

Early Jesuit Missionaries in Japan 10

Blessed Charles Spinola (1564-1622)

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The Jesuit mission in Japan has long been regarded with special affection by the Society of Jesus. One reason, of course, is the fact that it was established by St. Francis Xavier while also her lesson is to be found in the large number of Jesuit missionaries who laid down their lives for the Faith in this country. The heroism of these martyrs exerted a strong influence on the Society in Europe since it helped the Society to maintain its spirit of sacrifice along with that crusading spirit which provided the Church's world mission with many outstanding pioneers as well as with additional martyrs.

A fine example of these early missionary martyrs in Japan is the Blessed Charles Spinola in whom the heroic spirit of an old knightly family was raised to the status of a religious ideal and a deep yearning for martyrdom. There were, no doubt, other missionaries in Japan who suffered more than he did, but there was surely none that had such a desire for martyrdom even from his early youth.



1. Charles Spinola

(1) The Call to the Mission

Like his contemporary, St. Aloysius, Blessed Charles was the scion of an ancient noble family of northern Italy which had furnished both Church and State with a considerable number of prominent men. He was born in Italy in 1564, five years earlier than St. Aloysius, but spent most of the years of his childhood in Spain. After he returned to Italy his education was entrusted to his uncle, Philip Cardinal Spinola, Bishop of Nola, who promptly sent him to the Jesuit College in that city.

It was at this college that Charles found his vocation. On one occasion, the aged Latin professor there interrupted his class in order to tell the boys a choice bit of news that had just come in from India—the story of how one of his former pupils, Blessed Rudolph Aquaviva, had gone as a missionary to the land of the Great Mogul and had died there as a martyr. The story had a profound influence on the youthful Charles. He too, now wished to go to 'India'—the name by which the whole of East Asia was commonly designated at that time—and he, too, wished to work there for God and to die as a martyr. This first desire for martyrdom may, of course, have been something of a romantic dream, but it is certain that it never left him and was constantly

echoed in his prayers, his labors and in the spirit with which he faced a life of cruel privation.

When Charles announced his decision to his family he was met with a storm of indignation. All his numerous relatives, including high dignitaries of Church and State, were alarmed over the matter, but Charles remained firm. He did, indeed, seek the support of his uncle, the Cardinal, but when both of his letters remained unanswered, he wrote very frankly to the Cardinal as follows

If Your Eminence means to hold me up till my father gives his consent, then I may as well say at once that I consider his permission entirely unnecessary; he will never succeed in shaking my resolution, whether he consents or not. Moreover, it was in no sense because I believed that I needed your permission that I consulted Your Eminence about this matter; but merely because the respect I owe you and good manners seemed to require it. Strictly speaking, I need no permission; and hence, if I find my request not granted, I shall assert my rights....

I hope that a Cardinal of our Holy Mother the Church will not use the influence attached to his lofty dignity to keep his nephew back from so great a happiness. With what right, indeed, can Your Eminence venture to refuse your support to my vocation, seeing that you have helped and assisted in every way so many other vocations?

These strong words were not without their effect. The Cardinal understood that the deep yearning in the heart of his nephew was not the result merely of a romantic dream but was the proof of a real vocation to the religious life. He therefore lent his support to his nephew with the result that the young man's father finally gave his consent also.

Charles entered the novitiate of the Society of Jesus in Nola towards the end of the year 1584, and at the end of the first year his superiors sent him to the College of Lecce to teach mathematics. Little is known of his work during that year, but we do know that his spiritual director there was St. Bernard Realino and that the Saint advised him to write directly to the Superior General of the Society and to tell him about his deep yearning for mission work. St. Bernard Realino also promised to lend his own support to the young man's appeal.

It was thus that the name of Charles was added to the long list of *Indepetae* or volunteers for the East Asiatic Mission. Charles felt sure that his application would be accepted, and it was probably at this time that he drew up his well-known 'Morning Offering' in which his desire for martyrdom was again expressed:

"Fill my heart with spiritual consolation that I may find Thee always, in all things and times and places, and that I may reach Thy bosom finally by a martyr's death."

Charles began his philosophical and theological studies at the College in Naples, where he lived for some time with St. Aloysius of Gonzaga. Due to his poor health, he was later sent to Rome, where he also attended the lectures of the famous mathematician, Father Clavius, and finally he was transferred to Milan.

Ordained in 1594, he was assigned to pastoral work in Cremona but had the happiness after only one year to receive what he so greatly desired: an assignment to the Japanese mission.

His relatives again sought to move heaven and earth to get this assignment revoked, but it was all to no avail. The ship which was to take him to Lisbon in December 1595 ran aground shortly after leaving the harbor of Genoa and was forced to turn back. This provided the relatives of Charles with another opportunity to attack his resolution and to say that this mishap was undoubtedly an indication that God did not want him to leave. Charles, however, was adamant and while waiting for another opportunity to sail made use of his enforced leisure to draw up a Litany to the Martyrs of the Society of Jesus.

In writing to one of the priests in Malian on December 6, he declared:

I have been busy during the last few days in drawing up a kind of litany of all of those members of the Society who have laid down their lives for Christ. In the life of the Blessed Francis Borgia I found the names of the forty martyrs who were cast into the sea by the heretics. In addition to these, I have also found the names of nine others who suffered martyrdom in Florida. I am sending you the complete list in order that you may ask these martyrs to obtain for me the grace to imitate their virtues.... When, my dear Father, will the time come when I too can share their glorious lot?

In spite of the delay, Charles and his companions reached Lisbon in time to set out with the 'India Fleet', which left there in the spring of each year. Included among the eight Jesuits who were to set out for India with this fleet was Jerome de Angelis, then a scholastic, who was also destined to receive the martyr's crown in Japan.

Years were, however, to elapse before they could set foot on the land of their desires. Charles himself sent a report of the long Odyssey to the Superior General—a report which is given in great detail with almost mathematical precision. It is much too long to be given here in full but the general outline is worth recording.

The first part of their trip was uneventful. The priests in the group, especially Fathers Spinola and de Vicariis, devoted themselves to an intensive apostolate among the sailors and passengers.

I was kept busy almost all of the time with preaching, teaching catechism, etc., and was assisted in this work by Father de Vicariis, much to the delight of the Portuguese, who were deeply impressed by his virtuous life. There were two catechetical instructions every day with almost all of the soldiers and sailors taking part. We frequently called the people together for prayers in common, and many of them went to confession before the Feast of the Ascension and during the period of Pentecost.

The ship was heading for the Cape of Good Hope when it was caught in a tornado with the result that its rudder was broken off. It was only with great difficulty that a new, make-shift rudder could be provided so as to enable the ship to make for a port in

Brazil. Meanwhile, an epidemic also broke out on the ship and spread so rapidly in the tropical heat that no less than 400 persons became ill on one day. At one time there were only about ten sailors who were still able to stay on duty. The missionaries also became ill one after the other but were nevertheless kept busy taking care of the other patients and ministering to the dying.

In Brazil the missionaries had to wait for five months until the ship was sufficiently repaired to be sea-worthy. The Jesuits, meanwhile, were treated with the greatest kindness by their confreres at the College of San Salvador. Father Spinola had another sick spell in July but recovered rapidly while his saintly companion, Father de Vicariis, succumbed to the fever.

On December 12, 1596, the ship was finally able to put to sea again but made little headways because of the unfavorable weather. For three delays it was cast about like an eggshell upon the waters, and at this time also sprang a leak so that the pumps had to be worked day and night in order to pump out the water. Much of the cargo had to be thrown overboard. The priests, meanwhile, were kept busy 'day and night' hearing confessions. When the storm was over, the first thing that had to be done was to reach the nearest port, and since the wind was now favorable, they were able to disembark in Porto Rico on March 25.

Here again they had to wait for months, but the missionaries busied themselves with intensive apostolic work, concerning which Spinola has left us a very detailed account. In company with de Angelis, he travelled all over the island, and since de Angelis was not yet a priest, it was he that had to preach and teach the catechism while Spinola busied himself with administering the sacraments. That even a mathematician like Spinola could make a miscalculation was proven by the fact that he as well as de Angelis over-exerted themselves in the apostolate with the result that both of them were suffering from a serious attack of fever when they got back to the port city. Since they heard, however, that a ship was about to sail, they pulled themselves together and embarked immediately.

In view of his earlier experiences, Spinola did not wish to sail with the same ship and more so the group split up, and Spinola together with de Angelis boarded a Portuguese corvette hoping in this way to get back quickly to Portugal.

On October 17, their vessel was attacked by a British ship near the Azores and had to surrender after a battle lasting about two hours. During the plundering that followed, the missionaries lost all of the things that they had managed to save from the earlier storms. On the following day, they were taken as prisoners into the presence of the English Captain who asked them where they had come from. Spinola, inspired by a vision of speedy martyrdom, boldly told him that they were Italian Jesuits. Finding that these men were not Spaniards, the Captain treated them very kindly and even took them to his own residence in Atapson after his return to port.

For a while the two Jesuits toyed with the idea of staying in England and working for the Catholics there. On further reflection, however, they changed their minds since

they did not know the English language, and, in case of detection, would simply be deported as unwelcome aliens.

The Captain helped them to make all the arrangements for their return journey and even provided them with lay clothing in order that they might not become involved any difficulties. On December 5, therefore, they set sail from Yarmouth en route to France hoping to make the rest of the trip to Portugal by land. This ship, too, was caught in another storm and carried back to England, but since the missionaries were now dressed as laymen, they were not recognized as religious and thus escaped a second imprisonment.

Two Italian sea-captains were willing to take them on board, but as Spinola wrote very candidly to the Superior General: “We declined their offers because we feared that if we got back to Italy, Your Reverence would not permit us to set out again for our beloved mission.”

It was not long before they found a German merchant vessel which enabled them to get back to Lisbon in January, 1598, after an odyssey that had lasted nearly two years. Here they were warmly welcomed by the Portuguese Jesuits, and Spinola immediately wrote a very detailed report to the Superior General, which revealed the wonderfully supernatural spirit that animated him.

Months ago I wrote to Your Reverence, first from Brazil, then from Porto Rico and again from England. The fact that we touched upon all of these countries was due, no doubt, to the special Providence of God, who wished to prepare me by means of such a novitiate for the apostolate and the martyr’s death which I hope to find in Japan.

The two missionaries had hoped to sail for India in the following April with the fleet that was to set out at that time. The Superiors in Portugal, however, detained them until a new permission should be received for them from the Superior General. That meant a delay of another year since it was impossible to get the permission in time for the projected sailing. Spinola foresaw that his numerous relatives in Italy would make further determined efforts to get ‘their’ Charles recalled to Italy. In this he was not mistaken.

Happily, the Superior General, Father Claude Aquaviva, was convinced that the two Jesuits had a genuine missionary vocation and instead of yielding to Spinola’s relatives he immediately granted the desired permission. In addition to this, and as a special recognition of their genuine worth, the Superior General granted permission for Spinola to pronounce his Solemn Vows and allowed de Angelis to receive his priestly ordination.



CLAVDIVS AQVAVIVA NEAPOLITANVS GENERALIS

2. General Claude Aquaviva

At long last the awaited day of departure arrived, and the two missionaries were able to set out again from Lisbon towards the end of March with 18 other Jesuits. This time the trip was uneventful. It is true that Spinola was again laid prostrate with a lingering fever and was still sick when he got to Goa. Since the Malacca ship was ready to sail, he boarded the vessel immediately in spite of his sickness and reached Malacca on June 30, 1600.

After a delay of only one week, they set out again for Macao where the ship was to spend the winter. The Jesuits at that time had a college in Macao, and Spinola settled down there to study the elements of the Japanese language, to serve as Procurator for the Japanese mission and to help out also in pastoral work.

(2) Labor in God's Vineyard (1602-1618)

It was in the year 1602 that Spinola finally set foot in the mission that he had so long desired. His ship docked in Nagasaki early in May of that year, and here the newly arrived missionaries found a very warm welcome among their Jesuit confreres.

The Church in Japan was at that time faced with a new and promising era of development. The persecution begun by Hideyoshi ended with his death, and after a period of political turmoil, Tokugawa Ieyasu succeeded in 1600 in getting control of the country. It is true that a number of Christian Daimyos had lost their domains in the process, but the Church had several very good friends among the newly appointed feudal lords. Ieyasu himself was relatively tolerant in his dealings with the Christians during those early years when the Tokugawa regime was not yet firmly entrenched.



3. Tokugawa Ieyasu

land the Christians were giving proof of a fervor and zeal that were reminiscent of apostolic times.

Under these circumstances the Church was able to expand quietly for another decade. In Nagasaki, Bishop Cerqueira carried out all of the pontifical ceremonies for the first time during Holy Week and on Easter Sunday in 1601. In the fall of that year the first two Japanese priests were ordained in a ceremony that was attended by a large number of people, and a number of the daimyos were begging for priests for their own districts. Throughout the

Spinola thus arrived just in time to share in a bounteous spiritual harvest. Thanks to his linguistic abilities, he had already acquired some fluency in the Japanese language during his studies in Macao and he was now sent for one year to the seminary in Arima to complete those studies.

The Arima seminary had had a checkered history. During his first visitation, Father Valignano had drawn up a large-scale plan for the training of Japanese priests and lay-helpers, and in accordance with this plan, two preparatory seminaries had been established, one in Arima for the Kyūshū area, and the other in Azuchi for Central Japan. Political disturbances and civil war made it necessary to move the Azuchi school to Takatsuki in 1582 and to Osaka in 1585. When Hideyoshi published his Edict of Proscription in 1587, this school was closed down completely and the students were sent to the seminary in Kyūshū. Both groups of students, numbering 70 in all, were then taken to Hachirao, a retired spot in the mountains some seven kilometers north of Arima, where they were housed for some 14 months in make-shift huts.

At the end of that period, they were again moved to Kazusa on the western coast of Shimabara Peninsula, where the climate was thought to be more favorable. Since political conditions showed no improvement and the Jesuits wished to keep out of public eye as much as possible, the seminary was moved back in 1591 to Hachirao where the Daimyo of Arima had just erected suitable buildings for the purpose. These buildings were totally destroyed by fire in 1596, and the students, then numbering 112, were taken to Arie, which was also situated in the Arima district. The persecution of 1597 brought it about that all schools had to be closed down temporarily, and some of the seminaries were taken to Nagasaki while the others were sent to their own homes.

In the very next year, a separate building was erected for the seminarians on the grounds of the College in Nagasaki, and class work was then resumed there. The school buildings did, indeed, escape almost miraculously during the great conflagration in Nagasaki in 1601, but the Visitor then felt that it would not be well to center too many of the mission works in one place. The seminary was therefore moved back to Arima during that same year, and there it remained until 1612. It would seem that the seminary building was then situated on the beach below and westward from the castle where the Arima middle school is now located.

This brief survey shows how difficult it was in those turbulent times to build up an effective Christian educational system. Even the intellectual and spiritual formation of the students was bound to suffer under such conditions of uncertainty and constant change.

When Spinola was assigned to the Arima seminary in 1602 he was given a good opportunity to make use of the lessons he had learned as a student and teacher in the schools of Europe. One of the things he had learned as an eye-witness there was the effectiveness of the newly established Sodality of Mary for the creation of a Christian elite. Appointed as Director of the Sodality at the Seminary of Arima, he made a careful selection of the candidates for admission, had them make an eight days' retreat and induced them also to make a general confession. This select group was then given special training by means of private as well as public conferences. In thus working for the creation of an elite, Spinola was simply following the example set by the colleges in Europe, which employed the same tactics for the creation of such an elite not only in the spiritual but also in the intellectual sense of the word.

After only one year spent at the seminary, Spinola was sent, in 1603, to Arie, a town northeast of Arima, which then had a population of perhaps 8,000 souls. It is recalled that a great conversion movement had begun in the Arima area after the conversion of its Daimyo in 1576, and that the Jesuits had residences with perhaps two priests and two or three Brothers in each of the larger towns along the coast. The Arie house at that time had two priests and one Brother along with several *D juku* or lay helpers who lived at the mission and did work similar to that of our modern catechists.

From their central residence, the priests made it a practice (generally by turns) to visit the outlying groups and scattered families of the Christians in their area. When referring to Spinola's work in Arie, the reports emphasize especially his work for the Catholic families and point out that he knew every one of them and visited them regularly. In addition to meeting their spiritual needs he sought also to provide as much material help for them as possible. It must be remembered that many Christians of the lower nobility had lost both their feudal lords and their assured income as a result of the civil wars and the political upheaval of the years that had just passed. Many of them had sought refuge in the domains still entrusted to Christian daimyos and were now seeking to earn their living as farmers. (It was these displaced and leaderless knights—*R nin*—who were the real promoters and leaders of the Shimabara Rebellion). Spinola took a very special interest in these impoverished nobles and did all that he could to obtain material assistance for them from wealthy Japanese Christians and from the Portuguese merchants in order to save these needy families from destruction.

Not much is known about Spinola's daily routine, but we do learn from the documents connected with his beatification process that he baptized about 5,000 persons during the two years he spent in Arie. What such results imply with regard to the zeal, the work and the efforts of the missionary needs no comment. The joy and the satisfaction experienced by Spinola in this, his first real mission, is evidenced by an anecdote which he himself related in a letter to his confreres in Portugal.

One day he was walking home when he noticed a crowd gathered in a field. Learning that they were surrounding a dying child, he dipped his handkerchief in water and hastened up. The people believed that he had some remedy. They readily made way for him. As soon as he reached the spot he sprinkled the water over the head of the child while pronouncing the words of baptism. That soul went straight to heaven. "And if Almighty God were to give me no other reward than this for all the trials and sufferings I have borne or yet shall bear, I should account myself abundantly repaid by His granting me the grace of saving this one soul for Heaven."

After the two years he spent in Arima, Spinola was transferred to the 'College' in Miyako where he was immediately appointed as Procurator. Such an assignment must have been rather discouraging for a man for whom direct apostolic work was a veritable passion and whose greatest longing was for martyrdom. The 'College' of Miyako was not a college at all, but simply a center house for the missions in Central Japan which had been raised to the rank of what was then called a *collegium*. According to the *Catalogus* for the years 1606 and 1607, only two priests were stationed there, Father Pedro Morejon as Superior and Father Spinola as Procurator, along with five Japanese

Brothers. Eight others were also attached to this 'College' but they were scattered in the missions of Fushimi and Hokkoku (Echigo Province). As Procurator, Father Spinola had to attend to the material needs of his confreres and had little leisure, therefore, for real mission work. He may well have been tempted to groan a complaint, as a later missionary did from time to time, in the words: "Did I come to Japan in order to buy trouser buttons?"

Now that he was named 'watchman' for the house, his mission work was restricted to a great extent to the confessional. It would seem that the Christians found out very quickly that Spinola was ready to hear confessions at any time of day or night. When someone expressed the opinion that they were rather unreasonably insistent in this matter, Spinola answered with a twinkle in his eye: "Would a merchant be angry if many customers come and gave him a good chance to earn something? How much more unreasonable it would be for us to get angry when we have a chance to win a soul for heaven?"

In addition to his work in the confessional, Father Spinola was entrusted with another task which was very important for the entire mission. That was the direction of a sodality which had been established especially for the catechists.

In his spare time Spinola himself initiated another activity which netted excellent results for the mission and must have been especially satisfying to him as a mathematician. He had heard that the missionaries in China were getting excellent results by means of their knowledge of astronomy and the other sciences, and he saw, too, how deeply interested the educated classes in Ky to, including people at court, were in European science. He, therefore, established something in the nature of an "Academy of Mathematics" and invited the cultural leaders as well as members of the imperial court to attend a series of lectures he was preparing to give on mathematics and the natural sciences. The results exceeded his fondest hopes as large crowds assembled to hear him explain the mysteries of nature and the universe and then to hear him speak not only of nature but also of nature's Creator and God.

It was a source of great satisfaction for Spinola to find that among the 8,000 persons baptized in 1611, the last year he spent in the Ky to, many were members of the nobility and of the educated classes.

Then came the year 1612. Ieyasu had been showing an increasingly anti-Christian attitude during the preceding years and this attitude was strengthened by the propaganda carried on by the English merchants. Fully aroused against the Christians by the intrigues of Arima Yoshiaki and Okamoto Daihachi, the Shogun undertook a purge of his own bodyguard in 1612 and sent Hara Mondo along with a number of other Christians into exile. It was during this same year that Father Joao Rodriguez, the clever Procurator of the Jesuits whose diplomacy had hitherto warded off all threatening dangers, lost the favor of the mighty warlord and was sent as an exile to China. All of these developments were harbingers of the greater storm that was to break upon the Church in Japan two years later.

After the exile of Rodriguez, Father Spinola was recalled to Nagasaki in 1612 to take over his duties as Procurator for the entire Japanese mission, an office which he held down to the time of his own imprisonment,

(3) Missionary in Hiding

By the Edict of Proscription issued in 1614, Christianity was officially declared to be inimical to the State, the missionaries were ordered into exile and orders were given for the destruction of all churches. The missionaries were to assemble in Nagasaki and from there they were taken in five Chinese vessels either to Manila or to Macao. Only a few of them managed to remain secretly in Japan and one of the twenty-three who were given permission by the Provincial to do so was Father Spinola. "Never," he wrote to a confrere in Europe, "was my heart filled with a purer or a greater joy than it was when this great grace was granted to me."

In addition to his duties as Procurator he now had to serve also as Vicar General for the southern part of the Diocese of Japan. In the exercise of his two-fold office, he had to find ways and means of keeping in touch with all of the missionaries. This meant, of course, that a relatively large number of people had to know about his hiding place and that the danger of arrest was greatly increased. In order to escape detection by the officials and to avoid needless danger for the Christians who gave him shelter, he had to change his residence quite frequently.

For the most part, he kept in hiding during the day and did what he could at night to continue his missionary work. On Sundays and Holy Days, he often said Mass in two different places and every night was devoted as far as possible to preaching and to hearing confessions. His life at that time was described as follows in a letter written on March 3, 1617:

It is almost two and a half years that I have been working here in Nagasaki and trying to console and encourage the Christians. I must flee secretly from one hiding place to another, say Mass and administer the Sacraments in the homes of the Christians. During the day I am alone for the most part and have no other consolation except that which the Lord is accustomed to give to those who work and suffer for Him. The trials and troubles I myself must endure could be easily ignored if I did not have to see how this beautiful vineyard which has already brought forth such wonderful fruits is now being ignominiously laid waste. I make out as best I can and though I get only one rather meager meal a day I am still quite vigorous. It would seem that God is verifying in me the Scriptural saying that not in bread alone doth man live.

Things quieted down somewhat after the first great wave of persecution in 1614. The execution of the decrees ordering the persecution depended to a great extent on the initiative of the individual feudal lords and in many cases they were satisfied with merely demoting or banishing the leading Christians. Even Ieyasu refrained in the beginning from inflicting the death penalty on the missionaries because of the relations he still maintained with foreign countries.

The two Osaka campaigns in 1614 and 1615, whereby the last political rivals of Ieyasu, Hideyori, the son of Hideyoshi, and his followers, were eliminated, also tended to some extent to distract attention from the Christians.

It is true that Ieyasu was quite surprised to find many Christian emblems in the military encampment in Osaka. (The Christians still looked upon Hideyori as the legitimate successor of Hideyoshi.) Greater still was his surprise when he learned after the fall of Osaka castle that no less than seven missionaries (3 Franciscans, 2 Jesuits and 2 secular) priests had still been living in the city.



4. Hideyori

Ieyasu did not long survive his victory. He died at his residence in Sumpu (Shizuoka) in July of the following year (1616). Only a few months later, on October 1, 1616, the second Tokugawa Shogun, Hidetada, renewed the anti-Christian edicts of his father and took a more vigorous stand in the matter of their enforcement. In order to control the activities of all foreigners more effectively, he ordered that foreign trade should be carried on exclusively through the two ports of Nagasaki and Hirado. Nor did he shrink, as his father had done, from inflicting the death penalty upon the foreign missionaries.

When things seemed to quiet down more or less in Nagasaki in 1615 and 1616, some of the missionaries abandoned their previous policy of reserve and appeared more and more in the open. The civil authorities there naturally felt obliged to take steps against them before the matter should be reported to the central government. Thus it came about that a Jesuit and a Franciscan were beheaded in Omura on April 29, 1617, and that a Dominican and an Augustinian were put to death in the same province some weeks later. The last two had come out into the open expressly for the purpose of encouraging the Christians by their own heroic example to remain faithful even unto the martyr's death.

Spinola felt that he was closer than ever to the realization of his life-long dream. He himself sent a report to the Superior General concerning the martyrdom of his confrere, Father John Baptist Machado, and added the following comment:

How happy I am that I was permitted to be a witness of this glorious death. I, too, might well have gained the martyr's crown if a rather serious illness had not prevented me from carrying out my intention of visiting the various Christian villages. There I certainly would not have escaped the vigilant eyes of those who are trying to capture us. Unfortunately, my sins and imperfections have robbed me thus far of this great happiness. Nevertheless, in spite of my unworthiness of which I am only too keenly aware, I cannot but hope that God has merely postponed and has not denied it to me. At present I am doing what I can among the people to encourage them to remain steadfast in the great trial with which God has visited them. I am myself ready at any time to lay down my life with the greatest joy for Him Who shed the last drop of His Blood for me. Since my work as Procurator does not allow me to remain as much in secret as the others do, it is possible that I shall be the first to be caught and put to death by our persecutors. God grant that it may be so!

Then came December of the year 1618. Since the Superiors had urged Spinola to use the greatest possible prudence and had forbidden him to leave his hiding place in Nagasaki, he had already spent some weeks in the house of a poor Portuguese named Dominic Giorgi in that city. He seems to have had a presentiment of his impending arrest, for just two days before it happened he called the catechist after Mass and asked him to hide some of the Sacred Vessels and also turned over his account books with orders to give them to the Provincial.

Friends had advised Father Spinola to move to another hiding place, and it is quite possible that this advice had been relayed to him from no less a personage than Hasegawa Gonroku, the Governor of Nagasaki, himself. It is well known that Hasegawa tried to side-step this bloody business as much as possible and frequently sent secret warnings beforehand when he knew that private homes were to be searched. After Spinola had received his warning he planned to make the change on December 14, but the pious Portuguese begged him to stay just one more day in order that they might be able to receive the Sacraments once more.

During the following night the priest was awakened by the sound of breaking doors as a search party rushed in and seized his companion, Brother Ambrose Fernandez, who was sleeping in the adjoining room. The searchers were on the point of leaving the house with the Brother without having found Father Spinola, when one of them happened as if by accident to open the door of the priest's room and thus captured him also. Both priest and Brother were then taken to the residence of the Governor in company with Dominic Giorgi, but the catechist who slept in an adjoining building escaped detection.

The prisoners had to wait in the courtyard of the governor's residence for two whole days and nights. Father Spinola took this opportunity to hear the confessions of the Christian officials and soldiers and to encourage them to persevere in the faith. At the end of that time, two Dominican priests, Father Angelus Orsucci and Father John de San Dominico, who had been captured immediately after they landed in Japan, were also brought to the Governor's residence for trial. Since Spinola was the only one of the priests who could speak Japanese, it was he who served as interpreter during the hearings. As soon as the hearings were over, all of the captives were taken to Omura to be imprisoned there.

The authorities feared that there might be a great Christian demonstration either in Nagasaki or in the various towns along the way, all of which had strong Christian communities and the trip was therefore made under heavy guard.

The captives themselves were seven in number including Father Spinola and Brother Fernandez, the two Dominicans and three Japanese Christians. They went in single file, each accompanied by a policeman who held the ropes with which the captives were bound, and the whole group was surrounded on both sides as well as in front and in back by groups of soldiers. It was thus that they made their way to the nearest port on the Bay of Omura, in all probability Tokitsu or perhaps Nagayo. Along

the streets of the city as well as in the towns and villages they found large numbers of Christians lined up on both sides to bid their spiritual father and friend a tearful farewell.

After being brought across the Bay of Omura by ship, the captives reached their prison on a small peninsula near Omura towards evening on the following day. This prison had already been filled for several months by other Christians who now welcomed the new arrivals with great joy. In spite of many privations, Spinola found great satisfaction in the fact that his life-long desire for martyrdom seemed about to be fulfilled. On February 20, 1619, he wrote as follows to Father J. Baptist Porro: "I have finally been arrested. Bound like a robber, I have been led through the streets amid a great concourse of the people and thrust into prison. I am cheerful and contented and deeply grateful to God who has granted me such a great grace."

This same joy and a holy pride over the fact that he was being treated as Christ was revealed in the many letters he wrote from the prison, all of which end with the words: "*Carolus incarceratus*" or "*Carolus pro Christo captus*."

He still had long to wait for the crown of martyrdom since he and his companions had to remain in the prison for more than three and a half years amid sufferings which, according to Father Porro, amounted to a living martyrdom and were far worse than quick death at the stake.

Since the old building was rotting away and threatened to collapse, a new prison was built in July, 1619, but its structure was such that Spinola described it simply as a 'bird cage'. According to a pencil drawing made by Spinola himself and sent to the Superior General of the Society by Father Viera, the prison was made of bamboo poles driven into the ground at intervals of two inches and covered over with a straw roof. The inner room of the 'bird cage' was about twenty feet long and fourteen feet wide, and the door was so low and narrow that an adult could hardly get in or out of it. Next to the door there was a small opening through which the prisoners were handed their daily food. Surrounding the prison proper at a distance of about six feet was another strong palisade beyond which were the buildings that provided quarters for the prison guards. The entire compound was surrounded by a third and very high wall

In the beginning the prisoners numbered only 17, but this number was later raised to 24 and in the end no less than 33 of them were packed into prison. Then, things were so bad that the prisoners could neither lie down at night nor move around during the day. The prisoners could neither bathe nor wash their clothes, and since they had to meet all the necessities of nature within those four walls, the prison was constantly filled with disgusting odors in spite of the two inch openings that existed between each of the bamboo poles that constituted the 'walls' of the prison.

"We are not allowed either to wash our clothes or to dry them in the sun. The place is therefore filthy in the extreme, and since all other needs of nature must be met within this hut, it is always filled with a pestilential and unbearable stench."

Along with their difficulties, the prisoners also had to contend with all kinds of vermin which became so numerous that they could hardly sleep at night and soon found their bodies covered with sores and festering wounds. Surrounded only by such palisade walls, they were exposed to extreme heat in the summer time and to the cold and frost of winter. "Each of the senses is exposed to its own particular type of torture," as Spinola said in one of his letters. To the Father Provincial he wrote as follows:

I can assure Your Reverence that there is no one among us who would not prefer a fiery death at the stake if we gave heed only to our natural inclinations. We are almost entirely naked but the guards will not permit clothes to be sent to us from Nagasaki and in spite of the bitter cold they have not allowed us to have a blanket.

Governor Hasegawa had not wanted to have the prisoners tortured, but the greedy guards pocketed the money which had been intended for the prisoners, and in addition to all of their other difficulties, they were forced to endure a continuous fast. "Our life was one long fast. They give us enough food to keep us alive but not enough to satisfy our hunger." Again Spinola tells us:

Our daily food consists of two bowls of cold rice that was boiled in water (*o-kayu*), a cup of a bitter beverage that can hardly be swallowed, and either a small portion of vegetables or two small sardels. Since Europeans are generally not used to these latter dishes, we must be satisfied with the rice.

Hunger is so much of a torture that when a kindly guard gave us some black and moldy bread some time ago, we ate it as if it were the most delicious delicacy."

Brother Fernandez, who was already 69 years of age, finally succumbed to the rigors of prison life and died on January 7, 1620. Spinola's strength was also ebbing, and he became so ill several times that he was in danger of death. On one occasion he had already received the last Sacraments when he recovered so suddenly that his cure seems to have been a miracle. He himself wrote about it to the Superior General as follows:

On September 12, I suffered a violent attack of fever which lasted until November 4, the feast of my Patron, St. Charles, but then I recovered suddenly without having taken any kind of medicine. Before that, my companions were all convinced that I would die and could hardly contain myself for joy at the thought that I was so near to the goal and would soon enter into the joys of heaven.

Spinola's only consolation during his long imprisonment came from the fact that he was able to say Mass almost every day. In spite of the rigid system of inspection maintained by the guards, the Christians found ways and means within a few months to smuggle in wine, hosts, candles and all the other things that were needed for the celebration of Holy Mass.

By a loving dispensation of Divine Providence, we are equipped with everything we need for the Holy Sacrifice. This holy Bread provides added strength for body and soul. This heavenly Wine inflames my heart to such an extent that I can not

only make light of all the sufferings of the past but am willing to suffer far greater things and to die a thousand deaths for Him Who provides these things for me so lovingly and so generously in the Sacraments. [Letter to the Superior General, February 20, 1620]

In many respects, life in this prison was very similar to that in a monastery. It is well known that for prisoners of superior attainments, enforced idleness constitutes a greater hardship than do physical hardships. To obviate this difficulty, Spinola worked out a daily *horarium* 'timetable' from the very beginning of his imprisonment, and each of the priests took turns as 'acting Superior' for a week at a time to see that this *horarium* was observed. An hour's meditation in the morning was followed by Mass, and the Little Hours along with the Rosary were then recited in common. Spiritual reading took up the rest of the time until noon and after dinner all had an hour's 'recreation.' This was followed by Vespers, which were sometimes sung. The time until the meager evening meal was then taken up with more spiritual reading and by the recitation of Matins for the next day. Supper was followed by another period of 'recreation', examination of conscience and often also by a scourging prior to 'taps'.

In his gentle good humor, Spinola once referred to this prison regime as a novitiate which was to prepare him for martyrdom. "What I have suffered so far does not amount to much, and I long for far greater hardships. The first year of my novitiate will soon be finished, but since I hope to be allowed to make my profession in Heaven I shall gladly submit to many other and far greater trials."

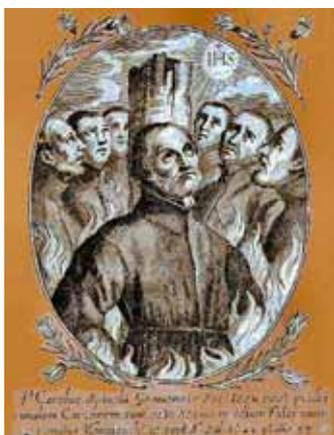
In point of fact, there were quite a few of the prisoners who asked to be admitted to the Society of Jesus, and no less than seven of them were permitted by the Provincial to pronounce their vows after having completed this 'prison novitiate'.

(4) Crown of Martyrdom (1622)

In 1620 the Spanish Augustinian, Father Peter Zuniga, and the Flemish Dominican, Father Louis Flores, made an attempt to enter Japan in the disguise of merchants. It was a Japanese merchant of Sakai, Joachim Hirayama, who had volunteered to bring them in on his own ship.

Hirayama's ship was captured en route by the English, who promptly transferred both the crew and the priests to a Dutch ship, which then brought them to Hirado. The incident led to long drawn-out court proceedings, which created a great commotion as Hirayama accused both the English and the Dutch of piracy and demanded compensation accordingly. The Dutch, on the other hand, sought to prove that the two foreigners were missionaries and as such were forbidden to enter Japan. They hoped, furthermore, to force a confession to the effect that the ship's cargo really belonged to the Spaniards and not to the Japanese in order thereby to escape the charge of piracy. The priests admitted outright that they were Catholics but put it up to their Dutch accusers to prove that they were priests and missionaries. The reason for this stand

was that they did not want to endanger the lives either of Hirayama or any members of his crew.



5. Charles Spinola

Both the Dutch and Hirayama appealed to the Edo government, which then appointed the Daimyo of Hirado and the Governor of Nagasaki to investigate the whole affair. Hasegawa Gonraku, therefore, went to Hirado, but the case dragged on and on. The Dutch tried on the basis of letters and other papers they had confiscated to prove that the two foreigners were missionaries but could get neither of them to admit this although the priests were tortured repeatedly with the most refined cruelty. Hasegawa Gonraku, who had known Father Zuniga personally in earlier years, hoped secretly that his identity might not be revealed and that the case could be closed in short order.

The Dutch even sent secret agents to Manila in the hope of getting documentary proof of their claims but in this they were not successful. In November, 1691, it was therefore decided to bring the two priests face to face with the other captive missionaries, and Father Spinola along with the Franciscans and Dominicans were therefore brought to Hirado from their prison in Omura. All of them, however, denied that they knew either Zuniga or Flores, which was perfectly true.

It was only on the following day when some people from Nagasaki recognized Father Zuniga and when the apostate Japanese priest, Father Thomas Araki, had confirmed their statements that Father Zuniga admitted that he was a priest and forthwith donned his habit. As a result of these developments, Father Zuniga was taken to a prison in Iki while Hirayama and his crew were also arrested. After an unsuccessful attempt to escape, Father Flores also admitted that he was a priest and was likewise taken to the Iki prison.

With the investigations concluded in this way, the Governor of Nagasaki went to Edo to report to the government and to receive further instructions. The Edo authorities were greatly surprised over the contents of this report and promptly gave orders to proceed with the utmost severity not only against all those who were involved in the case but against all of the other captured missionaries as well. That meant the death sentence also for Spinola and his fellow-prisoners.

After the Governor's return, Hirayama as captain of the ship and all of the members of his crew were examined, and twelve men were sentenced to death. The sentence was not executed, however, until Fathers Zuniga and Flores had been brought to Nagasaki, and then the two priests along with Hirayama were burned to death while the others were beheaded. This happened on August 19, 1622.

Meanwhile, the families and other persons related to the men who had given hospitality to Spinola and the other missionaries in Nagasaki were also arrested, and the prisoners in Omura were also informed that they were to be put to death. With the

arrest of additional Dominicans, Franciscans and Jesuits, their number had now been increased to thirty-three.

Spinola now made haste to send his final greetings to various friends. In a letter to the Father Provincial he wrote as follows:

The minions of the law rushed in upon us yesterday with such fury that we thought we would be killed immediately. In point of fact, however, they only wanted to count us and write down our names. We have heard of the glorious death of the monks who have just arrived, and I believe that we, too, will soon die at the stake. Prepared, with the grace of God, for whatever may happen, we are joyfully waiting for our great hour.

“It seems that God, like a good novice-master, has prepared us in the course of this year for our death. The guards have been much sterner with us since last July, and the food we have received has been both less and worse than it was formerly. Our life has thus been more miserable during the past two months than ever before. We could not even receive any letters. We were not, however, without consolation since we always received enough hosts and wine so that we could offer up the Holy Sacrifice every day,

In bidding you this final farewell, I beg you on bended knees for forgiveness for all of my faults, especially for the fact that I have made such poor use of all the means that were provided for me during the four years of my imprisonment in order that I might strive for perfection. I embrace all of my confreres in spirit and beg of them to thank God with me for the great blessing which He has bestowed upon me. May they also beg God to give me the strength that I shall need until the very last moment, the more especially since my last sickness left me so weak that I can hardly stand up.

I don't know whether I shall still have a chance to write to Father General and Father Visitor, so I should like to ask Your Reverence to do that for me. Along with this letter, I am sending you two precious relics, one of which is a relic of St. Aloysius which Father General sent me and with which I am also enclosing a few hairs of Brother Fernandez. The other relic is a particle of the penitential garb worn by St. Ignatius after his conversion in Manresa. In addition to these things, I am also sending the pictures which I had kept in my Breviary in the hope that you can distribute them as keepsakes among our confreres in Japan and Macao,

May God keep and protect Your Reverence. In case He deigns in His great love to permit me to enter into His dwelling, you may be sure that I shall never forget the loving kindness with which you have always treated me. Nor will I ever forget our confreres in this province and in the whole of our Society to which I am more attached than ever before.

Charles, sentenced to death for the Holy Name of Jesus.
August 28, 1622.

Early in September, the Governor of Nagasaki gave orders that those prisoners in Omura who had been captured in Nagasaki should be brought back to Nagasaki. After



6. Martyrdom of Spinola and Companions

having suffered so much together during the years of their imprisonment, the prisoners had hoped that they might also die together, but the eight who had been captured in Omura were now compelled to stay there. (Included in this group were Father Zumarraga O.P., Father Apollinaris Franco O.F.M. and their six Japanese confreres who were burned to death in Omura on September 12.) The other twenty-five were taken out of the Omura prison on Friday, September 9, and taken down to the shore under heavy guard and from there they were taken by boat across the Bay of Omura to the port of Nagayo.

From Nagayo they went by the over-land route to Urakami which was situated at only half an hour's journey from the execution grounds. Leading the group en route was an officer with twenty men armed with lances and two groups of soldiers armed with bows and arrows. Then followed Father Spinola and the other prisoners on horse back in single file, each with a rope around his neck, one end of the rope being held by a policeman. A guard of some 300 men flanked the prisoners on both sides while three other officers with their troops of foot-soldiers brought up the rear.

Great excitement reigned among the Christians who lined the road on both sides in order to extend final greeting to the priests, but the strength of the guard made it impossible for them to approach or to speak to the prisoners.

Arriving in Urakami in the late afternoon, they were locked up in a pen where they were to spend the night in the open. Since it began to rain, however, they were transferred to a dilapidated hut nearby. Three of the local Christians, including a former catechist of Father Spinola, managed somehow to get near enough to speak to the prisoners and to ask their blessing. It was thus, also, that the prisoners learned that

they had been condemned to death by fire and that preparations for their execution were a ready in progress.

On the following morning, the journey was resumed in the same fashion as on the previous day, and the prisoners were brought to the same spot on which the Twenty Six Martyrs were put to death on February 5, 1597. This spot, just opposite the present railroad station in Nagasaki, is now known as Nishizaka and it is there that the Japanese National Broadcasting Company (NHK) has one of its broadcasting stations. In those days, the sea still extended in-land so far that Nishizaka constituted a small peninsula jutting out into the bay while in the background it rose gently to the foot of Mount Matsu (Matsuyama). It was there that some 30.000 Christians and non-Christians had assembled to witness the tragic execution.

Having arrived at the execution grounds, the prisoners had to wait another hour for the arrival of another group of condemned Christians from a prison in Nagasaki. Included in this group were 12 men 13 women and 5 children, families which had secretly harbored the missionaries, and who had been arrested and condemned to death in order to spread terror among the other Christians.

The entire peninsula was cordoned off by the police. On the side nearest to the sea, a platform had also been erected for the authorities, and twenty-five poles with ropes suspended from their upper ends had been set up in a long row running from the sea in the direction of the mountain. Wood for the fire was piled up at a distance of from 12 to 15 feet from these poles. The whole area was enclosed in a bamboo fence, the only entrance being provided by a gate on the side facing the mountain. A separate enclosure was also erected adjoining the first one for those prisoners who were to be beheaded. The entire execution ground was guarded by strong military forces with the lance-bearers from Hirado lined up along the shore while the guards from Omura took their stand on the side facing the mountain.

The Governor, Hasegawa Gonroku, who usually pleaded sickness as an excuse for not taking part in such grim affairs, was absent as usual and was represented by a man named Sukedayu. As soon as this man had taken his place on the platform, the group who were to be beheaded were brought out, and when they were all in their places, the other twenty-five were brought forward and tied to their respective stakes.

When all was ready, Spinola intoned the Psalm *Laudate Dominum Omnes Gentes*, and the whole group took part in the singing. After the Psalm, Spinola, whose stake stood nearest to the platform, spoke briefly, first to Sukedayu, then to the Portuguese and finally to the assembled multitude. Seeing that the other missionaries also wanted to speak, Sukedayu, who feared that it might lead to mob action, ordered the execution to take place immediately.

The executioners began their work with those who were to be beheaded and who were now kneeling in front of the piles of firewood in such a way that the priests would have to witness their death. Among these Christians was Isabella Fernandez and her four year old son, Ignatius. Isabella was the widow of Dominic Giorgi, who had kept

Spinola hidden in his own home and had been executed for this ‘crime’ as early as 1619. Little Ignatius, then but an infant had been baptized by Spinola shortly before his arrest.

When the executioner approached Isabella, she called in greeting to Father Spinola, who had not recognized her until that moment. Little Ignatius was kneeling beside his mother but was hidden from view because of the firewood, and Spinola asked Isabella where her son was. She therefore took him up in her arms so that the priest could see him, and asked for his blessing. Spinola’s hands were bound, but he raised them heavenwards as he looked down upon the child and pronounced the words of benediction. Thereupon the mother inclined her head for execution and after her death little Ignatius also knelt and bowed his head as his mother had done and thus followed her to martyrdom. (A beautiful portrait of Blessed Isabella and her son, painted by Kimura Keizo, can now be seen in the cathedral in Yokohama.)

The heads of those who had been beheaded were now set up on poles just opposite the funeral pyre, and orders were given that the wood be set on fire. It was at this moment that the sound of murmured prayers surged down from the mountain as the Christians there prayed publicly for the grace of perseverance for the martyrs. This they did in answer to an earlier request of Spinola who remembered that on some occasions one or the other of the Christians, unable to endure the torture of the flames, had torn himself loose from the stake and had denied the faith. Because of this, the persecutors now made it a practice to tie the Christians rather loosely and to start the fire at a short distance from the stakes in order to make apostasy easier. This, however, prolonged the agony of those who persevered since their bodies were roasted slowly by the approaching flames.

In point of fact, two of the Christians apostatized on this occasion also and fled from the flames, but Suke-dayu had them thrown back into the fire even though they were then praying to the Japanese gods for delivery, and they thus died as apostates. A third had also torn himself loose from the stake but did not apostatize and went back into the fire of his own free will. He was not, however, beatified with the others.

The rest of the group, twenty-two in all, remained firm until the end. Spinola gave a last absolution to the Blessed Lucia Freitas, who was bound to the stake next to him, and then he stood stock still with his eyes raised to heaven. Weakened as he was by his long imprisonment and by his frequent illnesses, Spinola was the first to die after having endured the heat and the torture for ‘only’ one hour and a half. When his clothing caught fire he was quickly enveloped in the flames and he then sank down on his knees and collapsed. The others also collapsed, one after the other, the last being Father Sebastian Kimura who died after three hours of torture.



7. Sebastian Kimura

The remains of the martyrs were left exposed on the execution grounds for three days, during which the constant guard that was kept there made it impossible for the

Christians to take away the sacred relics. On the fourth day all that remained of the bodies was heaped up on wood in a pit and burned and the ashes were then thrown into the sea.

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