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Omnis Terra

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Father Gui Tianjue, C.M., Confessor of the Faith in China

Omnis Terra (1)

Fr Gui Tianjue (Joseph Kuei) was the first martyr of the diocese of Yujiang in the province of Jiangxi. The inscription on his tombstone says he died in 1953.

He was a Vincentian. After ordination he studied for a while in the United States. Before 1950 he worked in a Catholic church in Fuzhou, also in the province of Jiangxi. He founded the "True Light" secondary school, which he ran for over ten years. An American, Fr Steven Dunker, C.M., was one of his companions at that time. The present regime began in 1951. All priests and Christians were invited to join the Patriotic Association, which set up the Movement of Threefold Independence of the Church, at which time the police listed the false accusations against the American missionary, S. Dunker. Fr Gui spoke up in defence of his companion and refused to join the Movement. He was therefore arrested and imprisoned, bringing his breviary with him.

The Christians brought him whatever he needed. All he would accept were raw vegetables. With the passage of time it became more and more difficult to visit him. Once a month the prison authorities accepted parcels brought by the Christians, but they never gave them to the prisoner. He died in 1953 but no one received permission to see his body. It was only sometime later that two Christians succeeded in finding it in a ditch and were able to bury it in the church cemetery.

Evidence of his pupils

Fr Gui followed the example of Jesus. He lived poorly and willingly helped the poor. When he was a professor in the seminary he lived with the seminarists and like the seminarists. When he had to bring the sacraments to the Christians he prayed along the way. He always found time to do good to others. He knew a little Chinese medicine, which enabled him to help the sick poor. He had great humility. And, with all his learning, he carried out his ministry like a simple priest.

The first miracles after his death

During the ten years after his death many people came to pray at his grave and collect the herbs that grew there. The first person to receive a grace was the Christian Gong De. He had been present at the religious burial ceremony of Fr Gui. He had a stomach ailment for years. He drank a brew made from herbs which grew on the priest's grave and was healed.

But the most astonishing case of a cure was that of a child in a pagan family. He was feverish and howled all day and all night. The mother, in desperation, came to pray at Fr Gui's grave, and almost at once the child stopped crying and the fever abated.

Fr Zeng, a curate in the diocese of Yujiang, was also cured of cancer after drinking a brew made from herbs collected on Fr Gui's grave. That was in the spring of 1992. But the most significant thing is that, for more than 40 years, Fr Gui's grave was a meeting place for liturgical celebrations by the Christians of the diocese of Yujiang. In order to put a stop to this popular devotion the government wrecked the tomb in the winter of 1992.

Many Christians who witnessed the profanation of the grave smelt a beautiful scent. In the open grave all that was found were some ornamental buttons, of a type commonly used in the 1950s.

Very little is known of Fr Gui's life. The bishop called him: "The Martyr of Charity".

(Translation: Thomas Davitt, C.M.)

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