



**SAINT JAMES'**  
EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
Fremont, California

## SERMON

2. September, 2009. Pentecost 13  
Title: The Martyrs of New Guinea  
Text: St. Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

J.J.



Orthodox Icon: The Holy Martyrs

In our Episcopal Church Calendar, today, September 2, we observe the day of “The Martyrs of New Guinea. We could talk a lot about these Martyrs: Whether or not it was a good idea for them to stay behind when others of their colleagues fled to Australia . . . was it a good idea for their Bishop, The Rt. Rev. Philip Strong to encourage them “to carry on the ministry God expects of us remaining with the people”. . . we’re not even sure of the number of the martyrs: Do you count only the Anglicans? Do you include the indigenous people? Or do you count all 272 Christians who gave their lives for the sake of the Gospel (189 Roman Catholics, 20 Lutherans, 26 Methodists, 2 Seventh Day Adventists, 23 members of the Salvation Army, and the 12 Anglicans) during WWII? We could get caught up with that kind of thinking, and miss the point. Today’s Gospel reading, however, shows us the way to go, especially those concluding words: “Do not worry about how you are to defend yourselves or what you are to say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that very hour what you ought to say” (and I would probably add: “and what you ought to do.”).

Now, the word “Martyr” is a very interesting word. It comes from the Greek *Martus*, and originally meant: “Witness” (or the Greek verb, *Marturia* = witnessing). And that is what those closing words of the Gospel point out to us: “The Holy Spirit will teach you at that very hour what you ought to say.” Later, the term “*Martus*” came to mean “those who died for their faith” and with good reason: for many of those who “witnessed” the Gospel, often paid for it with their lives.


And those words from Bishop Strong and the decision of those martyrs to stay behind, has often been criticised, but after the war was over, the indigenous people of New Guinea, the Paupua of New Guinea, remained with the Christian tradition and welcomed back those missionaries who had escaped martyrdom. Indeed, “the Holy Spirit will teach you at that very hour what you ought to say” (and do).

Now what does all this have to say to us this morning. Well, I think we just prayed the answer in our Prayer of the Day: “. . . we pray that we who honor the memory (of the Martyrs of New Guinea), may imitate their loyalty and faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Amen.

S.D.G.

Rev. Dr. David E. Abernethy-Deppe  
Castro Valley, California



 The 20th Century Martyrs. [Westminster Abbey](#). The statue of Lucian Tapiedi, by [Tim Crawley](#), stands second from right.

# THE MARTYRS OF NEW GUINEA

(2 SEP 1942)

New Guinea (also called Irian), one of the world's largest islands, has a difficult terrain that discourages travel between districts. Consequently, it is home to many isolated tribes, with many different cultures and at least 500 languages. Christian missionaries began work there in the 1860's, but proceeded slowly.

When World War II threatened Papua and New Guinea, it was obvious that missionaries of European origin were in danger. There was talk of leaving. Bishop Philip Strong wrote to his clergy: "We must endeavour to carry on our work. God expects this of us. The church at home, which sent us out, will surely expect it of us. The universal church expects it of us. The people whom we serve expect it of us. We could never hold up our faces again if, for our own safety, we all forsook Him and fled, when the shadows of the Passion began to gather around Him in His spiritual and mystical body, the Church in Papua."

They stayed. Almost immediately there were arrests. Eight clergymen and two laymen were executed "as an example" on September 2, 1942. In the next few years, many Papuan Christians of all Churches risked their own lives to care for the wounded.

## Readings:

Psalm 126

Revelation 7:13-17

Luke 12:4-12

*Preface of Holy Week*

## PRAYER (contemporary language)

Almighty God, we remember before you this day the blessed martyrs of New Guinea, who, following the example of their Savior, laid down their lives for their friends; and we pray that we, who honor their memory, may imitate their loyalty and faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

*Lessons reflect changes made at GC 2009.*

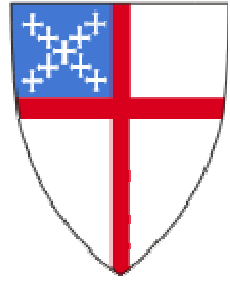
*Last updated: 19 July 2009*

*by James Kiefer*

The Lessons Appointed for Use  
on the Feast of  
**The Martyrs of New Guinea**

1942

September 2



### The First Lesson

#### Revelation 7:13-17

Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?" I said to him, "Sir, you are the one that knows." Then he said to me, "These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason they are before the throne of God, and worship him day and night within his temple, and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them. They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

### The Psalm

#### Psalm 126 Page 782, BCP *In convertendo*

- 1 **W**hen the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, \*  
then were we like those who dream.
- 2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter, \*  
and our tongue with shouts of joy.
- 3 Then they said among the nations, \*  
"The LORD has done great things for them."
- 4 The LORD has done great things for us, \*  
and we are glad indeed.
- 5 Restore our fortunes, O LORD, \*  
like the watercourses of the Negev.
- 6 Those who sowed with tears \*  
will reap with songs of joy.
- 7 Those who go out weeping, carrying the seed, \*  
will come again with joy, shouldering their sheaves.

### The Gospel

#### Luke 12:4-12

Jesus said, "I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that can do nothing more. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him! Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God's sight. But even the hairs of your head are all counted. Do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

"And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before others, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God; but whoever denies me before others will be denied before the angels of God. And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. When they bring you before the synagogues, the rulers, and the authorities, do not worry

about how you are to defend yourselves or what you are to say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that very hour what you ought to say."