

## Murdered Hungarian youth pastor to be beatified as martyr



**A young Hungarian priest who was lured into a forest and beaten and stabbed to death is to be the latest East European martyr declared blessed by the Catholic Church.**

Fr. Janos Brenner, who died in 1957, will be beatified May 1. He was just two weeks shy of his 26th birthday when he was murdered.

“The communist dictatorship sought to trample on the faith and frighten the Church, subduing and quenching the light emanating from it,” Bishop Janos Szekely of Szombathely said in a statement on the diocesan website.

Fr. Brenner had been a Cistercian novice, but when the communist government banned religious orders in 1950, he entered a diocesan seminary. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1955.

Bishop Szekely said Fr. Brenner had adopted a Cistercian motto, “Burn and give light,” in his ministry, and had run afoul of Hungary’s communist regime for his work among young people and rural families.

“His fate shows how another deadly enemy for dictatorships is the nation — the nourishing bonds which bind us to our ancestors, our mother-tongue, land and culture, and to the community where people plan and dream about their future together,” the bishop said.

Born into a devout Catholic family in Szombathely, with two brothers who also became priests, Fr. Brenner attended Cistercian schools. He entered the seminary when Hungary’s religious houses were being suppressed by communist decree in 1951 and was ordained after finishing studies at Gyor when Szombathely’s seminary was forcibly closed.

Assigned to a parish in Rabakethely, near the Austrian border, he attracted regime hostility during a wave of repression following the 1956 Hungarian Uprising and narrowly survived an attempt to kill him on his motorbike.

On the night of Dec. 14, 1957, after rejecting his bishop’s offer of a safer post, the priest was asked by a teenager to minister to a dying relative, so he set out on foot with the Eucharist and oils to the neighboring village of Zsida.

He was found by villagers in the roadside forest the next morning with 32 stab and boot wounds. Parishioners blamed drunken police and communist officials; parishioners were barred from attending his burial.

During the 1989 collapse of communist rule, a chapel was dedicated on the site of the priest's death.

In an April 13 statement, the diocese said the beatification Mass, to be concelebrated by Cardinal Angelo Amato, prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for Saints' Causes, and Hungary's Catholic primate, Cardinal Peter Erdo, would be moved from Szombathely's Cathedral Square to a park west of the city because of the large numbers wishing to attend.

More information here.

*Source: Catholic News Service - Jonathan Luxmoore*