



SEVEN FRANCISCAN MISSIONARIES OF MARY

Feast Day: October 1st



Saints and Martyrs

Franciscan Missionaries of Mary martyrs in Shanxi

*In 1898, at the request of auxiliary Bishop, Francisco Fogolla of Shanxi, Mother Mary of the Passion, founders of the Institute, Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, nominated seven sisters to go to that diocese in China to serve the poor in hospitals, and care for the unwanted or other destitutes in orphanages and other various ways, so that their presence would proclaim God is unconditional love, and that He loves all without distinction of race or rank. For many, it seemed folly to send Sisters from Europe to such a far-away place as China, when long voyages and transportation were tedious, dangerous and uncomfortable, when living conditions were precarious and health-threatening.



Marie-Hermine de Jésus (Irma Grivot)

She was born on 28 April in Beaune (France). A modest family: her father was a cooper and her mother looked after the house. Irma, of fragile health, was a simple child, upright, lively, affectionate, sensitive by nature and open to God. Intelligent and studious, she completed her studies in 1883, with an elementary certificate. Her religious vocation was neither understood nor accepted by her parents and this

made her position very difficult for her. She tried to become more independent by giving private tuition. In 1894, she went to Vanves, on the outskirts of Paris, where she began her pre-novitiate. Her fragile appearance made it necessary for her to spend some time in this community; it was necessary to make sure that her strength would permit her to commit herself to a missionary life. But behind her fragile appearance was hidden an iron will which overcame all difficulties. She began her novitiate in Les Châtelets, near Saint Briec (France), in July of that same year, and received the name of Marie Hermine de Jésus. The hermine is an animal which prefers death to being tarnished - so goes the saying - and this would be one of Hermine's resolutions. Such was her life, such was her death. A woman full of tenderness and firmness ... A humble woman. Her patience and her charity could create a homely atmosphere wherever she went: in the novitiate, then in Vanves where she took care of the accounts of the house and later in Marseilles where she was trained in the care of the sick; finally as superior of the group in Taiyuanfu. She knew how to win hearts: bishops, priests, lay consecrated people, children, the sick ... And for her own sisters, she was mother, support, animator ... till the end. From where did she draw this strength? Her words unfold part of her secret : "Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is half my life. The other half consists in loving Jesus and winning souls for Him." An ardent missionary, adorer, a single-hearted woman. Marie -Hermine did not flee in face of the danger of death. She knew how to live the Master's words "There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for those one loves" (Jn 15:13).

protection in this home. Affectionate and gay, the child very soon won the hearts of her protectors. At fifteen she entered the Secular Third Order of St Francis of Assisi. Her sister Rosalie was the first to enter the novitiate of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary in Antwerp where she received the name of Marie Honorine. It was only after the departure of Marie Honorine for Sri Lanka that Pauline decided to enter the novitiate, followed by her sister Mathilde. Marie Amandine was simple, joyful, generous, truly Franciscan. Her good humour and easily relationships attracted and created around her a homely atmosphere of joyous serenity. She was first sent to Marseilles to be trained in the service of the sick in the future hospital of Taiyuanfu. From there she left for the mission. The boat passed through Sri Lanka and its port, Colombo where she had the joy of meeting her sister Marie Honorine. The joy was mutual and then there was the 'good-bye': "Good-bye ... till heaven!" In the mission she gave the best of herself to the dispensary. She describes her task in these words to her superior general: "There are two hundred orphans, among whom are many sick ones whom we care for as best we can. The sick from outside also come to be cared for. If you saw these patients, you would be horrified. You can't imagine their wounds, aggravated by a lack of hygiene. How fortunate I am to have learned a little of everything in Marseilles. I do all I can to relieve them." In fact, the task was enormous: a life of sacrifice without a break, accepted with joyful endurance. "Sister Amandine is, by age and by nature, the youngest among us", wrote Marie Hermine. "She sings and laughs all day. That is not bad; on the contrary. The cross of a missionary must be borne joyfully". The Chinese called her "The European sister who is always laughing". She passed nights and days watching over and caring for Marie de Sainte Nathalie during her illness, and continued her usual work with the sick, so much so that in the end she fell seriously ill ... There are no great means, but little by little her robust nature overcame everything ... She resumed her service. In one of her last letters, Marie Hermine relates: "Marie Amandine said this morning that she was praying to God not to preserve the martyrs but to strengthen them." And in fact, she herself continued to prepare remedies, singing as usual. Her joy was the admiration of those who were imprisoned with her. Certainly, she to whom God had given Franciscan joy, will have sung the "Te Deum" till the end, that hymn of praise of the Lord God, "Total Good, Unique Good, all Good" according to the prayer of Francis of Assisi. *(excerpted from: www.ofm.org)

Perpetual Vows, she was sent to China. She described the voyage humorously and on her arrival put all her talents at the service of the community and the orphans. She wrote: "I feel I have always lived here. I thank the Blessed Virgin to whom I have always prayed, and it is a consolation for me to tell you, Mother, that my trials have ended." God gave peace to this missionary. Soon she would bear the supreme witness of Love.



Marie Adolphine (Anna Dierkx)

She was born on 8 March 1866 in Holland. Daughter of a poor family, she lost her mother very early and the six orphan children were taken in by neighbours. Anne went to live with a family of labourers who were richer in love than in money ... In school, attentive to her study and faithful to prayer, she was also the first in games and was very joyful and communicative. After Primary School, she understood that she had to help her adopted family and worked as a

labourer in the village factory, where she packed coffee. Later she was employed by a well-to-do family and then went to Antwerp for the same work. The young Anne matured, her personality and her faith grew; she understood that true joy comes from a spring which never dries up, and that this joy is bought at the price of suffering. She began to perceive an immense love that calls and found peace in the desire to serve within a bigger family without frontiers. In 1893 she entered the novitiate of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary in Antwerp. To the question: "Why do you desire religious life?" she replied: "Because of a desire to serve Our Lord." Like the strong woman of the Scriptures, Marie Adolphine gave herself without any useless complaints, without any noise, to the humblest and most difficult work. Adolphine did not think herself worthy to shed her blood for her faith. But she set out. "Marie Adolphine is a sister of whom we can ask anything" said Hermine, her superior. And she herself wrote: "May Jesus give me the grace to draw my Chinese helpers to His love, but for this I must fulfil my mission as a true victim, given up totally to God and souls." God heard her desire. Marie Adolphine did not miss the rendez-vous. She witnessed by her total gift of her life for her faith in Jesus.



Maria Amandina (Pauline Jeuris)

She was born on 28 December 1872 at Herk-la-Ville, in Belgium. Daughter of simple parents and courageous Christians who worked hard to bring up a boy and six girls of whom four dedicated themselves to God. At seven years of age she lost her mother and her father was obliged to leave for a neighbouring village. There, a woman took the two youngest girls to her home and Pauline found affection and



Maria della Pace (Marianna Giuliani)

She was born in Aquila in Italy on 13 December 1875. A poor home, a father with a difficult character, who easily got into a rage and did not tolerate any religious practice - to go to Church one had to do it stealthily - and the mother worked, suffered, taught her daughters to love Mary. But illness took her away all too soon, and at

the age of ten Marianna experienced the deep sorrow of losing her mother. The father abandoned them; some other parents adopted the orphans. Marianna who was intelligent and fervent was directed by an uncle to the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary. Mary of the Passion received her as a "probationer", that is to say, among the young girls who aspired to being missionaries. She completed her studies and strengthened her vocation in France. She began her novitiate in 1892. She had various experiences in Paris where she was given the responsibility of a group of young, very difficult girls ... Marie de la Paix, with her serene kindness, succeeded in calming them down and gave them the opportunity to continue their growth in maturity ... Then, she went to Vanves where she made her First Vows. Later she shared in the foundation of a community in Austria: another language, other customs ... All this prepared her for a departure further away, towards China. There, she was given the responsibility of organising the orphanage, the material work of the community and also the music and singing, for she was gifted with a beautiful voice. Silent, Marie de la Paix drew her strength from union with God, in constant prayer. The youngest of the seven, in the face of death, she had her hour of anguish, of agony like Jesus, but like Him also, she knew how to say "Yes" and gave herself up totally. She was only 25 years old.



Maria Chiara (Clelia Nanetti)

She was born on 9 January 1872 at Santa Maria Maddalena, the province of Rovigo, in Italy. Her parents received her with joy: she was lively, precocious, ardent ... loved by all - her family and the people of the village - of an impulsive nature, exuberant, intelligent and joyful, she grasped everything very quickly. In school, her teachers

tried to discipline her. After Primary School, she helped in the house. She was charming, everybody waited for her, but very soon Clelia felt attracted to another ideal. What was the first indication of her religious vocation? Her parents obliged her to go the Ball, but the choice was already made in her heart. Barnabé, her Franciscan brother, helped her on her journey of offering herself to God. At eighteen years of age, she asked her parents

to allow her to be a religious, but they thought this was just an idealism of youth. Clelia knew what she wanted and the struggle began. She experienced suffering, bitterness, hatred, despair ... every kind of misery of this world. The desire to give herself, to serve, to live and proclaim the Gospel grew in her. She came to know the Institute of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary through her brother and the missionary horizon opened out before her. Her strong personality urged her towards to a firm decision and, on 24 January 1892, she entered the pre-novitiate; then, in April she began her novitiate and received the name of Maria Chiara. "Clare" (clear) and such was her life and her offering; a frank nature, transparent, ardent, Chiara personified missionary joy, being generous and self-forgetful, often too hasty but always ready to sacrifice for others. In China, confronted with the bishop's suggestion to leave because of the danger, Chiara exclaimed: "Monsignor, flee? No. We came to give our lives for God if needs be!" However, since the orphans, too, were in danger, Monsignor was preparing two cars to take them away to a Christian village, and Chiara was to accompany the group. But the gates of the town were already blocked and they had to come back ... Having accomplished her duty, she returned happy ... In the final trial, Chiara was the first, they say, to receive the mortal blow ... Perhaps her height attracted attention ... Was it, perhaps, that she always went forward too quickly towards what she thought was God's will? ... Her last words were doubtless those she so often repeated: "Onward always!"



Marie de Sainte Nathalie (Jeanne-Marie Kerguin)

She was born on 5th May 1864 in Belle-Isle en Terre, in Brittany. Daughter of humble and poor peasants she knew the simple games of the village children: to run through hills and vales, to carry flowers to the statue of the Blessed Virgin. She learned to read in the village school and at the same time to weave, to cook, to look after domestic animals ... She went for Catechism classes and carefully prepared herself for her profession of faith. Shortly afterwards, while still a child, she lost her mother and had to face the housework, but already the desire to give herself totally to God was making a path in her heart. In 1887 she knocked at the door of the novitiate in France, which was close to her village and the young Breton whose blue eyes revealed her transparent soul to its depths, was received there. She worked on the farm, looked after the cows, did the laundry ... Her joy was born of a deep conviction that "everything is big for one who accomplishes it with a large heart". Two things sufficed for her: to be intimately united to God and to love while accomplishing the smallest services of each day ... After her novitiate she was sent to Paris where poverty was very acute. Marie de Sainte Nathalie accepted it joyfully. Her sisters called her "Brother Leo" in remembrance of Leo the beloved companion of Francis of Assisi. Her first departure was for Carthage in North Africa, but she fell ill and had to return to Italy. Little by little she discovered the secret of the cross and she wrote:

... "I am happy to have to suffer. When one suffers one is detached from the world. God wishes that I love more than all else; He has been so generous to me and has done so much for me since I came into this world." In March 1899 she was destined for the new foundation of Taiyuanfu. Shortly after her arrival in China, her health became a great concern for the community. She spent several months in bed with typhus. She suffered unceasingly with unbelievable patience and finally recovered some of her strength little by little. Work was not wanting to her ... but on 9th July, with all her companions, the young Breton with blue eyes was beheaded. "Do not be afraid ... Death is only God who is passing by ... " she had said several times ...



Marie de Saint Just (Anne Moreau)

She was born on 9 April 1866 in the little village of la Faye, in Atlantic-Loire. Her father, a well-to-do farmer, was known in the village for his charity, his help towards those in need. Anne inherited these family virtues. She was sensitive and courageous though sometimes a bit silent, aloof and serious.

She preferred to stay with her mother rather than play with the other children, being also the 'spoilt child' of the house. While still young she lost her father and had to assume the responsibilities of selling the agricultural produce. But she already felt the call to leave the house. "It seems to me", she confided one day to a cousin who remembered this, "that God is asking something big of me. I want to go to China and give my life for the Chinese." Then came the trial: she doubted her vocation which did not seem so attractive now and she did not feel that same apostolic zeal. The simple work without any show, seemed unbearable to her ... The future made her afraid, she suffered from scruples, doubted the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist ... What to do: give up this road? Return home? That would be so easy. Marie de Saint Just was suffering. She prayed and opened her heart to Mary of the Passion, her superior general. In all loyalty, she revealed to her the torture she was going through and said: "I am nothing and did not know it". The words that Mary of the Passion asked her to pray constantly were those of Jesus: "Father, may your will, not mine, be done". For several years the young sister who did not know the way of the great mystics, continued to suffer ... clay kneaded by the potter. Helped by Mary of the Passion, she did not recoil but learned to stand firm by the cross with all her faith and all her strength. Little by little she overcame temptation and peace reigned in the depths of her being. Her mother's death added to her sorrow, but God's will became her strength. In Vanves she learned how to use the printing machines, to make shoes for her sisters and to perform a thousand other little tasks to help and sustain the community. After her