

THE TONKIN MARTYRS

MARTIN CONNORS, O.P.



ON FEBRUARY 16, 1951, word was received from the Most Reverend Paul A. Skehan, O.P., S.T.M., Procurator General of the Order of Preachers that the holy martyrs of Tonkin will be beatified on the Feast of Saint Peter Martyr, April 29 of this year. The following is a translation of the decree issued by the Sacred Congregation of Rites and printed in *L'Osservatore Romano* on the thirteenth of February.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, in order that He might accomplish the redemption of the human race, came into the world made man and "has redeemed us to God with His blood" (*Apoc.* 5:9), "blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us . . . fastening it to the cross" (*Col.* 2:14), on which indeed He was slain, but even in death triumphed as He foretold. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself" (*John* 12:32).

Now because the Church is clothed in the person of the divine Redeemer and carries on His work, it must undergo with Him similar trials. The Lord Himself clearly prophesied this, saying: "If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" (*John* 15:20), which in fact has evidently been proved. For the Church, from the beginning up to our own times, has always suffered persecutions, but as victor she always triumphs and is invigorated with new strength. As St. Ambrose writes: "For by the death of martyrs religion is defended, the Faith is spread, and the Church is strengthened: the dead have conquered, the persecutors have been vanquished" (*De exc. Satyri.* PL 16, 1384).

From the year 1856 to 1862 fierce was the persecution instigated by King Tu Duc which the Tonkinese Church bore with wonderful fortitude in the two Apostolic Vicariates committed to the care of the Order of Preachers. For during this time, many thousands of Christians fortified with divine aid, preferring to undergo death rather than renounce their Faith, were barbarously slaughtered. From among these, two Vicars Apos-

tolic and others were inscribed among the ranks of the Blessed by the Venerable Pius X on April 15, 1906. The cause of 1288 Christians who suffered this persecution was introduced before this Sacred Congregation on November 14th, 1917. Since however an individual juridical treatment of each and every one of these defenders would be impossible, the postulators meanwhile have prudently selected (from among those who cause had been introduced and Apostolic process honored) only twenty-five the cause of whose martyrdom would be treated by this Sacred Congregation. These are: 1. Joseph Mary Diaz Sanjurjo, O.P., Bishop of Plataea and Vicar Apostolic of Central Tonkin; 2. Melchior García Sampedro, O.P., Bishop of Tricomia and Vicar Apostolic of Central Tonkin; 3. Dominic Ninh; 4. Lawrence Ngôn; 5. Dominic An-Khâm; 6. Luke Cai-Thin; 7. Joseph Cai-Tà; 8. Dominic Mao; 9. Vincent Tùòng; 10. Dominic Nguyễn; 11. Andrew Tuóng; 12. Dominic Nhi; 13. Peter Da; 14. Joseph Tuân; 15. Peter Dúng; 16. Peter Thuân; 17. Vincent Duong; 18. Dominic Toài; 19. Dominic Huyền; 20. Dominic Mâu, priest of the Order of Preachers; 21. Joseph Tuân, priest of the Order of Preachers; 22. Joseph Tuc; 23. Dominic Câm, priest of the Third Order of Preachers; 24. Thomas Khuóng, priest of the Third Order of Preachers; 25. Paul Doung.

Over and above those already honored with beatification, these twenty-five constitute the glorious army of the Tonkinese martyrs.

The veracity of the witnesses can in no way be doubted with moral certainty, since their testimony is in agreement with the documents.

The formal martyrdom of these servants of God which was instigated by the tyrannical ruler has been established conclusively from the acts and decrees of this same ruler. We know with historical certainty that Tu Duc had a violent hatred for the Catholic religion. It seems that some kind of a political motive in regard to foreigners is not to be denied, but the true and principal motive was hatred for religion. For he prohibited under pain of death the preaching of the Catholic religion by all European missionaries; ordered that all sacred furnishings should be burned; that churches rectories, and sisters' convents should be destroyed. From these and other similar commands, the hatred of Tu Duc against Christians in general and Bishops, priests and religious in particular is clearly made evident.

No political motive can be alleged however with regard to

his subjects, because if they had abjured the Catholic Faith they would have been delivered from his wrath immediately. Furthermore, it has been established from the records, that it was proposed to all that they trample on the Cross as a condition without which they could not escape death.

All of the aforementioned facts were examined with diligent care in the Antepreparatory Congregation held on May third, 1949, in the presence of the Most Reverend Cardinal Alexander Verde, Official of the Cause. On February twenty-first of the following year the Preparatory Congregation took place. Finally on January thirtieth of this year, the General Congregation was held in the presence of His Holiness Pope Pius XII. In this Congregation the same Cardinal Official proposed this question to be decided: *Whether the martyrdom and the cause of martyrdom, as well as the signs or miracles in the case concerned and the effect treated of is established with certainty.* The Most Reverend Cardinals, the Officiating Prelates, the Fathers and Consultors cast their votes. The Holy Father deferred the final decision until today.

Then, having summoned before him the Most Reverend Cardinal Alexander Verde, Official or Relator, Reverend Father Salvatore Natucci, Promotor General of the Faith, the Secretary, and myself, after the Holy Sacrifice had been piously offered, His Holiness decreed: *So clearly has it been established concerning the martyrdom and the cause of martyrdom of Joseph Mary Diaz Sanjurjo and Melchior Garcia Sampedro, and their twenty-three companions, as conceded by the signs or miracles and every other necessary and opportune dispensation, that the further steps in the process may be taken.*

He commanded that this decree should be public law and entered into the Acts of the Sacred Congregation of Rites.

Given at Rome, February 11, in the year of Our Lord nineteen hundred and fifty-one.

CLEMENT CARDINAL MICARA,
S. R. C. Pro-Prefect.