

# A View from the Pew

by Deacon Greg Kandra

## *The Martyrs*

**T**his week, as we approach All Souls Day, I ask you to think of a soul named Samuel Masih. This young Catholic was tending a garden in his home in Pakistan when he was arrested, beaten bloody and charged with blasphemy against Islam. He died in a hospital, at the hands of a police officer charged with guarding him.

Or remember Fr. Job Chittilappily, a 71-year-old pastor in India, who was murdered while saying his Rosary in his parish church.

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Or whisper a prayer for Brian O'Connor, an Indian Catholic kidnapped in Saudi Arabia. He was taken to a mosque, tortured, beaten and imprisoned. He was accused of selling liquor and—even worse, to his captors—preaching Jesus Christ. He was threatened with death unless he renounced his faith. To this day, he remains in prison.

These are just a few of the men, women and children who have become the martyrs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They suffer for being Catholic in non-Catholic countries. They go to jail, they endure torture—and very often, they give their lives.

The Vatican news agency Fides continues to report deaths and violence against Christians. Countless others have vanished, or are held captive, or have been slaughtered in acts of war.

It's happening mostly in Asia, but also in our own hemisphere, most notoriously in Colombia, where a bishop, priests and many lay people have suffered for their faith, and for the cause of peace and justice. It is happening in Africa, too, where people are arrested for the crime of converting to Christianity.

We don't hear much about these victims. Few people seem to notice. "Believers are subject to hardships in many parts of the world for following Christ and His Church," Pope John Paul said back in 2004. He asked all Christians to remember them, and to be prepared to suffer for the faith. It's a message many of us need to hear.

When we think of martyrs, we tend to think of legends named Stephen, or Joan, or Peter, or Paul. We see them in stained glass or carved in marble. We name our churches for them, and learn their stories, and bring to them our prayers.

But there are others we should also honor, and for whom we should also offer prayers and remembrances on All Souls Day. People like Samuel, and Job, and Brian. Many, no doubt, are saints. And many more are anonymous.

We do not know their names. We do not know all their stories. But the least we can do is pray for an end to the terror and the torture and the intolerance—remembering to entrust our petition, as always, to the Queen of Martyrs.

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