

The Story of St. Augustine Zhao Rong and His Companions

This past Friday, we celebrated the memorial of St. Augustine Zhao Rong and his companions. Below is a short excerpt from http://www.jclubcatholic.org/stories/saints_july.php#09. As we remember them, let's entrust our needs, particularly the Catholic Church in China, into their intercessions.

Christianity arrived in China by way of Syria in the 600s. Depending on China's relations with the outside world, Christianity over the centuries was free to grow or was forced to operate secretly.

Every year on July 9th, the Church celebrates the many people throughout Chinese history who have been heroic examples of Christian faith. St. Augustine Zhao Rong is one of the 122 Catholics who died for their faith as martyrs between 1648 and 1930. In 1815, a bishop named John Gabriel Dufresse was arrested. It was against the law to practice Christianity. One of the Chinese soldiers who was guarding him was deeply impressed by the bishop's calmness and patience under persecution. After Bishop Dufresse was put to death, the soldier asked to become a member of the Catholic Church. He was baptized, taking the name "Augustine." Augustine then entered the seminary and studied to become a priest. Soon after he was ordained, he was arrested for being a Christian. He was tortured in an attempt to try to make him give up his faith in Christ. But his sufferings only made him stronger and surer of his beliefs. He was put to death, and his name was added to the list of brave Chinese men, women, and children who sacrificed their lives in testimony to their faith. This list of heroes includes seventy-six lay people, some of them children as young as seven years old, eight seminarians, twenty-four priests, and six bishops. Of these people, eighty-eight were Chinese and thirty-four were missionaries from other countries, who had made China their home.

Beatified in groups at various times, these 120 martyrs were canonized in Rome on October 1, 2000 by Pope John Paul II.

Let us follow the example of St. Augustine Zhao Rong and his companion martyrs of China. Like them, we can live our faith joyfully. We can be courageous in standing up for what's right, even when it's not the popular thing to do.