

Martyrs of Japan

Feast Day – February 3

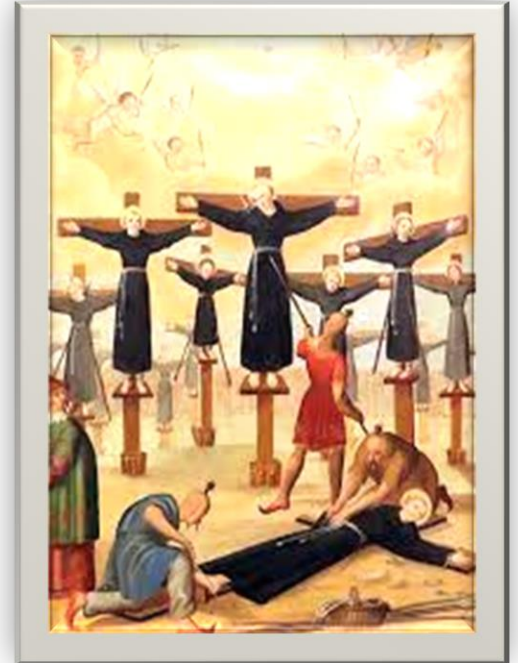
About the year 1592, Hideyoshi, the military dictator of Japan, planned to invade and conquer the Philippine Islands, situated near his domain but belonging at the time to the Spanish crown. To negotiate peace, King Philip II of Spain delegated Father Peter Baptist Blasquez, a Franciscan of Manila, as his ambassador to Hideyoshi.

Peter Baptist, who came from an ancient Spanish family of the nobility, was learned, capable, and known for his holy life. He arrived in Japan with three companions at the end of the month of June, 1593. He succeeded in winning the dictator to terms of peace, and even obtained permission to spread Christianity throughout Japan without interference. So Peter Baptist founded several convents of his order, built churches and hospitals, and in company with his associates, converted hundreds of pagans to Christianity. Hideyoshi even offered them a neglected temple in his capital city Miyako, with permission to rebuild it as a church.

The Japanese bonzes were much incensed at the turn of events. They got the dictator to believe that the missionaries had in mind to dethrone him and deliver up the country to the Spaniards. Enraged, Hideyoshi ordered the Franciscan missionaries and their helpers to be imprisoned and put to death as offenders against the crown. Forthwith the soldiers invaded the friars convents in December, 1596, and imprisoned the inmates. Peter Baptist was among the prisoners, together with his companions, the two priests Martin of the Ascension and Francis Blanco, the cleric Philip of Jesus, who was a native Mexican, the two lay brothers Francis of St. Michael and Gonsalvo Garcia. Included were also 17 Tertiaries who rendered services to the missionaries as catechists, teachers, sacristans, and infirmarians; likewise three Jesuits. They are now known as the Martyrs of Japan.

On January 3, 1597, the martyrs of Japan were all led out of their cruel prison to the public square at Miyako. Here they were informed that they were to be crucified, and as a mark of dishonor a portion of their left ear was cut off. Then they were driven through the city on hurdles, while the sentence of death was carried on a pole at the head of the procession, and the rabble was given free hand to illtreat and insult them. On January 4 the martyrs of Japan were again bound and thrown on hurdles, to be taken to Nagasaki for execution. The sad journey lasted 4 weeks, which in itself was cruel martyrdom because of the brutality of the bailiffs and the fury of the people in the towns and villages through which the martyrs passed. To this were added cold, hunger, and privations of every sort.

They arrived at Nagasaki on the morning of February 5th. The crosses on which the glorious confessors were to die had been prepared on a hill outside of town. The martyrs were immediately taken there and each one was bound to his cross. With loud voices they thanked God for the grace of being permitted to die like Christ their Lord, and they praised Him with psalms and hymns. As the martyrs hung crucified, executioners ran the body of each one through transversely with two spears, Father Peter Baptist being the last. Hardly had the martyrs breathed forth their souls when God glorified them with extraordinary signs and marvels. In consequence, Pope Urban VIII beatified them in the year 1627 and permitted the annual celebration of the feast of the Japanese martyrs.



@Church Of God 2021

In the feast of Pentecost, June 8, 1862, in presence of a great number of bishops assembled from all parts of the world, Pope Pius IX inscribed them in the catalog of the saints as powerful intercessors against enemies of the holy cross.

@Church Of God 2021