

Pope Paul VI Remarks at Canonization of Forty Martyrs

Pope Paul VI called for the eventual reunion of the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches in his address at the canonization of the forty Roman Catholics in England and Wales who were martyred in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The quotations from him are as follows:

“While we are particularly pleased to note the presence of the official representative of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Rev. Dr. Harry Smythe, we also extend our respectful and affectionate greeting to all members of the Anglican Church who have likewise come to take part in this ceremony. We indeed feel very close to them. We would like them to read in our heart the humility, gratitude and hope with which we welcome them. We wish also to greet the authorities and those personages who have come here to represent Great Britain, and together with them, all the other representatives of other countries and other religions. With all our heart we welcome them, as we celebrate the freedom and the fortitude of men who had, at the same time, spiritual faith and loyal respect for the sovereignty of civil society. . . .

“May the blood of these martyrs be able to heal the great wound inflicted upon God’s Church by reason of the separation of the Anglican Church from the Catholic Church. . . .

“Is it not one—these martyrs say to us—the Church founded by Christ? Is not this their witness? Their devotion to their nation gives us the assurance that on the day when—God willing—the unity of the faith and of Christian life is restored, no offence will be inflicted on the honor or the sovereignty of a great country such as England. There will be no seeking to lessen the legitimate prestige and the worthy patrimony of piety and usage proper to the Anglican Church when the Roman Catholic Church—this humble ‘Servant of the servants of God’—is able to embrace her

ever beloved sister in the one authentic Communion of the family of Christ: a communion of origin and of faith, a communion of priesthood and of rule, a communion of the saints in the freedom of love of the spirit of Jesus.

“Perhaps we shall have to go on, waiting and watching in prayer, in order to deserve that blessed day. But already we are strengthened in this hope by the heavenly friendship of the forty martyrs of England and Wales who are canonized today.”

Rome, Oct. 25, 1970