



Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest

St. Ralph Sherwin

Ralph Sherwin (1550-1581) was the protomartyr of the English College in Rome. The date of his martyrdom at Tyburn, 1st December 1581, is celebrated by the College and all its alumni as Martyrs' Day. He is one of the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales.

Born in Rodesby, Derbyshire, he was a brilliant scholar and fellow of Exeter College, Oxford. While at Oxford he abandoned the new Protestant religion and in 1575 he crossed the Channel to attend the seminary at Douai. He was ordained in March 1577 and left that August to become one of the first students to join the English College at Rome, the seminary newly founded by Cardinal William Allen. The project had the backing of Pope Gregory XIII, who issued the bull of foundation on 1st May 1579.

The new seminary settled into the old English Hospice of the Most Holy Trinity and St. Thomas [St Thomas Becket of Canterbury], which had been set up in 1362 to serve English pilgrims. The venerable English College still functions as a seminary.

The English Mission was the Catholic response to the determination of the Elizabethan government to deprive the people this country, still largely Catholic, of Catholic priests. As no Catholic seminaries were allowed in England, they were started up abroad. The government saw these seminaries as an attempt to thwart their plans. Students of the new college at Rome all signed their commitment to go on the English Mission, knowing that they would be hunted and likely to face torture and death if captured.

Ralph Sherwin started for England on 8th April 1580. He was captured on the 9th November while preaching at Mr. Roscarrock's house in London and imprisoned at the Marshalsea, where he was kept in heavy shackles. On the 4th

December he was transferred to the Tower where he was subjected to torture on the rack and then laid out in the snow. He was tortured again the next day and confined alone without food for five days. Note that all this suffering was inflicted before any trial took place, a clear indication of what justice he could expect.

Following his torture, just as Christians in pagan Rome were offered a way out if they would but offer sacrifice to the pagan gods, a similar deal was offered to Sherwin. As Cardinal Allen relates: "On Midsomer-day in the yere 1581, he was called before the Lieutenant (as likewise all his fellow prisoners were) who demaunded of him by Commission from the Counsel, whether he would go to their heretical service..." which he refused. (Cardinal William Allen, A Briefe Historie of the Glorious Martyrdom of Twelve Reverend Priests)

During Sherwin's time in the Tower, his brother John was able to see him. He gave an account of what treatment the martyr said he had suffered there and added that "It was offered him by the Bishops of Canterbury and London, that if he would but go to [St.] Paul's Church [i.e., to apostatise], he should have the second bishopric of England," - an offer he also refused. (Dom Bede Camm, Lives of the English Martyrs Beatified by Pope Leo XIII)

After a year in prison, Sherwin was brought to trial along with Edmund Campion and others. They never stood a chance of justice against the incredible trumped up charges of high treason. On 1st December 1581 Sherwin was taken from the Tower to Tyburn, the place of execution, with Fathers Edmund Campion and Alexander Briant. He and Father Briant were tied to the same hurdle and Father Campion to another. They were thus dragged through the cold, mired streets of London to be hanged, drawn and quartered, the barbaric death imposed on those convicted of high treason.



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Father Campion was the first to die as his companions were forced to look on the butchery. Then it was Father Sherwin's turn. The executioner, his arms covered in Campion's blood, tried to intimidate him, saying, "Come, Sherwin, take thou also thy wages." Father Sherwin kissed the executioner's arm in veneration of the newly martyred Campion. He forgave all those who were responsible for his death and his last words on the scaffold were: " *Jesu, Jesu, Jesu, esto mihi Jesus!*" He was then followed by Father Briant, aged only 28.

O God, who didst grant to Blessed Ralph before all other of the Roman students to run the way of torments for the salvation of souls; mercifully grant to us, that enkindled by the same zeal, we may not shrink from spending our lives for others. - Prayer to Saint Ralph Sherwin



Execution of Ralph Sherwin at Tyburn. Sherwin kisses the arm of His executioner, which is covered in Campion's blood.



Martyrdom of Ralph Sherwin, Edmund Campion and Alexander Briant, one of 34 wall paintings at the Venerable English College in Rome. Artist: Niccolo Circignani, 1580's.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Note that there will be Holy Hour with Benediction on Tuesday and Friday at 6pm, followed by Mass, at St Winefride's.

Annual Latin Mass Society Pilgrimage to Wrexham in Honour of Saint Richard Gwyn, Martyr and Co-patron of the LMS. 1130am at St Mary's Cathedral, Regent Street, Wrexham LL1 1RB - Sung Mass and veneration of relic. Canon Post to give first blessings of a newly ordained priest.

*St. Winefride's Presbytery, Mynd Close,
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Weekly Schedule *

		Ordo	Cathedral	St Winefride's	Mass Intention
Sun	13 Oct	XVIII Sunday after Pentecost		11.15 Mass	Private Intention
October 13 th at 3.15pm Sunday Mass at St. Wulstan's Little Malvern.					Private Intention
Mon	14 Oct	St. Callistus I Pope and Martyr, III class.	7.30am Mass		Louis Rayment
Tue	15 Oct	St. Teresa Virgin, III class.	7.30am Mass	6pm Holy Hour with Benediction and Confessions* 7pm Mass	Private Intention Novena: Maria Jordan
Wed	16 Oct	St. Hedwig Widow, III class.	7.30am Mass		Novena: Maria Jordan
Thu	17 Oct	St. Margaret Mary Alacoque Virgin, III class.	7.30am Mass 11am Holy Hour		Private Intention
Fri	18 Oct	St. Luke Evangelist, II class.	7.30am Mass	6pm Holy Hour with Benediction and Confessions* 7pm Mass	Private Intention Novena: Maria Jordan
Sat	19 Oct	St. Peter of Alcantara Confessor, I class.		10.45am Confessions 11.15 Mass	Novena: Maria Jordan
Sun	20 Oct	XIX Sunday after Pentecost		11.15 Mass	Novena: Maria Jordan

* Changes to usual schedule: No changes this week.