February 6th: Memorial of Saint Paul Miki and Companions, Martyrs

Gospel text (*Mt* 28:16-20): The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. When they saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted. Then Jesus approached and said to them, “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”

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Today, we celebrate the feast of Saint Paul Miki and companions, Japanese martyrs of the 16th century. Like the eleven Apostles on the day of the Ascension of Jesus Christ (cf. Mt 28:17), they also went to the 'mountain': in their case it was the "mountain" of crucifixion, which took place in the city of Nagasaki. In commemoration of the martyrs - paraphrasing Pope Francis’ words – it makes good more than ever, that the story of the Church “is a glorious story of sacrifices.”

The story of the martyrdom of these Saints describes the atmosphere of prayer when they were crucified but still alive: what better veneration than that self-reliant prayer, when they were evidencing their love for God above everything else, even their own life? “Brother Martin gave thanks to God’s goodness by singing psalms and added the verse: ‘In manus tuas, Domine’ Brother Francis Blanco also thanked God in a loud voice…” (words from a contemporary writer: “The Story of the martyrdom of the Saints Paul Miki and companions”).

In addition, the same account tells us how Paul Miki - from the cross – was trying until the last moment to bring his own executioners to God: "I do gladly pardon the Emperor and all who had sought my death. I beg them to seek baptism and be Christians themselves”. Every situation, every circumstance, no matter how hostile, one way or another, it may seem is an opportunity to evangelize. Indeed, "the evils of our world must not be excuses for diminishing our commitment and our fervor: let us look upon them as challenges which can help us to grow" (Pope Francis). Aid will never fail us; Jesus does not send us to the Mission at random. He has told us: “And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age” (Mt 28.20).