

A Little History of Christianity in Japan

Christianity was introduced in Japan in 1549 by Portuguese, represented by St Francis Xavier and spread rapidly under the protection of Nobunaga who unified the civil war-torn country. Given a warning by William Adams and Jan Joosten who arrived here on wrecked *De Liefde* in 1600, the newly established Tokugawa Shogunate was afraid of Catholic that always accompanied conquistadors and came to nearby Luzon. In fact, it is estimated that as many as three (or seven?) hundred thousand in a few million inhabitants in Japan had been Christianised. The government had strictly prohibited the religion and, after the Martyrdom at Amakusa, sealed the country in 1639 until 1854 but for Holland and Tsing. When a church was inaugurated by Westerners in Nagasaki in 1864, many villagers appeared and said that they had maintained their religion in secret over two hundred years, but they were told by the authority that Christianity was still illegal. Freedom of religion was restored in Japan in 1873 after the Meiji Restoration. *Amen.* (M.I.)



Kyoto Nan-ban-ji (Kyoto South-barbarian's temple), by Sōshū Kanō, famous painter in 15c.



Fifteen Scenes in Mother's Life, by a Japanese Jesuit artist in 15c. Below Maria are depicted Loyola, Xavier, Mateus and Lucia, the founders of The Jesus Society. (Kyoto University Library)