

Reflection Tuesday Week 5 St Paul Miki & Japanese martyrs 2024

St Paul Miki was 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 with twenty-five others. Mocked and tortured, they were taken to Nagasaki on 5th February 1597, bound to crosses and speared.

Gonsalo Garcia was born in Bassein, near Bombay (Vasai/Mumbai) about 1557. He was educated by the Jesuits, who took him on a mission to Japan when 15. He spent eight years in Japan. Learning the language, he became a popular catechist. He left the mission and set up as a trader. As his business expanded, he made frequent visits to Manila in the Philippines, where he got to know the Franciscans and became a Franciscan lay brother. In 1592 he sailed with 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.

Eventually, the enmity of the local Buddhist authorities combined with suspicion of Spanish political motives, the shōgun's attitude changed. The Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries were arrested, mutilated, and on 5th 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.

St Paul Miki: *"As I come to this supreme moment of my life, I am sure none of you would suppose I want to deceive you. So I tell you plainly: there is no way to be saved except the Christian way. My religion teaches me to pardon my enemies and all who have offended me. I do gladly pardon the Emperor and all who have sought my death. I beg them to seek baptism and be Christians themselves."*