

## *Canonization of Jean Gabriel Perboyre*

*On Sunday June 2nd, the solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, Pope John Paul II celebrated in St. Peter's Square, a solemn Mass for the canonization of French Jean Gabriel Perboyre (1802-1840) of the Congregation for the Missions, martyred in China.*

### *The Holy Father's Homily*

Jean Gabriel Perboyre, a priest of the Congregation of the Mission, wished to imitate Christ the evangelizer of the poor, following the example of Saint Vincent de Paul. After working for the formation of the clergy in France, he went to China. Here he testified with ardour to Christ's love for the Chinese people.

"I know not what awaits me along the road that lies ahead: certainly the cross, which is the missionary's daily bread. What more can one expect, when one sets out to preach a crucified God?" (*Letter n. 70*), he wrote as was he was about to enter China. Along that road he did find the Cross of Christ. Through daily imitation of his Lord, with humility and gentleness, he fully identified himself with Christ. By following Him step by step in his Passion, he is now with Him in glory, forever.

"One thing only is necessary: Jesus Christ" he would often say. His martyrdom was the apex of his commitment to following Christ the missionary. After being tortured, he died like Christ, a death on the cross. Jean Gabriel had one passion: Christ and the proclamation of his Gospel. It was because of his fidelity to this passion, that he too was lowered to the level of the oppressed, the condemned, and that the Church today is able to solemnly proclaim his glory among the choir of saints in heaven.

As we remember and celebrate Jean-Gabriel today, we wish also to remember all the others who have borne witness to the name of Jesus Christ in China in the past. I think especially of the blessed martyrs whose common canonization, for which many Catholics are praying, may one day be a sign of hope for the Church among these people, to whom I remain close in my heart and in my prayers.