

## **Nakaura Julian Memorial Park**

Nakaura Julian (1567–1633) was a member of the Tensho Embassy, a group of four youths sent to Rome as ambassadors of Japanese Christianity in 1582. Nakaura, who is believed to have been born near this park, attended the Jesuit seminary in Arima. His life as a Christian took a glorious turn when, at the young age of 15, he was chosen, along with Chijiwa Miguel, Hara Martinho, and Ito Mancio, to be part of the Tensho Embassy. The embassy was conceived by Jesuit Visitor Alessandro Valignano and backed by three Christian daimyo, including Omura Sumitada, the first daimyo in the nation to convert to Christianity. Nakaura and the other youths returned to Japan in 1590, having met Pope Gregory XIII, Pope Sixtus V, and King Philip II of Spain.

Toyotomi Hideyoshi passed the edict expelling the Christian fathers in 1587, so the Japan to which Nakaura returned was less welcoming to Christianity than the one he had left eight years earlier. After studying in Macao from 1601 to 1604, Nakaura was ordained as a priest in 1608. When the shogun prohibited Christianity throughout Japan in 1614, many priests—both foreign and Japanese—fled overseas. Nakaura opted to remain, and became an underground priest, ministering to the faithful in secret. In late 1632, when he was well into his sixties, he was captured by the Tokugawa shogunate. After many months in prison, Nakaura was put to the torture of the pit on October 18, 1633, and died on the fourth day, October 21. He was beatified by Pope Benedict XVI in 2008 as part of a group of 188 Japanese martyrs.

Along with the small park, there is a modest museum that houses some artifacts from Europe related to the Tensho Embassy.