

Saturday's reflection 6 February

This week we have been commemorating 3 martyrs. All of them quite different, living at various times in history but they had one thing in common and that was their uncompromising witness to the Lord Jesus Christ in the face of death for doing so.

Wednesday was the commemoration of St Blaise, Bishop of Sebaste in Armenia. According to tradition many cures were attributed to him, including miraculously removing a fishbone that was stuck in a boy's throat. Because of these cures he received widespread veneration in the Eastern and Western Churches. He was martyred under Lucinius (320-324). He is known as the patron saint of throats and it is customary for those attending Mass on St Blaise's day to receive a blessing of their throat. The celebrant places two crossed unlit candles, blessed the day before at Candlemas, across the throat of those receiving the blessing.

On Friday we commemorated St Agatha. She was martyred in Catania in Sicily in the reign of the Roman emperor Decius (251). She dedicated herself to Jesus and at the age of 15 she rejected the amorous advances of a Roman called Quintanus, who then persecuted her for her Christian faith. Agatha was tortured and imprisoned and finally she died.

This morning the Church commemorates St Paul Miki and Companions. St Paul Miki was a Japanese Jesuit and his 25 companions were martyred in Nagasaki, Japan in 1597. They received a horrible death by being killed simultaneously being raised on crosses and then stabbed with spears. Their executioners were astounded on seeing their joy at being associated to the Passion of Christ as they died.

The word martyr comes from the Greek "martus" meaning witness. All these people were witnesses to Jesus Christ and their love of the Lord led them to their death. Witnessing to him is what we are all called to do. We might not be asked to die for the Lord Jesus but our faith in him should allow us to be uncompromising in our witness when the occasion arises for us to stand up for our faith.

" O God, give us the strength to witness to you when we are called to do so.
St Blaise, St Agatha, St Paul Miki and his companions pray for us".