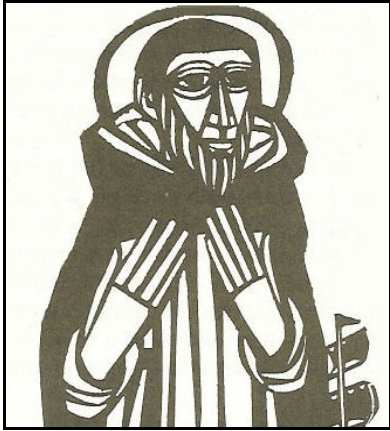
WRITINGS

- ◆ A *Letter* written to the Master General of the Order of Preachers, from Manila, in 1636. Part of it was published in the Circular Letter of the Order '*Paternae sollicitudine*' in 1641 by the Master General Nicolas Ridolfi (cf F. Villaroel, *Positio . . .*, p. 381).

SAINT MICHAEL DE AOZARAZA

Dominican Priest

(1598 - 1637)



Michael Gonzáles de Aozaraza was born in Oñate, Guipúzcoa, Spain, on 7 February 1598. He lived a happy and wholesome childhood in a good family. At age 17, he decided to enter the religious life in the Dominican Order, and received the habit in the Priory of St. Dominic in Vitoria.

During the years of study before ordination, Michael's desire to serve God and the Church in the missions became a holy goal. This is understandable given that the missionary spirit in that Priory was strong and deep. The Priory itself had given several important personages to the missions, among whom were some who were already considered martyrs. Frequently, missionaries visited the Priory and recounted their experiences.

Before Father Aozaraza's youthful dreams could be realized, several years passed — a period which seemed to be refining his intentions. He was first assigned to St. Thomas in Madrid, where he dedicated his life to serious prayer coupled with severe penances. He was gifted with excellent qualities that enabled him to lead an ordinary life attending to the ordinary business of daily living, serving his community. His was the proverbial service for all.

In early 1634, it was announced in all the Priors of Spain that an expedition was soon to leave for the Philippines. It was to be led by Father James Collado whose words were persuasive when he asked for help for the needs of the Japanese Church. One of the first to volunteer was Father Aozaraza. The time had come for him to express a resounding "yes" to God's call. He was well acquainted with the necessary procedures in matters of travel and was a great help to those who had also volunteered to go. The group arrived in Manila on 24 June 1634.

Michael's first appointment in the Philippines was in the province of Bataan. There he studied Tagalog while helping in the apostolate. Given that his hope was eventually to

go to Japan, he obtained permission to devote some hours each day to studying the Japanese language.

In 1636, the Superiors of the Province of Our Lady of the Rosary made an important decision. Father Aozaraza with three other priests and two laymen were to be sent to Japan. The mission was to be carried out in the greatest secrecy because the Governor was firmly against sending missionaries to Japan where the Christian religion had been outlawed and persecuted. The enterprise was successfully launched when the Province chartered a small vessel to be piloted by a Cooperator Brother who had been a sailor and was very familiar with the waters of the China Sea.

Shortly after arriving in Okinawa, the group was captured by the authorities and treated as transgressors of the law of the land. They were kept in prison for one year.

By order of higher authorities, they were transferred to the city of Nagasaki on 13 September 1637; there they were placed in cages and exposed to the stares of spectators. When they were taken to the courthouse, they declared that they had come to Japan to “save souls.” There was nothing of a political nature in their lives and they were not spies. When Aozaraza’s turn came to speak, an apostate priest came up to him and talked to him in Latin, attempting to convince him to renounce his faith. Aozaraza replied that he had no intention of doing so and that he did not wish to follow the other’s bad example; he was, in fact, prepared to shed his blood to the last drop if necessary. The apostate priest turned away shamed and beaten.

When the judges realized that they had gotten nowhere with promises and money, they decided to force the prisoners to renounce their faith through torture. They repeatedly forced them to drink great quantities of water and made them regurgitate it with great pain and anguish. After that, they used the *suffocation* method by forcing their head under water until they began to drown and pulling them out; they repeated this cycle again and again. Lastly, they tortured them with *sharpened canes*. Father Aozaraza compared all these torments to the sufferings of Jesus during His Passion. When he saw the blood running from his fingers, he exclaimed: “Oh, what beautiful carnations, what beautiful roses, shed for you, my God, for your love!”

The final torture — the agony of the *gallows and pit* — was started on 27 September 1637. Because Aozaraza’s death came too slowly, one of the executioners struck him to death with a sword on 29 September 1637. This glorious martyr rested with the Lord after a long road of suffering, torments and finally martyrdom. His body was burned to ashes and thrown into the Bay of Nagasaki.

SAINT VINCENT SHIWOZUKA OF THE CROSS

Dominican Priest

(? - 1637)



On 27 January 1614, Shogun Tokagawa Ieyasu sent out orders that every missionary was to leave the country within a year. To facilitate the exodus, four vessels were to leave at four different times from the Port of Nagasaki. Two were to sail for Macao, one for Siam and the last for Manila. On the last ship, there were seven Dominicans and Franciscans, 23 Jesuits and 15 Japanese catechists. Among the catechists was Louis Shiwozuka who, when he was later professed as a Dominican, took the name Vincent.

Louis Shiwozuka was born in Nagasaki of devout Christian parents, at an unknown date.

At his birth, his parents offered him to God in gratitude for the seven sons that He had already given them. To fulfill this promise, they took him to the Jesuit school in Nagasaki when he was nine years old, there to be trained as a catechist. After completing his training and formation, Louis began to share his faith with his people. He was engaged in this ministry when he was informed that he, too, was to be exiled because he had been an accomplice in spreading Catholic doctrine.

Once settled in the city of Manila, Louis began thinking about the best way to realize his parents' vow on his behalf. He decided that he could best do this as a priest. With the help and encouragement of the bishop of Cebu, Peter de Arce, he fulfilled his desire. After completing his studies, he was ordained a priest in 1619.

Conscious of the great need that existed in the Church of Japan, Louis decided to return to his country and work as a missionary among his people, who were being so cruelly persecuted at that time. He was ready to leave on an expedition with some Franciscans when he became deathly sick; so sick, it was impossible for him to leave. Once again he began to think of ways in which he would better serve God. It was then that he decided to become a Third Order Franciscan. Then he began teaching Japanese to the missionaries preparing for Japan. Among his pupils were Fathers Anthony González, William Courtet

and Michael de Aozaraza. Meanwhile, he also ministered to the Japanese Christians in Manila.

In 1636, when Father Anthony González was preparing to go to Japan, he invited Father Vincent to come along. The latter did not hesitate for one second. So that all would be in harmony in heart and spirit, Father Vincent asked for the Dominican habit; with this wish granted, he made profession according to the Dominican Constitutions. Later, when he appeared before the judges in Nagasaki, he made it clear in these words: “I have been professed as a Dominican religious from the beginning of this voyage.” He probably had made profession while in prison in Okinawa.

On 10 July 1636, Vincent stepped ashore on Okinawa. He was overjoyed to see that his dream of returning home had finally become a reality. Because he was Japanese, his help and guidance during those first days were invaluable. In spite of all their precautions, the arrival of the missionaries was known to the soldiers, who soon found them and put them in prison. Vincent was very disappointed; deprived of his freedom, he could not carry out his apostolate to the Christians who begged strongly for help. The will of God was taking him to different paths; in faith, he resigned himself to it. The years of imprisonment in Okinawa greatly helped everyone spiritually. Since all of them knew the fate that awaited them, they prepared for it with much fervor and diligence.

On 13 September 1637, Fathers Vincent Shiwozuka, William Courtet and Michael of Aozaraza were taken to Nagasaki to appear before the tribunal. The judges became furious when they found out that one of the missionaries was a Japanese. They were determined to make Father Vincent pay dearly for embracing the Christian religion and abandoning the religious traditions of his country — an act they considered treason. Three times they tortured him with the *regurgitated water* method. The shock to his system was so great that, hardly aware of what was happening, he renounced his faith. The executioners did not hear what he had said and continued the torments.

When he was returned to prison, Fathers William and Michael disregarded their own pain and suffering and gave all their attention to their fallen brother. They reminded him of Jesus’ Passion, His sufferings on the cross and of His admirable patience. They brought to mind the many martyrs who had given their lives without vacillating and who offered their lives for the perseverance of the Christians in Japan. Father Vincent began to feel that he had regained control of himself and possessed a strength that he did not have before. He looked once again on the face of Christ and saw that He was full of mercy and compassion. He felt pardoned and comforted.

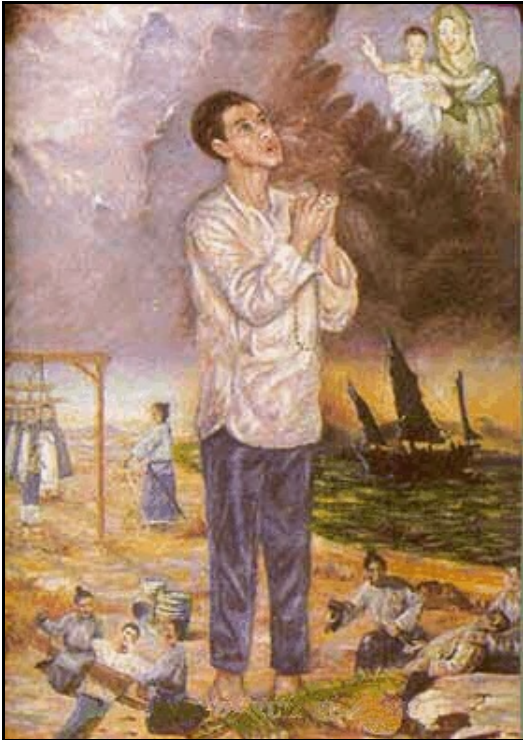
From then on, Father Vincent did not hesitate any more. On hearing his death sentence, he felt himself full of courage, ready to give everything away for the sake of Christ. He offered himself generously as a victim for the good of the Church in Japan.

On 27 September 1637, mounted on a horse and with his face painted as a symbol of ridicule, Father Vincent along with his companions was paraded through the streets of Nagasaki. When they reached the hill of execution, he offered no resistance to the executioners who tied him and suspended him from the *gallows*, with his head and the upper part of the body dangling in a *pit*. Soon he began to bleed from the ears, nose, eyes and mouth; because of the horrible pain, he lost consciousness. Father Vincent took so long to die that the executioners finally beat him on the head and killed him. On 29 September 1637, his soul went to meet his parents in the presence of God.

SAINT LAWRENCE RUIZ

Layman

(1600 - 1637)



On the 28th of March 1594, an important document was signed in the city of Manila. Mr. Louis Pérez Dasmariñas, Governor of the Philippines, bought the island of Binondo with his own money and donated it to the Chinese who had been displaced from the *Parián* [Chinese quarter]. With this gift, he gave them a place where they could be safe from the insurrection. Two years later, the Dominican Fathers took over the Church of St. Gabriel that had been built for the Chinese community. Since then, Binondo has been the cradle of Chinese Catholicism in Manila.

Marriages between the Chinese merchants and the native women of the Philippines was quite common at the time. From this practice there arose a strong mestizo population which eventually became very influential both in business and in the semi-autonomous government of Binondo.

Lawrence Ruiz was the offspring of such a marriage. His father was Chinese and his mother Filipina. Lawrence was born around the year 1600 and was most likely baptized in the Church of St. Gabriel. Even as a child, he served in church and in the Dominican Priory. He learned reading and writing as well as Christian doctrine in the parochial school. During his youth, Lawrence developed an intense devotion to Our Lady of the Rosary which he never lost. He joined the Confraternity of the Rosary and faithfully participated in all its activities: – receiving Communion on first Sundays, visiting Mary’s altar and joining in processions through the districts of Binondo during the dry spells. His adult occupation was serving as a notary, copying important documents in elegant handwriting. He was happily married, the father of two sons and one daughter.

The life of this martyr now reaches the point where the ways of man are not the ways of God. The events that transpired show the mystery by which the hand of God, though hidden, was directing things according to His eternal design.

There was an incident in Lawrence's life for which human justice found him guilty and demanded payment. Lawrence chose to flee. The Dominican Fathers, particularly the very upright Father Anthony González, helped him escape this embarrassing and dangerous situation. When Father Anthony and his companions left for Japan in June 1636, Lawrence accompanied them. He had planned to disembark at Macao, but that proved impossible when the winds drove them to islands of Lequios, Okinawa. Lawrence could have returned in the same boat; afraid that he would be caught in Formosa, he chose to stay with his companions. It was God who had thrown the dice that would lead His servant to become a renowned martyr.

Shortly after they landed in Okinawa, Lawrence and his companions were taken prisoner. During Lawrence's imprisonment, his noble and simple faith began to grow prodigiously and ended in the heroic confession that made him a martyr of Jesus Christ.

One fact is clear in the life of this servant of God: he was an outstanding disciple of Father Anthony. This great missionary, full of the love of God and of zeal for His glory, motivated Lawrence with the same spirit during their stay in the prison of Okinawa. It can truly be said: that year was equivalent to a novitiate and was fully dedicated to preparation for martyrdom.

On 21 September 1637, Father Anthony González, Lazarus of Kyoto and Lawrence Ruiz arrived at the Port of Nagasaki. Always attentive to the example and teaching of his spiritual director, Lawrence resolved from the very beginning to follow his footsteps and advice. Early on, one could sense in him a certain weakness on his road to martyrdom. Nevertheless, thanks to the example of Father Anthony and of his companions, Lawrence began to develop an extraordinary and admirable strength that soon made him a giant in the faith.

When Lawrence was tortured with the *regurgitated water* torment, he proved to be a steadfast man. When the judges offered him his freedom for his apostasy, he answered resolutely that he was "a Christian and would remain so until death," adding: "I am ready to give thousands of lives for God if I had them."

On the morning of 24 September 1637, Father Anthony died in prison as a result of the horrible tortures which he had experienced. Lawrence did not forget the example and righteousness of such a holy man. Besides, Father Anthony's promise to pray for him when he got to heaven gave him courage and strength — so much so, that when called before the judges, he emphatically stated: "You can do with me what you see fit."

On 27 September 1637, the final sentence came at last. Lawrence Ruiz and his companions were to die by the *gallows and pit*. All of them received the sentence with joy, knowing that soon they would appear before the throne of God to receive their reward. Again they prayed together and encouraged each other to remain faithful until the end. Lawrence fingered his rosary, his favorite devotion, and begged the Blessed Virgin for help in undergoing such a hard trial.

When they were placed in line to start the procession through the streets of Nagasaki, Lawrence was in second place. He and his companions whispered prayers as they walked. After arriving at the hill, Lawrence was hanged from the *gallows* and suspended upside down with his head and torso in a fetid *pit*. There, he waited for death, for the call of the Lord, offering his life as he had assured the judges. He died on 29 September 1637. His remains were consumed in a fire with the ashes cast into the sea.

Lawrence Ruiz is the protomartyr and first saint of the Philippines.

SAINT LAZARUS OF KYOTO

Layman

(? - 1637)



At the beginning of the “Great Persecution” against the Church in Japan in 1614, there were several hospitals for the care of lepers. These were under the supervision of the Jesuits and the Franciscans. Many of the patients became Christians because of the selfless service and sacrifices of the missionary priests. But the most persuasive reason for their conversion was the belief in the value of human suffering when joined to the Passion of Jesus Christ.

In order to suppress these Christian ideas, the Japanese authorities ordered all lepers who had become Christians to renounce their faith. Those who would, were to be taken care of at the expense of the Emperor; those who would not would be deported to unknown lands. The majority of the lepers chose to remain Christian.

In May 1632, the government began to carry out its orders. One hundred-thirty lepers were gathered in the Ports of Osaka and Sakai and thrown into the hold of the boats then sent to Manila as an act of reprisal against Spain for the hated Christian faith that Catholic missionaries had brought to Japan.

But God was close to these unfortunate ones who, during their long voyage, had begged God fervently for help. When they finally arrived at the harbor of Manila — and the city realized what kind of “merchandise” had arrived — an inexplicable upsurge of compassion and mercy was directed to these brothers and sisters in faith. The Governor, the Archbishop, the religious and the priests and the whole population en masse came to welcome the lepers from Japan. The lepers could hardly believe such a response. Forgetting all their hardships and pains, they tearfully broke into songs of praise and thanksgiving. After the official reception was over, they were carefully moved into different hospitals in the city to receive care.

Lazarus was one of the lepers who had come to Manila on that ship. He was born in Kyoto at an unknown date. It was through his sickness that he came to the knowledge of God and the Church. He was one of those who chose to be deported rather than to ounce their faith. While he was lying in a Manila hospital, he kept in close contact with the

Dominican Fathers. Through them, he became aware of the plan to charter a vessel to take missionaries to Japan secretly in order to help the persecuted Church.

Lazarus offered to go with them as guide and as a means for him to return to his country. Promptly accepted as guide and interpreter, he set out with the missionaries on 10 June 1636 for the long journey to Japan.

When the group finally arrived on the coast of Okinawa, it was Lazarus's job to direct the disembarkation and the hiding of the missionaries. This project was unsuccessful because in a very short time they were all captured and imprisoned. Lazarus, just like Lawrence Ruiz, had stayed close to Father Anthony González. The priest was not only their spiritual director but also the best counselor they could have had in such difficult circumstances. During the year that all were imprisoned in Okinawa, Father Anthony guided Lazarus and Lawrence and all his sons in spiritual strength.

On 21 September 1637, Father Anthony, Lazarus and Lawrence were taken to the judges in Nagasaki to be prosecuted. Lazarus confessed publicly that he was a Christian. He told the judges that the coming of the missionaries had nothing to do with espionage but was solely to spread the teachings of Christ for the salvation of souls. The judges forcibly pressed Lazarus to say that the government of the Philippines was planning to send new missionaries to Japan. He admitted hearing that a new expedition of missionaries would be sent in the following year. After his testimony, he was subjected to the *regurgitated water* torment, as was the practice.

Faced with the same tortures Father Anthony experienced, Lazarus lost courage and quickly told the judge that he was renouncing his faith. They refused to listen to him and continued the torments.

When Lazarus returned to prison and his companions heard of his disgrace, they all encouraged him to get up from his fall. Roused by their urgings and support, he promised that when the guards took him again he would remain strong and not give in. He stated that nothing in the world would make him renounce again his faith. He wanted his road to be similar to that of many who had gone before him.

On the following day, 23 September, Lazarus was subjected to new and horrible tortures. He withstood them all "like a faithful Christian, for the sake of Christ." In order that there would not remain any doubt as to his firmness in his Christian faith and in his decision to die for it, he proclaimed in a loud voice "that he took back every word that in fear he had said before."

On 27 September 1637, Lazarus led the procession of the servants of God. Mounted on a horse and with a rope around his neck, he was paraded through the streets of Nagasaki. On the hill of torture a *gallows* was erected especially for him. He humbly allowed himself to be tied while he whispered prayers asking God for courage in his martyrdom. When he was taken out of the *pit* on 29 September, he was dead. He had bravely given his life back to God for the faith that he had loved so much. His body was burned with the ashes thrown into the sea.

JEROME YAGOZAYEMON

Layman

(? - 1629)

We have no facts or dates about Jerome's life. However, from a letter of Father Dominic Ibañez de Erquicia, dated 18 October 1630, we learn of Jerome's martyrdom. He was a native of a village very far north of Nagasaki, near Omura.

Jerome Yagozayemon was Father Erquicia's innkeeper [housekeeper and factotum]. Dominic had such confidence in Jerome that he entrusted him with his personal belongings and all the money that the missionaries received from Manila. There were times when Dominic had to borrow money to pay his debts and when the money arrived from Manila he would send Jerome to repay them. Jerome was a steady collaborator and benefactor of Dominic and of the other Dominican missionaries in those difficult times.

Their close relationship lasted until 1629. The persecutors and spies learned of the help that Jerome had been giving to the Dominican missionaries. They took him prisoner in December 1629 and killed him. In his letter, Father Dominic gratefully recalls what his faithful helper and companion had done for them all. He felt the loss deeply because Jerome had been such a great asset in the missionary labors.

JOHN MOZAYEMON

Layman

(? - 1633)

Intimately associated with Father Dominic Ibañez de Erquicia and Brother Francis Shoyemon, although not canonized with them, was the Japanese layman John Mozayemon. John, like Francis, was a catechist for Father Erquicia; he was taken prisoner with them on 4 July 1633 and imprisoned in Omura. Since the catechist Mozayemon was originally from Omura, the Governor of Nagasaki ordered Dominic and Francis transferred to Nagasaki to be executed there while John would be executed in Omura.

On the morning of 27 August 1633, John and three other Christians were burned alive in Omura. This is attested to by the signed and sealed testimonies called “Kembunshu” given by the witnesses sent to Omura to attend the execution. It is also confirmed by the feudal Lord of Omura who sent letters to the Governor of Nagasaki reporting the execution at the stake of John and three other Christians.

Unfortunately, John was not introduced in the Process of Beatification because his Christian name and other facts concerning his life were unknown. Lately, it has been proven that his Christian name was John and that he died for the faith and for being a catechist for Father Erquicia.

It is possible, then, that some day in the future John Moyazemon will be elevated to the honors of the altar.

DOMINIC KAKUSUKE

Layman

(? - 1633)

Dominic Kakusuke was very likely a native of the region of Nagasaki. For many years he helped the Dominican missionaries as a servant, although it is not certain that he received the Dominican habit. It is possible that he was also a catechist.

In 1633, Dominic accompanied Father Luke of the Holy Spirit on an apostolic round through northern Japan. On 8 September, Dominic, Father Luke, the Jesuit Father Anthony de Sousa and Brother Matthew Kobioye were arrested. While imprisoned in Osaka, Dominic was subjected to torture in the hope that he might reveal the whereabouts of the other Christians. He refused to reveal any names or to deny his faith.

On 24 September 1633, he was taken to Nagasaki with Father Luke and his other companions. On 18 October, they were subjected to the *gallows and hole* torture. For long hours, Dominic endured this until his death. It is possible to set the date of his death as 19 October and the same for Father Luke of the Holy Spirit and Brother Matthew Kohioye of the Rosary. Their bodies were reduced to ashes.

Dominic Kakusuke has not been included in the list of the 16 martyrs of Nagasaki canonized by Pope John Paul II in 1987. The History Consultants of the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints found the following difficulties:

- a) The name of the martyr is not the same in various documents.
- b) There is a lack of explicit testimonies and eyewitness accounts to his death in martyrdom and perseverance in the faith.
- c) There are some doubts as to why he was martyred, whether it was for the faith or because he was a servant of Father Luke of the Holy Spirit.

For these reasons, Dominic Kakusuke was not canonized with his companions in suffering. Nonetheless, he can be considered as an authentic martyr deserving of all its honors, united even in death with our Dominican Martyrs of Japan.



Dominican Martyrs of Japan

We have presented here the biographies of Jerome Yagozayemon, John Mozayemon and Dominic Kakusuke because these three “martyrs” were intimately connected with some of the 16 Saint-Martyrs reviewed before them. These three have not been beatified. With respect to them, as well as to others who appear in this book, we do not wish to prejudge the criteria and the supreme authority of the Church when she has not yet officially recognized the merits of their martyrdom by declaring them “blessed.” (*Note of original editor*)

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**LAY DOMINICANS
CATECHISTS
INNKEEPERS
BENEFACTORS
MEMBERS OF THE CONFRATERNITY
OF THE ROSARY**

**Martyred in the Dominican Missions of Japan
(1602 - 1628)**

By José Delgado García, O.P.

I. LAY DOMINICAN MARTYRS

(1602 - 1628)



Japanese Lay Dominican Martyrs

a) LAY DOMINICANS WITH SOLEMN VOWS



Magdalene Kiyota (? - 1627)

Magdalene was a descendant of the illustrious family of the feudal Lord (*daimyo*) of Bungo, city of Oita. Her father was Francis “Sorin” Otomo (1530-1587). She was received as a Lay Dominican by Father Dominic Castellet after her husband died. Because her home was a refuge for missionaries, she was burned alive in Nagasaki on 17 August 1627.

Magdalene was beatified on 7 July 1867 by Pope Pius IX.



Frances Pinzokere (? - 1627)

After she became a widow, Frances consecrated her life to God, taking vows as a Lay Dominican through Father Castellet. On 17 August 1627, she was slowly burned to death for having given refuge to missionaries in her home.

Frances was beatified on 7 July 1867 by Pope Pius IX.



Lucy Louise (? - 1628)

Lucy was received as a Lay Dominican by Father Castellet. Her house was always open to missionaries and other Christians. She was 80 years old when arrested on 15 June 1628 for having allowed Father Castellet to preach in her home. She and the priest were burned to death on 8 September 1628.

Lucy was beatified on 7 July 1867 by Pope Pius IX.

Magdalene of Nagasaki (1610 - 1634)

As pointed out earlier [see p. 80 above], Magdalene is also considered a Lay Dominican. She received the habit from Father Jordan of St. Stephen but was not able to pronounce her vows because he was imprisoned on 4 August 1634. A short time later, Sister Magdalene was also captured and suffered innumerable tortures. She died on 15 October 1634 — only 24 years old — while undergoing the *gallows and pit* torment. She was *canonized* by Pope John Paul II on 18 October 1987.

Marina of Omura (? - 1634)

As we have seen in her biography [see p. 83 above], Sister Marina made her profession at the hands of Father Louis Bertrán between the years 1623 and 1626. She is called the “strong woman of Japan” for the great fearlessness that she showed while being tortured. After the tortures, she was paraded naked through the villages and towns. Then, on 11 November 1634, she was slowly burned alive. She was *canonized* by Pope John Paul II on 18 October 1987.

b) SECULAR LAY DOMINICANS

i) Independent Lay Dominican Martyrs

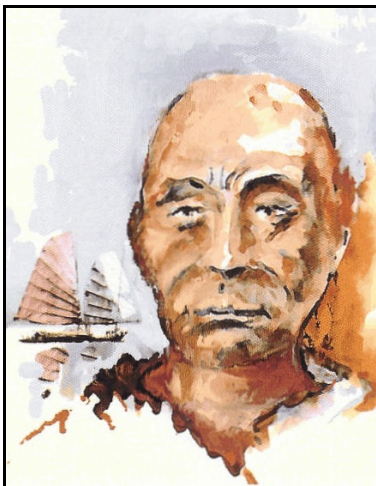
Caspar Koteda (1603 - 1622)

Caspar was a member of the noble family of Koteda of the Kingdom of Hirado. The family fled to Nagasaki in 1600 after refusing to take part in Buddhist Rites. Caspar was born in Nagasaki in 1603. As a catechist, he first helped the Jesuits and later the Dominicans. He was beheaded in Nagasaki on 11 September 1622, and *beatified* on 7 July 1867.



Francis Kurobioye (? - 1627)

Francis was a native of Chikugo, south of the present Province of Fukuoka. He was burned alive with Magdalene of Kyoto and Frances Pinzokere on 17 August 1627. He was *beatified* on 7 July 1867.



Caius Jiyemon (? - 1627)

Caius was born to Christian parents in the Archipelago of Amakusen in Korea. As a Lay Dominican, he fearlessly helped the Dominican missionaries in their ministry. For this, he was imprisoned then burned alive in Nagasaki on 17 August 1627.

He is among the “205 Blessed Martyrs of Japan” *beatified* on 7 July 1867.

ii) Lay Dominicans burned with Father Castellet

The above group of Lay Dominicans was followed by a more numerous group of Christians martyred on 8 September 1628, with Father Castellet. These had always accompanied and defended the priest. The reason for their martyrdom is found in the following historical account.

In June 1627, the Procurator of the Franciscans, Brother Bartholomew Laurel, was arrested; some documents listing Mass intentions of the Christians were found on him. These lists and other papers endangered both missionaries and Christians. Overcome by fear, one of the Christians who was arrested denounced the Franciscans, the Augustinians and the Dominicans to the persecutors. He revealed that they were making plans in Omura to get a boat to bring in missionaries from Manila. Enraged at this information, the authorities rounded up all the Franciscans and a large number of Christians from Nagasaki and the surrounding areas. As a result of this information, on 15 June 1628, Father Castellet and the Lay Dominican Lucy Louise with other Christians gathered in her home were also captured.

When the five Lay Dominicans, who had been helping to prepare the aforementioned boat, heard that Father Castellet had been captured, they unanimously presented themselves to the persecutors, declaring that they too were Christians. Burned alive in Nagasaki together with Father Castellet on 8 September 1628, these heroic believers were:

Michael Kyuhachi Yamada († 1628)

Michael was called *The Young One*; he was a sailor who offered his services to the missionaries. His little son, *Lawrence*, 3 years old, was also martyred. Both were *beatified* on 7 July 1867.



John Imamura († 1628)

John was the owner of the boat being prepared to sail for Manila. He was lending it to the missionaries.

John was *beatified*.

Paul Sandayu Aibara († 1628)

Paul, a sailor, was a native of Nagasaki. He was outstanding in his great spirit as a Lay Dominican and succeeded in instilling the same spirit in his two sons, *Roman* and *Leo*. They in turn became Lay Dominicans and were exceptional collaborators of the missionaries. All of them were captured with Father Castellet in the home of Lucy Louise. Paul was buried alive after witnessing the martyrdom of his two sons by decapitation on 8 September 1628. These three have been *beatified*



Leo Sandayu Aibara († 1628)

[Roman, father; Leo his son - according to Bologna sources.]

Matthew Alvarez Anjin († 1628)

Matthew was the captain of the boat in question. He has been *beatified*.

John Tomaki († 1628)

John was fearless. He hid missionaries and supported them at all times. When he presented himself voluntarily to the persecutors and told them that he was a Christian, they threatened to kill his four sons: *Dominic* 16, *Michael* 13, *Thomas* 10, and *Paul* 7. He did not give in to their threats but remained firm in his faith. He even had the courage to watch his four sons being burned to death before suffering the same fate. The father and sons were *beatified* on 7 July 1867.

iii) Lay Dominicans beheaded with Father Castellet

These were martyred with Father Castellet but not burned as he was. They were:

James Hayashida († 1628)

James was arrested because he helped the missionaries and was also a catechist. He is among the “205 Blessed Martyrs of Japan” who were *beatified* on 7 July 1867.

Louis Nihachi Nioye († 1628)

Louis was imprisoned for using his home as a refuge for missionaries and for spreading Christianity. The Government of Nagasaki threatened to kill his sons, *Francis* 5, and *Dominic* 2, if he did not renounce his faith. He chose martyrdom rather than deny his faith. The persecutors cut off the heads of his two sons in his presence before beheading him. These three martyrs are on the list of those *beatified* on 7 July 1867.

iv) List of other Lay Dominican Martyrs

Father Aduarte in both his *Report* published in Seville in 1631 and later in his *History of the Province of the Holy Rosary*, in Chapter 33 of Part Two, and Father James Rodriguez’s *Catalogues* in 1650, list the names of Lay Dominicans who were martyred in the 11th, 14th and 16th of September 1628. Some of these were *beatified*; we present here their names:

Michael Himonoya († 1628)

Michael and his son, *Paul*, were beheaded in Nagasaki on 16 September 1628.



Dominic Shobioye († 1628)

Dominic was beheaded with Michael and Paul Himonoya on 16 September 1628. Their names are on the list of those *beatified* on 7 July 1867.

Among the Lay Dominicans *not yet beatified* are the following:

Michael Dayemon († 1627) Beheaded on 19 May 1627 in Yagami, Nagasaki.

Anthony Mencoso († 1627) He was beheaded at age 23 on 17 August 1627 in Nagasaki.

Anthony Yozayemon Kikitsu († 1628)

Leo Kurobioye († 1628) He was a Third Order Franciscan as well.

Michael Kanaya († 1628)

Michael Omino († 1628) Beheaded on account of Father Dominic Castellet.

Michael Sinione († 1628)

2. NOTABLE MARTYRED CATECHISTS

(1602 - 1628)

Paul Nagaishi († 1622)

From the year 1607 to 1613, Paul was a catechist with the Dominicans in the Hizen region of Saga. He was exiled with the missionaries to Nagasaki. In July 1617, he was imprisoned with Father Zumárraga but was freed in the beginning of 1618. In the spring of 1619, he was again imprisoned for having continued to spread Christianity. On 10 September 1622, he was burned alive after witnessing the beheading of his wife, *Thecla*, and of his son, *Peter*, 7. Paul was wearing the Dominican habit at the time of his martyrdom. This family was *beatified* on 7 July 1867.

Alexis Saburo Sanbashi († 1622)

Alexis was a native of Nagasaki and was a catechist with Father Joseph of St. Hyacinth “Salvanés”. He was captured with the priest on 17 August 1621. He was burned alive wearing the Dominican habit on 10 September 1622, and *beatified* on 7 July 1867.

Dominic Tamba († 1622)

Dominic was a catechist and a loyal companion of Father Hyacinth Orfanell. Both were arrested and imprisoned in Suzuta, Omura, on 25 April 1621. Dominic was slowly burned alive, wearing the Dominican habit, on 10 September 1622. He has not been beatified.

James Chimba († 1622)

James is also known as “the Cripple.” Both he and Father Thomas de Zumárraga whom he helped were arrested together on 23 July 1617. At the beginning of 1619, he was freed but was thrown back into prison for persisting to catechize. He was wearing the Dominican habit when executed by being slowly burned alive on 10 September 1622. He has not been beatified.

3. IMPORTANT MARTYRED INNKEEPERS

(1602 - 1628)

The missionaries had to change their lodgings frequently for fear of being detected if they stayed too long in one place. Of the many innkeepers who sheltered them, we list here the better-known ones.

Casper Hikojiro Ueda († 1617)

Casper was arrested on 17 August 1617 for having given shelter to Father Alphonse de Navarrete for three years. He had been a member of the Confraternity of the Rosary, His companion in martyrdom was **Andrew Yoshida**, also a member of the Confraternity of the Rosary and who had hosted the Vicar Provincial of the Augustinians, Father Hernando de Ayala. Casper was decapitated on 1 October 1617 on Takaboko Isle, at the entrance of the Port of Nagasaki. Caspar and Andrew were both *beatified* on 7 July 1867.

Cosmas Takeya († 1619)

Cosmas was Korean by birth but settled in Nagasaki as an administrator for a rich Japanese from Chikugo, Korume Yanagawa. He happily welcomed the Dominican Fathers Angel Ferrer Orsucci and John of St. Dominic into his home in October 1618. He was arrested on the night of 13 December 1618 with his missionary guests. He was burned alive on 19 November 1619, and *beatified* on 7 July 1867.

John Shozayemon Shoun († 1619)

At John's insistence, Father Alonso de Mena finally agreed to stay with him. Alonso had been in the habit of hiding in the hills in order to avoid placing the Christians in danger. John was denounced by one of the Christian spies and captured on 14 March 1619 with Father Alonso. He received the palm of martyrdom on 19 November 1619 by being burned alive. He was *beatified* on 7 July 1867.

Andrew Tokuan Murayama († 1619)

In May 1609, Andrew took charge of all the religious objects that belonged to the Dominicans who had been exiled from Satsuma to Nagasaki. He did this until the Church of St. Dominic was built. He also took in Father Francis Morales when he returned from

the high seas after having been exiled with other missionaries on 6 November 1614. Tokuan was arrested with Father Morales on 15 March 1619, for having given hospitality to the missionary. He was burned alive on 19 November 1619. A few years later, on 10 September 1622, his wife *Mary* was beheaded. The couple was *beatified* on 7 July 1867.

Andrew Tokuan was the oldest son of Anthony Toan Murayama. The Government Administrator of Nagasaki.

John Chuan Murayama († 1619)

John was the third son of Governor Toan Murayama who harbored Father Alonso de Mena for two years, starting in October 1614. After Father Morales was found in his brother Andrew's home, John was beheaded in December 1619. He has not been beatified.

Paul Tanaka († 1622)

Paul was a native of Rosa, in the province of Kochi on the Island of Shikoku. He had offered his home to Father Salvanés so that the latter could carry on the spiritual preparation of the Christians of Nagasaki for the Feast of the Assumption. Father stayed until 17 August 1621, when he was apprehended with his catechist, some other Christians and Paul Tanaka. Paul and his wife, *Mary*, were burned alive in Nagasaki on 10 September 1622. Paul went to his martyrdom wearing his Dominican habit while his wife wore the Dominican scapular. Both were *beatified* on 7 July 1867.

Matthias Matazayemon († 1622)

Matthias was a farmer from the village of Yagami near Nagasaki. Father Hyacinth Orfanell was discovered in his home and so Matthias and his wife, *Mary*, their two sons, *Dominic*, a teen-ager, and the other, *Michael* 10, were arrested. On 23 September 1622, Matthias was burned alive while his wife and two sons were beheaded. They have not been beatified.

James Koichi († 1624)

James lived in a secluded home in the region of Fuchi, which is today the point of departure for the funicular of Mount Inasa above the Port of Nagasaki. He allowed Fathers Peter Vásquez and Dominic Castellet to bury the remains of Father Louis Flores near his home. Two agents of the Supreme Court of Nagasaki arrested both Father Vásquez and James and imprisoned them in Nagasaki. On 5 November 1624, James was burned alive.

He has not been beatified.

Martha († 1627)

Martha was a leper gifted with a great spirit of valor and a true Christian. She was very happy to give hospitality to Father Louis Bertrán and his helpers on 28 July 1626. They were discovered, however, and all, including Martha, were taken prisoners. She was burned alive on 29 July 1627. She has not been beatified.

Lucy Louise († 1628)

As noted above (page 111), Lucy was Lay Dominican burned alive at the age of 80 for having given hospitality to Father Dominic Castellet. Martyred on 8 September 1628, she was *beatified* on 7 July 1867.

**4. MARTYRED BENEFACTORS
OF THE DOMINICANS**

(1602 - 1628)

Anthony Toan Murayama († 1619)

Through the influence of the Jesuits, Anthony obtained the important position of Government Administrator of Nagasaki in 1605. He soon broke off relations with them and gave himself over to unbridled living until 1614. Nevertheless, he remained kind to the Fathers and granted them many favors. Through his generosity, the Dominicans were able to establish themselves in Nagasaki in 1610. He helped them build the Church of St. Dominic which became the center of the “New City of Nagasaki.”

Anthony’s conversion came about in 1614. From then on, he lived an exemplary life. He constructed a boat to take the missionaries back to Manila; at the same time, he protected those who remained in hiding in Japan. He was accused of protecting missionaries and Christians. He lost the case brought against him in 1618 by a renegade Christian named John Suetsugu Heizo. In consequence, he was stripped of his office and exiled. Later, when Father Morales was discovered in the home of Anthony’s eldest son, *Andrew Tokuan*, Anthony was arrested and beheaded on 1 December 1619. He has not been beatified.

Joachim Diaz Hirayama († 1622)

Joachim was the captain of the boat that brought Father Louis Flores, O.P., and Augustinian Father Peter de Zúñiga from Manila in August 1620. He was accused by the Dutch of bringing missionaries to Japan. When these priests chose to reveal their identity as missionaries, Joachim was arrested with them. The three were burned alive on 19 August 1622. Joachim was beatified on 7 July 1867.

Mary Murayama († 1622)

Mary was a niece of the Governor of Nagasaki and the daughter-in-law of the Government Administrator Toan Murayama. Her husband was imprisoned on 15 March 1619 for having sheltered Father Morales for five years. All the family's belongings were confiscated on that same day, leaving Mary with nothing. On 18 February 1620, Father Morales wrote to John Ocoaga of Manila asking him to send a donation to Mary in gratitude for all that her family had done for him. Mary was beheaded on 10 September 1622 and is listed among the martyrs *beatified* on 7 July 1867.

Louis Yakichi († 1622)

Born in Nagasaki, Louis was the leader of a valiant group of Christians formed by Father James Collado to rescue Father Flores, at the time a prisoner of the Dutch. The rescue attempt failed; Yakichi and his companions were held prisoners in their own boat. They suffered 17 terrible tortures intended to make them denounce the missionaries and other Spaniards who had participated in the plan to free Father Flores. Louis was present at the martyrdom of his wife, *Lucy*, and his two sons, *Andrew* 8 and *Francis* 5. Moreover he was forced to watch the decapitation of his friends Anthony Corai with his wife and two children, as well as Thomas, Mancio and Cosmas Sakuzo. Louis was martyred on 2 October 1622. He, his wife and his sons were *beatified* on 7 July 1867.

Agnes Correa and her daughter Mary (exiled in 1624)

Agnes was the wife of the Portuguese John Oliviera Velho from Macao who was the Commander of a Fort in Northern India. She risked her life again and again by helping the missionaries. She particularly liked the Dominicans whom she helped in recovering the body of Father Flores and in escaping the persecutors. In the spring of 1624, at the age of 60, Agnes and her daughter were exiled to Macao.

Benedict Sandaya Kagayama (exiled in 1627)

A native of Nagasaki, Benedict was arrested with Father Zumárraga on 23 July 1617. He was later freed and returned to his home in Nagasaki, where he offered his services to the Dominicans. "He is married with four small sons," wrote Father Zumárraga to his friend, John Ruiz Icoaga, on 13 January 1620, begging him to send alms to this gentleman.

Benedict was exiled to Macao with other influential Christians in October 1627. He died there shortly before Christmas 1627.

5. MARTYRED MEMBERS OF THE CONFRATERNITY OF THE ROSARY

(1602 - 1628)

In the 17th C., the members of the Confraternity of the Rosary in Japan dedicated themselves to performing their religious obligations in union with all the members of the Dominican Order. Through their spiritual exercises, they were sharers in the graces and spiritual benefits of the whole Dominican Order.

Once they became members of the Confraternity, they considered themselves and were treated by the Dominicans as members of the family. They gave the missionaries lodging and all other help needed and even exposed their lives and those of their families to danger and death.

Dominican historians tell of tens of thousands of Japanese Christians who enrolled in the Confraternity of the Rosary aside from others who became members of the Third Order of Lay Dominicans by profession, catechists, innkeepers and other benefactors.

Although the vast majority of the Rosary Confraternity members remain anonymous, the names of a few of them are known: those who were primarily hosts for the Dominicans, or persons connected with them in some way. Most of them suffered martyrdom. They deserve to have their names appear in the list of Dominican martyrs of Japan. We divide the names into three groups: members of the Confraternity of the *Rosary of Number*, of the Confraternity of the *Rosary and the Holy Name of Jesus*, and simply of the Confraternity of the *Rosary*.

**a) MEMBERS OF THE CONFRATERNITY
OF THE ROSARY OF NUMBER**

These were members who belonged at the same time to the Confraternity of the Rosary, the Holy Name of Jesus and the Confraternity of the Cross. This last group was founded in 1614 by a diocesan priest, Father Francis Murayama, the second son of the Government Administrator, Anthony Toan Murayama. He intended that during the persecution, the members would direct and conceal from sight the missionaries. The members went about encouraging and helping other Christians as well as visiting those in jail. In the spring of 1615, when he left for Osaka, Father Francis entrusted Father Navarrete with the task of carrying on. After Father Francis was killed near the Castle of Osaka where he had gone to help the Christian soldiers who were defending the castle, Father Navarrete assumed full responsibility. In the summer of 1615, Navarrete became Vicar Provincial. Using his authority, he combined the three Confraternities into one which he called: the *Confraternity of the Rosary of Number*. The members wrote the *Habit of the Rosary*, which consisted of a white skirt, a waist-length black blouse with a Dominican shield in front and the rosary as a fringe.

Here is a list of the Confraternity members who were *beatified* on 7 July 1867.

Andrew Tokuan Murayama († 1619).

He sheltered Father Morales.

Dominic George († 1619).

A Portuguese, he housed Father Charles Spinola, a Jesuit.

Cosmas Takeya († 1619).

A Korean, Cosmas hosted the Dominican Fathers John of St. Dominic and Angel Ferrer Orsucci. — See page 118.

John Shozayemon Shoun († 1619).

He gave hospitality to Father Alonso de Mena.

Thomas Kiuni Koteda († 1619).

He was a member of the illustrious Koteda family of Hirado. Because he lived on

the same street as Andrew Tokuan and failed to denounce Father Morales, he was beheaded on 27 November 1619.

Anthony Kimora († 1619).

He was a relative of the Governor of Nagasaki, Suetsugu Heizo. He lived on the same street as Cosmas Takeya. On 27 November 1619, at age 24, he was decapitated for not having denounced Fathers John of St. Dominic and Angel Ferrer Orsucci.

Michael Takeshita († 1619).

Because he was a neighbor of Anthony Kimora and because he had not informed the authorities about the missionaries, Michael was beheaded on 27 November 1619, at age 27 along with Anthony.

Leo Nakanishi († 1619).

Besides living on the same street as the persons mentioned above, Leo had also hidden Fathers Orsucci and John of St. Dominic. He was beheaded together with Kimora and Takeshita on 27 November 1619.

Paul Naguishi († 1622).

The oldest of the catechists at the service of the Dominicans, Paul was martyred on 10 September 1622.

Father Francis Morales wrote a manuscript in the spring of 1619, adding the following names of members of the “Confraternity of the Long Rosary,” as the Confraternity of the Rosary of Number was sometimes called. These persons have not been beatified.

Joachim Kurume - Resident of Nagasaki.

Matthias Chimba - Known as “the Cripple,” he lived in Nagasaki.

John of Hama no Machi -

“John from Hama Street,” in Nagasaki, was a treasurer of the Confraternity.

Louis of the Street Ino - Another treasurer, resident of Nagasaki.

Simon of the Street Ino - Resident of Nagasaki.

Michael of the Street Ino - Another resident of Nagasaki.

**b) MEMBERS OF THE CONFRATERNITY OF THE ROSARY
AND THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS**

The names below were members of the Confraternity who were *beatified* by Pius IX on 7 July 1867.

Bartholomew Seki († 1619).

Bartholomew lived on the same street where Fathers John of St. Dominic and Angel Ferrer Orsucci were hiding. For not denouncing the missionaries, he was beheaded on 27 November 1619.

John Iwanaga († 1619).

Beheaded on the same day as Bartholomew Seki and for the same reason.

Alexis Nakamura († 1619).

Beheaded with Seki and Iwanaga and for the same reason.

Matthias Kosaka († 1619).

He resided on the same street where Father Alonso de Mena was hiding. For not denouncing the priest, Matthias was decapitated on 27 November 1619.

Roman Miyotaro Matsuoka († 1619).

He was beheaded on the same day as Kosuka and for the same reason.

Matthias Miyataro Nakano († 1619).

He was beheaded with the above members of the Confraternity and for the same reason.

John Motoyama (†1619).

He was beheaded together with the above-mentioned martyrs for having hidden Father Alonso of Mena.

Father Francis Morales gave another list of names in a manuscript written at the end of spring in 1619. These men have not been beatified.

John Kanaya

He was an important resident of Kanaya Street, first block, in the city of Nagasaki.

Mancio from Kajiya Street

He lived on the street of the blacksmiths in Nagasaki.

Paul Kurogi

Also a resident of Nagasaki, Paul was a treasurer of the Confraternities there. Having refused to handle bribe money to pay the denouncers of missionaries, he was arrested on 20 January 1619. There, he prepared himself to suffer martyrdom, although a few months later he was set free, much to his consternation.

c) MEMBERS OF THE CONFRATERNITY OF THE ROSARY

The following were *beatified* by Pope Pius IX on 7 July 1867.

Casper Hikojiro Ueda and **Andrew Yoshida** († 1617).

Both were captured and beheaded on 1 October 1617. They had given refuge to Father Alphonse de Navarrete, O.P., and Father Hernando de Ayala, O.S.A., respectively.

Simon Bokusai Kiyota († 1620).

Simon was a catechist with the Jesuit Fathers and took in Fathers Orfanell and John de Rueda. On 16 August 1620, Simon, his wife *Magdalene*, his servant *Thomas Gengoro* and his wife *Mary*, and their son *James* were martyred in Kokura, Oita. All had been

members of the Confraternity.

Joachim Diaz Hirayama († 1622).

Joachim [see p. 127, above] was the captain of the boat that brought Fathers Louis Flores and Peter de Zúñiga to Japan on 4 August 1620. He was sentenced to death for aiding the Dominicans to enter Japan. He was burned alive in Nagasaki on 19 August 1622, with the two missionaries. Before his martyrdom, he had witnessed the beheading of 12 of his crew men who had collaborated in the enterprise. The entire crew, like Captain Hirayama, were members of the Confraternity of the Rosary. All have been beatified.

Their names and their duties on board were as follows.

Leo Sukeyemon († 1622) - boatswain.

John Soyemon Miyazaki († 1622) - official notary on board.

Michael Diaz (†1622) - sailor.

Mark Shinyemon Takenoshima († 1622) - sailor.

Thomas Koyanagi († 1622) - sailor.

Anthony Hamada († 1622) - sailor.

James Denshi Matsuo († 1622) - sailor.

Lawrence Rokuyemon († 1622) - sailor.

Paul Sankichi († 1622) - sailor.

John Yago Yakichi († 1622) - sailor.

Bartholomew Mohioye († 1622) - sailor.

John Matakichi Nagata († 1622) - sailor.

On 10 September 1622, the following suffered martyrdom in Nagasaki. These members of the Confraternity of the Rosary were *beatified* by Pope Pius IX on 7 July 1867.

Lucy de Fleitas († 1622).

Lucy was the wife of the Portuguese Philip de Fleitas who was not in Japan at the time. She was a fervent member of the Third Order of St. Francis and at the same time treasurer of the Confraternity of the Rosary in Nagasaki. She was accused of having given hospitality to the missionaries and especially to the Franciscans. She was arrested and later burned to death.

Anthony Sanga († 1622).

Anthony was a catechist with the Jesuit Fathers and was burned to death for confessing that he was a Christian. He made the public confession to dispel the rumors that he had apostatized. His wife, *Magdelene*, was beheaded before his eyes because she was both a Christian and a member of the Confraternity of the Rosary.

Anthony Corai († 1622).

Commonly known as “the Korean,” Anthony was a great supporter of the Jesuits. On one occasion, Father Sebastian Kimura was found hiding in his home. Anthony bravely declared that he would continue to give hospitality to the missionaries when needed. He also gave shelter to the Dominicans at the request of Father Castellet, the Vicar Provincial of the Dominicans at the time. Anthony’s wife, *Dominica*, a member of the Confraternity of the Rosary, and his two sons, *John* 12, *Peter* 3 were beheaded in his presence after which he was burned alive.



Members of the “Rosary of Number”

Thecla Nagaishi († 1622).

Thecla was the wife of *Paul Nagaishi*, one of the members of the Confraternity of the Rosary of Number and a catechist with the Dominicans. She was beheaded with her son, *Peter 7*, in the presence of Paul.

Mary Tanaka († 1622).

She was the wife of *Paul Tanaka* whose home was a refuge for the Dominicans. Both were members of the Confraternity of the Rosary of Number and were burned at the stake together.

Elizabeth Fernández († 1622).

Elizabeth was the wife of the Portuguese *Dominic George* (†1619), innkeeper for the Jesuits and a member of the Confraternity of the Rosary of Number. For that reason, she was beheaded with her son, *Ignatius* 4.

Apolonia († 1622).

The widowed aunt of the Lay Dominican Casper Koteda, Apolonia was a benefactor and hostess to the Dominican Fathers. She was beheaded for being a neighbor to Andrew Tokuan and Mary Murayama who harbored the Dominican, Father Francis Morales, in their home.

Dominic Yamada of Higo and his wife Clare († 1622).

Dominic was burned to death and his wife decapitated for giving hospitality to the Franciscan, Father Peter de Avila.

Mary Murayama († 1622).

As stated above (see p. 127), Mary was the wife of Andrew Tokuan Murayama († 1619). She was beheaded for being a great benefactor of the Dominican Fathers in Nagasaki.

Agnes Takaya († 1622).

She was the wife of Cosmas Takeya († 1619) and a member of the Confraternity of the Rosary. She was beheaded together with her son, *Francis* 12.

Dominic Nakano († 1622).

Dominic was the son of Matthias Miyataro Nakano († 1619), a member of the Confraternity of the Rosary and Holy Name of Jesus. He was decapitated at age 19 for being a neighbor of Anthony Corai and Damian Yahichi Tada, and for not turning in the missionaries who were lodged on his street.

Bartholomew Shichiyemon Kawano († 1622).

He lived on the same street as Anthony Corai, Dominic Nakano and Damian Yahichi. He had taken a vow always to give hospitality to missionaries. He was beheaded for not revealing Father Sebastian Kimura, S.J., who was hiding in the home of Anthony Corai. His son, *Peter* 7, was beheaded the following day, 11 September 1622, for the same reason.

Damian Yahichi Tada († 1622).

Damian was arrested and decapitated for taking up the same committed stance as that of Anthony Corai. His 5-year-old son, *Michael*, was also beheaded.

Thomas Shichiro († 1622).

Thomas suffered martyrdom for not denouncing a Dominican, probably Father Alonso de Mena, who was hiding in a home on his street.

Rufus Ishimoto († 1622).

Rufus was taken prisoner when he was found in Paul Tanaka's home where the Dominican Vicar Provincial, Father Joseph of St. Hyacinth Salvanés, was caught on 17 August 1621. President of the Confraternity of the Rosary, Rufus was wearing the Dominican habit when he was beheaded.

Mary Shoun († 1622).

Mary was beheaded for being the wife of *John Shozayemon Shoun*, a member of the Confraternity of the Rosary of Number and a lodger of the Dominicans. For that reason, John had previously been martyred († 1619).

Clement Ono († 1622).

Clement and his companion Rufus Ishimoto were arrested and taken to the same prison in Nagasaki. Clement was martyred with his two-year-old son, *Anthony*, by being decapitated.

Dominica Ogata († 1622).

She was beheaded because she did not reveal the home on her street where a Dominican missionary was hiding.

Catherine of Higo († 1622).

A 48-year-old widow, Catherine was beheaded for not telling the persecutors that some missionaries were hiding in a home on her street.

Mary Tanoura († 1622).

A 45-year-old widow, Mary was killed for being a neighbor to Agnes Takeya in

whose home were found the Dominican Fathers Angel Ferrer Orsucci and John of St. Dominic.

Louis Yakichi († 1622).

A member of the Confraternity of the Rosary, Louis is listed among the *Benefactors* of the Dominicans. Because he refused to denounce Father James Collado, Louis, his wife *Lucy* and his two sons, *Andrew* 8 and *Francis* 5 were condemned to death. After having been made to witness the beheading of his wife and sons, Louis was burned alive on 2 October 1622.

A list of Confraternity members who have *not* been beatified follows:

Leo Shichizayemon Saisho († 1608).

A native of Miyakonojo, Leo was a samurai, a Japanese warrior, in the service of the feudal Lord of the Castle of Hirasa in modern Sendai, Kagoshima. He was invited by one of his friends to study the Catholic religion under Father Francis Morales. In due time, he was baptized by Father Hyacinth Orfanell on 22 July 1608 in the Church of Kyodomari, Sendai. He was prepared for martyrdom by Father Joseph of St. Hyacinth Salvanés. After having prayed the rosary, he was beheaded in defense of the faith on 17 November 1608. Leo is called the protomartyr of Kagoshima.

Leo's remains were buried in Kyodomari and venerated at the Priory of St. Dominic in Nagasaki from 1610 to 1614, when they were transferred to Manila. Unfortunately, his remains together with the altar of the relics were completely destroyed by an earthquake in 1645. Since 1985, the Cause for his beatification has been studied in Rome.

John Kyuzayemon Takaya († 1614).

After the Dominicans were expelled from Hizen, Saga , in October 1613, John declared himself a Christian, for which he was exiled in 1614. In Nagasaki, he continued to help the Dominicans in their ministry. After suffering cruel tortures to make him renounce his faith, he was beheaded on 21 November 1614.

Cosmas Shobioye Takaya († 1614).

Cosmas followed in the footsteps of his brother, John Takaya, even to martyrdom. He too was subjected to terrible torments then beheaded on the same day as his brother, 21 November 1614.

Michael Kyuyemon Koganemaru († 1614).

Michael was fervent Christian from Saga. He was exiled to Nagasaki with the brothers John and Cosmas Takaya and beheaded on the same day, 21 November 1614.

Paul Tarosake († 1616).

A native of Hamamachi, Saga, Paul was a good friend of the Dominicans during the years 1606-1613 when they were evangelizing in the area. Paul was a treasurer of the Confraternity of the Rosary. After refusing to apostatize, he was beheaded at the age of 33.

Cosmas of Hamamachi (1616).

Around October 1616, the persecution became more intense not only in the city of Saga but also in the surrounding regions and especially in Hamamachi, where the Dominican Church had flourished during the years 1606-1613. Cosmas, a treasurer of the Confraternity of the Rosary, was horribly tortured to make him deny his faith. But for some reason, his life was spared.

Paul of Hamamachi (1616).

He was tormented along with his brother Cosmas and then given his liberty.

Louis of Chikugo (1616).

Louis was well known to the Dominican Father John of the Angels Rueda whom he often accompanied on the apostolate in the region of Chikugo. He was arrested and subjected to terrible tortures, such as drilling his muscles with needles made of bamboo cane and being hanged by his arms. He suffered throughout the month of October 1616. At last, he was freed and went to live with one of the Dominican Fathers until they had to separate because of the rigors of the persecution.

Dominic Yamaguchi († 1617).

A native of Omura, Dominic denied his faith but was reconciled with the help of Father Zumárraga. Accused by some Buddhist monks, he was exiled to Nagasaki. In addition, he was wanted by the feudal Lord of Omura, who ordered that he be decapitated when captured. Thus it was that, on 1 November 1617, on a road in the region near Nagasaki, Dominic was martyred together with his son, *Thomas*. Both had been members of the Confraternity of the Rosary.

Linus Jirobioye Tomonaga († 1617).

Linus was baptized as a child when almost everyone in the Kingdom of Omura , including the feudal Lord, was Catholic. In 1605, this feudal Lord apostatized, expelled the Jesuits from his dominion and prohibited the Christian religion. Linus, one of the most influential men, also apostatized. In the spring of 1617, he was sent by the feudal Lord to Nagasaki in order to arrest missionaries. Linus succeeded in capturing Father Peter of the Assumption, O.S.F., and Father John Baptist Tabora, S.J. A short while later, he repented of his sin of apostasy and with the help of Father Peter, he was reconciled to God and to the Church.

As proof of his sincerity, Linus allowed the Christians to visit the imprisoned missionaries and other Christians. Moreover, when the feudal Lord interrogated him concerning his favoritism toward Christians, he boldly answered that from then on, he too wanted to live as a good Christian. He was immediately decapitated in the castle on 4 November 1617.

John Niyemon Nejiri († 1617)

John had been a fervent Buddhist before he embraced Christianity with the help of Linus Jirobioye Tomanaga. He was baptized in Nagasaki in the summer of 1617 by Father Thomas Araki, who later apostatized. John was a native of Omura where he was elected treasurer of the Confraternity of the Rosary and became a model Christian. He was arrested on 23 December 1617 and martyred two days later.

John Matazayemon Kubo († 1618)

John had stopped practicing his religion. When Father Hyacinth Orfanell visited his home in 1615, John was moved to conversion and once again embraced his previously abandoned faith. He was beheaded in March 1618 along with his oldest son, *Thomas*.

Paul Tarobioye Sakai († 1618).

Paul was a fervent member of the Confraternity of the Rosary and wore a rosary around his neck. He took a special liking to the Dominican Fathers from his first contact with them. He was a well-established farmer in Kiruza (Kurume-Fukuoka). When he heard that the Dominicans had gone to evangelize in Saga, the province next to his, he invited them to stay in his home. Next to his home, he built a church in honor of the Virgin of the Rosary. Arrested and imprisoned, he succeeded in converting two Buddhist monks, Chitose and Chuzaburo, who were also prisoners. These two were martyred shortly after their baptism on 28 February 1618. On 13 April 1618, Paul was beheaded in Yanawaga.

Andrew “Sendo” († 1618).

Also known as “The Sailor”, Andrew was one of those responsible for bringing back from the high seas the priests who had been exiled. He took them back to Nagasaki on the evening of 6 November 1614. He had often welcomed Father John of the Angels Rueda who was confessor to him and to his family as well. Andrew was burned alive together with his wife, *Catherine*, and his three daughters, *Anthonia*, *Martha* and *Mary*, on 25 November 1618. They were all members of the Confraternity of the Rosary.

Sancho Shison († 1618).

Sancho was the notary on Andrew’s boat. He was burned alive in Nagasaki on 25 November 1618 for helping the missionaries get back into Japan from the high seas. His wife, *Seraphina*, and his three children, *Leo* 11, *Joanna* 4, and *Mary* 2, were also burned alive. The parents were members of the Confraternity of the Rosary.

John Ihioye Nodera († 1618).

A friend of Andrew and Sancho, John lodged Father Francis Morayama in his home. He was burned alive with his companions, his wife, *Elizabeth*, and an infant daughter of 9 months on 25 November 1618. Elizabeth was also a member of the Confraternity of the Rosary.

Ambrose “The Blind Man” († 1619).

Ambrose was formed in the faith and trained to be a catechist by the Dominicans. He went about the countryside teaching and preaching. He was beheaded on 31 January 1619.

Linus Sashikata († 1619).

A fervent Christian, Linus was baptized as a child. As an adult, he took a job as guard of the infamous prison of Suzata, Omura, because there he could be of valuable service by handling correspondence to and from the missionaries and other prisoners. Convicted of being a mail carrier, he was decapitated on 3 May 1619.

Peter Arizo († 1619).

A Korean by birth, Peter had retired from service to the feudal Lord of Omura. He was moved to compassion upon seeing the missionaries imprisoned in Suzuta. He tried to supply them with some melons through *Thomas Kosaku* who was also Korean and a member of the Confraternity of the Rosary. Their act of mercy failed. Caught and subjected to cruel torments to make them apostatize, they nonetheless remained firm in their faith and

were beheaded on 19 July 1619.

James Hayato Kagayama († 1619).

A servant of the feudal Lord of Kokura (Buzen, Oita), Tadaoki Hosokawa, James was dismissed for not abandoning his faith. He was also accused by the same Lord of favoring and aiding the Christians. He was beheaded on 20 October 1619. The process for his beatification is under way.

Dominic Matsuo († 1621).

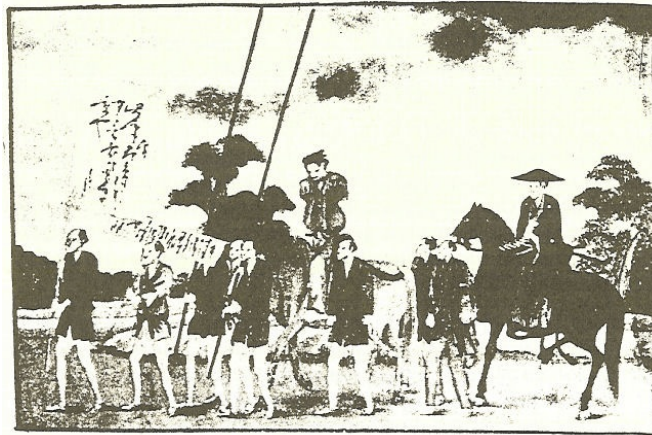
For giving hospitality to the Franciscans and other missionaries, Dominic was slowly burned to death in his own town of Okotsu, near Nagasaki, on 14 February 1621.

Francis Hampei († 1621).

Francis's enemies tried to force him to sign a document and swear by the gods of Japan that he thereby abandoned his faith. Francis refused and remained firm. For this and for lodging missionaries in his home as well, he was beheaded in the region of Kuwara, near Omura, on 20 June 1621.

Gabriel Kinshiro Ichinose († 1622).

Gabriel gave hospitality to the missionaries in his home in Hirado, Nagasaki. He was also a treasurer of the local Confraternity of the Rosary. He was beheaded on the Island of Ikisuki, near Hirado, on 26 July 1622.



Rosary Members on the Road to Martyrdom

EPILOGUE

Finally, in a letter from the Japanese Christians — abridged in Chapter 65 of the *Supplement to the Ecclesiastical History of Christianity in Japan* during the years 1602 to 1620, by the then Vicar Provincial of the Dominicans, Father James Collado — it is said that:

“All the members of the Confraternity of the Rosary and of the Confraternity of the Holy Name of Jesus could sign here but since they are in the thousands, only some of the *Senior* officials will sign on this 23rd day of February 1622, in Nagasaki. *Rufus Ishimoto*, President of the Rosary, *Paul Tanaka*, Treasurer, and another 102 have signed said letter, all persons of the quality mentioned above. ... These are the papers of the Christians of the whole province of Omura, and from some villages of Arima or Takata.”

There remain, then, “thousands” of unknown members of the Confraternities represented by the signatures of these 104 Christians.

To conclude all that has been said about the Confraternity of the Rosary between the years 1602 and 1628, we have to add that the Dominicans, since the time of Fathers Louis Bertrán and Dominic Castellet, emphasized Lay Dominicans more than the Confraternity of the Rosary. It was from the Lay Dominicans that they got their best collaborators in their missionary apostolates. From these also came excellent martyrs and Christians.

Thus, we see that in the catalogs written in Manila in 1650, no other important members of the Confraternity appear from 1622 onward. The list of Lay Dominicans, however, does continue to grow.

II

MARTYRS OF CHINA

By Constantino Montero, O.P.



CHINA

INTRODUCTION

The centuries-old cultured Empire of China had been, from the beginning, the goal of the missionary zeal of the Province of Our Lady of the Rosary. Evangelization of that immense country had always been like an obsession with the Dominican friars. But the entrance and establishment of missionary endeavors in China were not easy. After a span of 45 years, with nine attempts that ended in failure, Dominicans were at last able to enter China through the Island of Formosa.

The geographical dimensions of China have changed much since the 17th Century. Today, China has an area of 9,500,000 square kilometers and a population of over 1 billion (1988). The geography, flora, fauna and climate are extremely varied due to this immensity.

The Chinese civilization is one of the oldest of humanity. Its craftsmanship, decoration, painting and sculpture are among the greatest cultural achievements in the world. China's language, her type of ideographic writing, her philosophies, thinking and art have had an enormous influence on all bordering Asiatic countries since ancient times. China has not vainly considered herself "the central kingdom" of the world, as meant by the two ideographic characters with which her name is written. It is a traditional agricultural country that is now in the very rapid process of industrialization.

The religion of the Chinese people in the 17th Century was a tolerant mixture of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. It had a very marked tendency toward animism and placed a great emphasis on ancestor worship and on traditional family ties. In the 7th Century, Islamism was introduced into China and gained many followers in the north-eastern region. Christianity first came into China through the Nestorians in the 7th Century, but did not leave any visible traces. Catholic Missions were started in the 14th Century when the first Catholic missionaries arrived in China. They became stronger in the 16th Century with Jesuit successes and expanded even more in the 17th Century with the arrival of the Dominicans and other Religious Orders.

The political system in China was that of an empire ruled by emperors who came from different dynasties, both domestic and foreign. Besides the central government, there were provincial governors and local commissaries and the mandarins who were also responsible for running the cities and for the administration of justice. Perhaps the most outstanding fact about the political history of China is that the country has always preserved national unity, in spite of its enormity and of diversified ethnic groups, languages and customs. This could be attributed to the politico-moral ideals of Confucius. Confucian principles and behaviors served as a common bond that maintained the national identity through the years.

When our Dominican missionaries arrived in China in the 17th Century, the Ming Dynasty was still ruling but was almost in a state of exhaustion. Internal revolutions, foreign wars, the military and diplomatic ineptitude of the Emperors and of the government along with the corruption and favoritism of court officials soon caused the collapse of the Ming Dynasty. In 1644, under cover of a military alliance with the Chinese General U Sang-kuey, the Tartars entered China and overthrew the last Ming Emperor, LyKung-tsu. A new Tartar Emperor named Shung-chi was enthroned, thus starting the new Ching dynasty. In 1647, the Tartars gained control of the whole province of Fukien. On 9 August of that same year, an Edict of persecution against Christianity was issued. As a result, in January 1648, [Saint] Francis Fernández de Capillas, the protomartyr of China, was beheaded for his faith in Fogan.



Francis Capillas at the Ankle-Crushing Torture

The persecution continued locally and sporadically until 1664 when it spread throughout the whole country. It is difficult to understand the Mandarin hatred for all that was foreign. But the Christian religion symbolized and incarnated all that was most evil to them. In the 18th Century, there were periods of peace when the persecution subsided.

It was around the middle of the century when the majority of the martyrs in this book was executed. The forms of torture most often used with our martyrs were the *cangue* [a yoke, Ed.], crushing the ankles between boards, decapitation, strangulation, suffocation and cudgeling.

Hand in hand with the persecutions and growth of Chinese Christianity there developed the well-known controversy over the Chinese Rites in the 17th and 18th Centuries, in which Dominican missionaries took a very active part. Finally, in 1742, Pope Benedict XIV issued the Bull *Ex quo* which put an end to this thorny problem.

The Dominicans from the Province of the Rosary started the missions in China in 1631. The movement was led by Father Angel Cocci, in the capacity of Ambassador, who went from Formosa to Fukien accompanied by a Spanish expedition. Rapidly, other missionaries were summoned and Dominican missions were established in the province of Fukien.

These missions developed surprisingly well. In spite of the persecutions, the Christians held on to their faith. The first Chinese bishop consecrated in 1685 was the Dominican Father Gregory Lo. The Dominican missions continued to flourish there until the 20th Century. Its territories were divided into three Vicariates: Foochow, Amoy and Funing in which were found many schools, nurseries, churches, seminaries and founding hospitals, called "Holy Infancy."

The Lay Dominicans and other Dominican Confraternities were also flourishing. But with the coming of Communism, all missionaries were expelled from China. The last two Dominicans to leave in 1954 brought the Dominican presence there to an end.

The Dominicans first arrived in Formosa in 1626 under the leadership of Father Bartholomew Martínez. They established themselves in the north of the island where there were soon flourishing communities. Then they prepared to enter continental China.

Formosa is an island to the east of China. It has a land area of 3,981 square kilometers and a population of 20 million [1988]. Throughout its history, it has been invaded and dominated by different foreign powers. In 1626, along with the Dominicans, Spanish soldiers also arrived and established a small colony in the north of the island. It was protected by the Fort of Holy Savior near present-day Kilung. The Spanish domination came to an end in 1642 when the Dutch expelled both the Spanish soldiers and the

Dominican missionaries. The Dominican missions were not reestablished until 1859 by Father Ferdinand Sanz; they continue to flourish to the present day.

In the period between 1626 and 1642, at the time of the first Dominican mission in Formosa, three Dominican priests whose biographies are included in this book suffered martyrdom. These penalties were not decreed or executed by the government but were imposed by the hatred of the natives toward strangers. Nevertheless, these three priests were killed while exercising their apostolate.

In this book, we present the short biographies of 13 Dominican martyrs of China and Taiwan. These are the better known ones. The first six martyrs were either bishops or priests who were officially beatified by the Church in 1893 and 1909 [and canonized on 1 October 2000 by Pope John-Paul II - GC, Ed]. The next group of seven martyrs were priests and Lay Dominicans who have not yet been elevated to the honors of the altar.

CEFERINO PUEBLA, O.P.

E



China Provinces

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MARTYRS OF CHINA

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SAINT FRANCIS FERNANDES DE CAPILLAS

Dominican Priest

(1607 - 1648)



The life of Francis de Capillas was so penitential and angelic that one of the Cardinals present at the Process of Beatification declared that even if Francis had not died for the faith he could still be beatified. As the first to shed his blood for Christ in China, he is honored as the protomartyr of China.

Francis was born in Baquerín de Campos, Palencia (Spain) on 14 August 1607. He entered the Dominican Priory of St. Paul in Valladolid. In February 1632, after he arrived in Manila, he was ordained to the priesthood. His first assignment was in the province of Cagayan where he ministered for several years.

In 1641, Capillas attended the Provincial Chapter held in Manila and asked the new provincial, Father Francis de Paula, to permit him to evangelize in the Celestial Empire. He was allowed to go with his friend, Father Francis Díaz. They arrived in Formosa and stayed at the House of All Saints in Kilung. In March 1642, they arrived at Fukien, China. Due to the persecution that raged there, the only priest left to welcome them was Father John García.

Father Capillas began his pastoral ministry at once. The years 1644 to 1646 are called the golden age of the mission. Capillas and Díaz established the Lay Dominicans in China.

Capillas visited all the towns and villages in Fogan and Funing, converting large numbers of Chinese. His highly virtuous life and conduct won for him the love and respect of all whom he met. Francis Díaz died on 4 November 1646, assisted by his friend, Francis Capillas. On that same day, the Tartars entered Fogan, destroying, looting and killing. In addition, they had an Imperial order to kill the missionaries.

The apostolic works accomplished by Father Capillas were innumerable. One witness said: “When he was on the road, he had such a great desire to help souls that climbing the steep roads of mountains seemed easier than walking level roads.”

Hearing of the advancing army, Father John García fled during the night to Tingtau where Father Capillas was staying. Without any fear, Father Capillas went out to a small village on 13 November 1647, to administer the sacraments to a sick person. On that day, he was captured, one year after Father Díaz’s death. With a rope tied around his neck, Capillas was taken to the Mandarin’s tribunal. He was placed into the worse prison and subjected to the torture of crushing the ankles. The torturers dragged him all over the floor before taking the boards off his feet. They then flogged him and returned him to the cells for those condemned to death.

Father Capillas remained incarcerated for two months. He patiently endured the horrible torments that were inflicted on him. On 15 January 1648, the judge came and ordered that he be flogged again and placed into the sentry box of the city wall. When they ordered him to step down from the box, the executioners gave him a heavy blow with a sword, separating his head from his body. They threw his body outside the city wall, where it was found two months later.

Pope Benedict XIV proclaimed him the protomartyr of China on 16 September 1748. Pope Pius X beatified him on 2 May 1909. His individual feast is on 15 January.

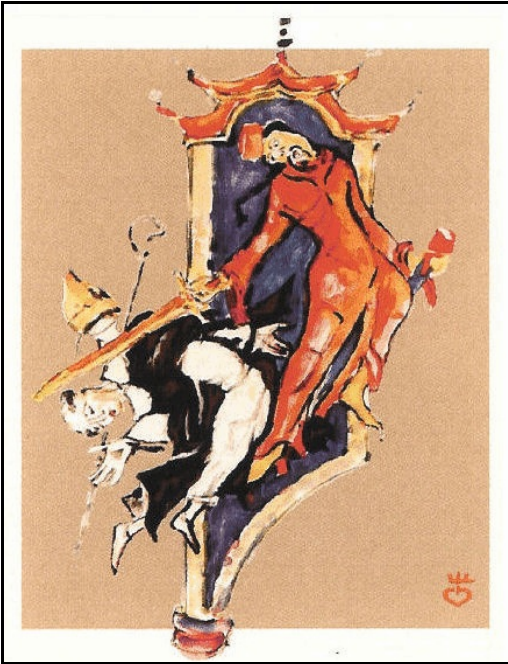
Writings

- ◆ Seven *Letters* to various Friars written in the years 1636-1647. (These can be seen in 1- Joaquín Recoder, O.P., *Vida del Protomártir de China, Beato Francisco de Capillas*. Avila, 1909; 2- APSR, Ms. Vol. 21).
- ◆ *Biography of Fr. Francis Díaz, O.P.* (This was taken away from him by the soldiers when they arrested him, as he himself tells us.)
- ◆ *Report on the Missions of China*, 1647 (in APSR, Ms. vol. 21, fos. 347-352).

SAINT PETER SANZ I JORDA

Dominican Bishop

(1680 - 1747)



Joseph Sanz was born with a twin sister who died shortly after birth in Ascô, Tarragona (Spain). His parents were Andrew Sanz and Catherine Jordá. Joseph was immediately baptized conditionally because of his precarious condition. On the following day, 3 September 1680, he was baptized in church and received the name Joseph.

When Joseph took the Dominican habit at Lérida in July 1697, he took the name Peter as suggested by his uncle who was devoted to St. Peter Martyr of Verona. On 20 September 1704, Joseph was ordained to the priesthood. In 1708, he was assigned to the Priory of Saragossa. While there, he became the chaplain of the Rosary Confraternity. He also

observed strictly the customs of the Priory, keeping all the fasts and mortifications, prayer at midnight and study.

On learning that the Province of the Rosary was seeking volunteers for the missions to the Far East, Father Sanz decided to enroll for the evangelization of China. In 1713, he arrived in the Philippines where he studied and ministered for two years. On 29 June 1715, he and Father Mateu arrived in Amoy, China. Before long, they were transferred to Fogan and immediately began their visits to the Christian communities. Disregarding the hardships, they climbed mountains, forded rivers and traveled widely on foot as they evangelized the Chinese. They gratefully accepted whatever food — usually rice — the poor farmers could give them.

In 1717, Father Sanz was named Superior of the Mission. In 1719, a persecution broke out against the missionaries. Peter was in Longgung and would have been caught if local Christians had not hidden him. As soon as he was able, this untiring apostle returned to the work of the faith. Conversions, baptisms and the foundation of new Christian communities reached an incredible height. If the blood of the martyrs has been the seedbed of Christianity, persecution has been the training ground of brave Christians — as noted in

Fogan at the time of our martyrs. The Acts of the Provincial Chapter of 1720 state: “We announce that the more the missions of China are persecuted the more they flourish and produce better results.”

Since 1723, to avoid being caught outside, Peter had to live in a small and very narrow room where he spent the days praying and meditating. The situation became so dangerous that the local Christians advised him to flee to Canton. He arrived there in 1730. In February of that year, he received word from Rome to accept the episcopate and on 24 February he was consecrated Bishop of Mauricastro.

Bishop Peter Sanz returned to his mission of Fogan. In spite of hardships, arising especially from his having to emerge from hiding, he had baptized 500 new Christians by November 1738. In the town of Moyang and in the city of Fogan, there were more Christians. By 1740, he had confirmed 4000. In Moyang, he lived as a simple missionary, preaching and hearing confessions, providing an example of virtue, being a minister of the Sacraments. He lived an austere life, observing all the customs of the Order in prayer, study, fasting and abstinence.

The persecution of the missionaries and Christians broke out anew with increased fury. Having to hide again, Bishop Peter stayed in the house of Joseph Mieu. Soldiers came to register all the inhabitants of the homes of Moyang in the hope that they would come across him. But the bishop, hiding under a bush in the garden, remained undetected. Many Christians were made to suffer for not revealing where he was. They preferred to suffer rather than to tell. Bishop Peter fled from home to home until he had no choice but to leave the town. When he arrived in another town, he again had to hide constantly. Finally, he decided to turn himself in. He was 66 years old, weak from hunger and sleeplessness and his legs constantly swollen. On 30 June 1746, soldiers arrested him, bound him and led him on foot to Fogan.

On 5 July, in the company of five missionaries, five Christians and Mrs. Teresa Chang — all of them with chains around their necks and handcuffed — he was taken by the soldiers to Fuchow. After spending five days traveling on foot, the group was imprisoned there until their execution.

When Bishop Peter Sanz received the death sentence, he made his confession to his companion, Father Francis Serrano, and devoted his last three days preparing to meet his Creator. On 26 May 1747, while he was praying the rosary, the executioners entered his cell, took the shackles off his feet and cut off his Chinese-style pigtail so that the sword would not be impeded from doing its job. When they arrived at the place of execution, Peter was ordered to kneel on a flagstone, hands tied behind his back; with one stroke of the sword, his head was cut off. The flagstone covered with the blood of the martyr was later taken home by a Christian named Matthias and was saved for use as an altar-stone for Mass.

Peter's body was recovered by Christians, but the officials took it away from them and placed it with the bodies of the others who were executed.

On 16 September 1748, after praising the virtues of Bishop Sanz and his apostolic works, Pope Benedict XIV called him a true martyr. On 14 May 1893, Pope Leo XIII beatified Peter Sanz. He was canonized on 1 October 2000 by Pope John-Paul II.

WRITINGS

- ◆ Thirty *Letters* written to various Friars in the years 1715-1745. (All of these can be seen in José María González, O.P., *Misiones Dominicanas en China*, vol. II, Madrid, 1958, pp. 13-95.)
- ◆ *Pastoral to the missionaries under his jurisdiction, of the provinces of Fukien, Chekiang and Kiangsi*, 1745 (in APSR, Ms. Vol. 21, fos. 321-322; and in J. M. González, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-87).
- ◆ *Catechism in Chinese characters* (in AOP, X, 5269-2571).
- ◆ *Apology of Religion* (in APSR, Ms. Vol. 28, fos. 212-213).



Peter Sanz and Companion Martyrs in China

JOACHIM ROYO PÉREZ

Dominican Priest

(1691 - 1748)



Joachim was born in Hinajosa de Jarque, Teruel (Spain) in 1691 and baptized on 3 October of the same year. His parents were Joachim Royo and Marianna Pérez.

In 1709, Joachim received the Dominican habit in the Priory of Our Lady of Pillar in Valencia. He left for the Philippines in the company of Peter Sanz and other religious on 17 September 1712. After his ordination, he was sent to the missions in China in June 1715. After remaining in Macao for a time, he proceeded to Fogan. In the first year of his missionary life, he served in Chuen-Cheu, not very far from Amoy. The town had a large, mostly pagan, population that needed a missionary. Joachim witnessed many

conversions; people did not hesitate to destroy all their superstitious objects. He edified everyone with his sincerity and obviously spiritual life.

In 1717, Joachim received orders to go to the provinces of Kiang-Si and Che-Kiang, where for many years there had been no spiritual help from the missionaries. It was in 1656 that Fathers John Baptist Morales and Dominic Coronado had gone there, evangelized and built some churches which were abandoned when the missionaries were exiled.

Many of the old Christians received Father Royo with joy. His work was heavy but led to many conversions and visible blessings from God. In 1722, he was named Vicar Provincial of Fukien and had to leave his beloved missions in Kiang-Si and Che-Kiang.

While the persecution in Fukien raged, Father Royo, in Ki-Tung Mission, was in constant danger. He hid in graves, secret rooms and cemeteries. Fearless for the faith, he never hesitated to go out at night to administer the sacraments. Close to the feast of Christmas, he disguised himself as a peasant and returned to his mission of Ki-Tung. Two Lay Dominicans, Rose and Juliana, hid him in their home. He and Father Oscot celebrated Christmas Mass with Christians who came secretly. Although the enemies were informed

of their presence, once more they miraculously escaped and hid first in one home then in another.

Finally, on 3 July 1746, some soldiers found Father Royo hiding between two thin walls. They destroyed the whole house, tied a rope around Royo's neck and took him prisoner. Interrogated by the captain, Royo stated that he was 54 years of age and had resided in China for 31 years to "preach the Law of God."

In prison, he was slapped, flogged and subjected to the ankle-crushing torment. Father Royo never stopped praying while in prison. On the day of martyrdom, at midnight, guards took him out of prison to an adjacent room where they told him to lie down. Then they covered his face and blocked up his mouth and nose with a thick paste made of eggs, paper and strong alcohol. "Then a sack of lime was thrown over his head and we stomped all over his body. He was able to take only a few breaths and then died," said a witness.

This great Dominican missionary died a magnificent death and gained the palm of martyrdom on 28 October 1748. The following day, his body was burned and placed in a common grave for criminals. Later, some brave Christians went to the burial place and collected the remains of the martyr.

Beatified on 14 May 1893 by Pope Leo XIII, Joachim Royo was canonized on 1 October 2000 by Pope John-Paul II.

WRITINGS

- ◆ Fifty-five *Letters* written to his family, Superiors and Friars between the years 1712-1748.
- ◆ *List and notices of our Christianity in China*, 1733.
- ◆ *List of confessions, communions, and baptisms that I administered in the towns of Sang-Yang, Ki-Tung, Lo-Kia and others in 1735*.
- ◆ Report on the Christian communities of the great Empire of China that are under the charge and care of the religious of the Holy Order of Preachers, 1741.
- ◆ *Notes on the Report or list of the Christian communities that in this Empire of China are administered by our religious of the Order of Preachers*, 1741.
- ◆ *A Catechism*, in Chinese characters, 1735.
- ◆ *Explanation of the Rule of the Third Order of St. Dominic*, in Chinese characters, 1741.
- ◆ *Perpetual Calendar*, in Chinese characters.

(All these writings were published by Father José Maria González, *op. cit.*, pp. 283-435.

SAINT JOHN ALCOBER FIGUERAS

Dominican Priest

(1694 - 1748)



This martyr, baptized John Thomas, was born in Granada, Spain, on 31 December 1694. His parents were Francis Alcober and Vincenta Figueras. In 1708, he entered the Royal Priory of the Holy Cross in Granada. After his ordination in 1718, John was stationed in Lorca in 1720 where he became famous for his holiness and his preaching. On 15 July 1725, he left Cádiz for the Philippines. In Manila, he was first assigned to St. Gabriel of Binondo and later sent to another Chinese parish where he learned the customs

and language of the Chinese.

In 1728, John arrived in Canton where he remained for three months before going to Fogan. He arrived during a time of persecution and had to disguise himself as a peasant to enter Fogan. The Christians, willing to risk their lives for him, took turns hiding him in their homes. Once, he was placed inside a coffin and taken to another place without being discovered. Regardless of the danger, Father Alcober took every opportunity to administer the Sacraments and to instruct catechumens.

In 1747, John wrote an interesting letter to the Provincial, Father Francis Pallás, detailing the torments and sufferings that he underwent as he fled from one hiding place to another. He reported: "On 26 June 1746, between eleven and twelve o'clock at night, about 100 soldiers attacked my house. They took me and tied a whip of leather very tightly around my neck. Then they dragged me to the river near the town of Moyang. The Mandarin of the city was there and ordered them to untie me. From there, they took me to the house where the Venerable Martyr Peter Sanz used to live. At sunrise, they transferred me to the city of Fogan. ... On the 27th, they brought me to the tribunal where they asked me innumerable questions. In this manner, I spent several days suffering what you cannot imagine. The Christians were frightened and many of them fled to the mountains or hid wherever they could."

Finally, after four months in prison, Father Alcober, in chains, waited tranquilly for the hour of his martyrdom. The death sentence was pronounced against Fathers Sanz, Royo, Alcober, Serrano and Díaz. The execution of the sentence was entrusted to the Governor of Fogan on 18 December 1746.

Emperor Kien-Lung decreed that Fathers Royo, Alcober, Serrano and Díaz should not die in 1748 but in 1749 instead. The cruel Viceroy of Fukien was not happy with the Emperor's leniency. On 28 October 1748, the Viceroy called a meeting of the leading Mandarins and persuaded them to agree that on that very night the priests would die in prison, their bodies burned the next morning and their remains thrown into a common ossuary for criminals. That night, while the other prisoners slept, the executioners smothered Fathers Serrano and Royo and strangled Fathers Díaz and Alcober.

At the Process of Beatification, one of the executioners described Father Alcober's death in these words: "Having received the order to kill the two Europeans, Alcober and Díaz, I called two guards and my brother to help me. As we came close to them, we saw that they were in prayer. They urged us to follow the Law of God. We placed a rope around each one's neck and began to spin them around until they were strangled. They died praying and accepting death peacefully."

Once their bodies were burned, they were thrown in the ossuary. Later, some Christians came to collect their remains.

Beatified on 14 May 1893 by Pope Leo XIII, John Alcober was canonized on 1 October 2000 by Pope John-Paul II.

WRITINGS

- ◆ Thirt-five *Letters* written to his family, Superiors and various Friars between the years 1730-1748.
- ◆ *Information on the Christian communities that were under my care and other events*, 1745.
- ◆ *Certificate of the Sacraments that he administered*, 1741, 1742.
- ◆ *Baptismal Certificate of Peter Mieu*, 1741.
- ◆ *The Spanish version of a Chinese testimony made by Mr. Paul Su, through which it is known that the body of Father Sanz was cremated*, 1748.
- ◆ *A translation from Chinese to Spanish of a decree of the Mandarin of Fogan against the Sisters of the town of Tingteu. Praises for Sister Petronila*, 1748.

(All these writings can be seen J. M. González, *op. cit.*, pp. 439-544.)

SAINT FRANCIS SERRANO FRIAS

Dominican Bishop-Elect

(1695 - 1748)



Francis was born on 4 December 1695 in Hueneja, Granada (Spain) to Francis Serrano and Mary Frías. He received the Dominican habit in the Priory of the Holy Cross in Granada. As a novice, he showed extraordinary signs of holiness and was a model of virtue. His zeal for the salvation of souls moved him to join the group of thirty-three missionaries who were leaving Cádiz for the Far East on 15 July 1725. Among the group was Father John Alcober.

The group remained in Mexico for sixteen months before leaving for Manila in 1727. Shortly afterward, Francis was assigned to Fukien. Fathers Serrano and Alcober disguised themselves as peasants in order to enter the town. Francis faced many difficulties in his evangelization campaign; these served as preparation for martyrdom.

Besides being gifted with a tremendous vitality for virtue, Francis Serrano possessed the great courage of Spanish blood in the face of cruel persecutions and continual hardships. Though he had to hide constantly, he bravely dedicated the best period of his life to serve the Lord in that desolate vineyard. In 1729, the persecution intensified. Disguised as a peasant, Francis crossed forests and rivers by night to administer the Sacraments to his flock and to encourage everyone. He baptized many Chinese during this time.

On 1 November 1729, the fury of the persecution reached the city of Fogan where Father Serrano and four other missionaries were staying. Much suffering befell the Christians and missionaries. Officials confiscated their crosses, rosaries, sacred vestments, chalices, books and wine for the Mass. Whatever could be withheld and saved was buried. In order to mislead the enemies, some Christians dug holes in which the priests could remain hidden. Only the love of God and for souls gave them the supernatural strength to withstand such dangers and not yield to fear.

On 26 June 1746, the Viceroy of Fukien, informed of the presence of the missionaries, arrived in Fogan with 200 soldiers. On 29 June, Fathers Serrano and Díaz fell into their hands.

Father Serrano was punished with 20 slaps of a leather strop. Weighed down with chains and surrounded by hired ruffians, he was taken to Fuchow on 5 July 1746. Awaiting him were interminable questionings, cruel torments, prisons of horror and misery for 28 months. Questioned about the bones of Father Capillas, Serrano was subjected to so many slaps on the face that he was left with a damaged ear. It is but right to mention that all 23 Christians who were apprehended at the same time defended the missionaries, especially the valian and virtuous Lay Dominican Teresa Chin. During his imprisonment, Father Serrano was named Bishop of Fukien by Pope Benedict XIV. Unfortunately it was not possible for him to be consecrated.

On the night of 28 October 1748, the executioners suffocated Father Serrano with a mixture of lime, paper, alcohol and wine. That same night, they took his body to the cemetery where they incinerated it in the crematory. Afterward, his ashes and bones were thrown into the common pit. Some days later, the Christians learned of his death and succeeded in bribing the bailiffs to allows them to retrieve his remains. Paul Chin Ul-Yuen and Father John Fung of St. Mary went to the ossuary and found the remains half burned and still damp. The neck, head and heart remained incorrupt for 27 days. The rest of the bones were dry and molded. They were taken to the home of Benedict LY where they were buried. Father Serrano was 52 years old and had spent 21 years in the apostolate to his beloved Chinese.

At first, Serrano's relics were kept in the home of Simon Yuen and later in the home of Lucy Van. From there, they were taken by Father John Fung and placed in six tin boxes, divided as follows: the heart, bones, chains and a padlock, handcuffs, valise, 2 Bishop's caps. Some were sent to St. Dominic's in Manila and some to Rome.

Francis Serrano Frías was beatified on 14 May 1893 by Pope Leo XIII, and canonized on 1 October 2000 by Pope John-Paul II.

WRITINGS

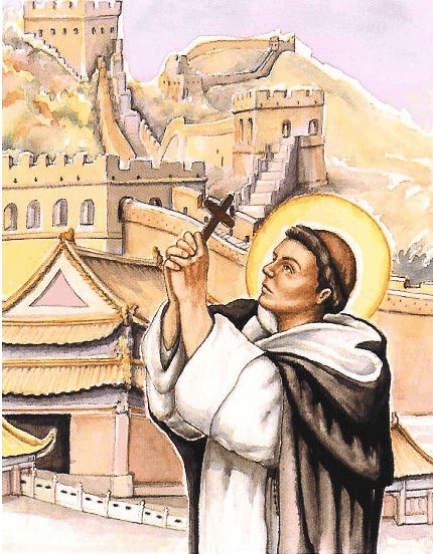
- ◆ Fifty *Letters* written to his family, friends and Friars in the years 1732-1748.
- ◆ *Records of the Administration of the Sacraments*, 1734-1738, 1739, 1740.
- ◆ *Baptism and Confirmation certificates of Mathias Yen*, 1741.
- ◆ *General statistics of the Administration of the Sacraments in the whole mission*, 1746.
- ◆ *Rebellion of Kien-Ning-Fu*, 1748.
- ◆ *Short extract of our imprisonment*, 1746-1748.
- ◆ *Report on the cruel persecution that our Christian community of Fogan suffered this past year 1746.*
Information on the imprisonment of the reverend missionaries of the Order of St. Dominic, 1747.
- ◆ *Continuation of the above report from January 1747 on.*

(All these writings can be found in J. M. González, op. cit., pp. 99-289.)

SAINT FRANCIS DIAZ DEL RINCON

Dominican Priest

(1713 - 1748)



Francis Díaz was the youngest of the five missionary martyrs. He was born in Ecija, Seville (Spain) on 2 October 1713, to John Díaz Fernández and Elizabeth Mary Rico. He was baptized on 13 October 1713, receiving the names Francis Augustine Angel.

When he was still a child, Francis told his father that he wanted to go to China to preach the Gospel and to be a martyr for Christ. He took the Dominican habit in the Priory of St. Dominic and St. Paul in Ecija, where he was professed on 12 September 1731.

Francis happily arrived in Manila in November 1736. Although he was sickly and naturally delicate, his fervor was exemplary. Once he was ordained, the Superiors did not hesitate to grant his wishes and incessant supplications to preach the Gospel in the Great Celestial Empire. In 1738, Francis arrived in Macao where providentially he met Father Peter Sanz; the two of them set out for the Mission of Fogan.

The young missionary was ready to begin his apostolate at once. The Superior of the mission, Father Joachim Royo, asked Francis to go to Ki-Tung and the neighboring towns to administer the Sacraments. Soon, Francis was left completely alone in that mission. He suffered so much anguish and bitterness that he went in search of Father Serrano who greatly consoled and helped him. Because Francis was also tormented by scruples, the Vicar Provincial gave him permission to return to Manila. He was not happy with this because he had always dreamed of martyrdom for Christ. He placed himself in the hands of the Blessed Virgin. Through continual prayer all the spiritual darkness left him; even his physical health improved.

Father Royo wrote in a letter of 1745: "Father Díaz's health is poor but it is because of his apostolic zeal. He hears confessions until very late, gives Holy Communion, maintains a recollected spirit, and has the greatest horror of the least sin of which he may be guilty. Nothing is too hard when the care of souls calls him. Both pagans and Christians admire his

simplicity and honesty.” Father Alcober said of him: “Father Díaz has four towns under his care, with another four oratories in the homes of some Christians. He has baptized 12 adults and 74 children. He has given Communion to thousands and converted 15 and has given Extreme Unction to eleven.”

On 26 June 1746, two hundred soldiers led by the Commissioner of Fogan and the Viceroy of Fukien arrived in Moyang where Fathers Serrano and Díaz were reported to be. Five days earlier, however, the priests had gone to Ki-Tung. When the soldiers did not find the priests, they ransacked their house taking vestments, books and all that was in it. A Christian had warned them of the approaching danger. The priests were immediately hidden under the floorboards of a friend’s room. Not having found the priests, the government soldiers returned to Fogan taking some Christian women with them to torture until they revealed the priests’ hiding place. But the women preferred to suffer rather than expose the priests.

In Ki-Tung, another brave Christian hid the two priests between two walls. On the night of 29 June 1746, soldiers came to the house looking for them because an apostate named Nicholas had told them that the priests were hidden in that house. They began to tear up and destroy everything. They did not stop until they had torn every wall down and found the priests. They put iron chains around their necks and took them at midnight to the Captain in Fogan. Father Díaz suffered the terrible torture of crushed ankles. The priests were then taken to the prison where they were shackled and chained together by their feet. One torture followed after the other. The victims were frequently molested, slapped and burned on the face with hot irons.

Finally, Father Díaz was taken out of prison and strangled. His remains were incinerated and thrown into the ossuary. Some of the brave Christians retrieved the remains of the martyr.

Martyred at midnight on 28 October 1748, Francis Díaz was beatified by Pope Leo XIII on 14 May 1893. He was canonized on 1 October 2000 by Pope John-Paul II.

WRITINGS

- ◆ Fourteen *Letters* written to several Friars in the years 1739-1748.
- ◆ *Oath of the Constitution of Benedict XVI, “Ex Quo Singulari.”*

(All these writings were published by J. M. González, *op. cit.*, pp. 547-563.)

FRANCIS VAEZ OF ST. DOMINIC

Dominican Priest

(? - 1633)

Portuguese by birth, Francis Váez made profession in the Priory of the Dominican Fathers in Zamora, Spain. He came to Formosa in 1629 with Father Bartholomew Martínez when the latter finished his term as Provincial. Father Francis was appointed to a newly-started mission in Senar, near Tamsui, dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary. He immediately began the study of the native dialect and preaching and teaching his pagan flock.

Francis was of slight build but full of the spirit of St. Dominic. He was strong, well balanced and indefatigable in his apostolate. He did not hesitate to go wherever and whenever he was needed. He slept on boards, was in constant prayer and was compassionate toward all. He was successful in forming Christian communities in the neighboring farms of Senar. He prepared the converts for baptism by giving them sound doctrinal foundation.

Francis treated everyone with great charity, especially those whose conversion would cost him his life. He prayed to the Lord with tears and disciplines and placed all his flock under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, to whom he was deeply devoted.

From Senar, where he lived, Francis decided to found another Church in a town called Pantao, whose natives were friends of the Spanish but bitter enemies of the people of Senar. In a short time, Francis had a great number of converts. On the day set for the beginning of Church activities in Pantao, he invited the Christian community of Senar to come to Pantao.

That night, the natives of Senar, hating what Father Francis was doing, set up an ambush to kill the missionary. In the morning of the following day, as Father Francis was getting ready to leave, he noticed that no one had arrived and so went out to call for them. The Senar natives were already waiting in hiding for him. As Francis approached, they began to shoot arrows at him. He was mortally wounded, his body full of arrows. He fell on his knees and invoked Jesus, offering up his soul. Seeing that he was dead, the natives cut off his head through the mouth, leaving the tongue and lower jaw intact. Then, taking his head and right hand, they went up on a mountain to celebrate his death. When they finished their celebration, they fearfully threw the head and hand into the river. This was on 27 January 1633.

Some days later, Spanish guards from St. Dominic Fort in Tamsui retrieved his remains for burial. They found the body without the least decomposition or decay before they buried it. The following year, they opened the grave to transfer the remains to a more fitting place. Everyone present noticed a most extraordinary and pleasing aroma, and realized that

the body was still incorrupt although the habit had already deteriorated. When the Dutch came, all knowledge and vestiges of his remains were lost.

In the Acts of the Provincial Chapter of 1637, the following statement was made about Father Francis Vázquez: “He was a man of ardent devotion and zeal for the salvation of souls; a man of great humility and charity for his companions and his neighbor.”

Francis can be considered the protomartyr of Formosa.

HYACINTH ESQUIVEL

Dominican Priest

(1595 - 1633)

Here is the story of another learned missionary of the Province of Our Lady of the Rosary. He filled the missionary history of Formosa (Taiwan) with glory.

Hyacinth was born in Vitoria, Spain , in 1595. In 1612, at age 17, he entered St. Dominic's Priory in the same city. With his Dominican habit came apostolic zeal. He had heard of the missionary martyrs of Japan and burned with desire to go to the lands of unbelievers, particularly Japan.

Hyacinth pursued his studies at the College of St. Gregory of Valladolid. From there, he went to the Philippines in 1626. For four years, he taught Theology at the University of Santo Tomas in Manila while studying Japanese. He prepared a Japanese-Spanish dictionary in collaboration with Father James Kyusei of St. Mary, O.P., a Japanese native and later a martyr in Japan.

Father Esquivel arrived in Formosa in 1630, anxious to start his missionary apostolate. He immediately went to Taparri, a town that was known for its pirates and cruelty. The Taparians refused to submit to the Spaniards and were mortal enemies of their neighbors in Kimauri.

With his zealous love of people, Hyacinth worked tirelessly to bring them together in Christian love. He was successful in bringing together various groups in Tiparri and Kimauri where they all became Christians. They put aside their old hatred and entered into a sincere friendship. With the help of his people, Hyacinth built a church in Taparri, which he named St. John the Baptist. Another church was built in Kimauri and dedicated to St. Louis Bertrán. His capable helper in these works was Brother Anthony of Viana.

Brother Anthony of Viana died in Kimauri in 1630. Also around that time, Father Matthew Cobisa died in the House of All Saints. He had been a man of great holiness; Hyacinth shed copious tears at his grave.

In 1632, the Superiors assigned Fr. Esquivel to Tamsui, where he built a modest chapel in honor of Our Lady of the Rosary. God blessed all his undertakings. The Acts of the Provincial Chapter of 1633 state: "Among the Houses recently accepted on Formosa Island, there is St. Louis Bertrán of Kimauri, Our Lady of the Rosary in Tamsui, All Saints of Holy Savior in Killung and John the Baptist of Taparri. Three of these are due to Father Hyacinth Esquivel's zeal."

Hyacinth Esquivel worked indefatigably in Tamsui and Kilung. He had gone to Formosa thinking not to remain there permanently but to see what he could do while waiting to be transferred to Japan. At this time, the persecution in Japan was at its height; entrance into that Empire was next to impossible. Hyacinth's wait extended into years, during which time he always kept himself busy. He studied the local language and wrote a *Catechism of Christian Doctrine* for the use of the natives. When he spoke to them about the resurrection, they did not accept it, for they said: "Our dead remain forever where they go." Hyacinth was loved and respected for his virtuous life.

The sufferings of the missionaries in Japan made Hyacinth all the more determined to go and fulfill his desire for martyrdom. Therefore, after three years of waiting, he took advantage of an opportunity to go to Japan. He and a Franciscan priest embarked on a Chinese sampan from the Port of Kilung. When they were on the high seas, some disloyal seamen killed them and threw their bodies into the ocean.

Father Hyacinth Esquivel's death was greatly felt because he was an exceptional man of God. He obtained the palm of martyrdom that he had so desired on 9 August 1633, when he was only 38 years old.

The Acts of the Provincial Chapter of 1635 record: "Father Hyacinth of the Rosary Esquivel was cruelly beheaded. . . while he was still on the high seas on his way to Japan where he was going to preach the Gospel to the afflicted Church. He was a very religious man, an example of an authentic penitential life, deeply humble and zealous for his people. He had always wanted to shed his blood for the love of God. The sailors cut off his ears and nose to serve as a testimony of the evil they had done. These they showed to the Japanese unbelievers. Esquivel's body was thrown into the ocean.

WRITINGS

- ◆ *Japanese Vocabulary, written first in Portuguese by the Priests of the Society of Jesus of that Kingdom, and now in Spanish at the Santo Thomas College in Manila.* With license in Manila to Thomas Pinpin and Hyacinth Magaurlua. In the year 1630. (This dictionary was written in collaboration with St. James Kyusei of St. Mary, Japanese martyr, whose biography is on page 70, above.)
- ◆ *The art of the language of Formosa, 1630.*
- ◆ *A very copious vocabulary of the language of the Indians of Tamsui, in Formosa Island, 1630.*
- ◆ *Catechism of Christian Doctrine in the same language, 1630.*
- ◆ *Memoirs of events pertaining to Formosa Island sent by Father Hyacinth of the Rosary Esquivel, 1632, (in APSR, Ms. Vol. 20, fos. 152-153; and José María Alvarez, O.P., Formosa geográfica e históricamente considerada, vol. II. Barcelona, 1930, pp. 424-428.)*
- ◆ *Statutes and Ordinances of the Brotherhood of Mercy, (in APSR, Ms. Vol. 20, fos. 139-144).*

LOUIS MURO

Dominican Priest

(? - 1636)



This holy man died at the hands of the natives of Formosa. Although he is not officially considered a martyr, his life and death earned him this honor.

A native of Madrid, Spain, Louis was a member of the Priory of St. Paul of Valladolid. In 1633, he arrived in Formosa and soon after was sent to the mission of Senar, where Father Francis Vázquez had recently been killed by the natives. Louis was yet to become another victim for those men, who, after killing Father Francis fled to the mountains.

In charity, Louis tried to bring them back to God. He was able to get an edict from the Governor of Tamsui pardoning those who repented and allowing them to return safely to their homes. In the meantime, there was a great scarcity of rice in this region. Louis saw this as a providential chance, for now he could accompany the soldiers that the Governor was sending to the neighboring villages to gather rice to bring to these people. Traveling with the soldiers, Louis could talk to the people, counsel them and urge them to live together in peace and harmony.

It was hard, however, for the men who had killed Father Francis Vázquez to believe in the promise of pardon. In March 1636, they set up an ambush, as before, to kill all who passed on the road at the foot of their hill. All the soldiers perished in a surprise attack. Having captured Father Muro, the infidels cut off his head as well as his hands and legs.

Thus was the life of this holy man sacrificed for the salvation of souls.

The Acts of the Provincial Chapter of 1637 record: "On the Island of Formosa, Father Louis Muro of St. Michael suffered martyrdom at the hands of impious infidels. He was truly known for his holiness and compassion for the poor. He was a lover of regular observance and even as a very young religious, he already shone with the beauty of a well-balanced person.

Having subjected his body to the spirit since he was a young man, he consecrated himself to the salvation of the native of Formosa Island. He showed prudence in all this, however, for he never neglected his body. He wore a chain around his waist, enjoyed purity of soul and body and had never tarnished his virtue of virginity. He was as devoted to his spiritual children as a natural father to his children, never giving in to fatigue or hardships. He was shot with arrows in the midst of his duties.”

“Thus he ended his days, crowned with the palm of martyrdom. His body was found after a few days still in perfect condition. No bad odors were detected and all who saw him were moved to venerate him.” (Cf. James Aduarte, *History of the Province of the Holy Rosary*. . . , vol. II, pp. 505 and ff.)



PETER CHING

Lay Dominican

(? - 1646)

A learned and great man, Peter Ching (Chim) was one of the best examples of virtue in the middle of the 17th Century. A native of Fogan, he was a friend of Fathers Francis Díaz and Francis Capillas.

Peter was baptized by Father Francis Díaz when he was 50 years old. At 54, he lost his life defending his faith. It is admirable to see the holiness of his life during the four years after his conversion. The blessings that God shed upon this great learned man changed him into one of the strongest champions of religion during the fiercest persecution in Fukien.

Peter was a prominent lawyer and doctor in Fogan and after his conversion, a most fervent Christian. He spent so much time in the service of God, helping the priests and engaging in works of mercy that they gave him the Dominican habit. He was professed as a Lay Dominican. He heard as many Masses as he could, went to confession frequently and gave whatever he had as alms. He was a tireless benefactor, spending long hours visiting prisoners and aiding the afflicted.

In 1646, the unbelievers of Fogan were very provoked and unhappy with the Christians. This caused the opening of a Court by the representative of the Emperor. An imperial decree ordered public debates in his presence so that both the non-Christians and the Christians could defend and vindicate their religion and beliefs.

Peter was appointed to defend the Christian viewpoint. He refuted calumnies, corrected errors and overturned their objections. He shed so much light on Christian beliefs and practices that he was rightly given the title of staunch defender of the purity and truth of our dogmas and doctrines. Far from accepting that truth, the unbelievers turned even more against the Christians and especially Peter Ching, determined to avenge themselves.

They planned ways to kill the valiant champion of the faith that very night. As Peter was quietly returning home, they assaulted him, beating him with clubs and stones, leaving him half dead on the ground. He lived for three days in pain and indescribable agony. He confessed, received the Sacraments; he soon after lost consciousness and gave up his soul to God.

The Lord, for whose name he suffered, gave him the halo of martyrdom which he had earned with so much valor.

JOACHIM KO

Lay Dominican

(? - 1646)

Joachim Ko, lawyer, apostle, defender of the Church of Fogan, Grand Mandarin, Privy Councilor of the Viceroy of the Province and Admiral of the Chinese Fleet in those waters, was one of the Christians who brought the most honors to the Lay Dominicans in the Empire.

We repeat here the short biography taken from Father Francis Gáinza's book: *Militia of Jesus Christ, Manual of the Brothers of the Third Order of Penance of St. Dominic*, Manila, 1859.

Joachim Ko was born in the city of Fogan to an honorable and rich family. He was born of pagan parents and educated in the superstitions of those regions. He studied law in Fuchow with such great success that he was immediately promoted to the best positions of the Viceroyalty of Fukien. He was converted and baptized by the Jesuits, but he did not rest until he persuaded the Dominican missionaries to go there. He instructed them in the language, rites and customs of the country. He was quite eloquent when he preached and therefore, he soon had a great following.

In 1638, when Fathers Morales and Díaz were exiled to Macao, he accompanied them there and after two years went with them to Manila. He also went with them to the province of Bataan, where he helped Father Díaz write the *Vocabulary and Art of the Mandarin language*. Joachim's personal life was one of prayer, fasting and penance. He received the habit of the Dominican Order, becoming a Lay Dominican.

In 1641, Fathers Díaz and Capillas returned to China with Joachim by way of Taiwan. They arrived in Fukien in March 1642, finding Christianity there in a sad state. Joachim worked hard with them to bring it back to its past fervor.

Joachim was an enthusiastic preacher of religion and defended it valiantly. He was persecuted for this by the non-Christians and stripped of his title of lawyer. At this time, the Ming Dynasty was losing the war against the Tatars who ultimately enthroned the Tatarian Ching Dynasty. For Joachim Ko, this meant losing everything because he supported the Ming Dynasty. He lost his home, land and estates. A little earlier, he had resigned his position as Admiral of the Navy of the region. He now had only two boats and 40 soldiers left. He went with them to a harbor or Funing where he fell into the hands of a Mandarin named Singli, a staunch enemy of the Christian religion.

Although Joachim was of a much higher rank than Singli, he had to suffer thousands of humiliations from his enemy who had no difficulty in condemning him and his nephew to death. A few days before their martyrdom in 1646, Father John García heard their confessions and gave them Communion. Later, the two were taken to the place of execution and while they prayed the rosary on their knees, they were beheaded. Joachim's body was then hacked into three pieces.

Father Victor Ricci, O.P., in his book *Acts of the Order of Preachers*, vol. II, chap. XVII, in speaking of the incident, holds the two as true martyrs.

The venerable martyr Joachim had given abundant proofs of his sanctity with his conduct as a perfect Christian. His fear of God was evident; he never rested from his labor of spreading the good cause of religion. He was widely responsible for the conversion of many. We conclude his short biography with the words of Father Francis Gainza:

“Without realizing it, the tyrant, by his injustices,, added more glory to the cause of Christianity. The victims of his cruelty were truly sacred victims of the faith who deserve to be numbered among the martyrs. This is especially true for Joachim Ko, in whom the splendor of the Law of Christ shone since his baptism. This was the sole reason for having to render his life to the punishment of beheading so unjustly. He died because of the hatred of a tyrant for our holy faith.”

JOHN FUNG OF SAINT MARY

Dominican Priest

(1719 - 1755)

Father Ocio says: "It is a great pity that the name of John Fung was not on the list of those whose Cause for beatification was introduced with the five European martyrs. But, it is not too late to still do it and thus have him raised to the honors of the Altar."
(*Compendium of the short biographies*. . . App. I, p. 46.)

John Fong was providentially a missionary priest at the time of the cruel persecution of 1747-1755. With his extensive services, he helped the five martyrs of Fuchow when they were in prison. He inspired and encouraged the Christians in the midst of the most cruel persecutions. He fortified them with an example of love and bravery, and led many pagans to conversion.

Defying all danger, ignored his fatigue and misery, he would go at night to anyone who needed him. If they persecuted him in Fogan, he went to Fuchow or to Hinghoa. From there, he would go to Chiangchou, encouraging and helping his people even as he ran from persecution.

This hero was born in 119 in Sangyang, near the great Christian community of Keseny, two leagues from another Christian community called Moyang. His home was more than once the refuge of the missionaries. John studied in San Juan Letran College and took the Dominican habit in St. Dominic's Priory in Manila. He sang his first Mass at San Juan de Letran in 1747 before being sent back to China. He traveled to Chiang-Chiu where he came to know about the death of Bishop Peter Sanz. This encouraged him to go to Fogan and Fuchow to care for the local persecuted Christians. Eventually, he had to flee from there because the authorities learned of his presence in China.

On 14 January 1748, John went to Fuchow to see Father Serrano and the other priests; to his great disappointment, he did not see them. The Christians and the imprisoned priests advised him to leave Fuchow quickly and go to Chiang-Chiu. But since the officials there were already looking for him, he returned to Fuchow. No one dared to take him in so he took refuge in a pagan temple. His stay there was providential because he learned about the horrible tortures and martyrdom the priests were suffering and was able to give a detailed account of all. John defied all kinds of dangers and hardships in order to rescue the relics of the five martyrs.

Father Simon Lo of the Rosary wrote how Father Fung was apprehended and imprisoned. He says: "In March 1754, a cruel persecution started against the Catholic religion in Fogan. During this period, Father John Fung of St. Mary was imprisoned. It was on Holy Saturday. The original punishment decreed was three years of exile, which was then extended to perpetual exile in the province of Kiang-Si. Before leaving, John went to confession to Father Peter Nieng,, his classmate in novitiate, then received Communion from his hands. In his turn, Father Peter Nieng also went to confession. On 20 March 1754, John left looking like a veritable prisoner with an iron chain around his neck, handcuffs and shackles on his feet. He was escorted by two soldiers and three Christians who wished to accompany him. Before arriving at the place of his exile, John had to appear before 36 tribunals." (Cf. Fr. Simon Lo of the Rosary, *Letter* dated 29 October 1754.)

During this long and calamitous trek, John suffered inexpressible torments of hunger, thirst, cold, rain. ... But none of these suffering could break this man of God who suffered joyfully for Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, these sufferings did affect greatly John's health. A few days after his arrival in Kiang-Si, on 1 July 1755, his precious life came to an end.

In 1771, the Vicar Provincial, Father James Terradillos, had Father John Fung's remains transferred to his native Sangyang. His body was still incorrupt.

John Fung is an honor to the Dominican Order and gave more than enough signs of his great sanctity and Christian fortitude.

WRITINGS

- ◆ Twenty-two *Letters* to his Superiors and other Friars, written in the years 1747-1753. (Thirteen of these are preserved in APSR, Ms. vols. 22, 28, 29. The other nine are found in Archives Casanatense in Rome (ACR), vol. 1576.)
- ◆ *Report on the conversion of a man named Ul Yuen, with one of his relatives*, 1749 (in APSR, Ms. vol. 55, fos. 227-228).
- ◆ *Individual and true Report of the martyrdom and finding of the bones of the Most Reverend Father Francis Serrano, and of Fathers John Alcober, Joachim Royo and Francis Diaz of the Order of Preachers, Apostolic Missionaries in the Empire of China*, 1749 (in APSR, Ms. vol. 29, fos. 152-154).

Ambrose Kuo-Hu-Jing

Layman

(? - 1777)

Ambrose was a Christian hero who has imprisoned and tortured for the faith. He preferred to suffer rather than to tell where the missionaries were hidden.

He was imprisoned in Heu-Kuan-Ulen, together with Father Peter Sanz. When he was called before the tribunal, the Viceroy asked him the following questions: -

“How long have you hidden Pe-to-lo (Father Peter Sanz) in your home?”

“Eight years.”

“How many did you persuade to receive baptism?”

“Twenty.”

“That is too few. How is it that in the Baptismal Record Book there are more than two thousand?”

“This book was started more than 40 years ago. It contains the names of infants, old people, living and dead. All are there.”

“Who baptized you?”

“I was a child and I don’t remember.”

“Does being a Christian mean that you foment rebellion to get some position as a mandarin?”

“No. It is only to serve God and obtain eternal life.” (At this point the Viceroy ordered that he be given 15 slaps [of a leather strop - Ed.])

“Why do you follow His law?”

“Because they teach me how to be virtuous and, after death, to save me from hell.” (Here they gave him five more slaps.)

Ambrose was jailed from 1746 until his death in 1777. In 1764, Father James Terradillos wrote: “Ambrose Kuo, who is mentioned in the report of the Venerable Martyrs, is still persevering in the prison of this city of Fogan, very happy to be suffering for the love of God. This year, Father Paul went to visit him, heard his confession and gave him Holy Communion.”

Father James Muñoz wrote of Ambrose: “In the prison of Fogan, I met the celebrated Ambrose Kuo, for so many years a prisoner for the faith. This holy man suffered the hardships of imprisonment with joy and died a holy death in 1777.”

The Acts of the 1781 Provincial Chapter state: “Even though he did not die by the sword, Ambrose did not lack the spirit of martyrdom.”

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III

MARTYRS OF VIETNAM



INTRODUCTION

The missions of Vietnam, considered as “models of missions,” are a glorious chapter in the history of the Province of Our Lady of the Rosary. These missions were confirmed by persecution and watered by the blood of many martyrs.

Vietnam occupies a large strip of land along the eastern side of the peninsula of Indochina. It is on the South China Sea, under the continent of China and bordering Laos and Cambodia [aka: Kampuchea]. Vietnam has an area of 333,000 square kilometers and a population of 60 million (1988). It includes the ancient territories of Tonkin, Annam and Cochin-China.

The country has passed through long periods of wars and divisions. From 1862 to 1885, France occupied all of Vietnam, establishing a protectorate regime in Tonkin and Annam and the Colony of Cochin-China. During World War II, it was occupied by Japan but at the end of the war the country became an independent republic and was renamed Vietnam. With the advance of Communism from the North, led by Ho-Chi-Minh, the country was embroiled in a bloody civil war. In 1954, France was completely overthrown; through the Treaty of Geneva, the country was divided into two separate states: North Vietnam and South Vietnam. The U. S. intervened to overthrow the Communist insurgents in South Vietnam, but in 1975, with the fall of Saigon, the Americans — humiliated — had to leave the country. In the following year, 1976, the country was reunited under the name: the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

Traditionally, Vietnam has been an agricultural country, thanks to its rich alluvial soil, big rivers and tropical monsoon climate. Rice is the principal staple crop. In language, Annamese is monosyllabic and tonal like Chinese. In ancient times, Vietnam was part of China and Chinese influence has been extremely pervasive in all aspects of Vietnamese life and culture.

The predominant religions in Vietnam during the time of our martyrs were Buddhism and Taoism. The people were tolerant and freely intermingled as in China. The most outstanding religious characteristic of the Vietnamese was the importance of the cult to their ancestors. The aged were the most respected members of the family and society. For this reason, his or her presence was to be religiously perpetuated in the family clan. This cult was the origin of both the “wooden slats” kept on the family altar and the rite of “offerings.” Today, all of this is disappearing although in the 17th and 18th Centuries these important Vietnamese Rituals had created problems and controversies among the missionaries but never as strongly as they did in China.

Christianity was brought to Vietnam in 1627 by the Jesuit Father Alexander Rhodes. He established it in Tonkin, in the northern part of the country. Later, in the same 17th Century, the Dominicans and other Religious Orders arrived, bringing about the consolidation of the Vietnamese Missions.

The political organization of Vietnam was much like China's: an Empire ruled by dynasties that succeeded each other. There were also local Viceroys and Mandarins who assisted the Emperors in ruling the country. The Emperor was considered the "Son of Heaven" and was absolute owner of everything, supreme legislator and judge of the country. The mandarins were the civil and military functionaries of the imperial government. They always worked directly under the dictates of the Emperor. They were the aristocracy of the nation, and were commonly called: the "learned ones."

In 1711, Emperor An Vuong issued the first Edict of Persecution of Christians. In addition, drought, hunger, natural calamities and political disturbances contributed to make the situation of the country extremely grave and volatile for several decades during the persecutions. In 1745, many Christians lost their lives, including Fathers Francis Gil de Federich and Matthew Alonso Liciniana, who were the first Dominican martyrs in Vietnam. Again in 1773, other Dominicans were martyred.

At the end of the 18th Century, a civil war was waged between two rival dynasties who were disputing possession of the imperial power. With the triumph of Gia-Long, who reigned from 1802 to 1820, Christianity was officially accepted and grew rapidly during this period of peace. But his successors, Minh-Nanh, Thieu-Tri and especially Tu-Duc, systematically carried out anti-Christian persecutions in the period 1830-1864. This thirty-four-year period produced thousands of martyrs especially in the region of Nam-Dinh. Various local governors and mandarins collaborated on the massacre, among them the infamous Trinh-Quanh-Khanh. Most of the martyrs presented in this section perished during the time known as "the era of martyrs."

The reasons for this cruel persecution were many: fear of outsiders (*xenophobia*), Buddhist anti-Christian campaigns, political intrigues, imprudences of foreigners and, at times, the excessive personal cruelty of local governors and mandarins. The types of torture varied: whipping of a person in the horizontal or upright position; the *cangue* [a yoke - Ed.] composed of two planks tied with chains, one on the shoulders and one on the feet; beheading; exile; exposure to raw weather and burning.

The first Dominicans, Fathers John of the Holy Cross and John de Arjona, arrived in Vietnam in 1676. They established themselves in Tonkin in the north of the country. The Dominican missions developed surprisingly well. In 1702, Father Raymond Lezoli was consecrated the first Dominican Bishop of Vietnam and was succeeded by several other bishops, some of whom were martyred. In spite of mishaps and persecutions, the Dominican mission of Vietnam was very well organized. It was divided into three Vicariates: Eastern,

Central and Northern. Each one had its own structure, hierarchy and institutions. From the very beginning, the Dominicans of Vietnam encouraged the recruitment and formation of native clergy, diocesan and religious. The more capable ones were sent to Manila for their studies.

Another characteristic of the Vietnamese mission was the extraordinary development of catechists. These lived in community houses called *Houses of God* and were dedicated to evangelization under the authority of the Apostolic Vicars. Women were also well organized. They were called *Sisters* and were dedicated to works of charity, such as in Nurseries where they cared for abandoned little girls. Lay Dominicans and Members of the Confraternity of the Rosary were also very numerous and were of great help to the missionaries. Many of them were also martyred. The Dominicans of Vietnam founded seminaries, schools, colleges, hospitals, asylums, leprosaria and workshops. Thus, a grand infrastructure of religious social works was created.

In 1967, an autonomous Vietnamese Province called “Queen of Martyrs Province” was formed, the fruit of the sweat and hardship of many Dominican missionaries. In 1975, with the advent of Communist rule over the whole country, all foreign Dominicans were expelled. At the present time, the number of native Dominicans continues to increase but constrained by many restrictions and with no communication with the outside world — as for the whole Vietnamese Church.

In this section, we have divided the biographies of the 60 martyrs of the Dominican Missions of Vietnam into three groups, as they appear in the Process of Beatification.

- A. Group of 27 martyrs beatified by Leo XIII on the 27th of May 1900. They were martyred in the years 1838-1851.
- B. Group of 8 martyrs beatified by Pius X on 20 May 1906. These were martyred in the years 1745, 1773 and 1861.
- C. Group of 25 martyrs beatified by Pius XII on 29 April 1951. These died for their faith during the years 1857-1862.

All three groups of martyrs were canonized by John-Paul II on 19 June 1988.

Ceferino Puebla, O.P.

A

MARTYRS OF VIETNAM

Beatified by Pope Leo XIII
on 27 May 1900

Canonized by Pope John-Paul II
on 19 June 1988

By Francisco Zurdo, O.P.

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PRESENTATION

The year 1838 will forever be celebrated in the history of the Church in Tonkin because in that year many lay-persons, bishops and priests gained the incorruptible crown of martyrdom. The clergy and the people of God have shown the world that they prize their faith not only in sufferings and persecutions but even to the shedding of their blood and the loss of their lives.

The tortures that the enemies of the Church inflicted on our martyrs are beyond imagination and make one tremble. Many individuals were cruelly strangled, others were crucified, some were put to the sword or starved to death, on some pliers were used to tear the flesh away bit by bit, other were placed in cages like animals and exposed to the sun and cold and some were continuously beaten with bamboo rods. Thus did the believers trade this transitory life for that one which is eternally peaceful.

By shedding their blood, these invincible soldiers of Christ gained for the Church glorious trophies by which this Mother of brave men is exalted day by day. Their martyrdom repeats the word of the Apostle, “This is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith.” (*I John 5:4*)

(Leo XIII, *Brief of Beatification*, 5 May 1900. Decree over the Question.)

SAINT DOMINIC HENARES

Dominican Bishop

(1765 - 1838)



As Father Henares was being condemned, the words pronounced by one of the judges of the tribunal give us an idea of the greatness of soul of this man. “The hand trembles and it does not dare to sign the sentence of this man.”

Dominic was born in Baena, province of Córdoba, Spain, on 19 December 1765. On 30 August 1783, having overcome some difficulties, he received the Dominican habit. When he transferred to the Province of the Rosary, he was still a student. He arrived in the Philippines on 9 July 1786 and completed his studies in Manila’s University of Santo Tomas. At the same time, he was a professor of Humanities in said University.

During his voyage to the Philippines, everyone was drawn to him because of his congenial and attentive personality. It was on this journey that he met his future companion in apostolic ministry to the people of Vietnam, the Dominican Father Clement Ignatius Delgado. Later, they sailed together to the eagerly-awaited “promised land” in the missions of Vietnam. There, they were close companions in the apostolate and there, both shed their blood for the faith.

This new apostle, Father Dominic, arrived in Vietnam toward the end of October 1790. Among the many responsibilities he held during his ministry were being Director of the Latin College of Ninh-cuong, Pro-vicar Provincial, Vicar General of Bishop Delgado and his Coadjutor. He was also named Bishop of Fez on 9 September 1800. In his pastoral ministry and in his personal life, he “singularly demonstrated the virtues of piety and prudence, wisdom and charity, purity and patience.”

Father Henares was knowledgeable about medicine, astronomy and the sciences which were greatly appreciated in the Orient. He was respected by the learned and by lawyers of the country and even consulted by the mandarins. “Gifted with a great capacity and at the

same time sweet and kind, he attracted all without excluding the proud mandarin because he was gifted with such excellent qualities,” says one chronicle.

But all of Dominic’s virtues and high qualities did not prevent his being persecuted for the religion that he preached. On various occasions, he was miraculously saved from the hands of persecutors. Among other incidents, Monsignor Martí, the first Vicar-Apostolic of the Central Vicariate, tells the story that one night a horde of bandits entered his bedroom and took Bishop Henares prisoner with all his vestments and the rest of his baggage. They did this so quietly and quickly that no one was aware of the break-in. Luckily, while they were leaving, a small box containing medicine that Dominic had been saving to give to the poor suddenly fell to the ground. The bandits, including two guards, thinking that it contained money, fell upon it. The Bishop took advantage of the confusion and of the darkness of the night and hid in some bushes. From there, he ran to hide in a small shack, from which he could hear their curses against him. Finally, fearing that they would be discovered, the bandits left without him. No doubt Dominic’s sensitivity toward the poor was rewarded in this manner. Such was his charity that, as a witness at the Process of Beatification said: “At the hour of siesta, instead of resting, he mended clothes for the poor.”

At last on 9 June 1838, Dominic fell into the hands of his persecutors. He was kept in a cage and taken to the capital where he had to appear many times before the tribunals. On 25 June 1838, he was beheaded. His head was thrown into the river where three days later it was retrieved by a Christian fisherman.

Jerome Hermosilla wrote the following: “Dominic led a life of extreme purity and had an untiring zeal for the salvation of souls. His singular piety was such that his praying was uninterrupted as was his constant study of the Holy Fathers. He maintained a truly evangelical poverty for himself but acted with great liberality toward those who were weaker.” Such were the principal virtues that Bishop Dominic Henares always exemplified. He is now raised to the honors of the altar.

WRITINGS

- ◆ *Letters* to his family and some Religious, written at different times (cf. APSR, Ms. vol. 72). Some of these can be found in Paulino Alvarez, O.P., Santos, *Bienaventurados, Venerables de la Orden de los Predicadores*, vol. II, *Bienaventurados*. Vergara, 1921, pp. 391-395.
- ◆ A *Prayer* composed for his niece can be found in Marcos Gispert, O.P. *Historia de las Misiones Dominicanas en Tonkín*. Avila, 1928, p. 396.
- ◆ *Report on the persecution that occurred in 1827 in the States of Assam against the Christian religion* (cf. APSR, Ms. vol. 72).

SAINT FRANCIS CHIEU

Layman

(1797 - 1838)



Francis Chieu (Do-van-Chieu), Father Henares's faithful catechist, was executed with him for refusing to step on the cross. Or, as the sentence of condemnation states: "For not obeying the laws of the Kingdom; for he cannot be forgiven; for which the punishment of beheading will be applied." When Francis refused to trample the cross, he said: "Even if the great Mandarin would tear my insides out, I will never do such a thing. I have decided to follow Bishop Henares to death, and what he suffers I am prepared to suffer with him."

God heard the words of his servant and granted him that he die with his master on the same day and in the same way. In this manner, they both entered their true home.

Francis Chieu was a native of Trung-le in the province of Nam-dinh. As a young boy, he entered the *House of God* and served Father Dominic Henares. His life was parallel to that of his master. When both were captured, Father Henares was placed in a cage while Francis had to carry a large *cangue* [yoke] and very heavy chains. While they were being taken to the capital of the province, a cross was deliberately placed on the path so as to make them walk over it. Heroic Francis threw himself on it, embraced it and picked it up. Blows rained upon him but he never let go of the cross until everyone in the party had passed the spot.

From there, he was taken to the public prison and to trial. When he appeared before the Mandarin, he was ordered to tread on the cross, "so that his offence would be forgiven."

Francis answered: "God is the true Lord and He alone is to be adored. For this reason I will not step on it." Then the Mandarin ordered that he be tied hand and foot to three stakes and flogged. Francis received 30 lashes without showing the least change of heart.

On another occasion, he was again ordered to step on a cross, and once again he courageously refused. He was cruelly whipped and then ordered to sit on a table covered with sharp-pointed nails. He obeyed, suffering the most horrible pains as the points of the nails pierced his flesh.

After he was sentenced, Francis was brought back together with Father Henares and in his presence was beheaded. His last words were: "Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit." He was martyred on 25 June 1838. Three days after his martyrdom, a dew of blood appeared on the leaves of the trees at the place of his execution.

SAINT VINCENT YEN

Dominican Priest

(1764 - 1838)

This holy martyr was born in Tra-lu in the province of Nam-dinh in 1764. He was trained under the supervision of Bishop Ignatius Delgado, who ordained him a priest at the age of 40. He was appointed to the care of souls. His Calvary began right away. He was secretly denounced to the Mandarins, taken prisoner and made to carry a heavy *cangue* [yoke]. He spent a month in this condition until he was rescued by friends.

Vincent asked to be admitted to the Dominican Order and received the habit on 22 July 1807. His purity and considerate treatment of others was such that he won everyone's respect. "His eyes, his whole facial expression was an eloquent testimony of his holiness." Even the enemies who captured him remarked that they had taken a prisoner who "was a man with a most beautiful countenance." It was no wonder that he was able to win over all those entrusted to his care.

Vincent was once again imprisoned on 8 June 1838; on the 11th, the Mandarins came together to judge him. The leading Mandarin, a good man of means and influence, resisted imposing the death sentence. He proposed to Father Yen to say that he was a doctor, not a priest. Vincent rejected this outright, saying: "I am not a doctor, I am a priest. My office is to offer sacrifices to God and to preach the faith of Jesus Christ for whom I am ready to die. I do not accept the offer for the price of a lie." Seeing the constancy of the priest, they took the message to the Emperor, who dictated the sentence himself. "Do Yen, native of this Kingdom, principal teacher of the Religion of Jesus Christ, has followed a false religion and does not wish to abandon it. He is truly a dangerous fool and is deserving of suffering any abomination, because he does not wish to follow what he knows and what he should do. Let his head be cut off."

The venerable old man of 74 walked erectly, calmly and with joy to his execution on 30 June 1838. He was beheaded for being a priest of the Religion and for teaching it to the people.

The Process of Beatification says that Vincent had a most gentle disposition, a happy face and limitless mercy, — that he was prudent, peaceful, very virtuous and that his life had been an edification to all.

SAINT JOSEPH UYEN

Lay Dominican

(1775 - 1838)

Joseph [Peter Nguyen Dinh] Uyen was born and baptized in the town of Ninh-cuong in the province of Nam-dinh. At the age of 11 or 12, he entered the *House of God*, and from that early age, he gave an example of modesty, docility and irreproachable conduct. He made profession as a Lay Dominican and observed “with the greatest care all the Rules and Constitutions of the Third Order,” according to the testimony of his contemporaries.

It was not surprising that when the persecution broke out, Bishop Henares placed him in charge of the Christian community of Tien-chu, in spite of the fact that he was not a priest. He was 63 years old when appointed to this responsibility. He carried it out so well that he gained the complete fidelity of his flock.

Joseph wore the Dominican scapular around his neck in public; it was because of this that he was imprisoned. In one of his appearances before the judges, a Mandarin said: “If you don’t step on the cross, you will be beheaded.” Joseph answered: “Even if I am beheaded, I will rise again.” Neither promises nor threats nor 39 lashes shook the constancy of this valiant Vietnamese catechist. “If the great Mandarin forgives me, I will be grateful; but if he cuts off my head, I will suffer obediently,” was Joseph’s reply.

After many comings and goings to the tribunals, Joseph was finally condemned to be beheaded, But the executioners did not have the satisfaction of beheading this man of God. Neither did he have the honor of having his head cut off at the stroke of a sword. Because he had become very weak from so many sufferings inflicted on him, he died on 4 July 1838.

SAINT CLEMENT IGNATIUS DELGADO

Dominican Bishop

(1761 - 1838)



“Due to the magnificent liberality of our Catholic King Charles III, there came to these shores of Manila a Mission of 18 ministers of the Gospel as an assistance to our afflicted Province.” These words were spoken in 1786. Among the future heroes of the faith, 15 “offered themselves and asked with insistence” to be allowed to go to serve in the severely persecuted missions of Vietnam. Only two were selected, like angels destined by Divine Providence, to go to those missions which were about to disappear. The two were

Father Francis Albán, who was later to become the Bishop of New Segovia, and Father Clement Ignatius Delgado. “Both were very favored by grace and by nature.”

Clement Delgado was born in the village of Villafeliche in the province of Saragossa (Spain) on 23 November 1761. (This is the date given by Father Hilary Ocio, O.P., in his book *Compendium of the short biographies*. . . p. 509. The Process of Beatification gives 1763, while the baptismal record indicates: “On 22 November of the year 1762. . .”) Clement became a member of the Province of the Rosary at the age of 19 and arrived in Manila at age 25. From Manila, he departed for Tonkin via Macao on 13 November 1788. The captain of the ship, however, deliberately took him to Cochinchina from which he was forced to return to Macao. Clement passed through Malacca where he stayed several months, helping in the apostolate.

At the end of October 1790, Clement achieved his dreams when he at last he stepped on Vietnamese soil. Father Francis Albán became very ill and was not able to go to Vietnam. In the end, Clement had the great joy of having three other priests accompany him to Vietnam. Among them was Father Dominic Henares who was later to become his Coadjutor Bishop and successor and a martyr.

In those days, there was a relative peace at the mission although once in a while the people had frights that made their lives a little uneasy. Father Delgado was named Vicar General and when Rome recognized his excellent qualities and virtues, it appointed him

Coadjutor of the Eastern Vicariate with right of succession. Pope Pius VI named him to this post on 11 February 1794. His episcopal consecration took place on 20 November 1795.

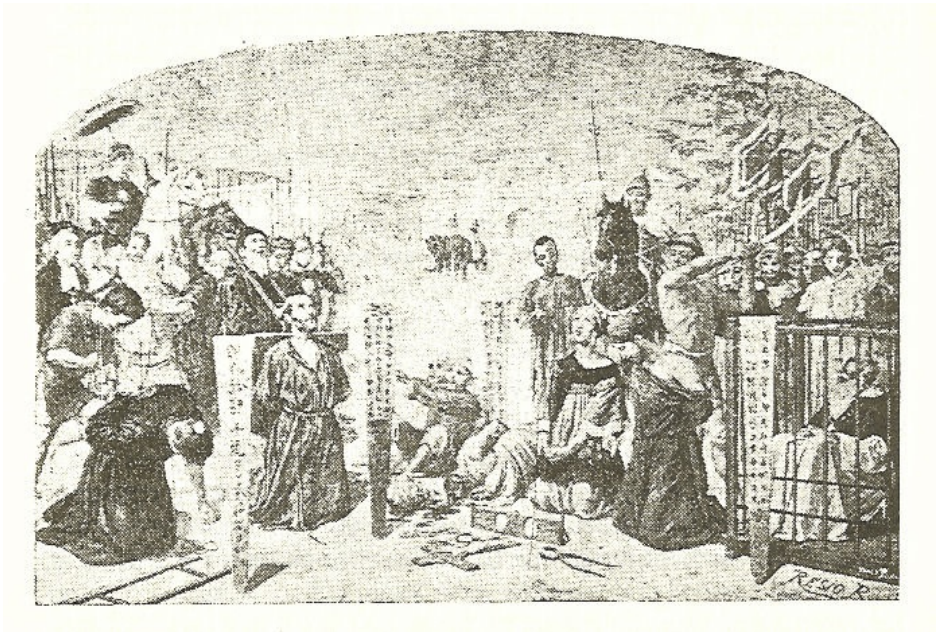
In 1820, the situation changed radically when Emperor Minh-Manh came to power. He was known commonly as “the Vietnamese Nero” because of his great hatred for the Christian religion. In order not to fall into his trap, the missionaries were obliged to hide. Only at night did they come out to minister to their flocks.

In the year 1838, the persecution became ruthless; both the pastors and the faithful were cruelly oppressed. The Dominican mission which embraced the majority of Christians was a particular target. Hardships, calamities, robbery, destruction of churches, colleges, monasteries and residences of the missionaries reflected the sad condition of the Church in those days. The European missionaries were the most hunted and coveted — and the ones most likely not to escape. Soon the two Apostolic Vicars, Bishop Delgado and his Coadjutor Bishop Henares fell into the hands of the tyrant. Father Joseph Fernández and other missionaries were also arrested. All were imprisoned and condemned to die by decapitation.

Pope Gregory learned of the cruelty of this tyrant and said of Bishop Delgado: “Our venerable brother, Clement Ignatius Delgado, O.P., Bishop and Apostolic Vicar of the Eastern part of the Kingdom, after being in charge of that Vicariate for 40 years, finally fell into the hands of the infidels. Moreover, although he was already weakened by advancing age, it was thought nothing to enclose him in a cage like an animal. Finally, consumed by sickness and much suffering, all of this sustained with incredible patience, Clement fell asleep in the Lord on 12 July 1838, before the death sentence could be carried out. In spite of this, the orders were given to cut off his head anyway and that it be exposed to the public for three days, then thrown into the deepest part of the river. Almost four months later, on 1 November 1838, it was recovered incorrupt.” (Cf. Acts of the Provincial Chapter 1841, pp. 161-162.)

WRITINGS

- ◆ *Official letters to the Congregation of the Faith*, 1802-1804. These can be found in Marco Gispert, *op. cit.*, pp. 322-328.
- ◆ *Personal letters* to different persons (cf. APSR, Ms. vol. 72).
- ◆ *Report on the persecutions started in the Kingdom of Cochin-China and Tung-kin in the year 1827* (cf. APSR, Ms. vol. 72).



Clement Delgado and Companion Martyrs

SAINT PETER TUAN (1766 - 1838)

Diocesan Priest

and

SAINT JOSEPH FERNANDEZ (1775 - 1838)

Dominican Priest



Joseph Fernandez was born on the Spanish plateau, between the pine groves, in Ventosa de la Cuesta, Valladolid, on 3 December 1775. Peter (Nguyen-ba) Tuan first saw the light in the Vietnamese delta, in the town of Ngoc-duong, Hung-yen around the year 1766.

Fathers Peter and Joseph took the same risks, suffered the same persecutions and were condemned to the same death.

In February 1805, Father Joseph Fernandez left Macao in an English ship that took him to the Port of Turane. From there, he went on foot until he reached his destination, the Dominican Mission of northern Vietnam. On this long journey, he suffered many hardships. Although his travels resulted in a prolonged and painful sickness, he did not allow his sufferings to impede him from missionary labors.

Joseph Fernandez was appointed Rector of the Latin College where once again he fell seriously ill with a severe attack of dysentery that nearly took him to the grave.

Joseph had been working in the Lord's vineyard for more than 30 years when another persecution, ordered by Emperor Minh-Manh, broke out in 1838. He was forced to leave the Latin College and wander from one place to another in order to evade his persecutors. It was in one of his hiding places that he met the aged priest Father Peter Tuan. When Peter saw how fragile Joseph's health was, he refused to be separated from him. Together, they journeyed, sharing the hardships as they fled from the fury of the persecution.

When they were taken prisoner due to the perfidiousness of one of the Mandarins, Joseph was placed in a very narrow cage while Peter was burdened with a heavy *cangue* [yoke] around his neck. Both were taken from one tribunal to another where they were subjected to ridicule and insults from the infidels and soldiers. Joseph could hardly move in his cage; adding to the intolerable pains was the paralysis of his hands and then of half his body. In the midst of these calamities, the Lord gave him a “small respite.” This was the joy of learning that both Bishops, Ignatius Delgado and Dominic Henares, were being held in the same prison with him.

When ordered to step on the cross, Joseph replied: “You may be sure that I will never, under any circumstances, step on the cross,” answered the venerable old man.

Closed up in his cage, Joseph was in a deplorable condition. He suffered hunger and would have starved to death had not a Christian friend bribed the guard to allow him to bring food every day. And of course, he had to feed Joseph as well since the latter could not use his hands.

The official sentence said that Joseph’s offense was very grave. Therefore, “Cut off his head as a warning to the people.” The soldiers then took him out of his cage. On 24 July 1838, Joseph limped to the place of execution where he was beheaded, at the age of 62.

Peter Tuan had carried out his pastoral ministry with much success. His Superiors were very pleased with him. He had a great devotion to the prayer of the Rosary. Along with the chains around his neck and the *cangue*, he wore a rosary. In this manner, he appeared before the judges.

Feigning great compassion for this venerable old man, they still tried to make him step on the cross. They told him: “You are very old and weak. If you step on the cross, you will be forgiven. If you do not, you will die.” Peter answered: “It is true that I am old and weak, but I know that God will give me the strength to suffer and even to die for Him. I will not step on the cross. I just want the day to come when I will offer my head and shed all my blood for the Lord of heaven, whose religion is the only true one.”

The sentence read: “It is clear that this man is ignorant and that he refuses to obey. Therefore, he deserves death, so cut off the head of this Nguyen-ba-Tuan.” Before the sentence could be carried out, our Creator took him to heaven on 15 July 1838.

SAINT BERNARD DUE

Diocesan Priest

(? - 1838)

Bernard was born in the town of Quan-anh in the province of Nam-dinh, the son of Christian parents. Since his parents were very pious, as soon as he was of age, they placed him under the guidance of Bishop Ignatius Delgado from whom he later received the Sacrament of Holy Orders. It is said that he was tireless in his priestly ministry and led a life of great mortification. Even in his old age, he slept on the floor, humbly suffering insect bites and other inconveniences. If asked to sleep on a bed or use a mosquito net, he would answer: "Until now I have lived with only a little discipline, so now I should suffer this."

On one occasion, Bishop Delgado asked him jokingly if he wanted to become a prisoner for the faith. The sick but spry old priest answered: "On the day you are taken prisoner, please allow me to accompany you." When the Bishop was captured, Bernard did not rest until he too was made a prisoner. He was in prison for two months, during which time he was often taken to the tribunal where he was treated roughly.

During all this time, Bernard had only the hard dirt floor for a bed. His Christian friends felt sorry for him so they brought him a mattress. He refused it, saying; "This floor is much softer than the wood of the cross Jesus had to lie on." Another cause for his sufferings was the dampness of the prison. They tried to have him agree to move, but again he said: "Let me stay in this place, for all I have to attend to are the things of the next life. My only desire is before long to shed my blood for our holy Religion."

Day and night, Bernard was tormented by the heavy weight of the *cangue* [yoke], and at night, by the additional stocks. Seeing that they could not make him step on the cross, nor deny his faith, the infidels beheaded him on 1 August 1838. This was the happiest day for this venerable man.

SAINT DOMINC HANH

Dominican Priest

(1772 - 1838)

Dominic [NguyenVan] Hahn was a companion to Bernard Due in college and in martyrdom. He was born of good Christian parents in the town of Nang-a in the province of Nghe-an. When he reached the age for choosing a state in life — and after learning what a minister of the Lord should have — under the direction of Bishop Jerome Hermosilla, he was professed a Dominican on 22 August 1826. From that time on, he gave his all with true apostolic zeal for the salvation of souls.

When the persecution broke out, Dominic hid for a time, but was denounced to the Mandarins and taken prisoner. As he was being led to the city, he noticed that a cross was placed in such a way that he would have to step on it to pass by. He asked to have it removed, for “they would have to cut him to pieces rather than he step on it.” All attempts to make him tread on the cross were in vain. He said: “To that, I will never agree in any way. The only thing that I desire is to be allowed to shed my blood for the faith, and thus follow my two teachers, Bishops Delgado and Hermosilla.”

On one of the occasions when he was taken before the judges, the Mandarin asked him: “Stupid! Don’t you want to live rather than die? If those who profess the Religion of Jesus go to heaven, where do those who don’t believe go?” The martyr answered: “Those who do not follow the Religion of Jesus go to hell. When that time comes, you will know.” The Mandarin became very angry and ordered that he be given 15 lashes and be dragged to prison carrying the *cangue* [yoke]. When he arrived at the prison, his feet were to be tied with chains and he was not to be given anything to eat.

On another occasion, he was handed a statue of the Blessed Virgin and told to step on it. But the valiant Dominic took in his arms and kissed it with great love and profound veneration. This act of love “earned” him the reward of 100 lashes, which he endured bravely.

At last, the Mandarin realized that the prisoner was firm in his decision, so he ordered the sentence of decapitation to be carried out on 1 August 1838.

SAINT JOSEPH NIEN

Diocesan Priest

(1787 - 1838)

Joseph (Dang Dinh) Nien was born in Tien-chu, in the province of Jung-yen, in the year 1787. After the death of his parents, he was free to study Latin and theology under the direction of a European missionary. He was ordained at the age of 35 or 36. For 16 years, he ministered to his people in various districts, earning for himself the reputation of being a “man adorned with all kinds of virtue.” He was distinguished for his sincerity and perseverance in carrying out his pastoral duties. [Along the way, he became a member of the Third Order of St. Dominic. - Ed., GC]

Unfortunately, there is never a lack of Judases looking out for themselves. In this case, they were two Christians, and to make matters worse, one was his brother, the other his nephew. Both denounced Joseph to the authorities. The story goes that these caught one of the youths who knew where Father Nien was hiding. They tortured the boy cruelly to make him divulge the information, but the boy refused. The persecutors continued their torture until his groanings and screams forced Joseph Nien to come out from his hiding place. He said to them: “Here is the priest you are looking for. Don’t torture the boy any longer.” They all stood there in admiration of such fortitude and fearlessness. Joseph was taken to prison on the same day that Fathers Bernard Due and Dominic Hanh were martyred, 1 August 1838.

Weighed down with chains and a heavy *cangue* [yoke] around his neck, Father Joseph was turned over to the authorities. In various ways and on different occasions, they treated him shamefully, but their efforts were in vain: they could not make him deny his faith. They condemned him to death by decapitation, saying: “It is clear that this man is an evildoer who does not know how to act; therefore, he should be beheaded.” The sentence was carried out on 21 August 1838.

SAINT JOSEPH CANH

Lay Dominican

(1763 - 1838)

Joseph Canh [Luong Hoang] was a companion of Father Peter Tu in ministry and in martyrdom. He was born in Hang-ban or Lang-ban, in the province of Bac-giang in 1763. He was still very young when he became a member of the *House of God*. Soon it became evident that his love of God was extraordinary. Since he was a doctor, on his visits to his patients' homes, he didn't hesitate to baptize the infants of pagan parents. He was also a catechist.

Joseph was 75 when he was taken prisoner. Weighed down with a heavy *cangue* [yoke], he was taken to the capital and imprisoned with the holy and brave Father Peter Tu. He was flogged cruelly on several occasions for refusing to tread on the crucifix. "He is the Lord of heaven and earth. There is no reason why I should step on Him," he replied. Then the Mandarin asked him: "How is it that you show such constancy and fervor in preserving your religion when others denounce the priests so that we can apprehend them?" To this the holy man answered: "We also had a Judas who betrayed my Lord so that they could capture Him. ..." The Mandarin persisted in his questioning. "The cross, that is, those two crossed planks, where did He take it?" "He carried it to Mount Calvary to suffer death for the redemption of the world, for our sins, including yours."

"By chance, do you wish to die?" the Mandarin asked once more.

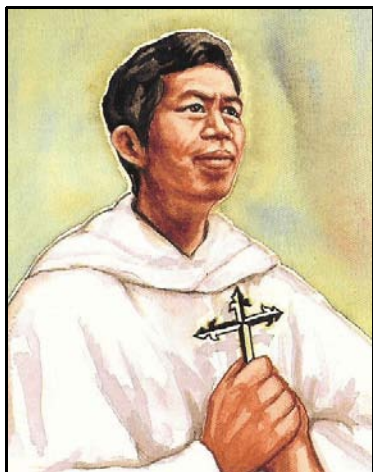
"I beg you to pronounce my sentence, so that I can die with my priest, Father Tu. And if I am this fortunate, I will be very happy." His desires were honored; he was beheaded on 5 September 1838.

Joseph Canh belonged to the Confraternity of the Rosary and was a Lay Dominican as well. It is said that after a time had passed, his Christian friends wanted to take his remains to a place across a river. But the river had risen high, making it impossible to cross it on foot. They begged the Lord to help them through the intercession of this holy martyr. The waters receded to such a degree that they were able to cross on foot with their precious treasure.

SAINT PETER TU

Dominican Priest

(1796 - 1838)



Peter [Paul Nguyen Van] Tu, a holy martyr, was born in the populous community of Ninh-coung in the province of Nam-dinh in 1796. From early childhood, he was docile, humble and affable in his relations with others. He was ordained at age 30 and shortly afterwards became a Dominican, making his profession on 4 January 1827. He ministered in several parishes and was always diligent and effective in caring for his flock. When he celebrated the Eucharist, he always wore the habit even in time of persecution. A biographer states: “He was so assiduous in prayer that he prayed at all times, whether he was fleeing from one place to another or hiding from his persecutors.”

Betrayed as Jesus was, by some who called themselves friends, he was taken before the tribunal where he confessed to the judges: “I am a priest and in no way will step on this adorable sign of the Redemption. If I have to die, I am disposed to do so.”

Several witnesses said that when Father Tu was taken prisoner, he uttered a loud shout such that the soldiers “filled with fear fell to the ground.” They also noticed that the sky which at first had been completely clear suddenly produced a cloud that covered the entire place where the servant of God was being held prisoner. This made the Mandarin so angry that he struck him with a sword, drawing blood.

Three months of long and pointless interrogations and suffering passed before the final hour. During one of the session, the Mandarin wanted to know all about Christian matrimony and why polygamy was prohibited.

On the road to his execution, Father Peter Tu wore his complete habit with the cowl over his head. As everyone wanted to see his face, one of the Mandarins approached him and said: “I beg you, Father, take the cowl off so that everyone can see your face.” Peter obeyed and everyone saw and admired the serenity of that holy face, a true reflection of his soul.

The condemnatory sentence read: “Nguyen-van-Tu has followed the false religion of Jesus Christ, causing insupportable damages. When he was examined, he confessed the truth. We comply, then, with the sentence that condemns him to die by decapitation.” Peter’s soul flew to receive his martyr’s crown on 5 September 1838.

SAINT DOMINIC TUOC

Dominican Priest

(1775 - 1839)



Dominic was born in 1775, in the ancient and Christian town of Trung-lao in the province of Nam-dinh.

Dominic was one of the first victims of Minh-Manh. He is one of the Vietnamese religious who figure as a “son of the Priory of St. Dominic in Manila.” It was there that he made profession on 18 April 1812.

The exact date of Dominic’s ordination is not known. Once ordained and sent to minister in parishes, Dominic fulfilled his task with much solicitude.

On one occasion, he was asked what he would do if he fell into the hands of his persecutors. He answered: “While it is possible, flee. When it is no longer possible, then may God’s will be done.” It is said

that he spent entire nights in prayer even when he was in flight during persecutions. When his time came, he placed himself into the hands of Providence. A band of 40 men took him prisoner. When the Christians heard of his capture, they mobilized at once to free him. Realizing that the people knew of his capture, the band fled with him and resolved to kill him then and there. One of the men took his mace and gave him a mortal blow on the head. Dominic expired a few hours later. During his agony, he gave thanks to God for allowing him the opportunity to die for the faith. Invoking the Holy Name of Jesus, he expired.

Dominic died on 2 April 1839, at the age of 64, having spent 27 years of professed life as a Dominican.

SAINT AUGUSTINE HUY

Layman

(? - 1839)

Augustine Huy was born in Ha-linh in the Nam-dinh province. Although he was the son of Christian parents, he spent some years in the army, in the service of Minh-Manh. Among his comrades he was notorious for his disorderly and licentious life. At one point, by order of the Emperor, a count of all the Christian soldiers was made. The Christians were then tortured to make them renounce their faith. Some obeyed, others escaped. Among those who remained faithful were Augustine Huy, Nicholas The and Dominic Dat.

The Mandarins then used all the trickery suggested to them by the devil. One of the ploys was to lift the prisoners by the extreme ends of the *cangue* and force them to walk over the cross. The prisoners, however, pulled up their legs to avoid treading on it. Using constant blows, the guards tired to make them lower their legs. The Mandarin then asked them: "Now, will you obey?" At this, the three answered: "We will obey whatever the Mandarin orders, except in that which pertains to abandoning our religion."

On another occasion, after having been tormented cruelly, Augustine replied: "You can do violence to my feet but can you do it to my will?" At last, in order to avoid the misfortunes and torments that threatened their families, the three miserably gave up and stepped on the cross. They soon acknowledged their sin and, crying bitterly, they confessed, repented and decided to go to the capital and present themselves to the Emperor. They entered and protested in the presence of the Emperor: "Death rather than trample on the cross."

Having made this decision, all three were condemned on 11 June 1839 to be sawed in half with a sickle and their bodies thrown into the sea. Great had been their sin and barbarous their execution, which was carried out on 13 June 1839. [But greater still was the forgiveness of God. - Ed., GC]

SAINT NICHOLAS THE

Layman

(? - 1839)

Nicholas was born in Kieu-trung, date unknown.

According to the census of 1838, there were in the province of Nam-dinh 500 Christian soldiers who, little by little, were abandoning their faith in the face of the cruel torments with which they were threatened.

With the intention of encouraging them to apostatize, their leaders gave them a great banquet. Faced with the choice of treading on the cross or suffering torture, the majority chose apostasy. Only 15 emerged victoriously from the test. The 15 were punished by having to carry a heavy *cangue* [yoke] day and night. At certain hours, the stocks were applied. Once a day, crucifixes were tied to their feet and they were forced to walk on them. Several succumbed, so that their number was reduced to 9, then to 5, and finally to three.

One of the three valiant soldiers of Christ was Nicholas The. He was Augustine Huy's closest companion both in his heyday of wild living, in his fall and repentance and finally in martyrdom. We refrain from recounting their long sufferings which were crowned at last with their execution.

In addition to the torments that were inflicted on them, the three added fasting and prayer. When they were taken before the tribunal, it was Augustine who spoke for the rest. In the meantime, Nicholas and Dominic prayed the rosary to the Queen of Martyrs, asking for the enlightenment of their companion.

Nicholas and Augustine were both executed on 13 June 1839.

SAINT DOMINIC DAT

Layman

(? - 1839)

Dominic Dat was born in Phu-nhai, the son of Christian parents. Like many other young men, he served in the military. Augustine Huy and Nicholas The were his close friends. He fell from grace, as they did, and as they did, he wept for his sins. "Obey the authority of the Emperor," the Mandarin said, "and step on the cross." Dominic weakened and obeyed, but repented immediately. With his friends, he hurried to the presence of the Mandarin to admit and bemoan his sin.

These three soldiers were determined to appear before the Emperor. When the time came to do so, Dominic could not go because he was on duty. He told the others, however: "You two go, I have to stay, but I am in accord with your views. When you present the formal report, sign my name on it as well; what you suffer, I too will suffer."

In the meantime, Dominic gave himself over to prayer and waited peacefully for the outcome. When he found out that his two companions had already been executed, he rejoiced. He knew that his hour had arrived also. With a serene and noble spirit he took leave of his wife and daughter, left his town and set out on the road to the capital. He prayed the rosary fervently all the way. From the capital, he wrote: "I have suffered many and diverse torments for confessing my faith. Though they have worse ones in store for me, I will never again trample the cross." And his reward for such constancy? "We order strangulation immediately," read the sentence.

On 18 July 1839, the soul of this glorious martyr was reunited with his two companions in the eternal mansions.

SAINT THOMAS DU

Dominican Priest

(1783 - 1839)

Thomas was born in 1783, a native of Phu-nhai, in the province of Nam-dinh — a town that has given many martyrs to the Church. A majority of Christians lived in Nam-Dinh and so, no doubt this was the reason for its many persecutions. Thomas was already a priest when he entered the Dominican Order at 31 years of age. He made his solemn profession on 21 December 1814. He led such an austere and exemplary life that his brothers in the community were wont to call him “Saint Bruno.”

Father Du had not escaped the fury of the infamous Governor Trinh-quanh-Khanh, the true “Whip of God.” He was taken prisoner in the town of Lieu-de just a few moments after celebrating the Eucharist. He had disguised himself as a laborer and was weeding in the garden like any laborer. Unfortunately, a man recognized him and denounced him. So the authorities handcuffed him and took him to the capital.

They took him before the tribunal when Governor Trinh-quanh-Khanh saw him, he asked in a loud voice and with a sour face: “What are you doing here, sinner?” To this Thomas answered tranquilly: “I am taking care of my people.” When he would not divulge the whereabouts of Bishop Hermosilla, he was given 20 lashes. This was repeated every time he appeared before the judges. As a “reward” for his bravery, he would receive 20, 30 and even up to 90 lashes. He endured them without the least sigh or complaint.

On one occasion, one of the Christian women was able to enter the prison and could not contain herself when she saw the heavy *cangue* that he carried. She broke into tears. Thomas consoled her, saying: “I am physically weak now, but I can take it. Our Lord suffered innumerable torments for the sins of the world, and I suffer all this in order to imitate Him in some way.”

To another pious woman, he said: “I desire death but I do not know when it will come.”

On 26 November 1839, his time came. The Lord heard the ardent desires of his faithful servant, giving him the singular privilege of sealing with his blood the Religion that he had practiced and taught so faithfully. That day, he received the blow that separated his head from his body, thereby opening for him the gates of heaven.

SAINT DOMINIC XUYEN

Dominican Priest

(1786-1839)



Dominic [Nguyen Van] Xuyen was born in 1786 in a town called Huong-hop in the province of Thai-binh. His parents were honorable and prosperous farmers. He dedicated himself to the study of the Sino-Vietnamese characters. He was ordained a priest at the age of 33. Under the direction of Bishop Ignatius Delgado, he became a religious in the Dominican Order and made profession on 20 April 1820.

Dominic was a faithful observer of the Rules and Constitutions of the Order. According to the testimony of witnesses for the Cause of his Beatification, he was a brilliant example of charity and compassion for the poor. So great was his compassion for the needy that he left standing orders that when beggars came to the door, they were to be given his portion and that he would eat the left-overs. His great diligence in helping the poor with material goods was far outstripped “when it came to distributing food for their souls.” His preaching was always accompanied by good example; thus, he attracted many to the Church.

Dominic was a companion of Thomas Du. In order to evade the fury of the persecution of Minh-Manh, he was forced to live in hiding for a long time. His enemies caught him at last on 18 August 1839. To the various questions asked by the Mandarin, he answered: “I am Xuyen, priest of the Religion. I am not from this town.” Pointing to a crucifix, the Mandarin asked: “This Lord Jesus, is he yours or not?” He answered: “We worship the Lord Jesus.” Slyly, the Mandarin whispered: “If you have money, we can settle this business.” Father Xuyen answered: “If the Mandarin will pardon me, please do me a favor. If you take me prisoner, I can endure that. I have only my body; I have no gold or silver.”

After two days, Dominic was taken to the capital of the province carrying a *cangue* so heavy that it was necessary for two men to hold it at both ends. When they arrived at the capital, they denied him this help. They tied a rope to one of the ends of the *cangue* and dragged him. Over and over he had to appear before the tribunal and over and over he was whipped. His flesh was torn with either cold or hot pincers. He was treated with unheard of cruelty. They even pierced his lips with red hot awl.

Father Dominic received the crown of martyrdom on 26 November 1839 with his friend, Father Thomas Du.

SAINT FRANCIS XAVIER MAU

Lay Dominican

(? - 1839)

Francis Xavier was a Lay Dominican and one of the disciples of Father Peter Tu. He was one of those martyred for the faith at the end of 1839. These five Lay Dominicans — Francis Xavier, Dominic, Thomas, Augustine and Stephen — made their profession in prison. They wrote to their Superior, saying: “We ask to be professed and be allowed to observe the Rule and Statutes and customs of the Third Order of St. Dominic and to live according to these until death.” They were martyred together.

Catechist Francis Xavier Mau was born in Ke-dien, a Christian community in the province of Thai-binh. With his natural goodness and joyful spirit, he won the friendship of all the Christians wherever he went. When Father Peter Tu was captured, Francis Xavier visited him in prison, and there, he too was caught.

Francis was taken to the tribunal where Peter was being tried. When the Mandarin asked who he was, he answered: “I am one of the disciples of Father Tu.” He then got close to Father Tu and whispered: “I beg you, Father, to have pity on me and to acknowledge me as your disciple so that I, too, may die for my faith.” He was to have his wish granted.

During his stay in prison, Francis catechized more than 40 neophytes of whom several died for their faith. Someone asked him how many things were being sent to him and his companions in prison; he replied: “The only thing missing is a mosquito net and a boy to fan us.” Such was his sense of humor and desire to die for the faith.

“If you don’t want to step on the crucifix, it’s all right, just go around it once and I will forgive you,” the Mandarin suggested in vain. The five Christians were more anxious to die than to have the Mandarin forgive them. Francis Xavier Mau answered in the name of his friends: “For a long time we have desired to suffer for our beliefs, like the deer yearning for the clear waters, and now at last we have received our wish. We beg you, Great Mandarin, to order the execution of the decree.”

“If you die, it is your doing. Do not complain and lament that the Great Mandarin did not have mercy on you.” The Mandarin then condemned them, saying; “You are criminals who follow the Religion of Jesus. For a long time, you have been admonished and corrected and you still refuse to tread on the crucifix. Therefore, take them out at once and strangle them.”

Catechist Francis Mau marched at the head of the group, face resplendent and joyfully saying goodbye to everyone. Every now and then he would raise his eyes to heaven and happily say: “I am going there,”

Francis’s earlier wish was fulfilled when he was strangled on 19 December 1839.

Three years later, when his grave was opened to transfer his remains, those present noticed a sweet odor. One of the witnesses declared at the Process for Beatification that: “When I came to take the body it was pitch dark. Then some lights appeared like lamps that were moving ahead of me, lighting the way.” The same witness related other episodes that attested to the holiness of this glorious martyr of Christ.

SAINT DOMINIC UY

Lay Dominican

(? - 1839)

Dominic Uy was born in Tien-mon in the province of Thai-binh at a date unknown.

This martyr, a companion of Francis Xavier Mau in life and in death, was also a faithful follower of Father Peter Tu in the exercise of their ministry. Such was his love for the priest that, one time, while they fleeing, he arranged a cave with two compartments for themselves, a lower one and an upper one. He placed Father Tu in the lower one so that if they were discovered the officials would take him and leave Father Tu to care for the faithful. He was heard to say: "If God wishes me to suffer, it is all right. I just fear for the Christians left behind."

In his first meeting with the judges, Dominic received ten lashes; during the night he got forty-five more because the soldiers were trying to get money from him.

All that Dominic Uy wanted was to shed his blood for the faith. From the following conversation that the two friends carried on in prison we can sense this.

"Son, if you wish to live, Father says of you that he brought you so that you would cook for him, and with that, the son will live."

"I ask you, Father, to say of me serious things so that I can suffer death and thus follow Father."

"I agree to that. I declare that the son is a Master Preacher, and thus you will die and follow Father. But whatever Father says of the son, by that he will abide. In no way must you on the writings or the sayings of the Court notaries."

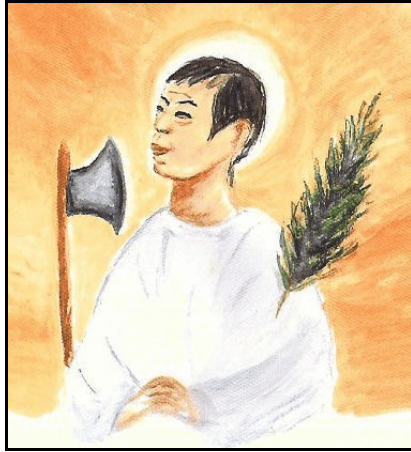
When this valiant catechist refused to step on the cross, he was condemned to death. He replied; "I am ready. I am full of joy for I have merited to be martyred."

Dominic died by strangulation on 19 December 1839.

SAINT THOMAS DE

Lay Dominican

(1810 - 1839)



Thomas [Nguyen Van] De was born in the small village of Ke-mot in the province of Bac-ninh, date unknown.

This Lay Dominican was a young man of 27 or 28 and the father of a family when he was taken prisoner. He was a tailor by profession and a man of irreproachable conduct. When he found out that his home was to be searched, knowing the danger he was in, he gathered his family — a wife and three sons — and said: “Serve and adore our Lord. In this battle in which I am about to enter, I depend only on the grace of God. I am determined to follow the teachings of my priest and do my duty. I will

not return.” Then, turning to his wife, he said: “If you love me, beg God to give me strength and . . . nothing more.”

Francis Xavier Mau wrote in a letter that when Thomas De had his encounter with the Mandarin, he was inspired to confess: “The most high Lord of heaven is the Creator of heaven and earth, of man and of all things,.” The Great Mandarin got very angry and asked: “Who is your Lord? That carpenter?” Then Thomas asked the Mandarin: “Answer me, Great Mandarin, where is the beginning or root of the idol Abalam? If the Mandarin cuts off my head, I shall see the face of my Lord above, in heaven, with undending joy.” Burning with anger, the Mandarin ordered that he be whipped. A short time later, he said: “Stop. That’s enough. Why dirty the whip?”

The Lord heard the desires of this young Lay Dominican. He died by strangulation on 19 December 1839.

SAINT AUGUSTINE MOI

Lay Dominican

(1806 - 1839)

Augustine [Nguyen Van] Moi was born in Bo-trang, in the province of Thai-binh. He was a “new Christian” baptized at age 31 by Father Peter Tu, at which time he also became a Lay Dominican.

“If the Great Mandarin orders that my head be cut off or that I die in any other way, I obey and accept death.” These were the words that valiant Augustine spoke as the soldiers picked him up to carry him over to a cross that he was to step on. He raised his legs, however, and refused to do it. They kept hitting him until they forced him to lower his legs. He said: “Lord, my God, deliver me. Into your hands I place my body and soul.”

When the Mandarin saw that Augustine obstinately refused to trample the cross, he ordered the soldiers to give him 100 lashes and to exile him. This sentence did not please the Emperor, so the Mandarin changed it to strangulation. Thus did this farmer receive his reward, the palm of martyrdom, on 19 December 1839.

SAINT STEPHEN VINH

Lay Dominican

(1814? - 1839)



This martyr, Stephen Vinh [Nguy / Nguyen] like Augustine Moi, was born in Bo-trang, in the province of Thai-binh. He was a catechumen when he was taken prisoner, but he remained faithful until death. He suffered the same interrogations and received identical tortures as his companions in prison. As the others, he too refused to tread on the cross and like them, he died by strangulation. Stephen was baptized and received into the Third Order of St. Dominic shortly before his martyrdom.

Stephen and his four companions were very worried about the deaths of Father Tu and Joseph Canh. But on the third night after the death of the two, the group seemed to see Father Tu's soul going by and saying to them: "You have no reason to be sad. You will obtain the palm of martyrdom but it will be a while yet because you still have to earn more merit to be worthy of such an honor." With these words, Stephen and his friends were consoled and strengthened to endure all the torments that were to come.

During the year that they remained in prison, they patiently endured all kinds of misery and all sorts of cruel abuse.

Through all this, they continued their fasts and penances. During their imprisonment, they prayed the rosary in chorus, as well as other devotions. Thus, prison became more like a chapel than a place for the condemned.

Their martyrdom took place on 19 December 1839 in the prison at Bac-ninh.

SAINT JOSEPH HIEN

Dominican Priest

(1775-1840)

We come now to 1840 during which many were martyred — sealing with their blood the truth of the Religion of the Crucified.

One of these heroes was Father Joseph (Do Quang) Hien (or Hieu), who was born in 1775 in the populous Christian community of Quan-phuong in the province of Nam-dinh. He had been a companion of Bishop Dominic Henares and had made profession in the Dominican Order on 13 October 1813.

“I should flee and hide but if God wants me to suffer martyrdom, so much the better,” this venerable old man would say. And suffer he did. He had been hiding in a cave for nine months when he was denounced by a pagan. When he was taken out and brought to Governor Trinh-quanh-Khanh, he was ordered to step on the cross. Father refused and said: “I adore my Lord, therefore, I will not tread on the cross.” For answering thus, he was given forty lashes on 20 December 1839. The blood flowed but he never stopped saying the sweet name of Jesus. Father Joseph was then 64.

Two days later, with a heavy *cangue* on his shoulders, he was taken to the capital and locked in the prison of Nam-dinh. He remained there for five months. During his stay, this venerable old man converted the jailers, brought reconciliation to some and catechized and baptized many others. He would have done more but when the Mandarin found out what was happening, he had him placed in total confinement. In his new quarters, Joseph painted images of the cross which he passed out to the Christians.

After several rough and humiliating interviews with the Mandarins and judges and after many promises and torments, Joseph — with a certain irony — said to the executioners: “I am very old and I am not afraid of death.” The Mandarins were finally exasperated with him because they could not break him. They condemned him to be decapitated on 9 May 1840, in the city of Nam-dinh.

SAINT THOMAS TOAN

Lay Dominican

(1767 - 1840)

This martyr was born in 1767 in the town of Can-ban (or Can-phan), in the province of Thai-binh. “For me to hide and reserve my life so that I can administer to the faithful is something I cannot do,” he told a priest who had asked him to join him in hiding.

Thomas was 73 years old when he was taken prisoner. He was brought before the Mandarins several times; each time he came out victorious. Neither bribery, threats, being exposed to the inclement weather, nor presented naked to the jeers and insults of the mob, could break his decision to die for Christ.

One day, sad to say, he fell. He could no longer stand the harassment, threats and attacks of the people. Catechist Toan stepped on the cross in their presence. With one voice they cried: “He stepped on the cross, he stepped on it.” He apostatized a second time, stepping on it again.

Instantly, Thomas was touched by grace, realized his grave sin and repented. He wept, confessed his sin and did penance. He changed into a different person, a more superior one. He received the grace to endure many more terrible tortures than before. Among others, he was exposed naked to the hot sun with a *cangue* around his neck with his hands tied to it. He also had crucifixes tied to his feet which he had to step on whenever he walked.

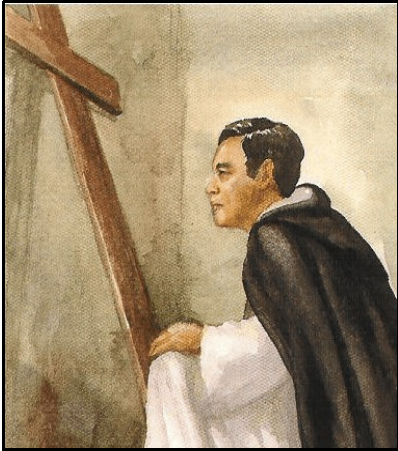
On one occasion, the Mandarin held a banquet and invited him, saying sarcastically: “Eat so that you can step on the cross.” To this, the holy man answered: “To eat to step on the cross, never shall I do it again.” The Mandarin retorted: “If that is what you want, then I prohibit everyone from ever giving you something to eat.” And thus it was done. After a rigorous and prolonged martyrdom, Thomas Toan died of starvation. His body was swollen from the blows he had received and he had become blind. He died on 27 June 1840; all the prisoners were witnesses to his baneful but glorious triumph. Catechist Thomas was then 75.

Bishop Dominic Martí, O.P. said that once in a while, Tham, a non-Christian sergeant, risked his life to bring Toan some food to eat. He was able to get some clean clothing for him and saved the old as pious relics. When Thomas was close to death, the sergeant, like the Good Thief, said to him: “Remember me when you get to heaven.”

SAINT DOMINIC TRACH (DOAI)

Dominican Priest

(1792 - 1840)



Another victim of Minh-Manh was the glorious martyr Dominic Trach (or Doai). This champion of the faith was born in 1792 in the Christian community of Ngoai-voi in the province of Nam-dinh, which was then called Eastern Tonkin. He was gifted by God with abundant graces and was ordained to the priesthood at the age of 31. Looking for a closer union with God, he entered the Dominican Order and made his profession on 13 June 1825.

This zealous missionary had exercised his apostolic ministry for 14 years when he fell into the hands of his enemies. Thanks to Christian friends, he was rescued but from then on he had to wander from place to place.

Dominic was once again taken prisoner and imprisoned in Nam-Dinh. Governor Trinh-quanh-Khanh was determined to break this holy man. But as often as he tried, Father Dominic remained triumphant. In one of his confrontations, the ferocious Trinh said; “Do you see that?” motioning to the cross. “Step on it or you will die.” Father Dominic went toward the cross, and when everyone thought that he was going to step on it, he prostrated himself beside it and adored it. Then, turning to the judges, he said; “This is the cross upon which my Lord died and is the emblem of the Christian religion. Everyone who wishes to be saved should adore it. For my part, I adore it and choose to die rather than trample on it.”

A few moments before he died, Dominic wrote from his cell: “Thanks be to the mercy of God, I have been prisoner in seven places and this is the last one. The only thing I now await is the execution of the sentence. I have always been sick. I have been whipped, and not as most people, but in a more painful way.”

Shortly after his arrival in Nam-dinh, the sentence was carried out on 18 September 1840. Dominic was tied to a stake; the blow he received opened the gates of heaven for this holy martyr. A few months after that on 20 January 1841, Minh-Manh died, the victim of an “unknown sickness, repulsive, shameful and insufferable,” without having totally annihilated the true religion in his dominion.

SAINT AUGUSTINE SCHÖFFLER

Priest, M.E.P., Dominican Tertiary

(1822 - 1851)



Augustine Schœffler was born in Mittelbron, Lorraine (France) in 1822. As a young seminarian, he became a member of the Third Order of St. Dominic. Later, in 1846, he entered the Paris Foreign Missions Society and was ordained on 29 May 1847. Shortly thereafter, he went to Vietnam as a missionary.

Father Mark Gispert, O.P., in his *History of the Dominican Missions in Tonkin* (pp. 511-512), in relating Augustine's martyrdom, states that he was the first European victim of the second wave of persecutions of Emperor

Tu-Duc.

In March 1851, Augustine was taken prisoner in North Vietnam by a district chief and taken to the Great Mandarin of Son-tay who ordered that he be burdened with a *cangue* and imprisoned for two months with other criminals.

On 1 May 1851, Augustine was taken to be executed. He was escorted by two companies of soldiers and several elephants and horses, as if they were going to battle. He was preceded by a soldier carrying a placard that read: "Notwithstanding the many times that the Religion of Jesus has been prohibited, this Father Augustine Schœffler, European priest, has had the audacity of entering clandestinely into this Kingdom to preach to and seduce the people. He was captured and confessed that it is so. Therefore, as his crime shows, he is guilty and so we order that he be decapitated and his body thrown into the river. The fourth year of Tu-Duc, first of the third moon."

When the group arrived at the place of execution, the holy martyr prostrated himself on the ground and prayed for a while. Upon getting up, he said: "Hurry." At the third blow, his head rolled to the ground, and was thrown into the river by the soldiers. The Christians then retrieved his body and gave it a fitting burial.

Father Augustine Schœffler was beatified by Pope Leo XIII on 27 May 1900, with the other 26 martyrs reviewed above. This entire group was canonized on 19 June 1988 by Pope John Paul II.



Portrait of Augustine's martyrdom

Wooden marker indicates his crimes

B

MARTYRS OF VIETNAM

Beatified by Pope Pius X
on 20 May 1906

Canonized by Pope John-Paul II
on 19 June 1988

By Francisco Zurdo, O.P.

CHRONOLOGICAL INDEX OF MARTYRDOM

MARTYRS OF VIETNAM

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PRESENTATION

We present here the biographies of more heroes of the faith who lived in various periods in the history of the Martyrs of Vietnam. All of them were beatified by Pope Pius X. To all of them can be applied the words of the letter to the Hebrews: -

... [O]thers, submitted to torture, refusing release so that they would rise again to a better life. Some had to bear being pilloried and flogged, or even chained up in prison. They were stoned, or sawn in half, or killed by the sword; they were homeless, and wore only the skins of sheep and goats; they were in want and hardship, and maltreated. They were too good for the world and they wandered in deserts and mountains and in caves and ravines. [Heb. 11:35-38]

In 1745, Matthew Alonso Liciniana and Francis Gil de Federich were martyred. They are the protomartyrs of the Dominican Order in Vietnam. In 1733, Hyacinth Castañeda and Vincent Liem [Le Duang] of Peace also received the palm of martyrdom. Finally, in 1861, Jerome Hermosilla, Valentine Berrio-Ochoa, Peter Almató and Joseph Khang [Nguyen Van Duy] were martyred.

These are the eight heroes of the faith beatified by Pius X on 20 May 1906 and canonized on 19 June 1988 by John-Paul II.

SAINT MATTHEW ALONSO LICINIANA

Dominican Priest

(1702 - 1745)



Nava del Rey in the province of Valladolid in Spain was the birthplace of Matthew on 26 November 1702. He [entered the Dominican Convent of the Holy Cross in Segovia. Still very young, he left for the Far East and] arrived in Manila in 1730. He was assigned to the University of Santo Tomas. On 13 February 1731, he sailed to the mission of Tonkin where he arrived on 19 December of the same year after many days of hardship, danger and calamity. Finally, on 18 January 1732, he landed at Trung-linh, where the Superior of the mission lived.

Father Matthew applied himself so assiduously to learning the language that by the end of the year he was placed in charge of a district.

Father Hilary Ocio, O.P., in his *Compendium of the short biographies . . .*, p. 365, says: “Matthew Alonso Liciniana was a fervent religious and a very zealous priest, although quite sickly. This, however, did not keep him from attending to the corporal and spiritual needs of his neighbor.”

And Father Mark Gispert, O.P., in his *History of the Dominican Missions in Tonkin*, p. 220, wrote of Matthew: “For ten consecutive years this holy missionary worked always with unflagging zeal and diligence in spite of his poor health. Many times he escaped from the hands of his persecutors. Once, he fled just in time, still wearing his vestments. On another occasion, having been defended by a friend, he was released.

Ultimately, Matthew fell into the hands of his enemies by the betrayal of an apostate Christian. On that day in November 1743, he was celebrating the Eucharist when some soldiers arrived, looking for him. The frightened Christians fled while he himself, taken aback, fled wearing vestments and consuming the Sacred Hosts as he went. He was entering a cave prepared for him when he was caught and dragged into the mission house where his hair and beard were torn out. One of the soldiers stuck a sword in his side. After a few days, wounded as he was, he along with several catechists was taken by boat to the capital, Nam-dinh.

Christian followers paid a bribe to rescue him, but instead the Governor himself took the priest to the court in Hanoi. Matthew was imprisoned and kept for forty days. He never stopped exhorting and helping everyone. He converted some and helped his faithful remain strong in their baptismal promises.

Matthew appeared before the tribunal many times and each time he came out victorious. He told the officials: “ I came to Tonkin to teach all to love and venerate God represented on the cross. How, then, am I going to commit the sin of stepping on it? It is the sign by which we were redeemed by Jesus Christ, our God and Savior, whom we should love above all things.”

Matthew was condemned to be beheaded but the Mandarin, who had a liking for Christians, commuted the sentence to life imprisonment. In prison, Matthew met his Dominican brother, Father Francis Gil de Federich. Both faced the same fate. Matthew wrote: “Fifty soldiers guard this prison. They permit us to leave once a day to go to the home of Christian friends but only because we give them plenty of money. There we celebrate the Eucharist, administer the Sacraments and care for the Christians of Hanoi City, who number about twelve thousand or more.”

When Matthew learned that his companion was going to be beheaded on 22 January 1745, he said: “I am a great sinner also; do I not deserve to die for my faith as my brother? When he goes to the place of execution, I will ask to be allowed to accompany him; and in the presence of the judges and the Mandarins, I shall ask them why they are beheading my brother and pardoning me — being that I, too, am a Teacher of the Christian Religion. So, you should make the two of us suffer the same punishment or enjoy the same pardon.”

Matthew finally received what he had so desired; the last sentence of condemnation read: “The first penalty for which the outsider Matthew was pardoned was death by beheading; he was sentenced then to life imprisonment. That decision has now been revoked, giving him again the sentence of death by beheading. This last judgment has been approved by the Emperor.”

When this last sentence was made known to him, Matthew exclaimed: “With happiness and resignation I submit to God’s will.” He went immediately to his companion. They embraced affectionately and congratulated each other for the new sentence. Both of them walked joyously to their execution, dressed in their Dominican habits. Both had words of pardon for their enemies. Dragged to the stakes, they were beheaded on 22 January 1745. Together, they flew to heaven to receive their crowns.

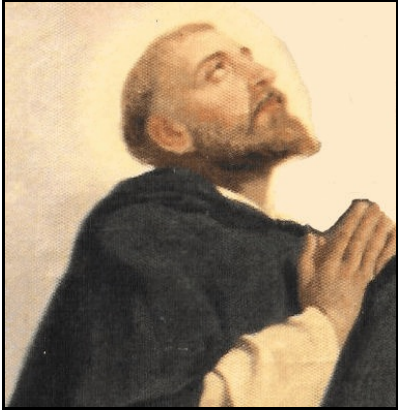
WRITINGS

- ◆ *Letters* to family members and other persons, written at different times (cf APSR, Ms. vols. 244 and 617). Some of these can be found in Paulino Alvarez, O.P., *Santos, Bienaventurados, Venerables de la Order de los Predicadores*, vol II, *Bienaventurados*. Vergara, 1921, pp. 437-443.
- ◆ *Report* on the interrogations that were made to him at the Tribunal (cf. APSR, Ms. vols. 35 and 266). Some fragments may be found in Paulino Alvarez, *op. cit.*, pp. 438-441.

SAINT FRANCIS GIL DE FEDERICH

Dominican Priest

(1702 - 1745)



“Are you looking for me? Then why are you taking them as prisoners also?” These were the words that our martyr spoke. They remind us of the words that Our Savior uttered in the Garden of Gethsemani. Who was this speaking? He was a humble but valiant friar.

Francis was born in Tortosa, Tarragona (Spain) in December 1702. He received the Dominican habit in the Priory of St. Catherine Virgin and Martyr of Barcelona. He made profession in 1718. For some time, he remained there as professor of philosophy and as Master of Students.

Francis had a passion for the conversion of unbelievers. As soon as he could, he affiliated himself to the Province of Our Lady of the Rosary. After a few months in Pangasinan, Philippines, as secretary to the Provincial, he asked permission to prepare himself for the mission of Tonkin. After receiving permission, he left for Tonkin, arriving there in August 1735.

Being gifted with exceptional qualities and talents, he soon had the language of the country at his command. He accomplished much during the two years (1735-1737) he was free to exercise his apostolate. He worked untiringly in the ministry, overlooking sickness, dangers and inconveniences, as long as he could be of service to the needy. According to an eyewitness, Francis preached incessantly, administered the Sacraments, visited and consoled the sick. Neither bad roads, intense heat nor fear of falling into the hands of the enemy stopped him. The love of God and zeal for souls were his incentive and strength against all difficulties.

The persecution against the Christians and their pastors flared up more and more often. It forced them to hide on rivers and in the mountains in order to continue evangelizing the people. Francis, who had the reputation of being one of the more capable Europeans in the Kingdom, was very prudent and careful in hiding. Eventually, after having been denounced by a Buddhist monk, he fell into an enemy trap on 3 August 1737.

Francis was apprehended as he finished celebrating the Holy Eucharist. He was taken to a boat holding other prisoners, some women among them. Francis confronted the leader, saying: “You have me now, why are you taking these as prisoners, too? Let them go.” To the surprise and admiration of all, the leader freed them.

Francis was taken to the capital, Hanoi. Weighed down with heavy chains, he was put in prison. The jailers took him out into an uncovered patio where they left him exposed to the raw weather, wearing only a short tunic and his rosary. He won the sympathy of all in prison because of the serenity and patience with which he bore his sickness and chains.

“How is it that since you know very well that the Christian Religion is prohibited in these kingdoms, you still came to preach it?” asked the Governor. Father answered: “I have come to liberate souls from perdition.” The Governor asked further: “If the Emperor cuts off your head, then what?” The answer was not one he expected. “If the Emperor cuts off my head, it will make me very happy.”

Later, weighed down with more chains, Francis was taken to another prison. From that moment on, the fever and all his other sicknesses left him. On his way to the prison, he ground so a deep wound on his foot from dragging the chains that he could no longer walk. He remained immobile in a corner of his cell.

Two non-Christian women were moved to compassion at the lamentable condition of this sick man. Through bribery, they were able to take him to their home, to care for his wound and to feed him. This act of kindness did not go unrewarded for one of the women — who was herself ill — was cured through the prayers of Father Francis. In time, both women became Christians.

It would not do the judges any good to threaten him with all kinds of sufferings if he didn't tread on the cross or shatter a statue of the Blessed Virgin. They asked him: “Will it be an injustice to behead you?” He answered: “Without a doubt, but I will gladly suffer it.” He was condemned to die by decapitation for being a teacher of the Christian Religion, which was prohibited by the laws of the Kingdom.

In his final triumph, Francis had the joy of being accompanied by his Dominican brother and friend, Matthew Alonso Liciniana. Both apostles were beheaded on 22 January 1745. The same can be said of them as was said of St. Paul and St. Peter: “These two apostles who loved each other in life were not separated in death.”

At the Provincial Chapter of 1743, the following statement was recorded:

A marvelous thing happened in Father Francis Gil de Federich's cell. There, he preached a mission and thanks to the disposition of his kind soul and to Divine aid, he was able to plant and water the faith in the Tonkin people. And what is even more marvelous is that the [natives] themselves ran to him to embrace the faith. God gave increase to his ministry.

[Provincial Chapter Acts 1743, p. 278.]

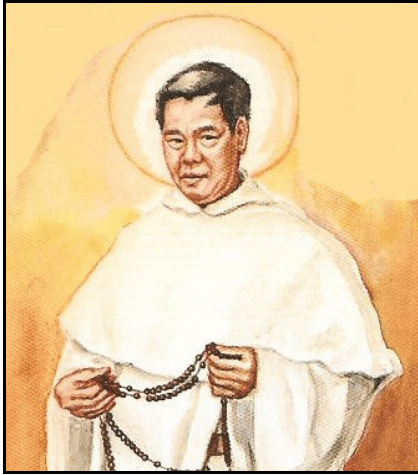
WRITINGS

- ◆ *Letters* to different persons. Some portions are found in Paulino Alvarez, *op. cit.*, pp. 427-432.
- ◆ *Report* on his captivity and imprisonment (cf. (APSR, Ms. vol. 266).
- ◆ *Report* on the interrogations before the Tribunal (cf. APSR, Ms. vols. 35, 47, and 266).
- ◆ *Theologico-moral Cases* and other canonical questions (cf. APSR, Ms. vol. 618).

SAINT VINCENT LIEM LE DUANG

Dominican Priest

(1731 - 1773)



Vincent was born in 1731 in the Christian community of Thong-dong of Phu-nhai district, Nam-dinh province. He entered the *House of God* at the age of twelve. His good qualities and abilities were recognized so that after a few years he was sent to study in Juan de Letran College in Manila — this, courtesy of a scholarship given by the King of Spain to Vietnamese youths.

Vincent studied successfully for three years, winning the approval of his professors and the friendship of his classmates. In 1753, he entered the Dominican Priory of St. Dominic. After profession, he continued his studies at the University of Santo Tomas in Manila. After ordination, he was allowed to return to his country to minister to his people.

In January 1759, he arrived at Trung-linh at the residence of the Superior of the missions. Because he could speak Vietnamese, he started his apostolate at once. He had gone to one of the Christian communities to celebrate the Feast of the Rosary when he was taken prisoner in October 1773. It had not been long since Father Hyacinth Castañeda met the same fate in the same district. Vincent did not attempt to flee or to defend himself. “May God’s will be done. If the Lord wants me to suffer, I am ready,” he said. The unbelievers threw him down, tied him up and beat him unmercifully.

Vincent found his Dominican brother, Hyacinth Castañeda in the same prison where he was taken. They were not to be separated again. Both were placed in cages like wild animals and taken to Hung-yen. The Mandarin in charge of administering justice ordered that they be taken out of the cages and allowed to walk in the streets because: “In our efforts to destroy the Christian Religion, we gain nothing by humiliating or taking the lives of two such honorable persons.”

The two took advantage of their liberty to preach the Gospel to all who came to listen. The people were delighted to hear how well they expressed themselves in the classical language of the country. This blessing lasted only a short time before they were again placed into cages and taken to the capital, Hanoi.

At one of their many appearances before the tribunal, it pleased the Emperor to arrange a disputation between the two priests and three famous learned men of the Court: one a Buddhist, another a Confucian, and the third a Taoist. The two prisoners proved with sound reasoning, clarity and elegance that the true Religion was the Christian religion. Witnesses were left in admiration, the adversaries in confusion. Such was the conviction of one of the Princes, who was present at the disputation, that then and there he confessed to the superiority of the Christian Religion.

“Old man,” they said to Father Liem, “preach your law so that we may follow you. Why is it that you, being such an illustrious man, do not concern yourself with regal matters, so that you may be elevated to the dignity of Mandarin?”

On another occasion, Vincent said to the judges: “If the Emperor lets the two of us go free, both of us will return to preaching the Law of God to gain the salvation of souls. Moreover, if the Emperor kills the European priest and lets me go free, I will be with him, saying: ‘We both profess the same religion in life, and the same we will profess in death.’ ”

Vincent’s fate had been decided, however, from the time he had engaged in a stormy dialogue with the Queen Mother. He was condemned to be decapitated, the sentence carried out on 7 November 1773.

Vincent’s beatification by Pope Pius X took place on 20 May 1906. San Juan de Letran College, which glories in being his Alma Mater, chose him for its Patron. His statue is decked with the college uniform and displayed in the patio of this famous College.

WRITINGS

- ◆ *Letters* written at different times to his family, Religious and other persons (Cf. APSR, Ms. vols. 47-317).

SAINT HYACINTH CASTAÑEDA

Dominican Priest

(1743 - 1773)



Hyacinth was born on 13 January 1743 in the ancient city of Játiva in the province of Valencia (Spain), the fatherland of saints, Popes and artists. He received the Dominican habit in his native city. Ordained a priest, he and a companion were assigned to the missionary apostolate in the Celestial Empire, where they arrived in April 1766.

Hyacinth's stay in China was brief because he was denounced very shortly after his arrival. When captured, he was weighed down with chains and imprisoned in Fogan. He wrote: "We were taken to various tribunals fourteen times; at last, they pronounced the sentence of exile." For this reason, the two were returned to Macao at the end of 1769. In February 1770, Hyacinth left for the mission of Tonkin in North Vietnam. "I did not find the Annamese language hard to learn because it was much like Chinese," he would say.

Hyacinth was not free from persecution in his new mission. On two occasions, he fell into the hands of the persecutors as he was fleeing in a small boat. One time, he was forced to hide in the keel of the boat, staying there for several hours, covered with boards. As a consequence of this episode, he fell gravely ill and hovered between life and death for several days. Eventually, he was captured on 12 July 1773.

And if this wasn't enough, afflictions of the spirit were added to the bodily pains, with which the Lord wished to test him. He wrote: "No doubt, you know of my tribulations, of my imprisonment, and of the cage in which I remain, stuck here since 5 August. I am waiting now to appear in Court, which I think will occur one of these days." (Cf. Mark Gispert, *op. cit.*, p. 269.)

While Hyacinth was in the prison of Hung-yet, he saw a prisoner in a cage being brought in. He recognized at once that it was his brother in religion, the native Vincent Liem [Le Duang] of Peace. These two venerable men suffered the same fate, passing through the same Calvary from that moment on.

From the prison in Hung-yen, the two — in their respective cages — were taken to a prison in Hanoi. Having appeared before the tribunal several times, both gained a

reputation for great learning and their remarkable knowledge of the Chinese language. This proficiency is not surprising, however, for Father Castañeda had been a missionary in China for years, and of course, Father Liem — as a native Vietnamese — had studied thoroughly the Chinese characters that “form the elegance of the Vietnamese language.”

In all their appearances before the tribunal, the two proved with solid arguments the superiority of the Christian Religion and its position as the only true religion. “If this is so,” asked the Queen Mother, “what is going to happen to those of us who are not Christian?” Father Vincent answered: “The destiny of the non-Christian is hell.” So angry was the Queen at this answer that she asked the Emperor to condemn the two missionaries to immediate death. The tribunal reconvened and endorsed the royal wish; the two were sentenced to death. The prisoners were taken to the door of the palace and again placed in their cages, after which the sentence of beheading was read to them.

Since Vincent was Vietnamese, however, it seemed to the authorities that maybe he should not be executed. Vincent protested: “If he is a Teacher of Religion, I am too. And if the law does not condemn me, neither should it condemn him. Therefore, if Father Hyacinth is to be beheaded, you should do the same to me.” Because of his words, the tribunal ratified the first sentence and the two priests were condemned to be decapitated.

When the two arrived at the place of execution, they gave each other the kiss of peace. Then the executioners carried out the sentence. On 7 November 1773, their heads fell and their souls flew to their eternal dwelling.

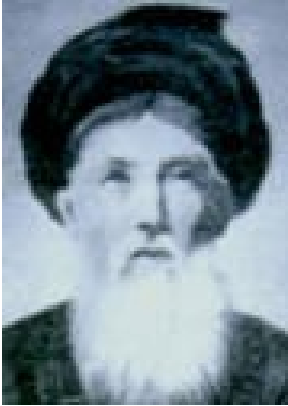
WRITINGS

- ◆ *Letters* written at various times to his family and to other persons (cf. APSR, Ms. vols. 24 and 40). Some fragments can be found in Paulino Alvarez, *op. cit.*, pp. 446-450.

SAINT JEROME HERMOSILLA

Dominican Bishop

(1800 - 1861)



This martyr was destined by God to be the main support of the Dominican mission in Tonkin during the most cruel persecutions suffered by Christians in Vietnam in the reign of the Emperors Minh-Manh and Tu-Duc.

Jerome Hermosilla was born on 30 September 1800 in Santo Domingo de la Calzada, Logroño (Spain). He attended first the Seminary of Valencia before entering the Dominican Order. He made his profession on 29 October 1823. He was already a sub-deacon when he decided to transfer to the Dominican Province of the Rosary. In the company of eleven other religious, he arrived in Manila on 2 March 1825. There, he completed his studies, was ordained and celebrated his First Mass.

Jerome was thirsty for the salvation of souls, so he offered to go to the missions in Vietnam where the Church was undergoing great sufferings. Martyrdom was its daily fare. Around the middle of May 1829, he arrived at the home of the Vicar Provincial who was gravely ill. The arrival of this new missionary gave the Vicar such great joy that he began to feel better right away. This most extraordinary happening was registered in the Acts of the Process for Beatification of Jerome Hermosilla.

Jerome was young, robust and tireless. He always took the heaviest and hardest tasks at the mission. He traveled constantly, visiting the Christian communities, preaching, teaching and witnessing to the faith. Right away, he also became very popular with the unbelievers. His apostolic ministry lasted for 32 years in spite of the cruel persecutions. Being such a great missionary, “he was especially persecuted till the last day of his life.”

The year 1838 is significant because of the persecution that was unleashed by Emperor Minh-Manh throughout all of his dominions. One by one the European missionaries fell. The only one left was the celebrated and hunted Father Hermosilla. The Emperor demanded his capture and the Mandarins were impatient for him to be caught. “We ask for more time,” the judges said. “We are doing all we can to find him; when we do, we shall sentence him.” Thousands of soldiers were sent out to look for him.

On one occasion, the soldiers entered the house when the missionary was present. When Jerome heard them he shouted: “God’s will be done.” In the midst of all the

confusion, the soldiers neither saw him nor heard him; since they thought he had escaped, they left. Hermosilla could not believe what had happened so he too left to look for a safer hiding place. God had preserved him because he was the supporting pillar of the Mission in those critical times.

At the beginning of 1841, Minh-Manh died without seeing his perfidious intentions accomplished. The year before, in August 1840, Hermosilla had been named Vicar Apostolic and Metropolitan titular Bishop. With this appointment came the beginning of his new Calvary. The journey he had to undertake to be consecrated was one of unimaginable hardships. Because he had to walk barefoot, his feet were covered with blisters. At times, he held on to the tail of a horse to be dragged; at others, he was carried by his helpers. After ten days of travel, he was consecrated on 25 April 1841. On that occasion, he changed his name, a Vietnamese custom, in order to hide more easily. From then on he would be known as *Liem*, which signifies “just and honorable.”

This change of name, however, did not protect him from falling into the hands of his enemies. He was denounced by a traitor. He was in a boat when a scene similar to that of Gethsemani took place. When the soldiers manhandled Jerome, his catechist Joseph Khang pushed one of the soldiers. The bishop told him: “Leave him alone, God’s will be done.” He then gave the Mandarin all the money he had and begged him: “Take me if you wish but let these poor fishermen go.” The Mandarin did so. The faithful catechist refused to be separated from his bishop, saying: “I beg you to let me go with him; if my master is to die, I want to die with him.”

Both were taken to the town of Hai-duong where a scene so often repeated with our martyrs again took place, namely, placing a cross on the path they were to cross. Bishop Hermosilla and Joseph Khang refused to move forward until the cross was removed. Once they arrived at the prison, they were placed in cages and waited patiently for the supreme moment, so ardently sought. Jerome was decapitated on 1 November 1861 with Valentine Berrio-Ochoa and Peter Almató. A few days later, the faithful catechist Joseph Khang died in the same way.

Jerome Hermosilla is “an immortal figure in the history of the missions. The influence he had on the Christian communities of Tonkin reminds one of that of St. Paul on the churches of Asia.”

WRITINGS

- ◆ *Letters* written at different times to family members and to some Religious. (Cf. APSR, Ms., vol. 34). Many of these can be found in: 1- Mark Gispert, *op. cit.*, pp. 375-460. 2- Paulino Alvarez, *op. cit.*, pp. 403-407.
- ◆ *Pastoral* to his missionaries. It can be found in Maark Gispert, *op. cit.*, pp. 471-473 and 520-521.
- ◆ *Report* on the martyrdom of Father Clement Ignatius Delgado and Companions (cf. APSR, Ms. vols. 23 and 99).



The Beheading of Valentine Berrio-Ochoa

SAINT VALENTINE BERRIO-OCHOA

Dominican Bishop

(1827 - 1861)



“I will become a saint so that Biscay will have one.” This is the answer that Valentine gave to a friend who had asked him what he intended to do with his life. We shall see that he did accomplish this goal.

Valentine was born in Elorrio, Biscay (Spain) on 14 February 1827. From a tender age, virtue was natural to him. He studied to become a priest at the Seminary of Logroño and was ordained there. He was appointed Spiritual Director of the Seminary, a post he filled for some time. In his desire for the support of community, he humbly asked to be admitted to the Dominican Order at the Priory of St Dominic in Ocaña. In no time, he was a model of regular observance. He wrote to his parents: “Your son has become a little friar in white. I live here with holy men who day and night praise God and sometimes get up to sing Matins, singing like angels.” He made profession in 1854.

After his arrival in the Philippines, the reading of letters from missionaries inflamed his heart with desire to go to evangelize Vietnamese lands. He knew well what was likely to be waiting for him there. After experiencing many dangers on his way to Vietnam, he finally arrived in 1858 at the hiding place of the venerable Bishop Melchior García Sampedro. This young 37-year-old bishop was pleased to welcome the new missionary, Father Valentine.

A persecution was raging at this time and the bishop, not wanting to remain without a successor in the Central Vicariate, chose Father Valentine as his Coadjutor. The latter protested because of his young age, unfamiliarity with the language and more importantly with the customs of the country. After all, he had been there only three months. In the end, he had to consent but remarked humorously: “His Eminence Bishop Melchior García Sampedro has given me a heavy cross. If I have the good fortune of reaching heaven, there I will ask him to give me an account of what he did to me.”

The situation of the missionaries worsened daily, especially in the Central Vicariate. A large number of priests, catechists and Christians suffered martyrdom, among them 17 Dominican religious. In such critical times, Bishop Berrio-Ochoa — after imploring Divine

help — followed the advice of Bishop Hermosilla to escape his persecutors by looking for refuge in the Eastern Vicariate. He did this with great sorrow, thinking of the flock he was leaving behind. But he was apprehended on 25 October 1861. On 1 November 1861, he received the palm of martyrdom in the town of Hai-duong with Bishop Hermosilla and Father Peter Almató. An eyewitness reported: “When the group arrived at the place of execution, the Mandarins opened the cages and the martyrs stepped out; prostrating themselves on the ground, they prayed long and fervently. They were tied to three stakes. When the signal was given by a trumpet blast, their heads rolled.” It was on 1 November 1861 when these three souls entered heaven — whitened with the Blood of the Lamb, embellished with crowns of triumph and carrying in their hands the palm of martyrdom.

In view of the heroic virtues of Father Valentine, it was not necessary for him to have been martyred to merit a place among the saints in heaven. Pope Leo XIII assured us: “Even if Father Valentine had not received the palm of martyrdom, his admirable life would have sufficed to obtain for him the honors of the altar.”

In effect, this martyr was gifted with the fundamental virtue of profound humility, protected by a tender devotion to Mary, imbued moreover with a holy joy that made him loved and respected by all. He once said: “I have experienced some dangerous episodes; if it had not been for my sins, maybe I would have lost my head earlier.”

Of his love for our heavenly Mother, especially under the title of the Rosary, it is enough to say that his heart was totally Marian. To his dear mother — who was one of his three loves — he once wrote: “Be consoled, dear mother, with the Blessed Virgin; prostrated at her feet, give her your heart. Pray the rosary with great devotion and love, for the rosary is a very effective weapon.

In summary, then, Valentine Berrio-Ochoa fulfilled what he set out to do when he said to his friend: “I will become a saint so that Biscay will have one.” Later, the Bishop of Vitoria was able to say to this faithful: “You have a saint in heaven, a son of Elorrio. Valentine is the first Biscayan to receive the honors of the altar.”

WRITINGS

- ◆ One hundred-seventy *Letters* to his family, friends and Religious, written between the years 1842-1861.
- ◆ Three *Reports* to the Congregation of the Faith in 1858, 1859.
- ◆ *Pastoral* to his priests, 1859.
- ◆ Report to the President of the “Holy Infancy,” 1860.

All these writings can be found in Jacinto M. Garrastachu, O.P. *Cartas y Escritos de Valentín Berrio-Ochoa*. 3rd printing. Bilbao, 1966. (See also APSR, Ms. vol. 618)

SAINT PETER ALMATÓ Y RIBERA

Dominican Priest

(1830 - 1861)

The acts of the Provincial Chapter of 1863 say that a great number of diocesan priests, catechists and other ministers of religion had suffered martyrdom in Vietnam. Among them were 17 Dominican priests, including Father Peter Almató.

Peter was born in San Feliú Saserra, province of Barcelona, Spain, on 1 November 1830. After finishing his study of the Humanities, he received the habit of the Order in the Priory of St. Dominic in Ocaña. He had followed the advice of St. Anthony Mary Claret who told him: "It is the will of God that you enter the Dominican Order." Peter made profession in 1848.

In his new life, Peter dedicated himself completely to his own sanctification and to the study of various disciplines. He was a man adorned with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. According to his confessor: Peter "preserved his soul free of mortal sin, lived a chaste life and remained a virgin." This is why he is called: Famous son of San Feliú Saserra, Dominican, Confessor, Virgin and Martyr of Jesus Christ in Tonkin, innocent and devotee of Mary."

Peter was ordained in Manila in 1853. A short time later, moved by the calamities that the afflicted Church in Vietnam was undergoing, he obtained permission in 1855 to go to the missions there.

From the very beginning, Peter was troubled with all kinds of sicknesses which impeded his exercise of ministry, in spite of the zeal and solicitude that warmed his soul.

Peter was a companion and disciple of Bishop Valentine Berrio-Ochoa, and like him, was obliged to live as a wanderer, ever facing calamities, "for lack of a place on which to lay his head." In October 1861, after spending several days in hiding with his Bishop, he was captured, due to the betrayal of an enemy.

Weighed down with chains and a large wooden *cangue* around his neck, Father Almató was taken to the capital. At the entrance of the city, someone had placed a large cross which he would have to step on when he entered. When the group reached the cross, Peter prostrated himself and adored it, refusing to go any further unless it was removed. The guards finally removed it.

Peter was taken to the tribunal where he was subjected to a lengthy interrogation

before being placed in a cage. He remained there until his execution of 1 November 1861.

On the road to his execution, Father Almató was carried in a cage while praying the rosary devoutly. He crowned his life with martyrdom on the day of his 31st birthday, which he celebrated in heaven. The decree of the cruel Tu-Duc had been carried out: “That the European Teachers be beheaded, that their heads be on display for three days, and then thrown into the sea with the bodies.”

When Peter’s body was transferred to Spain, the box that contained his remains “was covered with a cloth embroidered with a cross of fine gold thread over which were interlaced a lily and a palm — symbols of his purity and martyrdom. These form the halo of this apostolic man.”

WRITINGS

- ◆ Twenty-eight *Letters* to his parents and brothers, written in the years 1847-1859.

All these can be found in Vito T. Gómez, O.P., *Pedro Almató y Ribera, O.P., Mártir de Tonkín (1830-1861), Correspondencia familiar*. Valencia, 1987.



Beheading of Peter Almató

SAINT JOSEPH KHANG

Lay Dominican

(1832 - 1861)



Catechist Joseph (Nguyen-duy-) Khang was born in the year 1832 in the Christian community of Cao-mai in the district of Tra-vi, province of Thai-binh. At age 16, after his father died, he said good-bye to his mother and entered the *House of God* with the intention of studying for the priesthood. The tempest of persecution that arose against the Christians changed all his plans. All the colleges and seminaries were closed.

The fate of catechist Joseph Khang was the same that befell Bishop Jerome Hermosilla with whom he was taken prisoner. His fidelity and constancy were admirable since he could have escaped. Nonetheless, he preferred to remain at the side of his master. He stated: “If the Bishop dies for the faith, so will I.” For, as the Latin poet said: “There is nothing than can be disturbed in the soul of the just man who is tenacious in his purpose,” especially if his fidelity is founded on a supernatural life.

Joseph was cruelly whipped several times and subjected to other tortures but he never let out a groan nor did he get depressed. On the contrary, he was always happy and peaceful, carrying himself with utmost dignity. He exhorted all with whom he came into contact to love God and venerate Mary, the Mother of Jesus, to whom he had a special devotion. Joseph received the habit of a Lay Dominican and accompanied Bishop Hermosilla for three years. As the Vietnamese so aptly say: “He was the hands and feet of his master, Bishop Hermosilla.”

Joseph received the palm of martyrdom by decapitation on 6 December 1861, a few days after his beloved bishop was beheaded. His apostolate as a catechist and his martyrdom are an honor to all Lay Dominicans in Vietnam.

C

MARTYRS OF VIETNAM

Beatified by Pope Pius XII
on 29 April 1951

Canonized by Pope John-Paul II
on 19 June 1988

By Francisco Zurdo, O.P.

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PRESENTATION

The Decree promulgated in 1854 by Emperor Tu-Duc was intended to eradicate the Christian religion from his dominions. Between the years 1856 and 1862, thousands of Christians died. It is unclear, however, in exactly which year some of them died. In the province of Nam-dinh alone, the number of martyrs chillingly surpasses 30,000.

It has been possible to gather clear information on only 1700 of those who died. These were divided into four classes according to the value of the witnesses' statements. Among the group are two Apostolic Vicars and 54 priests, diocesan and religious of the Dominican Order (*Decretum omnium servorum Dei*. . . Rome, 1935, p. VI).

From these 1700, the introduction of the *Causes of 1315* was approved. These were further divided into the first and the second classes. For another 261, who belonged to a third group, the Sacred Congregation stated: "Wait until there is more proof." Those belonging to the fourth group were dismissed. This decision was approved on 14 November 1917 (*ibid.*, p. VI).

The glorious phalanx of heroes is closely bound to the Dominican Family. Here is the comprehensive table presented by Father Mark Gispert, O.P., Censor of the Process:

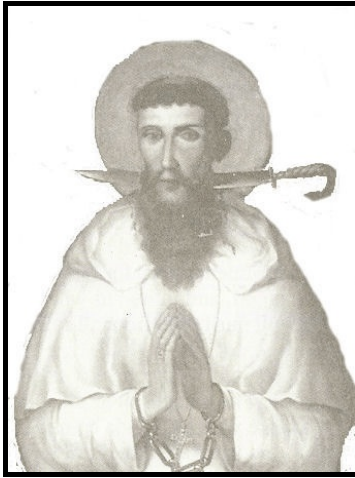
Apostolic Vicars	2
Dominican priests	20
Native priests - Dominican tertiaries	11
Diocesan priests	9
Catechists and pupils of the House of God	102
Lay Dominicans, both sexes	84
Christian men	1026
Christian women	34
Total	1288

To bring this extensive Process to a satisfactory ending, the Sacred Congregation opted to divide the people into groups, selecting for this first group the two Bishops Joseph Mary Diaz-Sanjurjo and Melchior García-Sampedro and twenty-three Vietnamese. The glorious finale took place on 29 April 1951 when they were declared *blessed* by the Church. Finally, the twenty-five were canonized by Pope John-Paul II on 19 June 1988. A short biography of each follows.

SAINT JOSEPH MARY DÍAZ-SANJURJO

Dominican Bishop

(1818 - 1857)



A most solemn celebration took place in Rome on 29 April 1951 when 25 martyrs from the Dominican Mission in Vietnam were beatified. At the head of the head of this band of athletes of the faith was Joseph Mary Díaz-Sanjurjo.

Joseph was born on 25 October 1818 in Santa Eulalia de Suegos, a town about 20 km from Lugo in Spain. [His parents determined that he would have a successful career using his literary skills.]

Joseph was known as “the Latin scholar of Lugo, the famous theologian and legal expert of Compostela, the distinguished professor at the University of Santo Tomas in Manila, the fervent missionary, the indefatigable Bishop of Platea and Apostolic Vicar of Cental Tonkin, the glorious martyr of Nam-dinh, the Most Reverend Father Joseph Mary Díaz-Sanjurjo.”

Joseph studied Latin in the seminary of Lugo. From there, he went to the University of Compostela for six years of theology and one of law. Hearing the call from God, he secretly entered the Priory of St. Dominic in Ocaña. This was the Dominican training center for apostles and martyrs. On 23 September 1842, he received the Dominican habit.

On his way to the Philippines in 1844, he stopped long enough in Cádiz to get ordained. Six months later, on 14 September 1844, he arrived in Manila. He completed his studies while teaching at the University of Santo Tomas.

With the permission of his Superiors, his desire to exercise the apostolate in non-Christian lands was honored. He left for the Vietnamese missions in September 1845. He had been heard to say: “Let us see if I can do a good job and bring credit to my people, the Galicians, because — and I am ashamed to say it — I am the first to come to this mission.”

In that land, so recently saturated with the blood of his brothers, this new apostle displayed his ardent zeal for the salvation of souls. In March 1849, he was named Bishop of Platea and Coadjutor of the Apostolic Vicar. He was consecrated by Bishop Jerome Hermosilla, the Patriarch of the Missions. Three years later, he was at the head of the

Central Vicariate. Despite all these honors, he was not vain. He wrote: “Here the dignities mean more work. I don’t have any means of transportation at all, and although I did not vow to go barefoot, I do and sometimes with mud up to my knees.”

With Emperor Tu-Duc’s persecution raging, it was not long before Bishop Sanjurjo fell into the hands of the enemy. He was taken prisoner in March 1856 and led to the capital Nam-dinh handcuffed and guarded, to appear before the tribunal.

In his farewell letter, he wrote: “This sinner, a prisoner for the Lord, salutes and takes leave of all until we meet in heaven. These shackles and chains are adornments worn for Jesus. My soul exalts for joy, waiting to shed my blood, and united to that which our loving Redeemer spilled on Calvary; it will purify me from all my sins.”

On 20 July 1857, weighed down with chains and with a heavy *cangue* around his neck — from which hung a rosary — Joseph was taken to the place of execution. There, he was tied to a stake with his hands behind his back. A signal was given; “after the second blow of the sword, the head of this venerable man fell to the ground.”

Unfortunately, Joseph’s body was heaved in the river and could not be recovered. After three days of exposure to the public, his head was also thrown in the river but was recovered by some Christian fishermen. Later, it was taken to “his beloved religious cradle,” the Priory of St. Dominic in Ocaña, Spain. On 27 September 1891, when the precious relic arrived, a Sister of the Poor was miraculously cured.

Joseph Mary Díaz-Sanjurjo is the protomartyr of the Priory of St. Dominic in Ocaña.

WRITINGS

- ◆ *Letters* to his family and religious brothers, written at different times (cf. APSR, Ms. vol. 34). Many of these can be found in: 1- Paulino Alvarez, *op. cit.*, pp. 645-662. 2- Mark Gispert, *op. cit.*, pp. 509 and 526.
- ◆ Four *Reports* on the missions in his Vicariate in Tonkin, 1851-1857 (cf. APSR, Ms. vols. 9 and 36).

SAINT MELCHIOR GARCÍA SAMPEDRO

Dominican Bishop

(1821 - 1858)



Melchior was born in Cortes, parish of Cienfuegos, in the province and diocese of Oviedo (Spain), on 26 April 1821. He lived there until the age of 7 when the family moved to San Pedro del Arrojo. He obtained a degree in theology at the University of Oviedo, where he distinguished himself for his piety and application to studies.

Melchior received the Dominican habit at the Priory of St. Dominic in Ocaña. On 6 June 1847, he sang his First Mass there. At the end of July of the following year, he arrived in Manila. At the University of Santo Tomas, he was appointed lecturer in philosophy, but he had another aspiration: to be a missionary in Vietnam. With the blessing of his superiors, he left for that land where he arrived at the end of February 1849.

Although Melchior's apostolate was short, it was very fruitful. He was an untiring promoter of the so-called *Holy Infancy* foundling hospitals. His election as Bishop of Tricomia and Coadjutor of Bishop Sanjurjo, whom he succeeded in the government of the Central Vicariate, was universally welcomed both by priests and faithful. His episcopal consecration took place in Bui-chu on 16 September 1855.

On 8 July 1858, the Lord permitted this holy man to fall into the hands of his enemies. A great number of soldiers sacked the Christian town of Kien-lao. Bishop Sampedro tried to escape at midnight but as he was fleeing, he stumbled across some soldiers who immediately seized him. The following day, weighed down with heavy chains and in a cage, he was taken to the capital. For twenty days, he was kept isolated in the prison at Nam-dinh. His two young helpers were also apprehended with him and were to win the crown of martyrdom for their constancy in the faith.

On the night of 26 July 1858, the Great Mandarin had Bishop Sampedro brought into his presence. Had he told him the manner of death he was to suffer? The fact is that on 28 July, about 7 AM, surrounded by troops, he and his two helpers — all wearing heavy

cangues — left the city for the place of execution. They walked happily to the place where they would receive the crown of martyrdom.

When they arrived at the place of execution, the two youths were tied to stakes and left for a long while. Wearing a heavy chain, the bishop was made to walk “through the more populated streets. Around him paraded 20 executioners with bared swords. Escorting them were 500 troops, two elephants, four horses and musicians playing infernal music.”

When Bishop Melchior passed by the youths, he urged them to be strong. “Be brave, my sons, and do not be afraid.” In a few minutes, the Mandarin’s voice was heard from atop the elephant on which he was sitting. He ordered that the heads of the two helpers be cut off. The executioners did so and threw the heads in the air for all to see.

Later, one of the executioners took a small mat and covered it with a cloth. He broke the bishop’s chains and made him lie face upward on the bed. He drove two stakes in front of Melchior’s hands but so far apart that he had to pull the bishop’s arms until they reached the stakes. He did the same with the feet.

Then the Mandarin ordered that they first cut off the bishop’s legs, then the arms, then the head, and finally that his abdomen be cut open. At these orders, five executioners were positioned on both sides, armed with hatchets without cutting edges so that the torment would be much greater, prolonged and cruel.

The executioners started with the legs which took twelve blows to sever, then they did the same with the arms. The blood flowed freely, saturating the ground. By this time, the victim had no strength to pronounce the name of Jesus. It took fifteen blows to cut off his head.

These butchers opened the victim’s abdomen with a sharp knife and with a hook pulled out the entrails. They took his liver and ate it because this would ensure their receipt of his valor [a widespread belief and custom. - GC, Ed.]

After all this cruelty, they wrapped the mangled boy in the cloth that had served as his bed and buried it in a deep hole, covering it with dirt. The Mandarin and the executioners tried to make the elephants stomp on the grave but the animals refused to do it. They seemed to acknowledge the respect owed to the venerable bishop. After being torn apart, the head of the martyr was thrown into the river.

Father Khang, a Vietnamese Dominican, related details of this martyrdom. He was well disguised as he stood and watched the sacrifice of the venerable Apostolic Vicar, Bishop García-Sampedro. This testimony was presented at the Process of Beatification.

Melchior García-Sampedro, protomartyr of Asturias, received the palm of martyrdom on 28 July 1858, at age 37, in the city of Nam-dinh, “the city of martyrs,” as Valentine Berrio-Ochoa called it.

SAINT DOMINIC MAU

Dominican Priest

(1808 - 1858)



Dominic Mau was born in 1808 in Phu-nhai, Nam-Dinh. As a child, he entered the *House of God*, where he dedicated himself to the study of Sino-Vietnamese characters. Since he was gifted with many talents and qualities, his superiors advised him to study philosophy and theology. His ordination to the priesthood followed. Because of his intense desire for greater perfection and union with God, he asked to be admitted to the Dominican Order. He was known for his piety and dedication to the ministry. He never allowed anything to interfere with the care of his flock. In so doing, he risked his life many times due to the rigor of Tu-Duc's persecution.

Advanced in age when he was taken prisoner, Dominic was imprisoned in Hung-yen where he endeared himself to everyone, including the guards, because he was so warm-hearted and docile. He preached to everyone and especially to the Christians, urging them to remain firm in the faith they professed. He always wore the rosary around his neck and always prayed to prepare himself for his last battle with the enemy.

When he was condemned to capital punishment by beheading, he accepted the sentence like a soldier of Christ. According to a witness: "When they were taking him to the place of execution, I was walking right behind him and noticed that he walked with determination, hands folded in prayer."

On 5 November 1858, this servant of God shed his blood in defense of the true religion.

SAINT DOMINIC AN KHAM

Lay Dominican

(1799 - 1859)

Dominic An Kham (Pham Thong) was born in the Christian community of Quancong. He later became [a judge], one of those who are called Notables. He was rich in worldly goods but even more so in the spiritual. He was respected for his great prudence. He became a Lay Dominican.

In the reign of Tu-Duc, Dominic was accused of giving shelter and hiding European missionaries, among them, Bishop Melchior García-Sampedro. When the ministers of the Emperor came to the town to force Christians to deny their faith, Dominic, using all the authority he had, exhorted them with all his soul not to commit such a sin. Soon after, it happened that another judge ordered some Christians to tread on the cross. Overcome by fear, one elderly man went to the cross to do so. Dominic, like the Maccabees of the Old testament, was infuriated at this and threatened him with banishment if he dared to commit such a horrendous sin against the sign of our Redemption.

This angered the judge, who ordered that Dominic's house be destroyed and that he be imprisoned in Nam-dinh. These actions did not intimidate the venerable Dominic. On the contrary, he was happy to face death for his religion. In prison, he became an ardent preacher, attracting many of the prisoners to the faith, helping them with alms in their misery.

Dominic An Kham was condemned to be decapitated on 13 January 1859, [along with one of his sons — Luke Ca-Thin — and other members of the Dominican Confraternity of the Rosary – Ed., GC]. Dominic left the prison of Nam-dinh joyfully and walked with determination to the place of execution, praying aloud with his companions. He died with the name of Jesus on his lips on 11 March 1859.

SAINT LUKE CAI THIN

Lay Dominican

(1819 - 1859)

Luke Cai Thin (Trong Pham) was born in 1819 in Quan-coang, Nam-nonh (Tonkin), the son of Dominic An Kham. Like his father, he was rich and also one of the Notables, not only in his town but also in the whole province. He held the post of judge for three years. He possessed deep religious sentiments and was a faithful observer of his religion. A Lay Dominican, he also became a member of the Confraternity of the Rosary.

In 1858, at the height of Tu-Duc's persecution, Luke went to the capital, Nam-dinh, to defend the cause of the Christians before the Great Mandarin. He was taken prisoner and imprisoned, during which time his father, his family and other Christians were also arrested.

Neither bribery nor torments could make him tread on the cross and abandon his religion. So that no one would doubt his intention, he confirmed his constancy in writing.

On 13 January 1859, this holy man received the announcement of his condemnation with great joy — a joy that he maintained until his death. He carried a crucifix in his hand as he walked to the execution site with the words of the Act of Contrition on his lips. He was garotted on 11 March 1859, the same day his father was beheaded.

SAINT JOSEPH CAI TA

Lay Dominican

(1800 - 1859)

Like the two before him, Joseph Cai Ta (Pham Thong) was born in the Christian community of Quan-coang, near Hanoi, in 1800. Similarly, he had been a soldier, the father of a family and held a prominent position as Sub-prefect of a district. A Lay Dominican, he was also a member of the Confraternity of the Rosary. He was accused of giving hospitality to the European missionaries. He was arrested, weighed down with chains and taken to the prison of Nam-dinh.

There, he refused — as he had previously — to tread on the cross. For this, he was condemned to death on 13 January 1859. On 11 March of that same year, he was strangled, joining his companions in martyrdom.

SAINT DOMINIC CAM

Priest, Dominican Tertiary

(? - 1859)

Another member of the *House of God* who earned the honors of the altar is Dominic Cam (Caam / An-Kham), priest and member of the Third Order of St. Dominic.

Dominic was born in Cam-thuong (Caam Choong) in the province of Bac-ninh, year unknown. He was already a priest when he made his profession in the Third Order of St. Dominic. Father Valentine Berrio-Ochoa wrote about this martyr in one of his reports, – the source for the following details.

On 21 January 1859, Father Dominic was captured and imprisoned in Hung-yen. In deference to his status, the Mandarin allowed him to speak to everyone who came to visit him. But Father Cam had a great desire to suffer for Christ and asked for this grace daily.

Dominic's wish was fulfilled when the Emperor ordered that his death by decapitation take place on 11 March 1859. The Mandarin who had such a liking for him was saddened by the order, but for Dominic the news was a time for celebration. At the place of execution, he proudly exposed his head to the executioner. With one blow, this native priest was beheaded, sealing with his blood the truth of Christianity.

SAINT THOMAS KHUONG

Priest, Dominican Tertiary

(1779 - 1860)



Thomas Khuong was born in 1779 in Nam-hoa, in the province of Hung-yen to a Mandarin family. He was a priest and a member of the Third Order of St. Dominic.

In the time of Emperor Minh-Manh, he was imprisoned for professing the Christian religion. Since he belonged to a noble family, he was soon set free. Under the reign of Emperor Tu-Duc, a persecution broke out once more.

On 29 December 1859, Thomas was on a journey.

As he approached a bridge, he noticed a cross on the ground. He stopped and refused to go on. A military prefect, who had been watching in hiding, had him arrested as a Christian.

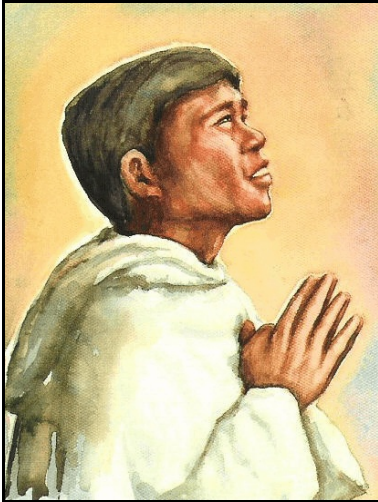
Thomas was imprisoned in Hung-yen where he valiantly and clearly confessed in the presence of the Mandarin. The Mandarin begged him to convince the Notables to abandon their religion and tread on the cross so that they could all return to their homes. At this, this athlete of Christ answered: "I am a priest of this religion and I am now 80 years old. Since my childhood I have known no other religion. I have always practiced its precepts and preached them to my people. If I should open my mouth to tell them to step on the cross — if, I repeat, I would ask them to do such a repugnant thing — it could truly be said that I no longer belong to the human race. For all this, — and without holding a grudge against you, our assassins — all we ask is to allow us to die a thousand times without complaining. All we want is to be able to shed our blood for the cause of religion, and in this way to return death for death, love for love to the true Lord of heaven and earth, for Him who suffered and died for the redemption of humankind. You have heard the reason for our wishes. Now, judge for yourselves."

As expected, Thomas was thrown into prison where he was kept for a month, witnessing to a heroic faith and a moving piety. On 30 January 1860, in Hung-yen, the head of this holy man was cut off as he was praying in front of a cross that he himself had made. With him died Nghia, a young pupil of the *House of God*.

SAINT JOSEPH TUÂN

Dominican Priest

(c. 1811 - 1861)



Joseph Tuân (Van Tran) is a wonderful example of the many martyrs who had their formation in the *House of God*, [a school founded by the Dominicans for the Christian formation of young men]. He was born in Tran-xau in the province of Hung-yen around 1811, and while still young, entered the *House of God*. After studies for the priesthood, he entered the Dominican Order.

Joseph was 50 years old when, [betrayed by an apostate Christian], he fell victim to the hatred of the Emperor Tu-Duc. While in prison, he cherished everyone, including his captors, who admired him greatly for his life of prayer.

After being kept in prison for a long while, Joseph was condemned to death by beheading. On the way to the place of execution, he noticed a cross on a threshold. He turned to the prefect and said: "Look, we are condemned to death for our religion, therefore, remove that cross so that I can continue to walk." Having said that, he sat down and refused to move until the prefect ordered the cross to be taken away. Accordingly, the servant of God got up and continued to walk. At the place of execution, he knelt down and invoked the name of Jesus. Commending his spirit to the Lord, he received the blow that severed his head on 30 April 1861.

SAINT JOSEPH TUAN

Layman

(1825 - 1862)

Joseph Tuan was born in 1825 at Nam-dihn, near Ha-nam in 1825. Married, he was a poor farmer but very honorable and pious. He was taken prisoner at age 36.

Originally, Joseph was to suffer banishment but when the prefect ordered him to tread on the cross, not only did Joseph refuse but he knelt down to adore it. Kissing the cross, he said: "I give you infinite thanks, my God. Be my refuge and my strength!"

As he walked to his death, Joseph was joyful and prayed litanies all along the route. He was beheaded on 7 January 1862 while invoking the name of Jesus.

SAINT LAWRENCE NGON

Layman

(? - 1862)

Lawrence was born in Luc-thuy in the Nam-dinh province, at a date unknown. He was a farmer, father of a family and a fervent Christian. At the beginning of the persecution started by Tu-Duc, he was taken prisoner. One night, he escaped from prison and went to his family to encourage them in their faith. Then he returned to prison voluntarily.

On various occasions, when he was put to the test for his faith, he showed admirable witness and strength. He fasted three times a week, wept for his sins and exhorted everyone to remain constant in their faith. He was wont to say: "Brothers, it is important that we be willing to suffer the most cruel death rather than offend God. Even if the Mandarin orders that we be cruelly whipped and tortured in a thousand ways, remain firm. Do not tread on the cross of our Savior."

In no way were the captors able to make him apostatize or trick him into it. The Mandarin tried sweet words, saying how he was so sad at having to condemn a young man. Once again, he tried to make Lawrence tread on the cross, but the martyr knelt before it and adored it devoutly. For this he suffered death by decapitation on 22 May 1862.

SAINT JOSEPH TUC [?]

Layman

(1837 - 1862)

Joseph Tuc was a young native of the town of Hoang-xa. He was of humble origins, poor in material goods but rich in spiritual things. He was a faithful keeper of God's law and for its defense, he suffered exile for five months. Joseph suffered hunger, thirst and various other torments. None of these sufferings, however, could bend his will and make him abandon his religion.

He was taken to the city of Hung-yen where at age 25 he won the palm of martyrdom by beheading on 1 June 1862.

[Editor: GC]

SAINT JOSEPH TUC (1852 - 1862)

Joseph was born in 1852 at Hoang-xa, Bac-ninh (Tonkin) in 1852. He was only 9 years old when he was beheaded on 1 June 1862



*Memorial to Vietnamese Martyrs
with young Joseph Tuc*

SAINT DOMINIC NINH

Layman

(1835 - 1862)

The young martyr Dominic Ninh was born in 1835 in the long-standing Christian community of Trung-linh in the province of Nam-dinh. There he married a young woman as arranged by his father — according to local custom. The marriage proved to be a disaster and the couple separated. During the whole time, Dominic never said an unkind word against his wife, but gave a true example of patience. After the separation, he dedicated himself to the study of the Chinese language and its characters.

As the persecution worsened, Dominic was expelled from his native village. Neither bribery nor threats could make him renounce his faith.

Dominic was taken prisoner with four other youths of the *House of God*. Upon hearing the sentence that condemned them to death, they all said: “This is the day of our return to our true home.”

On 2 June 1862, two of them were thrown into the air by an elephant which then stomped them to death. Dominic and the other two were tortured in this way: soldiers began to strangle them to death then loosened the rope. They repeated this procedure several times during a half hour or so until finally they gave the rope one last hard jerk that killed the victims. As though this horror was not enough, the executioners also twisted the martyrs’ heads until they were completely turned around. In addition to this atrocity, they repeatedly pressed lighted torches to the soles of their feet. [But this was also a way of making sure that the victims were dead. - GC, Ed.] The bodies of these holy martyrs were left scattered on the ground.

SAINT PAUL DONG

Layman

(1792 - 1862)

Paul Dong (Duong) was born in the Christian community of Vuc-duong, Hung-yen, in 1792. He was a model father and husband. Because of his piety and honesty, he was elected to manage all that pertained to the Church in his parish.

On his 60th birthday [68th? - GC, Ed.], 25 November 1860, Paul was arrested. With the help of divine grace, he was able to endure the torture of the *cangue* and the shackles. He was given 90 lashes and deprived of food for six days.

To add insult to his pain, his cheeks were branded with the characters *Ta-dao* (false religion), which he himself cut out (1). Another Mandarin wanted to replace them but Paul bravely resisted. He did, however, allow another Christian to brand on his cheeks *Huu-dao* (true religion). This caused our holy martyr additional torments and the condemnation to death. Filled with joy, he was beheaded on 3 June 1862, his soul ascending to be united with the King of Martyrs.

- (1) As cases of true heroism, some Christians who were branded with the characters *Ta-dao* (false religion) cut out the *Ta* (false) with a knife. This left only the character *Dao* (religion), by which they meant the religion of Jesus.

SAINT DOMINC TOAI

Layman

(1811 - 1862)

Dominic Toai (Tori) was born in 1811 at Dong Thanh, Thai-bin (Tonkin). He was a fisherman and the father of a family. He was 50 years old when he fell into the hands of his persecutors.

Despite the fact that he was sickly and could have easily paid for his freedom, he surrendered without a word. He wished to die for his religion. Dominic manifested the same bravery while in prison and on his way to martyrdom. On 5 June 1862, together with eter Da and Dominic Huyen, he was burned alive in a cane hut in Nam-dinh.

SAINT DOMINIC HUYEN

Layman

(1817 - 1862)

Dominic was born in 1802 at Dong Thanh, Thai-binh. Like his companion, Dominic Toai, he was a fisherman and a model family man. Captured at age 45, he spent nine years in prison, weighed down with a *cangue* and shackles. He and Dominic Toai endured every suffering with patience and resignation. They led a life of prayer and encouraged other prisoners to do the same and to face death bravely for Christ. Even though tortured cruelly, they never consented to tread on the cross.

They received their sentence — to be burned to death — three days before their execution. On 5 June 1862, together with the catechist Peter Da, they walked with determination and courage to a cane and straw hut which was set on fire, burning them alive. The soaring flames sent their souls up to God.

SAINT VINCENT DUONG

Layman

(? - 1862)

Vincent Duong (Van Truong), date of birth unknown, was a pious and humble man. He was married, had children, was a farmer and a tax collector. [Also a catechist. - Ed., GC] He was 41 when taken prisoner.

Because he remained constant and firm in his faith, Dominic was condemned to die at the stake. On 6 June 1862, after offering his life to God and praying the Act of Contrition, he met his death.

SAINT PETER DUNG

Layman (1800 - 1862)

and

SAINT PETER THUAN

Layman (1802 - 1862)

Both these two martyrs were born in Dong-phu in the province of Nam-dinh. Both were fishermen and fathers of families. Peter Dung (Duong Van Dinh) was born of humble origins in 1800, but in everything and everywhere he was an authentic Christian and was also a catechist. Peter Thuan, born in 1082, on the other hand, came from a ruling class and was weak in his faith. On one occasion, he stepped on the cross but repented immediately.

As persecuted Christians, the two were expelled from Dong-phu and imprisoned for nine months. With joyful spirits, they bore patiently all the hardships and penalties of prison. Many times they were tempted by the judges and other people to give up their faith. But both told them that they would rather die than offend God. For this, they were savagely whipped.

One day they were allowed to go home to say goodbe to their families. Peter Dung took this occasion to advise his children: "Be happy that I am going to die for Jesus Christ." When the two returned to prison, they were enclosed in a squalid hut for several days.

On 6 June 1862, when their executioners set afire the hut they were in, the two flew to their eternal reward.

SAINT DOMINIC MAO

Layman

(1818 - 1862)

This athlete of the faith was a landowner, judge and family man. He was born in 1818 in the town of Ngoc-cuc in the province of Nam-dinh. He was an ardent defender of the faith for which he was persecuted and imprisoned. He and several others of his town were tortured, then tempted by flattery and bribery to renounce their faith. The judge said: "You are from the principal families. You have wealth. Renounce this religion so you can go back to your homes."

Fearlessly, Dominic answered: "Why do you flatter us this way? Do you think that we are little boys, afraid of your torments more than we fear God? If we had wanted to tread on the cross we could have done so in our own town or in the Prefecture, and we would have avoided all these tortures and hardships. Do as the leader wishes, but as for us, we will not deny our religion by treading on the cross on which our Savior died."

At this, the judge turned this valiant Christian over to the executioners to behead him. On 16 June 1862, the head of the martyr Dominic Mao rolled to the ground.

SAINT VINCENT TUONG

Layman

(1814 - 1862)

We know very little about Vincent Tuong (Truong). In the Process of Beatification, this servant of the Lord is said to have spent many months in prison under inhuman conditions. His one consolation was praying the Rosary and reciting the Act of Contrition.

Vincent was born in 1814 in Ngoc-cuc, son of a prosperous family. He served as an auxiliary judge. He was well instructed in the truths of the religion of Jesus Christ. Vincent suffered the torments of his martyrdom with much patience and strength of spirit. He was beheaded at Laong Coac on 16 June 1862.

SAINT DOMINIC NGUYEN

Layman

(1802 - 1862)

Dominic Nguyen was another victim of the hatred for religion. He was born in 1802 at Ngoic-cuic, Nam-dihn. He was a model father to his family and was exceedingly diligent in carrying out his religious obligations. He was knowledgeable in the medicine of his country at that time.

Dominic was a mature individual when he was made prisoner. We know little else of his life. He suffered martyrdom by decapitation on 16 June 1862 at Laong-coac, Tonkin.

SAINT ANDREW TUONG

Layman

(1812 - 1862)

Andrew was born in the Christian community of Ngoc-cuc, Nam-dinh in 1812. He lived as a field laborer but was also one of the principals of the place. After some work as a lay catechist, he was beheaded with some companions and neighbors on 16 June 1862 at Lang-coac.

SAINT DOMINIC NGHI

Layman

(? - 1862)

Dominic Nghi (Nhi) was born in Ngoc-cuc. A farmer, he was a faithful observer of God's law. Along with some companions, he was decapitated at Lang-coac on 16 June 1862.

SAINT PETER DA

Layman

(c. 1800 - 1862)

Another martyr born in the town of Ngoc-cuc was Peter Da. Born around 1800, he was of humble origins, worked in the fields as a salaried laborer and lived an exemplary life with his wife. He was also a catechist. The persecutors caught up with him when he was 60 years old and imprisoned him. He remained there for one year, suffering joyfully and patiently all kinds of torments. He kept busy doing acts of charity and preparing himself for the final battle.

Every once in a while, the judge would offer him his liberty if he would deny his faith. Every time Peter refused and was exposed out in the hot sun. From all such tests he succeeded triumphantly and grew stronger in his faith. He was condemned to death. He and two companions — Dominic Toai and Dominic Huyen — were burned alive in a cane hut on 17 June 1862.

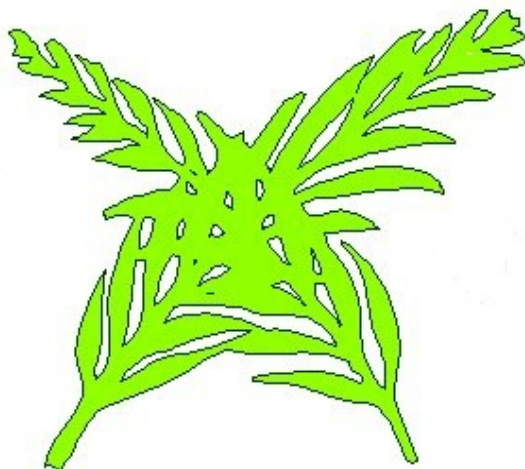


CONCLUSION

In this volume, we have presented the glorious sacrifices offered to God and His Church by the sons and disciples of the Dominican Province of Our Lady of the Rosary during the 300 years of evangelization in the blood-stained lands of Vietnam.

As we have stated earlier, there is an unknown number of Christian heroes who were martyred, although only 117 have been officially canonized until now [1989 - Ed., GC]. Of these, 60 belonged to the Dominican Province of the Holy Rosary. There were bishops, priests, lay Dominicans and other Christians from our mission territories.

To this martyred Church of Vietnam can well be applied the words of St. Augustine: *Inter persecutiones mundi et consolationes Dei peregrinando procurrit Ecclesia*. [Between the persecutions of the world and the consolations from God, the Church proceeds on its way in a pilgrim fashion — that is, step by step].



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