



## 40 MARTYRS OF ENGLAND AND WALES CANONIZATION 25 October, 1970

### HOMILY EXCERPTS

*\*Each of these excerpts and prayers were taken from Pope Paul VI's homily given at the Mass of Canonization on 25 October, 1970. For the full homily, [click here](#).*

1. Our time needs saints, and especially the example of those who have given the supreme witness of their love for Christ and his Church: "No one has a greater love than he who gives his life for his friends." (John 15:13)
2. The Church of Christ was born of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross and she continues to grow and develop by virtue of the heroic love of her most authentic children. "The blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians." (Tertullian)
3. "Therefore martyrdom, with which the disciple is made similar to the Master who freely accepts death for the health of the world, and conforms to him in the shedding of blood, is esteemed by the Church as an outstanding gift and supreme proof of charity." (Lumen Gentium, 42)
4. Faced with the choice of remaining steadfast in their faith and therefore of dying for it, or of having saved their lives by denying the first, they, without a moment's hesitation, and with a truly supernatural strength, sided with God and joyfully they faced martyrdom.
5. So great was their spirit, so noble were their sentiments, so Christian was the inspiration of their existence, that many of them died praying for their beloved homeland, for the King or Queen, and even for those who had been directly responsible for their capture, their torments, and the ignominious circumstances of their atrocious death.
6. The last words and the last prayer of Saint John Plessington were precisely these: "God bless the King and his family and grant His Majesty a prosperous reign in this life and a crown of glory in the next. God grant peace to his subjects allowing them to live and die in true faith, hope and charity."

### PRAYERS OF PETITION

1. May our gratitude rise to God for having wished, in his provident goodness, to raise up these Holy Martyrs, the industriousness and sacrifice of which have contributed to the preservation of the Catholic faith in England and Wales.
2. May the Lord continue to raise up in the Church lay people, religious and priests who are worthy emulators of these heralds of the faith.



3. May God, in his love, also today flourish and develop centers of study, formation and prayer, suitable, in today's conditions, to prepare holy priests and missionaries.
4. May the Lord grant us the grace that in these times of religious indifferentism and increasingly rampant theoretical and practical materialism, the example and intercession of the Holy Forty Martyrs comfort us in faith, strengthen our authentic love for God, for His Church, and for all men.
5. May the blood of these Martyrs be able to heal the great wound inflicted upon God's Church by reason of the separation of the Anglican Church from the Catholic Church. These Martyrs say to us: Is it not one, the Church founded by Christ? Is this not their witness? Their devotion to their nation gives us the assurance that on the day when, God-willing, the unity of the faith and of Christian life is restored, no offense will be inflicted on the honor and sovereignty of a great country such as England.

We are strengthened in this hope by the heavenly friendship of the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales who are canonized today. Amen.

#### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Which of the homily excerpts or prayer petitions most resonated with you? Why?
2. What do you think Tertullian meant when he said, "The blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians"?
3. There are numerous accounts of how the martyrs joyfully and thankfully accepted their fate. When Cuthbert Mayne was told that he had been sentenced to death, he said to the messenger, "I wish I had something valuable to give you, for the good news you bring me." Why do you think they were so joyful?
4. How would Catholicism in England be different if these men and women had not resisted conformity to the will of the government?
5. Though it is unlikely that any of us will ever become martyrs, what are some sacrifices we can make for our faith, and do so with more joy?
6. In what practical ways can we, too, contribute to the preservation of the Catholic faith in England and Wales?