

Homily
Memorial of Saint Andrew Kim Taegon, Priest and Martyr,
and Saint Paul Chong Hasang, Catechist and Martyr, and their Companions, Martyrs
Friday of the 24th Week in Ordinary Time
September 20, 2024

Who has ever made a choice, a selfless choice you would have rather not made, such as going to the grocery to pick up that one item when you would have rather stayed comfortably in your recliner watching your favorite show? Or when you were volunteered to do something you really didn't want to do, but did anyway? And what about when you said, "No," when asked? Did you feel guilty or was it a justified, "No?"

I was really tired this morning. I would have much rather stayed in bed and slept till noon. But I always feel better when I force myself to get out of bed, start my morning routine and come to Mass.

It feels good to make the right choice, even if the first steps are difficult. And it feels even better when we make the right choice. Sometimes we are presented with two or more options and have to make the determination which choice to make. When we rely on God, keep our focus on Him, the choice is simple; maybe not easy, but definitely obvious. It's when we aren't sure which choice is the right one that we struggle. Which is the one that God would like us to make?

The first native Korean priest, Andrew Kim Taegon was the son of Christian converts. Following his baptism at the age of 15, Andrew traveled 1,300 miles to the seminary in Macao, China. After six years, he managed to return to his country through Manchuria. That same year he crossed the Yellow Sea to Shanghai and was ordained a priest. Back home again, he was assigned to arrange for more missionaries to enter by a water route that would elude the border patrol. He was arrested, tortured, and finally beheaded at the Han River near Seoul, the capital. St. Andrew wasn't the only Korean martyred in Korea. Pope St. John Paul II canonized 98 Koreans and three French missionaries who had been martyred between 1839 and 1867. These martyrs made a choice. They knew their decision would likely mean their death, yet they chose to maintain their faith; they chose not to renounce their Christianity.

The first reading tells us of the just, those who put their trust in the Lord, even to the point of death. They now, "abide with Him in love." Jesus tells us that, "whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it." When we put our trust in the Lord, we will abide with Him in His glory.

Every day we are given the choice to follow Jesus or follow our own designs. Every day, we make good choices and we make bad choices. We come to Mass to hear God's Word, receive God, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity, to be strengthened and nourished in our effort to make good choices. It begins by following Christ, it begins by picking up our cross and aligning our will to His. The choice is ours.