

Homily for the Blessed Edward Bamber Mass at St. Winefride's, Bispham

18th July 2017

(Ap. 7:9-17; James 1:2-4,12; Mt. 10:28-33)



Edward Bamber (1600-46) was one of fifteen Catholics who were imprisoned for the faith in Lancaster Castle and who were to die as martyrs. Edward Bamber the priest was put to death in 1646 at the age of forty-six, one of three to die at the same time. Edward Bamber's execution was particularly cruel, as he was hanged, drawn and quartered. We can only imagine the fear that must have gripped Edward Bamber and his companions, but also the remarkable courage that enabled them to '*stand firm*' in the words of St. James in our Second Reading.

The martyrs had a vision which transcended this world. They saw beyond betrayal, imprisonment and ultimately execution. They looked to another life guaranteed by Christ, the after-life, where pain and suffering would be no more, for they would share in the victory of the Lamb, and where *the Lord God himself would wipe away the tears from their eyes*, as John records in the book of Revelation. Blessed Edward and his companions lived lives rooted in Christian hope which does not deceive.

What surely inspired our martyrs was the example of Christ himself, the King of Martyrs, who died on Calvary and laid down his life to redeem the world. They knew that holy Mass contained in a powerful way the memory of the Lord's suffering and death, for in it they could share in his body broken for us, and in his blood poured out for us. That sacramental food of the Lord's body and blood gave them the courage to face all that came their way. They ate the food of the King of Martyrs and so could imitate him in his death, convinced that their true life was in heaven where he now reigned at the Father's right hand side in glory. The martyrs took Christ at his word and '*acknowledged him before men, so that he would acknowledge them before his heavenly Father.*'

Pope St. John Paul II beatified Edward Bamber and eighty-five of his martyr companions in 1987, and this evening in the area where Blessed Edward was born and ministered as a priest we give thanks to God for his life and especially his outstanding witness to the faith. We do so by offering Mass to which he was devoted and which nourished him. We ask his intercession for ourselves, our families, our parishes, and our Diocese that we too will remain faithful, and as the apostle James puts it '*win the crown of life.*' Amen!

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Bishop of Lancaster