Feast of the Korean Martyrs – September 20, 2017

So this evening, we are given the privilege of remembering some of the most courageous Christians. Between the years 1797 and 1866, it's believed some 10,000 Koreans were martyred for their faith. And today we are called to particularly remember a group of martyrs that included one as young as 13 and oldest was 72.

Back in 1984 St. John Paul II was in Korea where he canonized these martyrs including Fr. Andrew Kim Taegon. And what I want to do is read a couple of quotes that the Holy Father, St. John Paul II used at that time to represent the courage of these Korean martyrs. And these words are from Teresa Kwan who was one of the early martyrs and she said "Since the Lord of heaven is Father of all mankind and of all creation, how can you ask me to betray him? Even in this world anyone who betrays his own father or mother will not be forgiven. All the more may I never betray Him who is the father of us all." And then there are the words of the 17 year old, Agatha Yee. She and her brother were told that their parents had betrayed the faith. And this is what this 17 year old said when she was told that. "Whether my parents betrayed or not is their affair. As for us, we cannot betray the Lord of heaven whom we have always served." Supposedly when other adults heard what this 17 year old had said, they gave themselves up freely to the magistrate and were martyred and indeed her parents had recanted the faith. They and Agatha and her brother were martyred for their faith. This, plus countless others who are unknown, humble martyrs, faithfully and bravely served the Lord.

And let me quote from Fr. Andrew Kim Taegon who was the first priest in Korea who was born in that country, who was actually raised in a Catholic home. Just days before he was beheaded in 1846, he had a letter that he wrote to others who were also being held captive with him. Listen to these words of a man who knows he is very soon going to be martyred for his faith. "My brothers and sisters, my dearest friends, think again and again on this. God has ruled over all things in heaven and earth from the beginning of time. Then reflect on why and for what purpose he chose each of us to be created in his own image and likeness. In this world of perils and hardship if we did not recognize the Lord as our creator there would be no benefit in either being born or in our continued existence. We have come into the world by God's grace and by the same grace we have received baptism and entrance into the church and the honor of being called Christians. Yet what good will all this do if we are Christians in name alone and not in fact. We would have come into the world for nothing, we would have entered the church for nothing and we would have betrayed even God and his grace. It would be better to have never been born than to receive the grace of God and then sin against Him."

I don't expect you to remember that quote, but what I want you to remember is the essence of it. A man who understood that God created him, that he was born for a purpose, that he was baptized and brought into the church and he was able to live his life in professing Jesus even to the point of death.

I think the saints for us is what my glasses do for might sight. Without them, the text on the page is all blurry but when I put them on, that which was blurry becomes clear. The saints help

to bring clarity to our spiritual vision so that we can hear Jesus say that it is those who hear the word of God and do it, that truly are His brothers and sisters.

May the example of these brave Korean martyrs be for us an inspiration in our day with the things that we deal with in our lives that might lead us to doubt or to wonder or to question or those ways in which we might be tempted to want to give up the faith. May the Korean martyrs pray for us. May their example, may their courage inspire us to see evermore clearly the truth that is in Jesus, the truth that is worth living for and at times, worth dying for.

Holy martyrs of Korea, pray for us.