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"My friends who went through this, they paid their martyrdom with their blood, and my life is a testimony to give echo to their voices."

—Cardinal Ernest Troshani Simoni

The witness of the blood



Photos by Mike Stechsulte | The Michigan Catholic

Cardinal Ernest Troshani Simoni of Albania processes into St. Paul Albanian Parish in Rochester Hills on March 19 for a Mass celebrating the 38 Albanian martyrs beatified by Pope Francis last year. Cardinal Simoni, who spent decades in communist labor camps while secretly ministering in Albania's political prisons, was elevated to the College of Cardinals in November after his story of "living martyrdom" moved Pope Francis to tears.

Imprisoned for decades, Albanian cardinal visits Michigan to offer living witness to brutal martyrdom of 20th century

MIKE STECHSULTE
The Michigan Catholic

ROCHESTER HILLS — When a prelate is elevated to the College of Cardinals, the bright red color of his new vestments is meant to signify the cleric's willingness to become a martyr for Christ, to "take up one's cross" by sharing in the blood of the savior's sufferings.

When Cardinal Ernest Troshani Simoni of Albania was elevated to the sacred college in 2016, he didn't have to imagine what such martyrdom might be like.

The 88-year-old priest, who suffered nearly three decades of torture, imprisonment and forced labor at the hands of Albania's 20th century communist dictatorship, was the featured speaker March 18-19 at St. Paul Albanian Parish



A young boy holds a photo of one of the 38 Albanian martyrs beatified last November by Pope Francis. For Michigan's Albanian Catholics, the brutal persecution in their native land still rings loudly.

in Rochester Hills during a special Mass and dinner honoring those who suffered under Stalinist dictator Enver Hoxha's brutal regime, which outlawed the practice of religion for all Albanians in 1967.

Albania's Catholic martyrs — particularly the 38 who were beatified by Pope Francis in November, just days before the pope made Cardinal

Simoni a living witness to the sacrifices of Albania's Catholics — are still little-known outside the tiny Balkan country of 2.7 million people.

"If you were Albanian, you knew about it, but if you were outside of 100,000 people in the

Vatican official 'encouraged' by Detroit's response to immigrants

DAN MELOY
The Michigan Catholic

DETROIT — Msgr. Anthony Figueiredo's mission to the United States is of the utmost importance to the Vatican: to be the pope's ears on the ground.



Visiting the Archdiocese of Detroit for the annual Holy Trinity Apostolate Lenten Symposium, Msgr. Figueiredo's role in the Vatican's Migrants and Refugees Section of the Dicastery of Integral Human Development means he has the task of speaking with local bishops and Catholic leaders about what is being done, and what more can be done, in support of refugees and immigrants seeking safety in the United States.

The new dicastery was formed by Pope Francis on Jan. 1, bringing together the departments of Justice and Peace, Pastoral Care of Migrants, Charity and Healthcare. Msgr. Figueiredo said the departments were combined into Integral Human Development to answer to the needs of thousands of migrants, refugees and victims of human trafficking, who are being forced from their homes.

"The department does not wish to be an action center, but rather look at the whole phenomena of migration and refugees," Msgr. Figueiredo said in an interview with *The Michigan Catholic*. "It's in our bones to migrate; it's part of human history." Msgr. Figueiredo cited a United Nations report stating there are as many as 78 million refugees in the world today, and as many as 244 million migrants and refugees all together.

While much attention has been called to the immigration and migration policies of President Donald Trump's administration, Msgr. Figueiredo pointed out the

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