

Seven Blessed Martyrs of Shanxi (Shansi)

Died 9 July 1900, Taiyanfu, Shanxi Province, China

During the Boxer riots, fanatics massacred tens of thousands of Christians, including seven Franciscan Missionaries of Mary who had founded a hospital and orphanage in Shanxi's capital.

Natives of France, Belgium, and Holland, the sisters belonged to a new missionary order founded by Mary of the Passion. Their superior, Marie-Hermine de Jesus, had become a missionary, she said *"to save souls by caring for their bodies."* On arrival in May 1899, they were greeted by two hundred orphans, and more children were brought to them every day. The sisters treated them for scabies and typhoid and taught them to knit, to make lace, and to operate a sewing machine. As the Boxer violence escalated, the sisters prayed to God, not to spare them, but to give them strength. When their monsignor came to evacuate them, Sister Clelia Nanette shook her head, "Monsignor, flee? No. We came here to give our lives for God if needs be." (Clelia did, however, get most of the orphans out of harm's way.)

The sisters were arrested with thirty-three other Christians, including a sixty-six year old widow and six orphaned children. Days later, three thousand Boxers watched them sing hymns as they filed in to face the viceroy. As the hearing began, the viceroy exchanged angry words with the bishop and then ordered his soldiers to kill them all. The Boxers immediately began hacking at heads and limbs. A Boxer witness said later: "What was most astonishing was to see the 'she-devil Christians' die singing." The Martyrs of Shanxi were canonised with the Martyrs of China. They are venerated by the Fransiscan Missionaries of Mary on 10 July.

The Genius of the Martyrs of Shanxi

Capturing the spirit of her sister martyrs, Anne Moreau wrote: *"I attach myself to the Will of God as the anchor of my salvation."*

Reflection:

"There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for those who one loves."

John 15.13

Source:

Gallick, Sarah [The Big Book of Women Saints](#) p. 204