December 26th: Feast of Saint Stephen, first martyr

Gospel text (*Mt* 10:17-22): Jesus said to his disciples: “Beware of men, for they will hand you over to courts and scourge you in their synagogues, and you will be led before governors and kings for my sake as a witness before them and the pagans. When they hand you over, do not worry..."

Stephen, First Martyr

EDITORIAL TEAM evangeli.net (based on texts by Benedict XVI)
(Città del Vaticano, Vatican)

Today, our minds still bathed in the light of Bethlehem, we are commemorating St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr. The One stirring in the manger is in fact the Son of God made man who asks us to witness courageously to His Gospel as did Stephen. He, like his Master, died forgiving his persecutors and thus makes us realize that the entry into the world of the Son of God gives rise to the civilization of love.

Stephen is also the Church's first deacon. In becoming a servant of the poor for love of Christ, he gradually enters into full harmony with Him and follows Christ to the point of making the supreme gift of himself. The martyr is one who dies knowing with certainty that he is loved by God, who puts nothing before love of Christ, knowing that he has chosen the better part.

—The Feast of St. Stephen reminds us also of the believers in various parts of the world who, because of their faith, are subjected to suffering. Let us strive to sustain them with prayer!