

the sentence was carried out at night, and wood was not to be found. The main account by Fr. Prosper goes on:

“The Shah had (by this time) eight men under arrest, among them the two returned converts who, unaware of the written information about them the Shah held in his hands, denied at first that they were such: to make certain he had them sent to Fr. John Thaddeus for identification: and, while we were still confined, the executioners arrived at the convent having brought attached by a chain eight catechumens, among them two, Ibrahim and Yusuf, who had been baptized, with a message to the effect that those whom the Father said were not Christians he would allow to go free. I (Fr. Prosper is writing) went out to meet them, accompanied by Frs. John and Balthazar. The (former) Father began to exhort the men, saying that it behoved them to confess in public that they were Christians, since the Christian religion did not allow denial. He spoke words of comfort to them, saying that these were men whom he had baptized, for their names both as Christians and when Muslims were known to the Shah. To his exhortation Yusuf said: ‘I came but a single time to this house.’ Fr. John replied: ‘My son, thou knowest the times thou camest. What I tell thee is that whoever is a Christian ought to confess it without fear of death.’ After many other words he embraced Ibrahim and Yusuf, saying: ‘These are my Christians.’ Yusuf burst into tears at seeing himself found out, for in the king’s presence both he and Ibrahim had denied being Christians. It was a remarkable thing to see how the gaolers were encouraging the men to die for their new faith, the one saying that they should not be afraid of death, as no other lot awaited all human beings—‘if you be Christians, say so and go to your death in the Christian religion’: while the other observed: ‘Death is over in a moment: you will go with gladness.’ . . .

“Father John called aside the officers of justice, and begged them to try and get the men released without regard for the cost, as he would arrange to make it good to them: and they all promised. And so the Christians went off, more reassured. This happened at one hour after nightfall. We returned to saying the office of Matins for, as I said, the other Fathers were waiting for us without having proceeded farther, seeing how apposite were the verses we were reciting when we went out: ‘Introduxisti nos in laqueum, posuisti tribulationes in dorso nostro, imposuisti homines super capita nostra. . . .’

“On Wednesday, the 16th February, very early, as we were at morning prayer, at which was read the life of S. Catharine, virgin and martyr, the same officers of justice returned with the eight men on a chain and called us to the gate: and we, Fr. John and I, went out. While Fr. John once more spoke to the officers of justice” (asking that) “the two Christians be set at liberty in return for a considerable sum of money, I went to see whether anything could be found to give to eat to those poor prisoners: and, finding nothing but bread, I carried it to them in my scapular. The rest would not touch it, thinking it might be considered a manifest sign of their being Christians, but only Yusuf and Ibrahim with glad faces took it and gave some to Bastian Diaz, who was also on the chain with them. Thereupon they were taken away to Daulatabad, where the Shah was, a place some three leagues outside Isfahan. God permitted that He should be all the more glorified because they went confessing the Faith in front of all the city and the king. Bastian Diaz encouraged them a great deal (on the way). In the end the Shah ordered them to be stoned to death, and he sent a crier around all the city calling on those who loved Muhammad to assemble with stones to kill those who had abjured him. They came to the place where they were to be stoned, and the Justiciar, i.e. Daruga (who is a renegade Georgian) harangued them and together with the Mullas present begged them to confess the Muhammadan religion. . . . And so Yusuf stood while they stoned him and, when his head was split open, said that he felt no pain. The other, not having cared to make a profession of Faith when they tied him up, said to the executioners that he pardoned them and begged that the Lord would not require an account of his blood. In short they were stoned to death and afterwards were burnt, and guards set on the bodies, so that the Christians should not