July 9

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The 32,000 Chinese martyrs of Taiyuan (d. 1900)

In the year 1900, China became the scene of one of the worst xenophobic repressions in history.
Swayed by popular discontent, which had found an outlet in the famous Boxer's Revolt, the empress Cixi laid the blame for the disintegration of her immense country's political and economic structure on the foreigners present in China. She decreed the physical elimination of three categories of persons: foreigners, Christians, and merchants who did business with foreigners. The slaughter that followed was staggering in scale, and among the hundreds of thousands of victims were thirty thousand Catholics and two thousand Protestants who had refused to deny their faith.
In Shanxi province, the executions were particularly vicious. The viceroy Yuxian ordered that all foreigners and Christians residing in his province present themselves at his palace. On the afternoon of July 9, they were all hacked to pieces in the palace's courtyards in the city of Taiyuan.
Among the martyrs who died that day, there were many bishops, pastors, and religious who had not wanted to abandon their people in the tragic hour of persecution.

A READING

To scan the names of these martyrs is to pray, letting oneself be moved to deep sorrow over all of the evil, violence, and madness that continue to make their way through history. This sorrow, as we continue our meditation, is transformed into a sort of inner strength, a need to not replace the book of witnesses on the shelf, to not let these names fade back into silence. In fact, they come from a silence that is Life and infinite communication of Love, enfolded in the Father's mystery. If this silence is forgetfulness for us, it is because we are deaf.
God often appears indifferent to the world's destiny because we keep looking away from his face, which is too humble and suffering, because we fail to listen for his whisper in the perennially new history of hearts that love, children who put their trust in him, people who, in their weakness, hope because they accept God as he is. The martyrs cry out so that we will stop staring at the torturers and look at them: they are the most vivid image of God.

(Franco Cagnasso, from *Martyrs in China*)

THE CHURCHES REMEBER...

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (2 abib/hamle):
Thaddeus, apostle

LUTHERANS:
Georg Neumark (d. 1681), poet in Thuringia

MARONITES:
Pancratius of Taormina, Sicily (1st cent.), martyr

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:
Pancratius, bishop of Taormina, hieromartyr