



Roman martyrology: In Daijiazhuang City in Shandong Province, south of China, Joseph Freinademetz, priest of the Society of the Divine Word, who worked tirelessly in the evangelization of that region (1908).

Canonization date: October 5, 2003 by Pope John Paul II.

SHORT BIOGRAPHY

He was born April 15, 1852 in Pedraces in Val Gadena, the Tyrolean Alps, Italy into a pious farm family, the fourth of twelve children. Joseph was a polymath who knew seven languages. Ordained in Bressanone, Italian Tyrol on July 25, 1875. Joined the Divine Word Missionaries when the congregation was only three years old. Missionary to China in 1879; he spent the rest of his life there, and did all he could to be Chinese in order to convert the Chinese.

He worked initially with Franciscan missionaries so he and his group could get acclimated. The bishop of Hong Kong planned to put Father Joseph in charge of the group, and later to ordain him as bishop; Joseph refused to leave the bishop's office until his superior had changed his mind and given the honor to some one else.

It was a time of persecution of Christians in China; many in authority resented foreigners of any sort, and others were openly anti-Christian no matter if the faithful were native or foreign. Father Joseph, his co-workers and his flock were chased from place to place, arrested, routinely beaten. Joseph is reported to have preached to his attackers while they were beating him; they were so moved and impressed, they left.

The abuse of the missionaries led to some foreign governments to dispatch armed forces to China to protect them. The Chinese government reacted by expelling all foreigners. Father Joseph stayed to minister covertly to the converts, finally resuming his work openly after the deportation orders were lifted. On the roads and from the mission, he worked to teach and convert up to the very end of his life.

“Love is the only language everyone understands.” - Saint Joseph

