



ASIA/LAOS - Process of beatification for 15 missionary martyrs

Nantes (Agenzia Fides) – The Diocese of Nantes, France recently concluded the diocesan process for the beatification of 15 missionaries, including religious and laity, killed in hatred of the Christian faith between 1954 and 1970. Among them are 5 French religious of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI), 5 members of the Paris Foreign Missions Society (MEP), and 5 Laotians.

As Fides has learned, in a solemn Mass presided by Bishop Jean-Paul James, Bishop of Nantes, the local Church expressed his joy at the outcome of the process, which now goes to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

"The canonical process has enabled many of us to learn more about the history of the Church of Laos and to continue to pray for our brothers in the faith who live in that country," said the Bishop in his homily.

The process has been, in fact, an opportunity to revive the heroic missionary effort carried out by missionaries in Southeast Asia: "The guerrillas tried to eliminate everything that was foreign and Christian. And faced with this situation, the missionaries chose to remain in this place as the Holy See asked them, despite the serious threat to their lives," say MEP religious today, remembering their brothers.

There is the exemplary story of a French missionary, Father Jean Baptiste Malo, who died of fatigue and weakness while he was walking a forced march, in a Marxist "re-education camp," to nearby Vietnam.

Research to attest to the heroic virtues of the 15 martyrs were held in Laos, with surveys and interviews with local witnesses of that era. All this, however, is done very discreetly because "Christians in Laos are living amidst limited freedom."

Another cause of canonization, which reached Rome two years ago, is underway for the Italian missionary Fr. Mario Borzaga, OMI and the Laotian catechist Paul Thoj Xyooj, both also martyred in Laos. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 30/3/2010)