



St. John Rigby

John Rigby was born in about **1570** at a time of great turbulence in England.

Henry VIII had broken away from the Catholic Church and started his own **Church of England**.

When his daughter, **Mary**, became queen, she decided that everyone should go back to being **Catholic**. However, when Mary's sister, **Elizabeth I**, came to the throne, she wanted everyone to ditch the Catholic Church and attend the Church of England!

Lots of people during this time were persecuted because of their faith.

We don't know a lot about John Rigby but we do know he worked for a wealthy family in **Eccleston near Wigan**. One of the daughters of his employer was a strong Catholic and she had been summoned to appear at **the Old Bailey** in London to explain why she would not attend the Church of England. She was too ill to go so **she sent John** to tell the judge this was the case.

However, when he got there, the judge asked John about his beliefs **and John said he was Catholic**. Even though he was threatened with going to gaol, he refused to give up his faith. The judge sent him to Newgate and then White Lion prison.

He was given further **chances to be set free** by giving up being a Catholic but John's conscience would not let him do this. Neither would he give the judge the **names of any other Catholics**.

Eventually he was **executed on 21st June, 1600**. Before he was killed, he gave the executioner a piece of gold, saying **"Take this in token that I freely forgive thee and others that have been accessory to my death!"**

He had a rope placed around his neck as he stood on a cart. The cart was then driven off and he started choking as he hung there. He was then cut down, still alive. At this point, he was heard to say **"God forgive you. Jesus receive my soul."**

The executioner **cut his body open** so his heart, lungs and intestines could be seen. He was still alive and in great agony. Finally, **he was beheaded** and his limbs cut off.

4th May Feast of the English Martyrs

A martyr is someone who dies for their faith and John Rigby is one of the 40 English martyrs that the Catholic Church regards as saints! He wasn't a priest, just an unmarried man who had a strong faith in Catholic Christianity.

The house flag for Rigby is **WHITE**, reminding us of the purity of his faith and also the White Lion prison where he spent his last days.

PRAYER

Lord, we give thanks for the purity of John Rigby's faith and for the loyalty he showed his fellow Catholics. We marvel at his willingness to forgive his executioners.

We pray that we too might be strong and pure in faith in times of trouble and always be forgiving of heart!

We pray this in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.