



103 Saint & 124 Blessed
Korean Martyrs

103 Korean Saint Martyrs

Catholicism entered Korea in 1603, introduced by Korean scholars who had encountered it in China. The faith spread quickly, but **conflicted with Confucian traditions**, especially ancestral rites. The Joseon government viewed Catholics as a threat to social order and loyalty to the state. As a result, waves of **persecutions led to thousands of deaths**.

79 martyrs during the Gi-Hae and Byeong-oh Persecutions were beatified to the blessed in 1925, and **24 martyrs from Byeong-in Persecution** became blessed in 1968. Finally, the 103 martyrs were canonized to the sainthood in 1984.

The group of 103 canonized martyrs consists of **93 Korean lay people** and **10 French missionaries**. This includes **10 Clergies** - both Korean and French priests such as St. Andrew Kim Taegon; **laypeople (men and women)** - the largest group, demonstrating that the faith was truly a lay-led movement; and **children and young people** - including the youngest martyr, Peter Yu Tae-chol at age 13. Together, these 103 saints represent the **heart of Korea's Catholic identity**: a Church founded by laypeople, defended by families, strengthened by foreign missionaries, and made holy by the courage of the young and old alike.

On May 6th 1984, Pope John Paul II canonised 103 Korean martyrs during a ceremony at Yeouido Plaza in Seoul. It was a landmark moment - the first time Korean Catholics were elevated to sainthood and broke the tradition of holding canonizations in Rome, as the Pope visited Korea to celebrate the 200th Anniversary of the Catholic Church in Korea.



124 Korean Blessed Martyrs

The **124 Korean Blessed Martyrs** were beatified by Pope Francis on **August 16, 2014**, in Seoul, South Korea. The event was held at **Gwanghwamun Gate** in central Seoul. This location was chosen for its historical significance, as it was near where many of the martyrs were killed. **An immense crowd of an estimated 800,000 to one million people**, including both Catholics and non-Catholics, gathered for the open-air Mass. This was one of the largest beatification ceremonies in the history of the Catholic Church.

It was only the second time a Pope had beatified martyrs **outside of Rome** (the first also being in Korea, when Pope John Paul II canonized the 103 Korean Martyrs in 1984). Pope Francis's decision to travel to Korea for the ceremony underscored the importance of the Korean Church and its unique history.

The 124 Korean Blessed Martyrs are a group of Catholic martyrs who were persecuted and killed for their faith in Korea during the 18th and 19th centuries, **focusing on later persecutions and additional recognized martyrs** including more Korean catechists, young children, and faithful laypeople. The group consists of **123 laypeople and one Chinese priest, Father James Zhou Wenmo**, who was the first missionary to secretly enter Korea. The large number of laypeople highlights the unique origins of the Korean Catholic Church. The cause for their beatification is named after **Paul Yun Ji-chung, who is considered the first martyr of the Korean Church**. He and his cousin were beheaded in 1791 for violating Confucian rituals by giving his mother a Catholic burial.



Bl. Paul Yun Ji-chung (복자 윤지충 바오로)



Blessed Paul Yun Ji-chung (1759-1791) was a Korean Catholic layman, considered one of **the first Korean martyrs**, who was beatified by Pope Francis in 2014.

He and his companion James Kwon Sang-yeon were executed in 1791 for refusing to participate in traditional Confucian ancestral rites for Yun's mother, which was considered a violation of the Joseon dynasty's laws against Catholicism. **Paul Yun Ji-chung's**

execution, along with that of 123 martyrs, marks a significant early period of persecution for the Catholic Church in Korea.

The discovery and confirmation of the remains of Paul Yun Ji-chung highlighted the authenticity of their martyrdom and the deep roots of the Catholic faith in Korea. Pope Francis praised Paul Yun Ji-chung for his call to, ***“put Christ first,”*** and ***“for the victory of God's love,”*** in his life and death.

St. Anna Pak Agi (성녀 박아기 안나)



St. Anna Park Agi (1783 - 1839), born in Gangcheon near Han River, was raised in a Catholic household and deeply devoted to God, even though she struggled to memorize prayers. She once said, ***“I may not know God as much as I want, but I can try to love Him with all my heart.”***

At eighteen, she married fellow Catholic Francis Tae Mun-haeong, and they had five children. Though not poor, Anna lived simply, teaching her family the faith and meditating often on Christ’s Passion.

During the 1839 Gihae Persecution, Anna was arrested with her husband and eldest son. **Anna remained firm. “Why, for a few days more of life, would you risk eternal death?”** she told them. Despite brutal torture and pressure from guards and friends, she refused to deny Christ, ***“I have decided to preserve my faith and die for it.”*** After three months of beatings and imprisonment, May 24, 1839, at age 57, Anna was beheaded at Seosomun with eight other believers. Her courage, faith, and love for Christ made her not just a mother of five, but a mother of saints. She was canonized in 1984 by Pope John Paul II among the 103 Korean Martyrs.

St. Paul Chong Hasang (성 정하상 바오로)



Saint Paul Chong Hasang (1795–1839) was a **foundational lay leader of the early Korean Catholic Church** during a time of intense persecution. Born into a noble and devout family, his father Jeong Yak-jong was martyred in the 1801 Sinyu Persecution.

After witnessing the deaths of his father and brother, Chong grew up in a hidden Christian village and committed his life to rebuilding the

persecuted Church. In the absence of clergy, he traveled to Beijing nine times between 1816 and 1826, risking his life to seek help from the Catholic Church. **In 1825, he boldly petitioned Pope Gregory XVI to ordain native Korean priests.** Deeply moved, the Pope called the request “**a miracle of the Lord in the East,**” and soon after, **the Diocese of Joseon was established.**

During the training for the priesthood under Bishop Imbert, he was arrested during the 1839 Gihae Persecution. On September 22, 1839, Chong was executed at age 45, along with his mother and sister. Though never ordained, Chong’s work paved the way for Korea’s native clergy, including Saint Andrew Kim Taegon. Canonized in 1984, he is honored as a martyr, scholar, and spiritual father of the Korean Church.

St. Andrew Kim Taegon (성 김대건 안드레아)



St. Andrew Kim Taegon (1821–1846) is the first native Korean Catholic priest and the patron saint of Korea. He was born on August 21, 1821, in Solmoe, Chungcheong Province, into a Catholic family during a time of severe persecution. His father, Ignatius Chejun Kim, was later martyred for the faith in 1839.

He traveled to Macau to study for the priesthood, as seminaries were not allowed in Korea. **He was ordained a priest in Shanghai in 1845 by French bishop Jean-Joseph Ferréol.** After ordination, he returned to Korea to secretly minister to the growing but persecuted Catholic community, teaching, administering sacraments, and strengthening the faithful.

In 1846, at age 25, he was captured near Seoul while trying to arrange for missionaries to enter Korea. After months of torture, he was executed by beheading on September 16, 1846, at Saenamteo, on the banks of the Han River near Seoul.

He was canonized in 1984 by Pope John Paul II along with 102 other Korean martyrs. His feast day is celebrated on September 20 (together with the Korean Martyrs) and also on September 16 in Korea. He is remembered for his courage, missionary zeal, and dedication to bringing the Catholic faith to Korea despite life-threatening persecution.

Saint Sisters Agnes Kim Hyoju (성녀 김효주 아네스) & Columba Kim Hyoim (성녀 김효임 콜롬바)



Born into a wealthy but anti-Christian household on Bamseom Island, Hyoim (1814-1839) and Hyoju (1816-1839), the sisters faced a father who violently rejected the faith. After his death, their mother and all six children converted to Catholicism. **From baptism, the sisters, Columba, Agnes, and Clara, vowed virginity and chose a life of prayer, fasting, and service to the poor, rejecting wealth and marriage.**

In 1839, during the Gihae Persecution, the family was betrayed. **Agnes was arrested first, and Columba, witnessing her rough treatment, bravely stepped forward to join her.** At the Seoul Police Bureau, they boldly defended their faith, refusing to betray fellow Catholics or renounce God. Subjected to brutal tortures including beatings, burning skewers, and sexual humiliation, **they endured all in silence and prayer.** The sisters refused to betray anyone, including their brother Antonio. **Agnes was beheaded on September 3, 1839 at age 23 and Columba followed on September 26 at age 25.** Their unwavering faith and defense of both virginity and martyrdom became a powerful witness for the Korean Church. They were canonized in 1984 by Pope John Paul II among the 103 Korean martyrs.

St. Peter Yu Tae-chol (성 유대철 베드로)



Saint Peter Yu Tae-chol (1826-1839) was the son of Saint Augustine Yu Jin-gil, a prominent lay Catholic who helped bring foreign priests to Joseon. Though his father was devout, Peter faced opposition at home from his mother and sister who mocked his faith. Yet he

remained respectful and faithful.

During the 1839 Gihae Persecution, 14-year-old Peter, inspired by the martyrs, voluntarily turned himself in. Imprisoned and tortured through fourteen brutal interrogations, he endured over 600 lashes and 45 beatings without wavering. **When threatened with fire, he opened his mouth in defiance, stunning his captors. Fellow prisoners marveled at his strength and humility.** Fearing public reaction, authorities executed him in secret on October 31, 1839. **He was only 13.** Peter's martyrdom was a profound witness to his love for Christ. He was beatified in 1925 and canonized in 1984 by Pope John Paul II.