

Vinspiration

SAINT JOHN GABRIEL PERBOYRE

John Gabriel Perboyre was born to Pierre and Marie Perboyre in Montgesty, near Cahors, in southern France, on 6 February 1802. There were eight children in the family; three sons became Vincentians, and two sisters entered the Daughters of Charity. His father owned a farm where cereals and grapes were grown and some sheep reared. It was the time of Napoleon's military supremacy. On December 25, 1818, John Gabriel entered the Congregation of the Mission. He was later ordained to priesthood on September 23, 1823 in the Rue du Bac Chapel of the Daughters of Charity.

It was natural for John Gabriel to join the Vincentians because not only did it offer evangelization of the poor and formation of the clergy, but also offered missionary work. From his earliest days in the seminary he longed to go to China. After many years of seeking permission to travel to China, John Gabriel is finally granted his wish in 1835. The previous year his brother Louis died at sea, on the way to China. John Gabriel leaves France on March 21 and arrives in Macau on August 29. Chinese law forbade the entry of Christian missionaries so the captain and crew disguised themselves as merchants and smuggled the missionaries onto mainland China. Then transportation was by foot and horseback to reach Nanyong in Henan.

After five months, John Gabriel was able to express himself, though with some difficulty, in good Chinese, and at once threw himself into the ministry, visiting small communities. In the company of two Chinese Vincentians he spent 1837 and 1838 reanimating the faith in Catholic villages by preaching, catechizing, and administering the sacraments.



FEAST DAY
11 September
BEATIFICATION
30 May 1889
CANONISATION
2 June 1996
DEATH
11 September 1840

John Gabriel's words...

"There is but one thing necessary, and that is Jesus Christ."

"In the crucifix, in the gospel and in the Eucharist we find everything we can possibly desire."

"There is no other way, no other truth, no other life; consequently, to him [Jesus] alone we must attach ourselves, him we must study, to him we must incessantly have recourse."

"We can only attain salvation through conformity with Jesus Christ."

"...May my hands be the hands of Jesus. May my tongue be the tongue of Jesus. Grant that every faculty of my body may serve only to glorify you."

FOUR THEMES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JOHN GABRIEL PERBOYRE

Devotion to Providence: belief in the attentive presence of personal God who walks with us in the... varied experiences of human existence.

Love for the Mission: lies at the heart of the Vincentian experience: a deep yearning to follow Christ, evangelise and servant of the poor,... reaching out effectively to the most abandoned...

Love for the Community: shows itself...in fidelity to our commitments and in our living working with one another.

Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary: expresses itself today in a wide variety of ways – celebration of feast days, the rosary, the Miraculous Medal. Most importantly, in our being united with Mary as listeners to the word of God.

(Seasons in Spirituality: Reflections on Vincentian Spirituality in Today's World, Robert P. Maloney CM, 1998, New City Press, New York.)

Saint John Gabriel Perboyre

Missionary and Martyr

In 1839 the Viceroy of the province of Hu-pei began a persecution and used local Mandarins to obtain the names of priests and catechists in their areas. Soldiers were sent to arrest John Gabriel and his companions, after being tipped off by some Christians they were able to scatter in different directions. The soldiers used threats to force a catechumen to reveal where John Gabriel was hiding resulting in his arrest. The prisoner had no rights, he was not protected by laws, and was at the mercy of gaolers and judges. Given that he was arrested it was presumed that he was guilty and would be punished. A series of trials began. Frequently tortured in prison, John Gabriel refused to betray his faith and his associates. In May 1840 his case went to the Emperor where he was found guilty of preaching Christianity and condemned to death.

John Gabriel was executed on September 11, 1840, by strangulation on a cross and buried in the same cemetery where Regis Clet was also buried. His remains were later returned to Paris, and can be found in the Motherhouse of the Vincentians.



Something to think about ...

Reflect on the questions below ... share your thoughts with others ... or take some time to write down your thoughts and offer them to God.

What dimension of my faith is most difficult to me?

What are the forms of martyrdom for Catholics today?

What does martyrdom mean for me in comparison to the world view of it today?

In what form do I "give" my life today?

What does it mean to give my life for God and for my brother/sister?

Do I expect to be in control of every aspect of my life?

What would it mean to me to allow God to control my life?

What is God telling me when my plans are upset and I have to adjust to the unexpected?

Let us pray...

O God, through the intercession of John Gabriel Perboyre, inspire us to witness to the power of life within us.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen



Bibliography

Seasons in Spirituality: Reflections on Vincentian Spirituality in Today's World, Robert P. Maloney CM, 1998, New City Press, New York.



Web Resources

www.famvin.org www.vinnies.org.au
www.filles-de-la-charite.org
www.secretariadojmv.org

VINCENTIAN
FAMILY
CELEBRATION

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