**THE 26 MARTYRS OF NAGASAKI**

Taken from text by Diego R. Yuki, S.J.

**ST. FRANCIS**, a carpenter from Kyoto, resolute and loyal, who insisted on following the martyrs until he was arrested and could join the group. Some of the chronicles call him Adauctus, after a similar case in the early church.

**ST. COSMAS TAKEYA**, a sword maker from Owari. He had been baptized by the Jesuits and worked as a catechist with the Franciscans in Osaka.

**ST. PETER SUKEJIRO**, a young man from Kyoto, sent by Fr. Organtino to care for the martyrs on their way to Nagasaki. His devotion to duty secured for him the grace of joining them.

**ST. MICHAEL KOZAKI**, a native of Ise, 46 yeas old and a bow maker. He was already a Christian when he first met he friars and his skill as a carpenter was a great help in building the Franciscan convents and churches of Kyoto and Osaka. He also trusted them with something he treasured over everything else: his own son Thomas.

**ST. JAMES KISAI,** a Jesuit lay brother, a man of deep devotion to the Passion of Christ. Sixty-four years of age, he had known a life of hardships, and excelled for his kindness and peace of heart. Born in Okayama, he had been in charge of the guests at the Jesuit residence.

**ST. PAUL MIKI** had been born in Tsunokuni district, the son of a brave soldier, Miki Handayu. Educated as a boy in the Jesuit schools of Azuchi and Takatsuki, he had witnessed the ups and downs of the Church in Japan. Paul Miki treasured his vocation to spread the gospel over everything else, and was near being ordained as a priest. The best preacher in the country, he fell silent when the executioner's blow shattered his heart. He was only thirty years of age.

**ST. PAUL IBARAKI**, born in Owari, of a samurai family. Baptized by the Jesuits, his faith went through a time of testing, and only in his final years could he find peace of soul, thanks to the Franciscans in Kyoto. He led a poor man's life near the Franciscan convent of Our Lady of the angels, running a small sake brewery to support his family, and could still afford to help others poorer than himself. He was also native as a preacher.

**ST. JOHN OF GOTO**, a portrait of innocence and joy, a short life of 19 yeas fully used in the service of God. Born in the Goto islands from parents already Christian, he studied with the Jesuits in Nagasaki, and then at the Jesuit school in Shiki (Amakusa), a training center for catechists who also help the missionaries as painters or musicians. His next post was Osaka where he worked under Fr. Morejon until the Lord offered him the crown of martyrdom.

**ST. LOUIS IBARAKI**, the youngest of the group, only 12 years old. He had been born in Owari and was the nephew of Paul Ibaraki and Leo Karasumaru. An endearing boy who kept singing and laughing when they cut off one of his ears, all through the long march to Nagasaki and on the cross too, he proved his mettle when he refused pointblank to be cajoled into apostatizing. "We have little Louis with us - wrote Fr. Francis Blanco on he eve of martyrdom - and he is so full of courage and in such high spirits that it astonishes everybody.

**ST. ANTHONY**, born Nagasaki of a Chinese father and Japanese mother. An artless boy 13 years old, he had received his first education at the Jesuit school in Nagasaki and went then to the Franciscan convent in Osaka. The bitterest thing the boy was to see was his mother crying not far from his cross. He died a singing martyr.

**ST. PETER BAPTIST**. Superior of the Franciscan Mission in Japan, former ambassador from Spain, a father to the poor lepers, a captain of martyrs. From San Esteban del Valle (Avila, Spain) where he was born, to Nishizaka Hill, his life of 50 years is too rich in merits and holiness to be summarized here.

**ST. MARTIN OF THE ASCENSION**, born in Guipuzcoa, Spain. He was 30 years old, His purity of heart was extraordinary, and this may be a clue to his fondness for singing. Told by his superiors to be ready to go to the Philippines, he went to Seville. In the old Franciscan convent he used o spend the nights in prayer, taking turns with another friar. His missionary work in Japan (Osaka) was short lived, but his death was most outstanding.

**ST. PHILIP OF JESUS**, a Mexican, 24 years old. A vase of sterling silver, which God knew how to emboss. His young life had been a maze of conflicting roads, a contest of strength between Christ and Philip, neither of the two willing to concede defeat. In the end Christ had emerged the victor, and Philip is now anxious to make up for the lost time: he will be the first to die.

**ST. GONZALO GARCIA**, 40 years, born in the remote Vasei (Bazain, India) of a Portuguese father and an Indian mother. A catechist with the Jesuits and a trader in Macao, he entered the Franciscans as a lay brother, and was the right hand of St. Peter Baptist. He spoke Portuguese with a stutter, but when he confronted Hideyoshi, absolute ruler of Japan, his Japanese came out without a hitch. He is the patron saint of Bombay.

**ST. FRANCIS BLANCO** was born in Monterrey (Galicia, Spain) and came to Japan with St. Martin of the Ascension. Like him, he had also traveled on foot to Seville before boarding a ship for Mexico and proceeding to the Philippines. A quiet, soft spoken man and extremely intelligent.

**ST. FRANCIS OF ST. MICHAEL**, 53, born in La Parrilla (Valladolid, Spain). He was so unassuming in life that he well deserves a special eulogy after death. "Seeing his good heart, physical strength and simplicity, he was accepted into the Order as a lay brother", say an old chronicler appropriately. Br. Francis had his own brand of humor too: "The bell for diner will toll tomorrow", he used to answer when asked to break his fast. When he was in Manila he enjoyed breathing "the winds from Japan" but once he set foot on the Japanese mission he had to go through a dark night of the soul feeling that he was useless and had better return to the Philippines. He died in silence, just as he had lived.

**ST. MATTHIAS.** We know nothing about his age, place of birth or date of baptism, only his name and the reason why he joined the martyrs. The soldiers were looking for another Matthias who could not be found. Our saint offered himself and the soldiers gladly accepted him. God accepted him too.

**ST. LEO KARASUMARU**, from Owari, younger brother of St. Paul Ibaraki. a bonze in his youth, he was converted by Japanese Jesuit and always led an exemplary life. When the Franciscans arrived, he became their main support. When it as a matter of building a church, buying a piece of land or running a hospital, the friars could always count on Leo. A zealous catechist and a man of prayer, he was a leading figure among the lay martyrs.

**ST. BONAVENTURE.** His young life bears the seal of inscrutable ways of Providence. Baptized as an infant, he soon lost his mother, and his stepmother sent him to a Buddhist monastery. One day he found out about his baptism, and came to visit the Franciscan convent in Kyoto, his place of birth, eager to have further information. There he found again his peace of soul. On his way to the cross he prayed for his father's faith and the conversion of his stepmother.

**ST. THOMAS KOZAKI**. With the rugged manners of a country boy, this fourteen year old had a beautiful heart, much like the Pearls of his native Ise. He was already Christian when he became acquainted with the Franciscans while helping his father as a carpenter, and stayed at the Franciscan convent once the job was finished. He was straightforward, unhesitant and totally committed in his service to God. His farewell letter to his mother, written from Mihara castle is one precious stone more in the saga of the 26 Martyrs.

**ST. JOACHIM SAKAKIBARA**, 40 year old, a native of Osaka. In gratitude for his baptism, received from a catechist when he was gravely ill, Joachim helped out in the construction of he Franciscan convent in Osaka and stayed on here as a cook. A man of very strong character, he excelled for his kindness and readiness to serve, a fitting preparation for the martyrs' crown.

**ST. FRANCIS**. Born in Kyoto, 48 years old. He was a physician and a zealous preacher. While still a pagan he used to wear a rosary that had belonged to Otomo Sorin, the Christian lord of Bungo. Divine Providence brought him into contact with the Franciscans, and after his Baptism and the conversion of his wife, he lived next door to the Franciscan convent, treating the sick without pay, and leading them to Christ.

**ST. THOMAS DANGI**. A druggist, with an extremely violent disposition, he mellowed with God's help into a kindhearted catechist. A Christian of many years, he opened his shop next to the Franciscan convent of Our Lady of the Angels, and while selling medicine he also took care to show the customers the way to heaven.

**ST. JOHN KINUYA**, 28 years old, from Kyoto. A silk weaver and trader, he had recently been baptized and moved his shop next to the convent. His silk fabrics, smooth and brightly colored, expressed the quality of John's prayers and love. And God graciously accepted John's life of work and prayer.

**ST. GABRIEL**, a native of Ise, 19 years old, another young life ungrudgingly offered to God. Converted by Br. Gonzalo, he made quick progress in his way to God, overcoming all kinds of obstacles. Gabriel worked as a catechist.

**ST. PAUL SUZUKI**, 49 years old, from Owari. His cross was at the end of the row and his voice, all fire and zeal, could be heard unimpeded. He had received baptism 13 years before. A man of impetuous character--and many a scar on his body to testify to that--he excelled for his apostolic zeal and was one of the best catechists helping the Franciscans. He was also in charge of St. Joseph's Hospital in Kyoto.