

Reflection Monday Week 5 St Paul Miki & the Japanese martyrs 2023

St Paul Miki (1564/6 - 1597) born in Japan between 1564 and 1566, he 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 together with twenty-five others. Mocked and tortured, they were eventually taken to Nagasaki on 5 February 1597, bound to crosses and speared.

Pope Francis on a visit to Japan at the shrine to the Japanese martyrs:

This shrine speaks of the triumph of life over death, a true *Mount of the Beatitudes*, where hearts can be stirred by the witness of men and women filled with the Holy Spirit and set free from selfishness, complacency and pride. Here the light of the Gospel shines forth in the love that triumphed over persecution and the sword.

We are not destined for death but for the fullness of life. This was the message the martyrs proclaimed. Here we see the darkness of death and martyrdom, but also the light of the resurrection, as the blood of the martyrs becomes the seed of the new life that Jesus wishes to bestow on us. Their witness confirms us in faith and helps us renew our dedication and commitment to that missionary discipleship which strives to create a culture capable of protecting and defending all life through the daily “martyrdom” of silent service towards all, especially those in greatest need.

May we never forget their heroic sacrifice! May it not remain a glorious relic of the past, to be kept and honoured in a museum, but rather as a living memory, an inspiration for the works of the apostolate and a spur to renewed evangelization. May we free ourselves daily from whatever weighs us down and prevents us from walking in humility, freedom, *parrhesia* and charity.

In this place we are united with Christians throughout the world who, today, suffer martyrdom for the faith. The martyrs of the twenty-first century whose witness summons us to set out with courage on the path of the Beatitudes.