

Monday Week 16 of Ordinary Time (27 July 2020)

**Memorials of Blessed Robert Sutton (1545-1588) Blessed Titus Brandsma (1881 - 1942)
and Bl. Rudolph Acquaviva & Companions (- 1583)**

Jeremiah 13:1-3, Matthew 13:31-35

Reflection

"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church" said Tertullian, a second century father of the Church. In the early days of the Church, as in every age, men, women, and children who refused to deny Christ or to "moderate" their teaching on Salvation in Him alone, faced martyrdom. The word "martyr" actually means "witness."

Today, the Church celebrates three optional memorials to three very different martyrs. Our diocese celebrates Blessed Robert Sutton, from Burton-on-Trent carpenter, who was brought up and ordained in the "established Church" before converting to Catholicism in 1577 and was ordained as a Catholic in France. After ten years secretly ministering to Catholics, he was betrayed and arrested in Stafford, where he was hung, drawn, and quartered on 27th July 1588. In his speech before execution, he proclaimed that He lived and died in the Catholic faith and, holding aloft a handkerchief, He reminded those present that the candle given at Baptism was still alight at his death.

Titus Brandsma was a Dutch Carmelite priest whose faith was based on a deep relationship with Jesus as the centre of his life. As adviser to the Dutch Catholic press, argued and defend Church teaching against Nazi ideology, defending the freedom of Catholic education and the Catholic press to teach the truth of salvation in Christ alone. Eventually he was arrested by the Nazis and taken to Dachau. There he continued to witness to the love of Christ and to minister to and comfort his fellow prisoners. Finally, the Nazis had had enough, and he was killed by lethal injection on 26th July 1942.

Rodolfo Acquaviva was an Italian Jesuit, sent on a mission to India where he ministered mainly in around Goa. He and four companions and killed by locals in 1583.

Today's readings underline the need for a complete dedication to the word of God. Jeremiah, obeying God's instructions was able to witness by his deeds as well as his words to God's

plans for the people of God. He shows that God created us for Himself and that separated from Him we deteriorate and are good for nothing and in the Gospel, we hear again the parable of the mustard seed. The faith of the martyrs of all ages should inspire us to look beyond our day to day issues and focus on Christ. In our Baptism a seed of faith was sown, and nurtured by the Holy Spirit and in the sacraments, we too by the grace of that same Holy Spirit can witness to the love of Jesus Christ to a world which is falling apart without Him, just as Jeremiahs' loincloth did.

Carol Ann Harnett 27th July 2020