

Life

St. Guo Sheng Wu was born in 1768 to a very poor family in Longping, Guizhou. He was a filial son with a strong personality since childhood and had extraordinary strength. He had a strong sense of justice and gradually became a dominant figure in his area. Everyone was afraid of him. He opened a large inn. When a believer stayed at the inn and saw his forthright temperament, he wanted to preach to him. He used the moon in the sky to arouse Guo Sheng Wu's desire to know about the Creator, and gave him several catechism books. After reading these books, Guo Sheng Wu wanted to deepen his understanding, so a local church president from Sichuan was invited to visit him. Guo Sheng Wu invited a group of local scholars to talk to the president. The president was enlightened by the Holy Spirit and calmly answered all their questions. Guo Sheng Wu admired him and was willing to be converted. He was impatient and impulsive, and wanted to immediately "start church"(form a local church community). When anyone whom he knew passed by his door, he would force them to join the church, and soon there were more than 100 people. Because of his aggressive evangelization methods, the local people called Catholicism the King of Hell Cult. When the priest heard about it, he immediately sent someone to stop it.

In the 60th year of Qianlong's reign (1795), the priest personally went to Longping. Impressed by Guo Sheng Wu's zeal, he appointed him as the local church president, but did not allow him to be baptized. In order to get him to change his temperament, the priest sent him to Sichuan to learn from the examples of believers who had been practicing their faith for a long time. Guo Sheng Wu stayed in Chongqing for many days and observed carefully. He deeply felt that his own behaviour was not in line with the teachings of Jesus. After returning home, he changed his ways. The next year the priest baptized him.

By the 16th year of Jiaqing(1811), there were many places of assembly in Longping, and there were more than 600 believers. Not long after, Christianity was forbidden, and religious persecutions arose. In the 19th year of Jiaqing, some imperial officials came to him. Guo Sheng Wu could have escaped, but he gave up and was willingly arrested and imprisoned. Everyday he led the believers in prison to pray and sing hymns. He wrote to his wife: "Although the storm is as fierce as a tiger, I have no fear. I am imprisoned, I am bound, and I am about to die, but my heart is full of joy. The tortures can atone for my sins and make up for God's justice... I only hope that God will protect us, make each day meritorious, and advance every day to the realm of humility, patience, and other virtues." He also advised her not to desire the pleasures of this world, but to long for the kingdom of heaven. During his trial, he was severely tortured to force him to apostatize but he would rather die and was sentenced to strangulation. On the day of his martyrdom in 1814, Guo Sheng Wu happily recited the Rosary and walked to the execution ground, where he was tied to a T-shaped cross and strangled. He was 46 years old.

Reflection

St. Guo Sheng Wu was like a chivalrous hero from novels. Although it is admirable that he willingly died for God than surrender, it was not surprising. The most commendable thing was that even before his baptism, he changed his temperament in order to become a Christian. From his aggressive missionary approach, we can infer before knowing God, how he progressed from being born in poverty to becoming a dominator in order to improve the livelihood of his family. Asking him to cultivate "forbearance", "kindness", "tolerance", "patience" (1 Corinthians 13:4, 7) was really contrary to his natural strong character as well as the way of dealing with thing that he picked up from the street. However, he believed in the Lord wholeheartedly and was willing to learn from the good examples of others and repented. Many years later, in the letter to his wife from prison, he still asked the Lord to help him increase his "humility, patience, and other virtues." This shows that he had never forgotten to keep this as his lifelong goal. When not in times of religious persecution, a person's transformation is the best testimony of his belief in the Lord. Let us learn from St. Guo Sheng Wu to get rid of bad habits to believe in the Lord and work hard to cultivate virtues.

Prayer

In St. Wu Guo Sheng's letter to his wife, it is obvious that he suffered for Christ without fear. Therefore, he led the believers in prison to pray, and he himself recited the rosary when going to his execution. His prayers were not to spare him from death, but with a hope that the Lord would walk with him in difficult situations. We should also learn from St. Guo Sheng Wu to pray not to avoid disasters, but to be accompanied and supported by Him in the storm, and to bravely march forward.

May we learn from St. Guo Sheng Wu and work hard to get rid of bad habits, pray for God's help, and become better Christians. St. Guo Sheng Wu, pray for us.