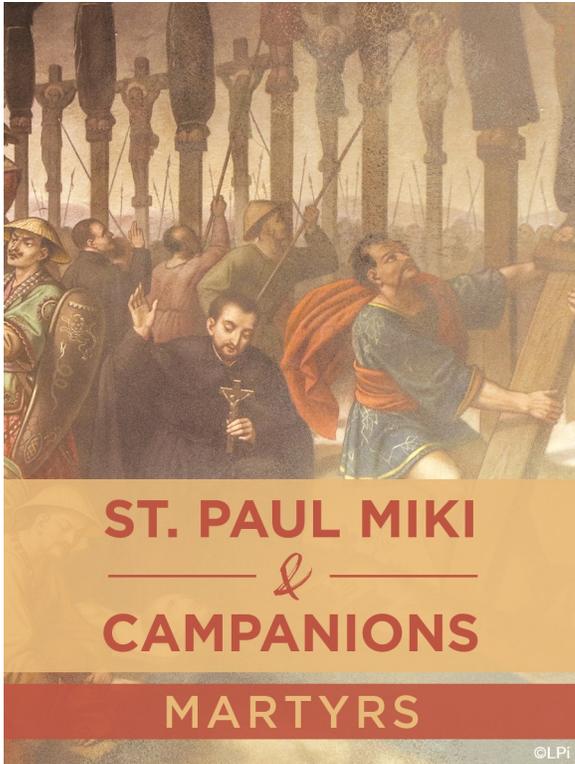


FROM FR. JASON



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This past Sunday we kicked-off Catholic Schools week. As we know, it is a great sacrifice to send children to Catholic Schools. Thank you to all who do so. Thank you to all Catholic School teachers who, understanding the importance of Catholic education, are committed to their work, even for lower pay. Thank you to all who fight for our schools to remain Catholic.

As we enter the month of February, our hearts are drawn once more to the luminous witness of the saints who have gone before us. On February 2nd, we will celebrate the Solemnity of the Presentation of the Lord and give thanks for our seminarians (there are two from this parish currently in the seminary!), consecrated religious, priests, and deacons. On February 3rd, the feast of St. Blaise, we will have our traditional Blessing of Throats.

On February 6th, the Church celebrates the Memorial of St. Paul Miki and Companions, the Twenty-Six Martyrs of Nagasaki—those courageous souls who, in 1597, sealed their faith with blood on a hill overlooking the city now known as Martyrs' Hill. We are continually invited to rediscover the power of the Kerygma—the proclamation of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ—as the heart of our journey. These martyrs lived this proclamation in the most radical way. St. Paul

Miki, a native Japanese Jesuit brother, along with his companions—Franciscan friars from abroad, Japanese Jesuits, lay faithful including catechists, artisans, doctors, servants, and even boys as young as twelve—were arrested under the orders of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who feared the growing influence of Christianity in Japan. What began as a time of flourishing faith, with hundreds of thousands embracing the Gospel brought by St. Francis Xavier and the early missionaries, turned to persecution when political suspicions arose.

The twenty-six were mutilated—their left ears cut off as a mark of shame—and then forced to march over 600 miles from Kyoto to Nagasaki in the bitter cold. Yet, far from breaking them, this journey became a pilgrimage of evangelization. They sang the *Te Deum* along the way, praising God even in suffering, and preached to the crowds who gathered to mock or to marvel. Upon arriving in Nagasaki, they were bound to crosses on the hill of Nishizaka, echoing the crucifixion of our Lord. There, St. Paul Miki stood in what he called “the noblest pulpit” he had ever known. From his cross, he proclaimed: “I am a Japanese and a Jesuit... I am dying for the Gospel I preached.” He forgave his persecutors, prayed for their conversion, and asked that his blood might fall upon them like fruitful rain, that they too might come to know Christ.

What a powerful image for us today! May we be formed to announce this same Kerygma—not in words alone, but with our lives. The martyrs show us that the cross is never the end, but the path to resurrection. Their witness reminds us that true missionary zeal is born in the Paschal Mystery: dying to self so that Christ may live in us and through us.

In our time, when secularism, indifference, and even hostility to the faith press upon families and parishes, are we ready to be signs of contradiction? Do we forgive as Paul Miki forgave? Do we proclaim Christ with joy, even when it costs us? Do we live our baptism, not as a private affair, but as a sending forth, becoming oases of faith in a dry world? These Japanese martyrs, canonized by Pope Pius IX in 1862, continue to intercede for the Church in Japan and throughout Asia, where the faith still grows amid challenges. Let us ask their intercession. May the Lord awaken in each of us the same courage and love that burned in their hearts.

Let us pray together: “Lord Jesus, who called Paul Miki and his companions to follow you even to the cross, grant us the grace to proclaim your resurrection with boldness. Make our parish a living sign of your mercy and send us forth to announce the Good News to every corner of the earth. Amen.”

Peace,