

## **Letter to the Pope from Japanese Priests**

Reports reached Pope Paul V (1550–1621) that the Japanese faithful were suffering after the shogunate's promulgation of a nationwide ban on Christianity in 1614, and he sent his flock an official letter of support in 1619. The priests who were scattered around Japan in hiding banded together to respond with letters written in both Japanese and Latin.

This particular letter is believed to have been drafted under the supervision of Nakaura Julian, a Japanese Jesuit priest who, as a member of the Tensho Embassy, had actually met two popes in person while staying in Rome from 1585 to 1590. The 12 signatories from the Shimabara area wrote using a mixture of Japanese, the Roman alphabet and *kao* written seal marks. The original of the letter is in the Vatican library.