

The Martyrs of Vietnam



*Presented by Chevalier Thomas J. Serafin, V.V., KODA,
(Liaison to HIH for the relics of Vietnamese Catholic Saints)
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The Martyrs of Vietnam

Feastday: November 24

A Portuguese missionary arrived in Vietnam, once called Annam, in **1533**. An edict in Vietnam forbid Christianity, and it was not until **1615** that the Jesuits were able to establish a permanent mission there, in the central region of the country.

In **1627**, a Jesuit went north to establish another mission. By the time this missionary, Father Alexander de Rhodes, was expelled from the land in **1630**, he had baptized **6,700** Vietnamese. In that same year the first Christian martyr was beheaded, and more were executed in **1644 and 1645** .

Father Rhodes returned to Vietnam but was banished again in **1645**. He then went to Paris, France, where the Paris Seminary for Foreign Missions was founded. Priests arrived in Vietnam, and the faith grew.

The Martyrs of Annam were slain for the faith in Vietnam from **1798 until 1861**.

Between **1798 and 1853**, was a period of intense political rivalry and civil wars, sixty-four known Christians were executed. These were **beatified in 1900**.

Those who died in a **second group, between 1859 and 1861**, were beatified in **1909**. There were twenty-eight courageous men and women who died for the faith during a long period of persecution.

In **1833**, all Christians were ordered to renounce the faith, and to trample crucifixes underfoot. That edict started a persecution of great intensity that was to last for half a century. Some twenty-eight martyrs from this era were **beatified in 1909**. The priests, a bishop, and the faithful Europeans were given "a hundred wounds," disemboweled, beaten, and slain in many other grisly fashions.

For a brief period in **1841** the persecution abated as France threatened to intervene with warships. However, in **1848**, prices were placed on the heads of the missionaries. Two priests, Father Augustin Schoffier and Father Bonnard, were beheaded as a result.

In **1855**, the persecution raged, and the following year wholesale massacres began. Thousands of Vietnamese Christians were martyred, as well as four bishops and twenty-eight Dominicans.

It is estimated that between **1857 and 1862**, 115 native priests, 100 Vietnamese nuns, and more than 5,000 of the faithful were martyred. Convents, churches, and schools were destroyed, and as many as 40,000 Catholics were dispossessed of their lands and exiled from their own regions to starve in wilderness areas.

The martyrdoms ended with the **Peace of 1862**, brought about by the surrendering of Saigon and other regions to France and the payment of indemnities to France and Spain. It is now reported that the "Great Massacre," the name given to the persecution of the Church in

Vietnam, resulted in the following estimated deaths:

Eastern Vietnam - fifteen priests, 60 catechists, 250 nuns, 24,000 Catholic laymen and women.

Southern Vietnam - ten priests, 8,585 Catholic men and women.

Southern Tonkin region - eight French missionaries, one native priest, 63 catechists, and 400 more Christians slain.

In all, an estimated 4,799 were martyred and 1,181 died of starvation. Some 10,000 Catholics were forced to flee the area.

In **1988**, Pope John Paul II canonized 117 Vietnamese martyrs, but they represent only a portion of the thousands of Vietnamese men, women, and children, who have given their lives for believing in Jesus Christ, and for belonging to His Holy Church.

In the almost five hundred years that the Christian Faith has existed in Viet Nam, hardly a decade has gone by, without persecution of the faithful. The faithful have been challenged by violence of the worst kind - but never have they met violence with any answer but the answer of Jesus Christ - a peaceful acceptance of suffering. Few nations can equal the record of Viet Nam for Christian witness - few peoples have shown such a superlative degree of courage.

These are seven of the 117 martyrs of Vietnam.

(show reliquary)These are their relics.

Pierre François Néron, arrested and decapitated on Nov. 3, 1860, in Annam.

Andrew Trong Van Tran, arrested, stripped of his military rank, imprisoned, and decapitated on Nov. 28, 1835 in North Cochin-China.

François Jaccard, strangled to death on Sept. 21, 1838, in Annam.

Pierre Dumoulin-Borie, beheaded and died on Nov.24, 1838, in Tonkin.

Lawrence Imbert, tortured to death with Sts. Peter Maubant, James Chastan, and companions.

James Nam, Vietnamese martyr. A native of Vietnam, he became a priest and joined the Paris Society of Foreign Missions. Seized in the anti Christian persecutions, he was beheaded in 1838.

St. Bernard Due (Bernard Due Van Vo), Martyr of Vietnam. He spent many years in missionary work before retiring. At age eighty-three, he declared his faith and his priesthood to a group of soldiers, where upon he was arrested and beheaded in 1838.

Pierre François Néron, (Peter Francis Néron, Phêrô Phanxicô Néron Bắc), priest; b. 1818 at Bornay, Saint-Claude (Jura), France; d. Nov. 3, 1860, in Sơn Tây, Annam. He entered the MEP in 1846, was ordained 2 years later (1848), and sent to Hong Kong. He labored in West Tonkin as director of the central seminary until his arrest and decapitation. Beatified 1909.

Andrew Trong Van Tran, (Andrew Tran van Trong, Andrew Trong Van Tran, Anrê Trần Văn Trông), soldier; b. 1817 in Kim Long, Huế, North Cochin-China; d. Nov. 28, 1835 at An Hòa, Huế, North Cochin-China. Trong was a young native soldier or silk-weaver to the king of Cochin-China and attached to the MEP. When this affiliation was discovered by the authorities in 1834, he was arrested, stripped of his military rank, and imprisoned. In the image of the Blessed Virgin, his mother assisted at his execution, and received his falling head into her lap. Beatified 1900. Feast: Nov. 18.

François Jaccard, (Francis Jaccard, Phanxicô Jaccard Phan), priest; b. 1799 at Onnion, Annecy, Savoy, France; d. Sept. 21, 1838, at Nhan Biều, Annam. He entered the seminary for MEP in Paris, was ordained, and was sent to Cochin-China in 1826. Strangled. Beatified 1900.

Pierre Dumoulin-Borie, (Peter Dumoulin, Phêrô Dumoulin-Borie Cao), missionary priest of the MEP; b. 1808 at Cors (diocese of Tulle), France; d. 24 Nov. 1838, at Đông Hới, Tonkin. St. Peter studied for the priesthood in Paris, was ordained in 1832,

and sent to Tonkin. He was arrested in 1836. While in prison he was appointed vicar apostolic and titular bishop of Western Tonkin, but was never consecrated prior to his beheading. Beatified 1900.

Lawrence Imbert (1846) Bishop and martyr of Korea. Lawrence was born in France and was a member of the Paris Society of Missions. He was tortured to death with Sts. Peter Maubant, James Chastan, and companions.

James Nam (1838) Vietnamese martyr. A native of Vietnam, he became a priest and joined the Paris Society of Foreign Missions. Seized in the anti Christian persecutions, he was beheaded in 1838. *Canonized* in 1988 by Pope John Paul II

St. Bernard Due (Bernard Due Van Vo), Martyr of Vietnam. Bernard was born in 1755 and was ordained a priest in his homeland. He spent many years in missionary work before retiring. At age eighty-three, he declared his faith and his priesthood to a group of soldiers, where upon he was arrested and beheaded in 1838. He was canonized in 1988.