

## Reflection Tuesday Easter week 5 – The English Martyrs 2021

Three Carthusian monks died on 4<sup>th</sup> May 1535, at Tyburn in London, the first of many martyrs of the English Reformation. Of these martyrs, forty-two have been canonized, and a further 242 declared Blessed; but the true number of those who died on the scaffold, perished in prison, or were tortured or persecuted for their faith cannot now be reckoned. The persecution lasted 150 years and left a permanent mark on English culture. The martyrs celebrated today came from every walk of life. There were rich and poor; married and single; men and women. They are remembered for the example they gave of constancy in their faith and courage in the face of persecution. From 2001, also celebrated on this day are the forty martyrs of England and Wales who were canonized on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1970 and formerly celebrated on that day. They include Saints Cuthbert Mayne, John Houghton, Edmund Campion, and Richard Gwynn, as well as Saints John Roberts and Ambrose Barlow from the Benedictine monastery of St Gregory at Douay (now at Downside Abbey in Somerset).

### **The Martyrs** – Emily Dickinson

Through the straight pass of suffering  
the martyrs even trod,  
their feet upon temptation,  
their faces upon God.

A stately, shriven company;  
convulsion playing round,  
harmless as streaks of meteor  
upon a planet's bound.

Their faith the everlasting troth;  
their expectation fair;  
the needle to the north degree  
wades so, through polar air.

### **Pope Francis** in an address to an ecumenical gathering:

There is a strong bond that unites, which goes beyond Christian divisions: the testimony of Christians from different Churches and traditions, victims of persecution and violence simply because of the faith they profess. The blood of these martyrs will nourish a new era of ecumenical commitment, a fervent desire to fulfil the last will and testament of the Lord: that all may be one (cf. *Jn* 17:21). The witness by these our brothers and sisters demands that we live in harmony with the Gospel and that we strive with determination to fulfil the Lord's will for his Church. Today the world urgently needs the common, joyful witness of Christians, from the defence of life and human dignity to the promotion of justice and peace.

**Oscar Romero:** Martyrdom is a grace I do not think I deserve. But, if God accepts the sacrifice of my life, may my blood be a seed of freedom and sign that hope will soon be a reality.

