



St. Edmund Arrowsmith

Born: 1585 at Haydock, Lancashire, England as Brian Arrowsmith, his confirmation name was Edmund, and he preferred to use it

Died: hanged, drawn, and quartered on 28 August 1628 at Lancaster, England, his hand is preserved as a relic at Saint Oswald's Church, Ashton-in-Makerfield, England

Canonized: 25 October 1970 by Pope Paul VI as one of the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales

Son of the farmer Robert Arrowsmith and Margery Gerard Arrowsmith. His rebel parents refused to attend Protestant services, harbored priests in their home, and at one point were arrested for their actions, and dragged away in the night, leaving the child Edmund alone. Entered Douai College in 1605; he was forced to quit due to ill health. Ordained in France in 1611. Worked among beleaguered English Catholics in Lancashire for 15 years. Even in those oppressive times he was known for his pleasant disposition, sincerity, and energy.

Queen Elizabeth's governors and hierarchy lived on confiscated Catholic property, so public distrust of priests as agents of Catholic Spain working for a Spanish invasion, worked to their advantage, keeping the population in a constant state of paranoia, dependant on an intrusive government. To keep all this in place, Elizabeth had her own Inquisition. Edmund was arrested in 1622 for his faith, and spent his prison time arguing theology with the local Protestant bishop.

Edmund was unexpectedly freed by a pardon issued by King James I. After making the Spiritual Exercises, Edmund entered the Jesuits in 1623, and returned to Lancashire for the remaining five years of his life. Betrayed by the son of the landlord of the Blue Anchor Inn in south Lancashire, he was arrested by priest hunters, and imprisoned for his vocation. He decided to let the court prove the charge rather than help them with a confession, replying, "Would that I were worthy of being a priest!" When the jury found him guilty of being a Jesuit priest, he exclaimed, "Thanks be to God!" Brought to execution, he prayed for everyone in the kingdom, then said, "Be witnesses with me that I die a constant Roman Catholic and for Christ's sake; let my death be an encouragement to

your going forward in the Catholic religion." His confession on the day of his execution was heard by fellow-prisoner Saint John Southworth, and his final words were "Bone Jesu" (O good Jesus).