

Reflection Wednesday 3rd Week Easter Forty Martyrs 2022

On 4th May 1535, at Tyburn in London, three Carthusian monks died, the first of many martyrs of the English Reformation. Of these martyrs, forty-two have been canonized, and a further 242 have been declared Blessed; but the true number who died on the scaffold, perished in prison, were tortured or persecuted for their faith is not known. The persecution lasted a hundred and fifty years and left a permanent mark on English culture: to this day Catholics suffer certain minor disabilities under English law.

The martyrs celebrated today came from every walk of life: 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, the forty martyrs of England and Wales canonized on 25th October 1970 are also celebrated on this day. Many gave their lives for the supremacy of the Pope, the unity of the Church, and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. 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 blood of martyrs has given birth to
and is constantly giving birth to a culture
where every religion is accepted;
every creed respected;
every creature is valued;
and every human being is understood.
The indefatigable efforts of our martyrs
have helped fly the spirit of this belief
in the value of all beings and of creation.***