

Life

Among the 121 Chinese martyrs, two had not been baptized, but they gave up their lives for the Lord and received baptism of blood. Those who suffer death for the sake of their faith without having received baptism are baptized by their death for and with Christ. This baptism of blood brings about the fruits of baptism without being a sacrament. (Catechism of the Catholic Church #1258).

St. Huai Lu Zhang was born in 1843 in Zhukotian, Hengshui County, Hebei Province. He began to learn the catechism at the age of 57. Although his family opposed it, they could not stop him. Because of his age and poor memory, no matter how hard he tried, his progress in learning the catechism and prayers was slow. When church members prayed together, they were fluent, but he could not remember the prayers and was teased by others. Huai Lu Zhang never got upset and answered with confidence: "God will teach me how to save my soul. Even though I do not know how to pray or answer questions, it is not a problem." In June 1900, during the Genzi Boxer uprising, local scoundrels extorted the faithful for money, and they had no choice but to pay. Huai Lu Zhang was only a catechumen for six months, but he regarded himself as a prospective church member, and he also paid money to the extortionists. One month later, the Boxers entered the village to search for believers and kill them. Most Catholics escaped prior to the invasion, but Huai Lu Zhang's old age hampered his escape, and he was caught. The non-Catholic villagers and even the extortionists declared firmly that he was not a Christian, but he deliberately wanted to be martyred and said earnestly: "I am really a Christian. Although I don't know how to pray, I know how to worship the God of all the faithful." St. Huai Lu Zhang's wish was granted, and he died under swords and spears at the age of 57.

St. Zhu Ze Chi was born in 1882 in Dezhao village in Shen Xian, Hebei Province. At the age of 17, he witnessed the piety of the Catholics in his village, heard about the catechism from them, and became determined to become a Christian. He was an illiterate villager, so it was not easy for him to learn the prayers and the doctrines, but it did not lessen his enthusiasm. At that time, the church was being persecuted; his parents and his family all opposed his conversion. They initially persuaded him to start after things have calmed down. Later, they threatened, insulted, beat him up, and ignored him. In the New Year, he was even starved as a punishment. They tried everything to deter him, but his determination to be a believer never wavered. In June 1900, in order to avoid the Boxers, Zhu Ze Chi followed the faithful of his village to look for shelter elsewhere, but the faithful in other villages only accepted Christians, as they fear that a non-Christian person may be a Boxer in disguise. Zhu Ze Chi was rejected everywhere in trouble times. Fortunately, a believer took him in to work at his home. The place was very close to Dezhao Village. Soon his parents sent him a letter ordering him to return home and promised to let him be converted. On July 20, Zhu Ze Chi was accosted by Boxers on his way home. He admitted that he was a Catholic and was dragged to the temple to worship the idol. He resisted strongly and was dragged back to the village to be executed. He knew that he would die and when he passed in front of his home, he knelt to pay respects to his parents inside, but his family cruelly ignored him. After arriving at the execution ground, Zhu Ze Chi knelt down and made the sign of the Cross, showing that he was all ready. The villain cut off his right arm but he bravely said: "I am a Christian. you can cut me into a thousand pieces, but every piece of my flesh, every drop of my blood, will tell you that I am Christian." The crowd was furious and killed him with knives and spears. St. Zhu Ze Chi died at the age of 18. After his martyrdom, his whole family became Catholics.

Reflection

Among the Chinese faithful who were persecuted, the most tragic was during the Gengzi Boxer Uprising. According to scholars' statistics, in Shanxi province alone, the number of Chinese faithful who died range from thousands to 10,000 people, some were mere babies. At that time, some believers renounced their faith to keep their lives, but St. Huai Lu Zhang and St. Zhu Ze Chi who were not baptized, firmly declared their faith and wanted to die as a martyr. They did what the ordinary people thought as stupid, but they were actually full of wisdom and chose the shortcut to heaven. When we need to make a choice in our everyday lives, will we have their courage and wisdom to do the "stupid thing" that sacrifices our own interests to follow God?

Prayer

St. Huai Lu Zhang and St. Zhu Ze Chi may not be familiar with prayers, but they did not pray with their lips, but offer their prayers with their blood instead. St. Zhu Ze Chi made the sign of the cross in the execution ground, which is better than saying thousands of words. May we also learn from these two Baptism of Blood saints, and let our actions become the most devout prayers in our lives.

May we learn the courage and wisdom of St. Huai Lu Zhang and St. Zhu Ze Chi,
to be a witness of our faith when we are challenged.
St. Huai Lu Zhang and St. Zhu Ze Chi, pray for us.