

St. Paul Miki



1562-1597

Feast Day:
January 6

St. Paul Miki was born 1562 and was the son of a Japanese military leader. His family converted to Christianity when he was a child and he studied under the Jesuit missionaries in Japan. He joined the Society of Jesus in 1580.

At that time in Japan, there were many political and religious tensions between the Japanese and the Christians that came from Spain and Portugal. The Japanese lord, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, ordered the arrest of 26 Christians at Kyoto. Paul Miki had just completed his eleven year training as a novice, and he was one of the 26 Christians arrested. The arrested Christians had their ears cut off as a sign of disrespect, and they were paraded through the streets of Kyoto. Paul Miki stood out among the crowd. They recognized him as the son of a nobleman and that he could even have been a Samurai if he wasn't a Christian. Many in the crowd felt pity for the Christians and some were even converted by their example.

The 26 Christians were then marched over 600 miles from Kyoto to Nagasaki. They were asked to give up their Faith to save their lives. They refused. When they reached Nagasaki, they were crucified like Jesus was. Paul Miki gave a final sermon from his cross. He declared that he was Japanese born and that he was being crucified because he was a Christian. Then he forgave his enemies.

The 26 Christians then sang the Canticle of Zachariah from their crosses and the executioners waited for them to finish. Then they were put to death by the lance. The eyewitnesses in the crowd were impressed by the faith, patience, strength, and peace in which the martyrs met their death.

For the next couple hundred years, Christianity was forbidden and persecuted in Japan. When missionaries returned to Japan, at first they could not find any trace of Christianity. But to their complete surprise, they found thousands of Christians around Nagasaki, where the 26 martyrs had died, who had secretly kept the Faith.