

From the Homily of Pope Paul VI
At the Canonization of the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales
25th October 1970

To all those who are filled with admiration in reading the records of these martyrs, it is perfectly clear that they are worthy to stand alongside the greatest martyrs of the past; and this is not merely because of their fearless faith and marvellous constancy, but by reason of their humility, simplicity and serenity, and above all the spiritual joy and that wonderously radiant love with which they accepted their condemnation and death.

The high tragedy in the lives of these martyrs was that their honest and genuine loyalty came into conflict with their fidelity to God and the dictates of their conscience illumined by the Catholic faith.

Faced with the choice of remaining steadfast in their faith and of dying for it, or of saving their lives by denying that faith, without a moment's hesitation and with a truly supernatural strength they stood for God and joyfully confronted martyrdom.

At the same time such was the greatness of their spirit that many of them died with prayers on their lips for the country they loved so much, for the King or Queen, and not least for those directly responsible for their capture, their sufferings, and the degradation and ignominy of their cruel deaths.

May our thanksgiving go up to God who, in his providential goodness, saw fit to raise up these martyrs.