

Rev, Paul A. Hottinger

The Cost of Discipleship Fourth Week in Ordinary Time Friday, February 6, 2015
8:15 AM **Heb 13:1-8; Mk 6:14-29** **St. Paul Miki, priest and companions, martyrs**
(What is it that God is asking us to do for him?)

The theme of today's liturgy is clearly **martyrdom**. The first reading talks about the suffering that Christians have to undergo—and even to the point of death. The gospel is about St. John the Baptist and his martyrdom, and today's memorial is about St. Paul Miki, one of twenty six martyrs in Japan in 1597.

The Church has always undergone persecution. The Roman Empire tried to wipeout Christianity. When Christians finally overcame that opposition because of the actual weakness of the Roman Empire and Constantine turned to the Church for help, that was a kind of a victory, but unfortunately close relationship with the state tended to sow all kinds of corruption into the Church. So **persecution often kept the Church purer**. Later when the Church sent missionaries to various countries in the world it also suffered persecution, notably in **Japan** and **Korea** and **Vietnam**. And then with the coming of totalitarianism the Church suffered greatly in **China, Russia, and all the other communist countries**. In fact, the worst persecutions of the Church have been in the twentieth century. In fact, Pope John Paul II said that there was **more blood spilled for Christ's in the twentieth century than all the others combined**.

Now this is rather astonishing if we think about it. We, living in the United States with our freedom of expression, don't think about the cost of discipleship; but there is a great cost to it. Today we talk about **evangelization**, spreading the good news of Christ, but that's also an invitation to a commitment and **a commitment that is actually costly**. Jesus sealed his commitment with his own blood. The martyrs have followed suit. The rest of us are not really asked to do that necessarily, but **we are asked to seal our commitment was something substantial**; a commitment to God's will is what it comes down to, **doing what God wants, not what I want**.

We find many people want to call themselves Christians, but who really want to follow their own will. Well, that's not actually acceptable. That isn't doable. That's what the first reading today is saying, the Letter to the Hebrews. **You can't just do what you want and call yourself a Christian**. Well, you can, people do, but it's not really truthful. So we need to consider now the cost of discipleship. **What is it that God is asking us to do for him?**