



The martyrdom of our three Assumptionist Bulgarian Martyrs was remembered and honored at a recent prayer day by our two lay Assumptionist groups, representing about twenty members, in Worcester, MA, thanks to the hospitality of our retirement community on Old English Road.

The day was facilitated by Fr. Claude Grenache, A.A. who presented the rich and long standing history of the congregation in Eastern Europe and the circumstances of the events that led up to the execution of Fathers Kamen Vitchev, Pavel Djidjov and Josaphat Chichkov during the communist regime on November 11, 1952. Their death sentence was the result of a trumped-up trial wherein these priests were accused of spying for the Vatican, plotting an uprising and being agents of capitalism. Along with them was the execution of a Passionist, Bishop Bossilkov. All four martyrs were buried in a common grave. Their bodies have never been found.

The presence of Assumptionists in Bulgaria since 1863 reflects the keen interest of Fr. d'Alzon in Church unity. He was passionate about doing all he could to heal the schism between the East and West.

Later in the afternoon, following the Liturgy which commemorated the martyrs of the Church, Fr. Claude expanded the meaning of martyrdom or 'witness' to include a reflection and discussion on how we have experienced significant challenges of witnessing our faith in our daily lives and then calling to mind who have been such witnesses for us in professing their faith by word and/or deed. The sharing of these memories was personal, profound and faith-filled.

The day ended with a short prayer service which included a sending forth and blessing through the intercession of our martyrs to always give witness to our Christian faith with courage and love.