

**June 27th**

## **Diocesan Memorial of Saint John Southworth priest, martyr**

A native of Lancashire, John Southworth trained for priestly ministry at Douai College. He was ordained priest in April 1618, and in December of that year was sent to England to serve on the English mission. He ministered first in London and then in his native county of Lancashire. It was there that he was first arrested and imprisoned. In 1630 he was transferred from Lancaster Castle to the Clink prison in London. He remained a 'prisoner' there for the next twenty years, although for much of that time he was effectively on parole working amongst the Catholic poor, in the parishes of St Giles, Holborn and St Margaret's, Westminster. He was especially renowned for his ministry to the sick and the dying, courageously ministering even during times of plague.

He was arrested again in 1654 and brought to trial accused of being a priest. The judge advised him that, as there was no 'proof' of his priesthood, a plea of 'not guilty' would ensure his release. This plea John Southworth refused to enter, on the grounds that those Catholics who knew him to be a priest would perhaps feel he was denying his priesthood. He was found guilty and condemned to death. He was hung, drawn and quartered at Tyburn on 28th June, 1654.

His body was bought for 40 guineas by the Spanish ambassador, embalmed, sewn back together and smuggled from England back to Douai where it quickly became the focus of a cult. At the time of the French Revolution his body was secretly buried, and was finally recovered in 1927. The body was returned to England in 1929, being brought to Westminster Cathedral on 30th April 1930, and placed in a shrine in the St George's Chapel. John Southworth was canonised as one of the 40 martyrs of England and Wales on 25th October 1970.

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### **Entrance Antiphon**

Here is a true martyr who shed his blood for Christ; his judges could not shake him by their menaces, and so he won through to the kingdom of heaven.

### **Opening Prayer**

Almighty God,  
you made your Church grow  
through the missionary zeal and apostolic work  
of Saint John Southworth.

By the help of his prayers  
give your Church continued growth  
in holiness and faith.

*Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God for ever and ever.*

### **Prayer over the Gifts**

Lord, be pleased with our prayers  
and free us from all guilt.

In your love, wash away our sins  
that we may celebrate the mysteries which set us free.

*Grant this in the name of Jesus the Lord.*

### **Communion Antiphon**

I am the vine and you are the branches, says the Lord; he who lives  
in me, and I in him, will bear much fruit.

### **Prayer after Communion**

Lord, may we who eat at your holy table

be inspired by the example of Saint John Southworth.

May we keep before us the loving sacrifice of your Son,  
and come to the unending peace of your kingdom.

*We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord.*

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