

Life

Saint Anna Wang was born in 1886 to a poor Christian family in Machiazhuang in Hebei Province. Her mother died when she was five years old, and she was abused by her grandmother. She was clothed shabbily in her childhood and bullied by her classmates. However, Anna Wang was fervent since she was young and did not defend herself even when punished on behalf of others; she endured hunger and would not steal; she lived a rough life but did not complain. She not only prayed enthusiastically but also led others to pray. She was a model of dignity and obedience. When she was 11 years old, her grandmother and stepmother got her father's permission to betroth her to a Catholic, but she refused because she wanted to remain chaste for the Lord. In 1900, Anna Wang was 14 years old when the Boxer Rebellion took place. The imperial court persecuted believers, and Catholics were in danger of being killed at any time. On July 21, the Boxers raided their village, arrested the faithful, and took them to Daningcun. Before entering the village, they killed the 68-year-old Yu Mei Wang, the elderly local church president, and locked the remaining believers in the East Room, warning them that if they follow the "western religion", they would be killed. Apostates who walk to the West Room would be freed. Anna Wang's stepmother hesitated for a while and walked towards the West Room, then immediately turned back, grabbed Anna Wang's arm and tried to pull her away. Anna Wang struggled desperately, grabbed the door frame and shouted, "I want to believe in God. I want to be a Catholic. I do not want to leave the Church! Jesus, help me!". Her stepmother had to give up in order to save her own life.

It was getting dark, and as St. Yu Mei Wang had been martyred, there were no religious leaders among them, and the rest were women and children. Anna Wang encouraged the companions who stayed and led everyone to recite the evening prayers for the last time. The next morning, the believers were taken to the execution ground. Anna Wang continued to lead everyone to be contrite of heart and recite prayers aloud. Afterwards, all the believers, including a ten-year-old baby/child, were brutally killed, leaving Anna Wang alone. The executioner persuaded her again to apostatize and promised to marry her into a rich family to enjoy happiness, but she flatly refused and hinted that she was betrothed to Jesus. The executioner was enraged and cut off a piece of flesh from her left shoulder to force her to renounce her faith, and then chopped off her left arm. Anna Wang still refused to give in, and whispered "Jesus" three times. She calmly endured the torture. The executioner then beheaded her. She was 14 years old when she was martyred. Her funeral was very solemn, and the church members respected her as a saint. Her grandmother who had abused her and her stepmother who had apostatized also turned around and became devout and fervent.

Reflection

St. Anna Wang opposed the forced marriage arranged by her parents and was determined to remain chaste for the Lord, that is, to devote herself completely to Jesus. In fact, in that era, marriage was subject to parents' orders. Women were betrothed very early. It was not easy to break off an engagement. For example, St. Zhen Mei Yi, the virgin saint, had to pretend to be crazy to trick her betrothal family into breaking off the engagement and have her wish fulfilled. Among the Chinese martyrs, there were several virgins who devoted themselves to the Lord. Most of them were sent to teach catechism to girls, for example St. Zhao Lin who had bound feet, not only had to climb mountains and ridges in Guizhou to teach girls, but also taught prayers and doctrines to the illiterate Yi clan. It required big efforts from her but she worked hard without any complaints. Another example is St. Gui Lin Fu, a virgin who had great achievements in preaching, single-handedly found the Daliu Village parish in Jianwu County. These virgins who contributed greatly to missionary work are unsung heroes. St. Anna Wang originally wanted to follow in their footsteps, but she received the crown of martyrdom at a young age. Should we learn from St. Anna Wang and be willing to dedicate our time and effort to evangelization?

Prayer

St. Anna Wang had developed the habit of praying, established a deep relationship with God, and remained unwavering no matter how severe her trials were. If we want to learn from her courage and perseverance in professing her faith, we also need to learn from her constant fervent prayers. In addition, St. Anna Wang could comfort other believers even in desperate situations, led them in prayer, and helped them face death with the hope of eternal life. People we know may also face problems that cannot be solved by mere mortals. Let us learn from St. Anna Wang to accompany and pray with them.

May we learn from Saint Anna Wang to remain steadfast when faced with trials,
and accompany those in need and pray with them.
Saint Anna Wang, pray for us.