

Refection Tuesday Week 34 Vietnamese Martyrs 2020

Saints Andrew Dũng-Lạc and his Companions. The evangelization of Vietnam began in the 16th C and became formally established in 1659. There are now about 6 million Catholics in Vietnam, 10% of the population. This growth comes partly from the fact that since the earliest times the seed of the Faith has been watered by the blood of the martyrs of Vietnam – missionary clergy, local clergy and ordinary Christian people. They shared the labour of apostolic work and faced death to bear witness to the Gospel. In the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries 53 decrees from the lords and emperors of the country from 1625 to 1886, launched one persecution after another, each more savage than the last. Over 130,000 Christians were killed in these persecutions. The names of most of them have been lost, but their memory lives on in the Catholic community. Since the 20th C, 117 of these heroes were beatified and later canonized by Pope John Paul II in 1988.

Today we ask God's blessing on the Church in Vietnam.

In so many countries of Asia the Christian faith has been built and nourished by the blood of martyrs willing to give their lives for the Gospel. They had great faith in God and, despite terrible suffering, trusted that offering their lives would not be pointless. In all these countries the faith has grown stronger and stronger. We ask the martyrs of Vietnam to strengthen our faith and commitment to living the Gospel with all our hearts and with all our minds.

For many years now the Assumptionists have been strengthened by the presence of our Vietnamese brothers. Their numbers among us increase year on year. Brother Joseph Cuong is our bursar in Bethnal Green. Let us thank God for their faith, commitment and inspiration.

The bottom suddenly falls out of a plane. All passengers hold themselves up in the conveniently placed assist grips. The usual jingle is heard through the speakers, as the co-pilot speaks slowly and clearly: *"Just now, all of our fuel has been used."* The frightened passengers look at each other. The pilot now speaks with heavy breathing: *"We need to lose some weight to assure a safe landing. If you are unselfish, brave and willing to be a hero, please let go of the assistive grips."* A deep voice pierces the air. *"I'm on it"* a middle-aged man says, letting go and falling to his doom. In admiration at his empathy and bravery, the rest of the passengers proceed to clap. . . .