



Saint of the Week

Paul Miki and Companions

Memorial—February 6
1562–1597

Toyotomi Hideyoshi, ruling Japan in the name of the emperor, became alarmed at the growth of Christianity resulting from St. Francis Xavier's mission, begun in 1549. Because of Hideyoshi's orders, 26 Christians were arrested, had their left ears cut off as a sign of disrespect, were marched through towns, and were crucified and pierced with lances on a hill outside Nagasaki on February 5. While the public procession and execution was meant to instill fear

in Japanese Christians, the joyful witness of the soon-to-be martyrs—who sang hymns on arriving to the hill where their crosses awaited them—evoked compassion and conversion instead. The martyrs were Franciscans, Jesuits, Japanese laymen, and one Korean. Paul Miki, a distinguished preacher, who was the son of a samurai, was the most prominent of the Japanese Jesuits. The martyrs were canonized in 1862; their feast was added to the General Roman Calendar in 1969.



“Asia has given the Church and the world a great host of these heroes of the faith, and from the heart of Asia there rises the great song of praise: *Te martyrum candidatus laudat exercitus*. This is the song of those who died for Christ on Asian soil in the first centuries of the Church, and it is also the joyful cry of men and women of more recent times like St. Paul Miki and his companions . . . May the great host of Asian martyrs, old and new, never cease to teach the Church in Asia what it means to bear witness to the Lamb in whose blood they have washed their shining robes (cf. Rev 7:14)! May they stand as indomitable witnesses to the truth that Christians are called always and everywhere to proclaim nothing other than the power of the Lord's Cross! And may the blood of Asia's martyrs be now as always the seed of new life for the Church in every corner of the continent!”

—St. John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 49