

FEBRUARY 4
JESUIT MARTYRS OF THE MISSIONS
MEMORIAL

Today we commemorate several Jesuit martyrs who were put to death in missionary lands for the profession of the faith. They are: St. John de Britto (d. February 4, 1693, in the Madura Mission; canonized 1947 by Pius XII); Bl. Rudolph Acquaviva and four companions (d. July 25, 1583, in India; beatified 1893 by Leo XIII); Bl. Francis Pacheco (d. June 20, 1626), Charles Spinola (d. September 10, 1622), and thirty-one companions (d. 1617 - 1632 in Japan; beatified 1867 by Pius IX); Bl. James Berthieu (d. June 8, 1896, in Madagascar; beatified 1965 by Paul VI); Bl. Leo Mangin (d. July 20, 1900) and three companions (d. July 19-20, 1900, in the Chinese Mission; beatified 1955 by Pius XII).

From the Common of Several Martyrs, or of Pastors

THE OFFICE OF READINGS

Second Reading

(From the Homilies of Pope Paul VI. Homily delivered at the solemn canonization of the forty martyrs of England and Wales, October 25, 1970 [A.A.S. 62 {1970}, pp. 748-749]. English translation *Letters and Notices*, 76 [1971], p. 8.)

There is no loftier or nobler love than that which led the martyrs to offer the sacrifice of their lives to God.

A great deal has been said and written about that mysterious being, man; about the resources of his intellect, capable of penetrating the secrets of the universe and of subjugating material things, utilizing them for his own purposes; about the grandeur of the human spirit manifested in the admirable works of science and art; about his nobil-

ity and his weakness; his triumphs and his wretchedness. But that which characterizes man, that which is the most intimate element in his being and his personality, is the capacity to love, to love to the end, to give himself with that love that is stronger than death and extends into eternity.

The martyrdom of Christians is the most sublime expression and sign of this love, not only because the martyr remains faithful to his love to the extent of shedding his blood, but also because this sacrifice is performed out of the loftiest and noblest love that can exist, namely love for him who created and redeemed us, who loves us as only he can love, and expects from us a response of total and unconditioned donation, that is, a love worthy of our God.

Responsory

R. Christ Jesus is at the right hand of God and indeed intercedes for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

V. In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loves us. Who shall....

Concluding Prayer

Lord God, you sent out your martyrs to preach the Gospel by word and example. Grant a rich harvest of grace to those who are fearless in proclaiming the word of our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.