

still persecuted for their beliefs. (Still obviously pertinent in 2024).

In 1987 Pope [John Paul II](#) beatified an additional 85 martyrs who died between 1584 and 1689 in [England](#), Scotland, and [Wales](#). Many were priests or members of religious orders, but 59—including seven of those canonized—were lay Catholics.

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- Bernard Kellett

**Entrance Antiphon: O sing a new song to the Lord; sing to the Lord, all the earth. In his presence are majesty and splendour, strength and honour in his holy place.**

**First Reading: Nehemiah 8: 2-6, 8-10**

**Responsorial Psalm: 18: R/ Your words are spirit, Lord, and they are life**

**Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12: 12-30**

**Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! The Lord has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives. Alleluia!**

**Gospel: Luke 1: 1-4, 4: 14-21**

**Memorial Acclamation: When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.**

**Communion Antiphon: Look toward the Lord and be radiant; let your faces not be abashed.**

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*'The martyrs are not to be seen as "heroes" who acted individually, like flowers blooming in a desert, but as the ripe and excellent fruit of the vineyard of the Lord, which is the Church'. Pope Francis*



## **Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle C, 2025 Weekly Reflection: Cheshire/Lancashire Martyrs (1)**

Forty Martyrs of England and Wales were a group of [Roman Catholic martyrs](#) executed by English authorities during the [Reformation](#), most during the reign of [Elizabeth I](#). An act of Parliament in 1571 made it high [treason](#) to question the queen's title as head of

the [Church of England](#)—thus making the practice of Roman Catholicism an essentially treasonable act—and authorized the confiscation of the property of Roman Catholics, many of whom fled to the European continent. In the ensuing persecution, 183 English Catholics were put to death between 1577 and 1603; altogether, some 600 Catholics died in the persecutions of the 16th and 17th centuries. Some were executed for offenses as trivial as obtaining a papal license to marry. Forty of these victims were [canonized](#) by Pope [Paul VI](#) on 25 October 1970 as representatives of all the [martyrs](#). A Thanksgiving Mass was held in the ABC Cinema in Chester on 8 November celebrated by 40 Cheshire priests. The Holy Father sent a special papal blessing to the people of Chester on the occasion. Over 2,000 people participated in the Mass. This is the first time that the cinema has been used for such an occasion.

The two Cheshire martyrs, Margaret Ward of Congleton, and Father John Plessington were specially mentioned in this tribute to the 40 martyrs. Two unusual features of the day's celebrations were the presence of a crucifix attributed to Edward Arrowsmith, executed at Lancaster gaol and one of the three copies in existence of John Plessington's speech from the scaffold, which is kept at St Werburgh's Roman Catholic Church, Chester. An address was made by Canon George Higgins, who emphasised the need for faith in this age in the same degree as there was in the 17th century. He told the large congregation that the fight for freedom is something we should all admire because the struggle still exists in the world today, and people are