Spirituality
Pencil Preaching



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"They began to bring in the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was” (Mark 6:55).

Gn 1:1-19; Mk 6:53-56

Memorial of Saint Paul Miki and Companions, Martyrs

Pope Francis’ appeals for peace during his trip to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan have focused world attention on the complexities of nation

building and peaceful coexistence on a continent already bearing the scars of European colonization and the mixed blessings of evangelization. Today's first reading from Genesis reminds us that Creation began with light that reveals insight and order. The pope brought light to regions overshadowed by corruption and conflict. Peace is always the first step to renewal, he insisted.

South Sudan's majority Christian makeup (Catholic, Anglican and Presbyterian) reflects British colonization on top of multi-ethnic divisions with over 60 indigenous languages. Internal and international efforts to establish unity and independence in the south have faced challenges marked by outbreaks of ethnic conflict and climate disasters causing famine and displacement.

Today's commemoration of the martyrdom of Paul Miki and his companions in 17th century Japan illustrate these same complexities where evangelization met official cultural preservation that led to the expulsion of missionaries for 200 years.

Pope Francis' efforts in Africa to stop the deadly conflicts and build a just society that develops the regions resources to benefit everyone encounter this same complex challenge. Only heroic and urgent collaboration between churches and civil agencies will bring light and peace to the region.

Today's gospel continues Mark's narrative of Jesus' ministry with his disciples as they cross the Sea of Galilee to the area of the Gennesaret where crowds awaited them, and miracles of healing occurred with just a touch of Jesus's cloak.

We are heirs to this gospel, empowered by our baptism to be Christ to others, sources of healing, forgiveness and consolation to anyone who sees our faith and invites us to touch their lives. One of the central goals of the Second Vatican Council was to ignite a deeper sense of mission in the lay majority of the church. A passive laity that expected clergy and religious to be the church was a distortion of the early church and a tragic diminishment of the mission of every baptized person to be another Christ in the world.

People in search of God may resist indoctrination, but they will always be attracted to the kind of loving compassion Jesus exhibited. The thousands of clergy, sisters, brothers and laity in our complex world are the only gospel many people will ever experience. We become that gospel in our support of their efforts and our own desire to show that Christ is with us, in us, alive and active through us.