

St. Anna Wang

1886-1900

INTRODUCTION

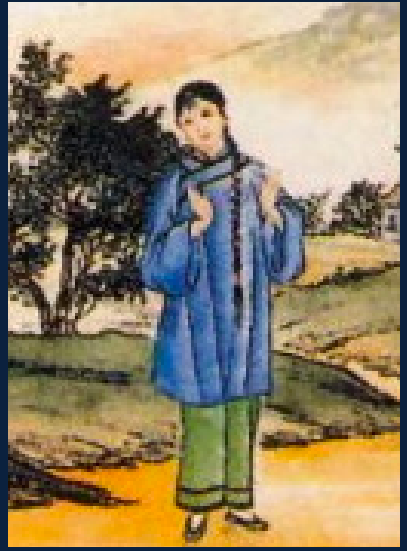
To be shared with older students:

On October 1, 2000, Pope John Paul II canonized the "Martyr Saints of China" – 120 men, women, and children who gave their lives for their faith in China between 1648 and 1930. The martyrs include 87 native Chinese and 33 foreign missionaries. Among these saints was a 14-year-old Chinese girl named Anna Wang.

St. Anna Wang was born in the Xingtai Hebei Province in China in 1886 to Catholic parents and lost her mother at a young age. After the loss, Anna was fervent in her faith, intently studying the Catechism and continually devoting herself to pious exercises. At the age of 10, St. Anna dedicated her whole self to God.

On July 21, 1900, a Chinese political and religious group called the Boxers began a bloody persecution against Christians in China. As the Boxers approached Anna's village, she took shelter in the nearby Catholic school with a group of Catholic women. With determination in her eyes, Anna led the women in prayer and helped them persevere in their faith through her words of encouragement.

Eventually a group of Boxers reached the school, and the bandit leader told the women to renounce God or die. As the bandits led away Anna's stepmother, St. Anna cried out, "I want to believe in God. I want to be a Catholic. I do not want to leave the Church! Jesus help me!" The next day, the bandits took the women to their execution and once more demanded that they renounce their faith. Anna



responded by kneeling, holding her hands towards heaven, and calmly saying, "The door of heaven is open for all!" She whispered, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus" as she was killed. Witnesses spoke of her bravery and peace. Anna was confident in Jesus' love for her and the promise of eternal life in heaven with Him.

Pope John Paul II said of St. Anna and the Martyr Saints, "Chinese men and women of every age and state, priests, religious and lay people, showed the same conviction and joy, sealing their unflinching fidelity to Christ and the Church with the gift of their lives." Even today, Chinese Catholics face harsh persecution from the Chinese government, but St. Anna and others are a witness of hope and courage for the faithful.

On July 9, the Church celebrates the feast of the 120 Martyrs of China. We commemorate St. Anna and all others who gave their lives for their faith.

A version for younger students:

St. Anna Wang was a young girl who lived in China. Growing up her faith was very important to her. No matter how difficult things were, she always found time to pray and learn about her faith. Anna knew that God loved her very much and she trusted in His plan for her.

When Anna was 14 years old, the government of China began persecuting Christians. This was a scary time, but Anna continued to pray and helped others to pray too. She continued to trust in God and knew that her reward would be to reside in heaven forever with God.

When Anna was given the choice to give up her faith or die, she chose death. Even though this was a very difficult decision, God gave her peace and courage. God protected her with His love as she gave her life for Him. St. Anna's last words before going to heaven were, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus." She wanted everyone to know how important Jesus is. No matter what happened, St. Anna found joy and happiness in Jesus.

We celebrate the feast day of St. Anna and other saints from China who gave their lives for God on July 9.

PRAYER

Almighty God, we give You thanks for choosing so many Chinese faithful to witness to Christ by giving up their lives and serving as examples of steadfast love. We beg You that through the intercession of all the Chinese martyr saints, many more people will come to know and believe in You. We also pray that we may follow the example of these Chinese martyrs by remaining strong in faith, hope, and love, by overcoming fear of hardship and sacrifice, and by boldly proclaiming our faith.

May the Gospel of Jesus Christ be spread throughout China and around the globe, and may Chinese people in all parts of the world receive the light of faith and the grace to follow Christ each day, so as to enter Your everlasting kingdom. We ask this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

Or...

Dear Jesus, please help us to learn to love You as St. Anna loved You. Allow Your love to guide our every move, no matter how difficult life seems to be. May we always follow and love You. St. Anna, pray for us. Amen.

CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

Religion

- As a class, pray for those who are suffering persecution for their faith.
- As a class, pray in gratitude for the gift of faith and the ability to practice it freely.
- Discuss: What does it mean to be a martyr?
- Research other saints that were martyred for their faith.
- Spend time reading the Catechism and learning more about the tenets of the Catholic faith.

Writing

- Have students write about a challenging time in their faith and how they reacted to adversity.
- Research a news article about Catholicism in China
- Explore the various spiritual traditions in China in relation to Christianity.
- Analyze the following New York Times article about the canonization: <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/10/02/world/pope-canonizes-120-killed-in-china-and-one-american.html>

Social Studies

- Locate Xingtai Hebei Province on a map. Research the number of provinces in China and how they are governed.
- Discuss the current political state of Christianity in China.
- Interview a Christian who lives or has lived in China.
- Research the Boxer Rebellion.
- Learn more about the 120 Martyr Saints and discuss modern-day martyrs in China.
- Teach about the political effects of the People's Republic of China on religion.

Language

- Listen to Catholic prayers in Chinese (Example: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MKqz_HD7W-4).
- Visit a Chinese Catholic liturgy.

Art

- There isn't a lot of art depicting St. Anna and the Martyr Saints. Ask students to depict and/or describe St. Anna and the Martyr Saints.
- Browse Chinese iconography and discuss the differences with European iconography (Example: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/453174781226469823/>)

SOURCES

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