

St. Pedro Calungsod

The Forgotten Saint

Cynthia L Reyes

Filipinos call him – “The Forgotten Saint”.

I think it should be more of – “The Accidental Saint”.

Pedro Calungsod (1654-1672) was born in Ginatilan, a poverty strapped town 135 kilometers south of Cebu. How he got to Manila to join the Jesuit missionaries headed by Padre Diego Luis de San Vitores is not known. It could be that the Bishop of Cebu sent him to join Padre Diego’s mission to the Ladroneas, as it is part of the Diocese of Cebu. Or the Jesuits in the Visayas may have sent him and other young boys to Padre Diego. At that time the Jesuit missionaries used to train and employ young boys as catechists and versatile assistants in their missions. Pedro was just 13 years old when Padre Diego’s group arrived in Guam on June 15, 1668.

Life in the Ladroneas was hard, but the missionaries persevered and the mission was blessed with many conversions. The Jesuit trained Pedro taught catechism for four years. The missionaries were sustained in their mission by their daily celebration of the Eucharist, frequent confession and great devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.



Persecution against the missionaries started when a Chinese quack named Choco got envious of their success. He started spreading rumors that the waters used for baptism was poisonous which was killing the children. There actually was an epidemic going on at that time. And people believed him and started persecuting the missionaries.

The worst happened on April 2, 1672. Padre Diego and Pedro were informed of the birth of a new baby girl. So they went to the village to baptize the child. The child’s father, Matapang was Catholic and a friend of the missionaries, but he has been influenced by Choco. So he refused to get his daughter baptized. So Padre Diego and Pedro gathered the children with some adults by the shore and chanted the truths of the Catholic faith. They tried to invite Matapang to join them but he refused. Instead he left and looked for someone who would help him kill the missionaries. So, he went to a non-Christian village Chief Hirao to help him implement his evil motive.

During this absence, Padre Diego baptized Matapang's daughter with the permission of the Christian mother. When Matapang learned about this, he got more furious and started hurling spears at Pedro. Being young and agile Pedro was able to skirt the spears hurled by Matapang and Hirao. He could have escaped but did not want to leave Padre Diego alone. Finally he got hit by a spear and fell to the ground. Hirao finished him off with a blow of a cutlass on the head. Padre Diego could not do anything but give Pedro the final sacrament. After that Padre Diego was also killed. They dragged their bodies to the edge of the shore, tied them together and threw them into the deep. Their bodies were never found again.

The surviving Jesuit missionaries managed to start the process for beatification of their superior Padre Diego. Documents were gathered from witnesses and from the Jesuit reports that were sent regularly to the Jesuit headquarter. All these reports mentioned Padre Diego's assistant Pedro Calungsod. But nothing was being done about Pedro who suffered and died along with Padre Diego. Even Padre Diego's process for canonization was forgotten and lost during the 18th century when the Jesuits were suppressed.


Padre Diego's beatification cause was only discovered when the Diocese of Agana, Guam was preparing for its 20th anniversary as a diocese in 1673. (Another accident!) So Padre Diego was

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finally beatified on October 6, 1985. And this was when Archbishop Vidal learned about Pedro Calungsod, started the investigation and subsequently initiated his beatification process in 1996.

Having proven that Pedro Calungsod was martyred for the love of God he was beatified by Pope John Paul II on March 5, 2000 in Rome. On Dec 19, 2011 the Vatican verified a miracle attributed to him in 2002, of a woman revived through his intercession.

Pedro Calungsod's feast day is April 2, the date of his death. He is a saint especially for the young people and for catechists. Also, he can be looked up to by migrants and evangelists.

He was canonized a saint by Pope Benedict XVI on October 21, 2012 in Rome. Pedro Calungsod will be officially called San Pedro de Cebu – St Peter of Cebu. 



"May the example and courageous witness of Pedro Calungsod inspire the dear people of the Philippines to announce the kingdom bravely and to win souls for God!"
by Pope Benedict XVI