

The Algerian Martyrs

Led by Fr Martin McGee OSB

Description:

The story of the love of the Tibhirine community for its Muslim neighbours in Algeria has lit a fire which refuses to go out. In 1996 on the night of the 26th/27th March seven monks from the Trappist monastery of Tibhirine, 96 km south of Algiers, were kidnapped by Muslim fundamentalists and fifty-six days later, on 21st May all of them were beheaded.

The inspiring witness of the Tibhirine monks came to the attention of the world thanks to Xavier Beauvois' film 'Of Gods and Men', winner of the Grand Prix at the Cannes film festival in 2010. This film captured the imagination of countless people, many of whom had no religious affiliation or interest in religion. They were above all amazed by the close friendship which the monks had established with their Muslim neighbours.

What most people don't know is that there twelve other martyrs - priests, religious sisters, one Marist brother and a Dominican bishop, Pierre Claverie, who were also assassinated. The lives of these nineteen martyrs speak powerfully to us today of the Good News which can break down barriers and light a fire of hope and peace in the hearts of many.

Reflecting on the almost total destruction of the Church in Algeria, Br Paul of Tibhirine wrote in January 1995, shortly before his martyrdom: ***"Nevertheless I believe that the Good News is being sown, the seed is germinating ... The Spirit is at work; he works in the depths of people's hearts. Let us be available so that he may act in us through prayer and a loving presence to all our brothers."*** By giving their lives out of love, the nineteen martyrs continue to inspire both Christians and Muslims. The seeds they have sown are bearing an abundant harvest.

More Detail:

Fr Martin has written five books about the witness of the nineteen Algerian martyrs (1994-1996). His talks will seek to show their relevance for our own lives in a world becoming increasingly more divided by race and religion.

Retreat Dynamics:

All our retreats are run along Benedictine principles with a balance between prayer and work, silence and talking, and being alone and being in community. To do this we use the monastic rhythm of the day defined by the structure of the monastic services, along with the regular meal-times this establishes a balanced and healthy environment from which good reflection and discernment can happen.

What should my expectations be?

The retreat will include:

- A time for monastic services and Mass (once a day);
- A time for silence;
- A time for practising Lectio Divina (sacred reading);

A time for listening to reflections;
A time for discussion and asking questions.

In the afternoon there will be:

A time to have space for myself;
A time to walk in the Sussex countryside;
A time to have a 1:1 with a monk (if you wish).

Our hopes for the Retreat:

You will leave feeling:

That you have connected with God in some meaningful way;
Rested and refreshed with a sense of joy and hope;
You will want to return at some stage in the future.