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Peter Wu Guosheng (1768-1814) martyr

In 1814 the first Chinese-born Christian martyr, Peter Wu Guosheng, was sentenced to death. He was a catechist in Guizhou province and was guilty of refusing to renounce his Christian faith in the presence of the Mandarin.
Peter is an emblematic representative of that group of Chinese martyrs and confessors who had become Christians after meeting a traveler or missionary from the West. An innkeeper by profession, Peter was seduced by the beauty of Christian life and turned his hotel into a large community. Within a few years hundreds of his fellow villagers were involved in running it, as were many visitors.
The total absence of priests in the area did not discourage Guosheng, who remained faithful to his baptismal commitments until the day he chose to give his life rather than fail in his Christian vocation.
Arrested during an outbreak of persecution in China, Peter could have fled but chose to face his accusers and give them an account of his hope. After refusing to stomp on a wooden Cross that was thrown to the ground in front of him, and after ignoring all other requests to deny his Christian faith, he was tortured and killed.
His holiness was recognized by thousands of his contemporaries, and in China today, Christians and non-Christians alike still invoke his intercession. In the year 1900, Peter Wu Guosheng was beatified together with other Chinese martyrs by Pope Leo XIII.

A READING

It is useless to ask ourselves whether martyrdom is effective, because it belongs to another logic. Martyrdom, as the word itself tells us, is a testimony, but its worth does not depend on how much it convinces those who see it. It has worth because it comes from the Spirit.
It is the Spirit who says that because of Christ's saving death, the dignity of the human person transcends even the mystery of death. Not even death can defile or debase human dignity. On the contrary, death can reveal who a person truly is, as was the case with Jesus: his cruel and ignominious passion, his dying on the Cross without any apparent logic, made the centurion exclaim, "Truly this man was the son of God!"
Christ, disfigured and humiliated, arises from the dead bearing the marks of the passion, and becomes the first of those who prefer to die rather than inflict violence upon others, themselves, or the truth.

Franco Cagnasso

BIBLICAL READINGS

Sap 3:1-9; 1 Pet 3:14-17; Mt 10:17-22

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

ANGLICANS:
Willibrord of York (d. 739), bishop, apostle of Frisia

WESTERN CATHOLICS:
Willibrord, bishop (Monastic calendar)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (28 babah/teqemt):
Marcianus and Martyrius (d. ca. 355), disciples of Paul of Constantinople, martyrs (Coptic Church)
Yam`ata (5th-6th cent.), monk (Ethiopian Church)

LUTHERANS:
Willibrord, apostle of Frisia

MARONITES:
Jaron and his 33 companions of Melitene (3rd cent.), martyrs

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:
33 martyrs of Melitene
Lazarus of Mount Galesion (d. 1053), monk and thaumaturge

OLD CATHOLICS:
Willibrord of Utrecht, bishop and apostle