

There is a scene in Robert Bolt's play "A Man For Seasons" depicting the courtroom where Thomas More is about to be convicted of treason. He confronts Richard Rich who in return for providing false witness has been given a place at court. More asks about the insignia Rich wears and is told it is the Attorney General for Wales. More responds: "It profit a man nothing to lose his soul to gain the world...but for Wales, Rich?"

Many of our brothers and sisters in the faith were faced with the choice of their souls or their lives. I could not find the number of lay people who lost their lives, but the Catholic News Service reports a death toll of 13 bishops, 4172 diocesan priests and seminarians, 2364 monks and friars and 283 nuns, for a total of 6832 victims, of whom 977 have been declared Blessed. Last Sunday, Benedict XVI beatified 498 in the largest beatification ceremony in the Church's history.

Each of us is called to take up our cross, as we heard in the gospel. We need to recognize that while our discipleship certainly has a cost in the 21st century, we face a different political and social reality from our Brothers. Our Brothers model a faithfulness we should emulate in our lives. I hope you have all had a chance to read at least parts of Fr. Salaverri's book that Bob Wood summarized for us. We see a portrait of the martyrs as teachers, community members, and faithful believers, products of their time but reflective of all generations of believers.

As I read their stories they are very familiar. They are described as...

..loved by his students and the Brothers, all of whom he watched over with the love of Jesus. Ready to do whatever Jesus tells him under the banner of Mary [Miguel]

...described as "giving himself to his students" and constantly seeking to improve his teaching. Like the Founder, his heart was dedicated to imitating the faith of Mary. [Florencio]

...noted for working with those discerning a call to a religious life and remembered for his kind smile and affectionate demeanor...desiring to live and work with the Family of Mary. [Sabino]

...wholly in love with life as an educator and as a religious...dedicated to work under "the banner of Mary." [Joaquin]

We have Brothers and Sisters in this chapel and others with whom we have shared ministry and community for whom these descriptions are accurate. Our martyrs provide models of faithfulness and courage.

Their horrific death underscores their deep and abiding faith. St. Paul addresses our Brothers when he writes: "You have followed my teaching, way of life, purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, and sufferings..." Our faith tells us they have been delivered into the hands of God and share in the resurrection of Jesus. With their lives and their deaths they gave thanks to God and made known His name by their teaching and life in community.

Out of the horror of the Spanish Civil War we see the lives of people who challenge us to renew our commitment to follow Jesus "under Mary's banner." Through every generation of

believers, Martyrs arise to remind us of our share in the Paschal mystery—the death and resurrection of Jesus. As the Church proclaims our Brothers to be **Blessed**, we rejoice with all who believe in the resurrection. We honor them not just with our prayers and our celebration this morning. We honor them as we continue our work to transform ourselves into a spectacle of saints where the primitive zeal of the Church is alive in our communities and our ministries...where we face the challenges with the strength and light of the Gospel. This is the 21st century and we will continue to read the signs of the times and act boldly, recalling the lives of our Brothers and working toward the salvation of all.

When faced with the choice, our Brothers chose the Kingdom. The question we must ask of ourselves is do he have the same faith and strength to respond. Do we choose Wales or our souls. We have the model of our Brothers and the words of the Church:

“Whereas in Spain during the Twentieth Century they shed their blood in witness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, henceforth let them be known as Blessed and their feast be celebrated annually on November 6...”

Miguel. Florencio, Sabino, and Joaquin Pray for us!

May the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit be glorified in all places through the immaculate Virgin Mary.