

LANDSCAPE OF THE HEART *continuation*

and in action because as pope he must "strengthen his brethren and feed the sheep and the lambs of the flock as a proof of his love." All these would be done in a climate of love as "we want our ministry to be from the outset a ministry of love . . . We must aim at this: that all forms of injustice which exist today should be given consideration by all in common and should be really eradicated from the world, so that all men may be able to live a life worthy of man." (TPP)

How does the Pope define the office of Peter? John Paul II sees himself as joining rather than dividing in spite of seemingly paradoxical stands he takes which might lead to division. But he has one sure-fire formula to solve all these. In his address on the day after his election, he recalled the three-fold scriptural foundation of his office as successor of Peter: he is the rock-apostle (Matt. 16:18-19); he is commanded to "confirm the brethren" (Luke 22:32); and to feed the sheep and the lambs of his flock as a witness of love (John 21:15-17). This office, he said, was entrusted not only to Peter, but also to his legitimate successors. As the 265th successor to Peter, John Paul II is convinced that his unique mission must be always done in love.

Love will therefore be the sustaining power of this pontificate. Love is the climate and the heart the landscape in which one grows. It is the necessary answer to the question of Jesus: Do you love Me? The millions of Catholics all over the world are under the loving ministry of a Pope, one of the noble people who have suffered too much.

This is the landscape of the heart in which Pope John Paul II has always worked. We offer our hearts to him in sincere welcome.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! ●

—Maria Delia Coronel, icm
Prelature of Marawi
Marawi City

1. WHO IS LORENZO RUIZ?

LORENZO RUIZ is the first known Filipino who was martyred for the Christian faith. He is the only Filipino in a group of sixteen martyrs of Japan in the 17th century who are candidates for beatification.

Lorenzo Ruiz- PROTO- MARTYR OF THE PHILIPPINES

"I am a Christian . . . and although I did not come to Japan to be a martyr, as a Christian and for God I shall give my life."

2. WHO WERE HIS PARENTS?

The names of his parents are unknown. We only know that his father was a Chinese and his mother was a Filipina (Tagala). Both were Christians.

3. WHEN AND WHERE WAS HE BORN?

He was born in Binondo, sometime between 1600 and 1610.

4. DO WE HAVE A RECORD OF HIS LIFE PRIOR TO HIS MARTYRDOM?

YES, although such a record is somewhat sketchy. He must have been baptized in the Dominican Church of San Gabriel in Binondo and went to the school run by the Dominican Fathers. As a young boy he served in the church and convent of Binondo. He was an errand boy who did various jobs in the convent, and at the same time an altar boy or little sacristan in the church. He acquired a good knowledge of three languages: Tagalog, Chinese and Spanish. He was an "escribano" or notary, not necessarily an official one since this was always reserved to a Spaniard, but most probably a calligrapher who rendered documents in beautiful penmanship for private or official use. He was a "cofrade," a full member of the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary. He was married and had two sons and one daughter.

5. WHY DID HE LEAVE FOR JAPAN?

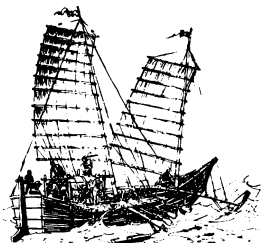
From a meager information we possess about Lorenzo, we know that his involvement in a crime led him to leave the Philippines.

6. WAS HE GUILTY OF THE CRIME?

The records never showed the extent of his involvement in that crime. Until he is proven guilty by documentary evidence, we presume that he was innocent. We can surmise, however, that Lorenzo was afraid that, as a consequence of a trial or mistrial, he might be given death sentence. So he decided to escape from the Philippines.

7. HOW DID HE MANAGE TO ESCAPE?

He offered his help to a group of Dominican missionaries who were then about to leave for Japan to preach the Gospel of Christ.



8. ALL IN ALL HOW MANY WERE THEY WHEN THEY SAILED FOR JAPAN?

There were six of them: 4 priests and 2 laymen. The Dominican priest-missionaries were: FR. ANTONIO GONZALEZ, O.P., FR. VICENTE SHIWOZUKA, O.P., FR. GUILLERMO COURTET, O.P., and, FR. MIGUEL AOZARAZA, O.P. The two laymen were LORENZO RUIZ and a Japanese who was called LAZARO.

9. DID LORENZO HAVE THE SAME INTENTION AS THAT OF HIS COMPANIONS, I.E., TO BRING THE GOSPEL MESSAGE OF CHRIST TO JAPAN?

No. Eager to flee from the Spanish authorities who sought for his life, Lorenzo's main preoccupation was to leave the Philippines. He joined the group thinking that the champion they took was going to Macao, a Portuguese territory, where most ships from Manila were bound. He got the surprise of his life when he found out that they were bound for Japan.

Lorenzo Ruiz...

Continuation

10. WHY THEN DID HE NOT RETURN TO THE PHILIPPINES?

He could have returned to the Philippines aboard the same charpan but he was told that the boat would make a call at Formosa, a Spanish territory. There too, he would risk being apprehended by the same authorities. So he decided to stay with the missionaries.

11. DO WE HAVE ANY INFORMATION ABOUT HIS STAY IN JAPAN PRIOR TO HIS MARTYRDOM?

Yes, but again, it is minimal. We know that on July 10, 1636, the missionaries, together with Lorenzo, were caught and imprisoned by the Japanese authorities. Japan was then a country where Christianity was considered a crime. For more than a year, the group of Lorenzo remained in confinement. But what transpired during their period of confinement, the records never showed.

Eight days before his death, Lorenzo and his companions were brought to Nagasaki to be tortured and tried before a Japanese tribunal. It is in the records of these proceedings, fortunately preserved intact up to the present, that we gather much information about the martyrdom of Lorenzo.

12. TO WHAT TORTURES WAS LORENZO SUBJECTED?

These were surely hair-raising, for at the sight of such tortures, even the Japanese priest and the Japanese laymen temporarily renounced their faith in order to be spared of these. One of the excruciating torments which Lorenzo underwent was the "water-torture," where a large amount of water was poured into his stomach through his mouth. Japanese soldiers would then place a piece of wood over his bloated stomach and jump on it, forcing the water to come out of Lorenzo, often with a mixture of blood. This and many more tortures did not make Lorenzo renounce his faith, to the admiration of the Japanese people who witnessed the proceedings.



13. HOW DID LORENZO SUFFER HIS TORTURES?

Lorenzo underwent his agony with unflinching constancy. When asked to give up his faith to avoid being tortured, he boldly declared:

"I AM A CHRISTIAN . . . AND ALTHOUGH I DID NOT COME TO JAPAN TO BE A MARTYR, AS A CHRISTIAN AND FOR GOD I SHALL GIVE MY LIFE."

His tormentors, then, employed another means to make him renounce his faith: they promised him life. That was perhaps a greater temptation than all the rest because Lorenzo had escaped the Philippines precisely to save his life. Now, life was being offered him and freedom as well — if he would renounce his faith. But again, Lorenzo surprised them all by saying:

"HAD I MANY A THOUSAND LIVES, I SHALL OFFER ALL FOR HIM. DO WITH ME AS YOU LIKE."

14. HOW DID HE DIE?

When the Japanese authorities recognized the futility of their efforts to make Lorenzo and his companions apostatize (i.e. renounce their faith) they were led to Nishizaka Hill, near Nagasaki, where they would be put to the final torment of hanging in the pit, a gruesome way of killing a person painfully and slowly. Hung by the feet from the gallows, his body inserted into a narrow pit,

and the entrance of the pit closed with pieces of wood and stones, Lorenzo was left to suffocate and bleed until he died on September 29, 1637. His body was cremated and the ashes thrown into the sea.



15. WAS LORENZO'S DEATH THE REASON WHY HE IS CALLED A MARTYR?

Lorenzo is a martyr not because of his death, but because of his *MOTIVE* for dying. Martyrdom is not simply dying a horrible death, for anyone could undergo that, willingly or unwillingly. Martyrdom is *dying for the faith*, a death freely accepted, and thus is an eloquent and effective testimony before men to the meaning and truth of such faith. By his death, Lorenzo:

- a) testifies that every man, if he would only acknowledge it, has nothing more valuable than his faith in Christ;
- b) impressed the people with the force of his testimony. His love for God acquires its highest expression: utter self-giving, which is the same expression of God's love for us.

16. IF LORENZO IS A MARTYR, GOD WOULD HAVE SURELY REWARDED HIM FOR IT IN HEAVEN. WHY IS THERE A NEED TO MAKE KNOWN TO THE WHOLE CHURCH HIS MARTYRDOM?

The reason why we make known the martyrdom of Lorenzo is to remind all of us to esteem this noble Christian act of dying for

one's faith.

- a) A martyr dies as Christ died, in unresisting surrender to those who take away his life by violence, convinced that he is dedicating himself to God who is ready to accept him in love.
- b) A martyr not only shares the sacrificial character of Christ's death but also shares in its redemptive power. Rightly is it said that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of Christianity. By their sacrifice, the martyrs bring Christ's salvation to others by their effective testimony.
- c) A martyr is said to undergo "baptism by blood" because by his death, he enacts realistically what is done symbolically in sacramental baptism: "dying along with Christ in order to rise again with Him" (Rom. 6:3-11).

17. HOW DOES THE WHOLE CHURCH ACKNOWLEDGE AND MAKE KNOWN LORENZO'S MARTYRDOM?

The first step is by beatification. This is the way by which the Church assures us, by her supreme authority, that Lorenzo and his companions, being martyrs, have attained salvation beyond any doubt, and are proposed to the Christian people as models of virtuous living and as intercessors and advocates for us before God.

18. IF LORENZO HAD ONLY FIVE COMPANIONS WHEN HE WAS MARTYRED IN JAPAN, WHY ARE THERE SIXTEEN OF THEM TO BE BEATIFIED?

The other ten died in the years 1633 and 1634 under the same persecution and for the same motive — for proclaiming their Christian faith. Of this total to be beatified, nine were Dominican priests, two Dominican lay brothers, two Dominican sisters and three laymen. By nationalities, nine were Japanese, four Spanish, one French, one Italian, and our connational Lorenzo Ruiz. Lorenzo is the only married man and family head in the entire group. He is also the first person of this country to be raised to the honor of the altars. ●