

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University · Loyola Heights, Quezon City · 1108 Philippines

Asian Saints

Review Author: Vitaliano R. Gorospe, S.J.

Philippine Studies vol. 28, no. 2 (1980) 234–235

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at philstudies@admu.edu.ph.

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>
Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

Besides the hagiographic material on the martyrs, this book will be interesting to many readers because of the vivid images of Manila in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, and the life of the Chinese in Binondo. There are clear glimpses also of the quarrels between the religious and civil authorities, quarrels that lasted almost throughout the Spanish regime. One sees, too, the peculiar religious psychology of European missionaries of the age, some of whom had a definite obsession for bearing witness to Christ — martyrdom — in pagan lands. There are, too, the vivid images of the methods of torture used by the Japanese persecutors, and the intense xenophobia which was at the root of the religious persecution and which led Japan to self-isolation for two centuries.

This book is a readable and popular version of a larger work by Fr. Villaroel, the *Positio* (of some 700 pages) submitted to the Vatican as a document for the Beatification Cause of Ruiz and his companions. It is hagiographic work made charming by the author's sense of narrative and historical vividness; its occasional grammatical, rhetorical, idiomatic, and typographical lapses notwithstanding.

Catholics as well as other men of goodwill who admire men heroic enough to die for their beliefs will find this book inspiring.

Florentino H. Hornedo

ASIAN SAINTS. By Francis X. Clark, S.J. Quezon City: East Asian Pastoral Institute, 1979. 80 pages.

It is rather sad that we Filipino Catholics have been devoted for so long to so many European saints, but up to now know nothing about our own Asian brothers and sisters who have been officially recognized by the Church as saints. This is not our own fault but is simply due to historical circumstances. In similar words, Jaime Cardinal L. Sin, in his Foreword, introduces this "small but precious" booklet prepared by Francis X. Clark, S.J. for the International Mission Congress held in Manila, 2-7 December 1979.

In this age of "inculturation" of the Christian faith within each culture, in this era of "local churches" so recommended by Vatican II and the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences, Fr. Clark's contribution to the growing literature on indigenization is a "first." According to Fr. Clark (p. 67), inculturation, indigenization, contextualization are abstract terms. But in the more than 400 hitherto unknown Asian saints, we witness inculturation in the concrete: these saints are the visible realization of the perfect blending of Asian culture and the Christian faith. By their martyrdom, these heroic Asian men and women have demonstrated that they did not have to renounce their own native culture in order to embrace the Christian faith, that they remained 100 percent Asian and 100 percent Christian.

In introducing the Asian-born saints from Japan, Korea, China, Vietnam, India, and the Philippines, Fr. Clark provides brief historical notes on the persecutions that led to their martyrdom and to the growth of the Church in Asia (*sanguis martyrum, semen Christianorum*). By “spotlighting” the memorable words and touching moments in the lives of these Asian martyrs, Fr. Clark succeeds in bringing to us Asian Christians today the identity and shining example of Asian saints whom we might never have known. Japan has twenty canonized saints and one hundred and fifty-eight blessed, the more famous of whom are Joachim Sakakibara, Francis of Kyoto, Matthias, Peter Sukejiro, three boys – Louis (eleven years old), Anthony (thirteen years), Thomas (fourteen years), Paul Miki, and two other Jesuit Brothers. Korea can be proud of ninety-three blessed among whom the more prominent are Andrew Kim Dae-gun, Paul Chung Ha-sang, Barbara Kim, Barbara Lee, and Charles Hyun Sok-mun. Of the twenty-one Chinese martyred under the first persecution worthy of mention are Agnes Tsaou-Kong and Peter Wu. Under the “Boxer” persecution, among the fourteen Chinese beatified are James Tchao, Peter Tchou, and Anna Wang. The Vietnamese have ninety-six beatified martyrs, the most outstanding of whom is John Dat. One Indian and one Filipino who were both martyred in Japan and who were both in the Philippines, are Gonzalo Garcia and Lorenzo Ruiz. Fr. Clark has only one line mentioning the first Filipino blessed because Fr. Fidel Villaroel, O.P. has just published the life of Lorenzo Ruiz who will be beatified in Manila on the occasion of Pope John Paul II’s visit to the Philippines. There were also foreign-born martyrs in Asia, but Fr. Clark’s book intended to highlight Asian-born saints without separating them from others who toiled, suffered, and died together for their faith in Christ.

In both his introduction and concluding observations, Fr. Clark gives the reasons for writing this book and provides answers to some questions readers of the book might ask. Why have we never heard about these Asian saints before? Why were there no Sisters among the thousands who died for their faith? Do we have any Asian saints who were not martyrs but confessors? Will our own Filipina Mother Ignacia del Espiritu Santo who founded the Beaterio Sisters (RVM Sisters) be beatified or canonized someday?

Since the majority of the Asian martyrs were lay people, Fr. Clark’s little book is recommended especially to lay people because these Asian saints, in the words of the author, “can be inspiring models of Christ-like love and heroic courage for all Christians, especially those in Asia but also those in the West and in the whole world” (p. 71). For those who wish to know more about these Asian saints, Fr. Clark gives an annotated bibliography of books and articles used in preparing the book.

Vitaliano R. Gorospe, S.J.