

The traitor, Kim Yo-sang, promised the government officials that he would catch the French missionaries if they gave him some policemen. The government officials gave him the police that he requested.

Kim Yo-sang approached a naive Catholic farmer and told him a lie, saying that some learned Catholics in Seoul had persuaded the government officials to accept the Catholic faith. He said that the government officials and even some high ranking ministers had decided to become Catholic. He went further, suggesting that the French missionaries should go to Seoul to convert the government people.

The simple Catholic, deceived by Kim Yo-sang, led the group of men to Son Andrew's home, where Bishop Imbert had been hiding. He arrived ahead of the police and told the bishop what he heard from Kim Yo-sang. The bishop knew that the Catholic had been deceived. He did not run away but decided to give himself up to the police in order to avoid trouble for his people.

On August 10, 1839, the feast of St. Laurence, his patron saint, Bishop Imbert surrendered himself to the police and was led to the Seoul prison. He was interrogated by a Korean official. The official forced him to renounce God, but he strongly refused to do so. Therefore, Bishop Imbert was finally sentenced to death, and was beheaded at Saenamteo on September 21, 1839. He was 43 years old. His body was buried in Samseongsan Mountain, and later transferred to the grotto of Myongdong Cathedral.

** (excerpted from: English.cbck.or.kr)



Bishop Imbert

SAINT LAURENT IMBERT AND 103 KOREAN MARTYRS

Feast Day: September 20th



Honored in Korea and the Paris Foreign Mission Society

Saint Laurent Marie Joseph Imbert

*Laurent-Marie-Joseph Imbert was born to a poor farming family on 23 March 1796 in Marignane, France. He studied at the seminary of the Missions Étrangères de Paris, France in 1818.

Ordained on 18 December 1819, he was sent as a missionary to China in 1820. Before reaching China, he taught at College General (Major Seminary) in Penang, Malaya from April 1821 to January 1822

In 1821, Bishop Esprit-Marie-Joseph Florens, the Vicar Apostolic of Siam, requested for him to call at Singapore. The bishop had been contemplating on opening a missionary station in Singapore. He was not very certain, though, whether there was any urgency nor was he aware of the circumstances prevailing in the island. Therefore, the young missionary was to go check on the situation. He reached Singapore on 11 December 1821 and spent about a week there. Father Imbert could have been the first priest to celebrate Mass on the island.

In 1822, he sailed for Macau, but unable to go directly there, he spent 2 years in Tonkin, French Indochina.

In China, he spent twelve years in Szechuan province and founded a seminary in Moupin.

Korea and Martyrdom

The relics of Saint Laurent-Marie-Joseph Imbert at the Cathedral of the Good Shepherd, Singapore. On 26 April 1836, he was appointed Vicar Apostolic of Korea and Titular Bishop of Capsa. On 14 May 1837, he was ordained Titular Bishop of Capsa and crossed secretly from Manchuria to Korea the same year. During this time, Korea was going through a period of Christian persecution.

On 10 August 1839, Bishop Imbert, who was secretly going about his missionary work, was betrayed. Realising that it was only a matter of time before he was arrested and killed, he celebrated Mass and surrendered himself to those who lay in waiting for him. He was taken to Seoul where he was tortured to reveal the whereabouts of foreign missionaries. Believing that his converts would be spared if all foreign missionaries came out from hiding and gave themselves up, he wrote a note to his fellow missionaries, Fathers Pierre-Philibert Maubant and Jacques-Honoré Chastan, asking them to surrender to the Korean authorities as well. He had written, "In desperate circumstances, the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep."

They did and the three of them were imprisoned together. They were taken before an interrogator and questioned for three days to reveal the names and whereabouts of their converts. As torture failed to break them down, they were sent to another prison and finally beheaded on 21 September 1839 at Saenamteo, Korea. Their bodies remained exposed for several days but were finally buried on Nogu Mountain.

The three martyrs were one of the 79 Korean martyrs beatified in 1925 and were among the one hundred and three martyrs canonised by Pope John Paul II in Seoul on 6 May 1984.

The Feast Day of Saint Laurent-Marie-Joseph Imbert is on 20 September (formerly 10 June).
*(excerpted from: www.findagrave.com)

103 Korean Martyr Saints and Saint Laurent Marie Joseph Imbert, Bishop

** Bishop Imbert was born in France on April 15, 1797. He joined the Paris Foreign Mission Society in 1819, and in the following year he left Paris to go to Szechuan in China. Later he was in charge of the seminary there.

He was named the Vicar Apostolic of Korea at the age of 41. In 1837, he was led by Korean Catholics and successfully crossed the Yalu River after many hardships and difficulties. Thirteen days later his entourage arrived at Seoul. He was the first bishop to set foot in this country, six years after the establishment of the Vicariate Apostolic of Korea and 52 years after the foundation of the Catholic Church in Korea. One can easily imagine how happy the Catholics of that time were.

He met two French priests, Fathers Maubant and Chastan. They worked very hard in a strange and unfamiliar country. The number of the Catholics was about 6,000 when the first French missionary (Father Maubant) started to work in Korea in 1836. By 1839 the number of Catholics had reached 9,000.

Bishop Imbert tried to escape the persecution, and in 1839 hid himself in Suwon with the help of Son Andrew.

The fact that the French missionaries were in the country had become known publicly to almost everyone, because some informers spread the news.