

# Saint Mark Ji Tianxiang



Date of birth: 1834

Birthplace: Jizhou District, Hengshui, Hebei, China

Date of death: July 9, 1900, *martyred*

Canonization: October 1, 2000 by Pope Saint John Paul II

Feast Day: July 9

**Patron Saint of: Drug Addicts**

## About Mark Tianxiang:

Mark Ji Tianxiang was born into a Catholic family in China. While his brother became a priest, Mark chose to serve others through medicine and became a doctor. He was very generous, even treating the poor for free.

In his early 30s, Mark developed a stomach ailment for which opium was a common prescription at the time. Sadly, what began as a remedy for his ailment spiraled into a lifelong addiction. Mark, deeply faithful, sought confession weekly, but addiction was not understood as it is today. His confessor, after repeated confessions, believed that Mark had not made enough progress in overcoming his addiction. He was told not to return for confession until he had stopped using completely. Although this meant he could not receive Holy Communion, Mark remained faithful, attending daily Mass and praying for healing for over 30 years. Eventually, Mark prayed for the grace of martyrdom, believing that it might be the only way he could find salvation. He remained addicted.

In 1900, his prayer for martyrdom began to be answered. Amid the Boxer Rebellion, which sought to purge Western influence, including Christianity, Mark's family was exposed for their Catholic faith. Many of them were arrested and thrown in prison, and Mark, along with a son, two daughter-in-laws, 6 grandsons, and a total of 109 other Christians, were threatened with execution if they did not renounce their faith. Imprisoned, his frightened grandson asked him, "Grandpa, where are we going?" "We're going home," Mark replied. On July 9, 1900, his family was led to execution. Mark requested to be the last, so none of his loved ones would die alone. As he sang the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary and encouraged each family member to remain steadfast, Mark and his nine relatives were martyred.

Glorious St. Mark, holy martyr of China, you are the patron saint of drug addicts because for many years you struggled with the effects of opium addiction which affected every aspect of your life. Yet despite this you never gave up trying and praying, and in heaven God has rewarded your perseverance. Dear saint, you know better than anyone the great tribulations that come with addiction; look with compassion upon all drug addicts throughout the world and deliver them from their bondage. Strengthen them in their recovery and help them resist their temptations. Obtain from God that drug addicts everywhere may receive the support and the compassion they deserve and may all, through the grace of God be restored to full health. Amen.