

Reflection Saturday Week 4 St Paul Miki and his companions 2021

St Paul Miki (1564/6 - 1597) was born in Japan, joined the Society of Jesus and preached the gospel to the Japanese people with great success. When a persecution of the Catholics arose, he was arrested with twenty-five others. Mocked and tortured, they were eventually taken to Nagasaki on 5 February 1597, bound to crosses and speared. Gonsalo Garcia was born in Bassein, near Mumbai around 1557. He was educated by the Jesuits, who took him on a mission to Japan when he was 15. He spent eight years in Japan, quickly learning the language and becoming a popular catechist. He left the mission to become a trader. As his business expanded, he made frequent visits to Manila in the Philippines, where he met the Franciscans and became a Franciscan lay brother. In 1592 he joined other Franciscans including Peter Baptista, on an embassy from the Spanish Governor to the Emperor of Japan. He worked as a preacher for four years and the simplicity of the Franciscans' mission won them many Japanese friends and converts, including the shōgun Toyotomi Hideyoshi. However, the enmity of the local Buddhist authorities combined with suspicion of Spanish political motives changed the shōgun's attitude. The Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries were arrested, mutilated, and on 5 February 1597 crucified at Nagasaki. They included five European Franciscan missionaries, one Mexican Franciscan missionary, three Japanese Jesuits and seventeen Japanese laymen including three young boys.

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul wrote that it was Christ who now lived and worked in him and through him. This same Christ motivated, inspired and urged him to go and preach the Gospel to the pagans. It is the same Christ and the same spirit that motivated Paul Miki and his companions to want to spread the good news in Japan. Paul talks about being crucified with Christ. The martyrs we celebrate today were crucified for Christ. It is their example, their faith and commitment that kept the faith alive in Japan until this day. Let us join them in the prayer of the Psalmist (125/126): *Deliver us, O Lord, from our bondage as streams in dry land. Those who are sowing in tears will sing when they reap. What marvels the Lord worked for us! Indeed, we were glad!*

God is handing out characteristics to all the animals and is coming the end of the list. All the animals have made a choice except the lions, beavers and pigs. God looks up from the list and says *"Who wants courage?"* One pig says to another, *"Ooh, we should get that!"* the other one says, *"No, who wants to be courageous? You have to strut around, humans will start hunting you, it's a huge pain. Let's wait."* So, the lions choose courage. God says *"Next, who wants to be industrious?"* The pig says, *"Hey, we could definitely be that. Make stuff, stay busy, it sounds good!"* The other pig says, *"Are you crazy? Get up at dawn, work all day, who wants that? I'm sure God saved the best for last."* The beavers choose industriousness. Finally, God says, *"Let's see, claws are taken, flight went to the birds, the cheetah chose speed . . . Okay, here we go. Who wants to be delicious?"*