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Khrushchev was one of the soviet leaders during the Cold War. During one of his formal addresses to the communist faithful he proceeded to denounce his predecessor, Stalin, for crimes committed against the Russian people. Half way through the address a loud voice came from the audience: 'Where were you, Mr Khrushchev, when all these atrocities were taking place?' There was a stony silence. Khrushchev then said, "would the man who said that please stand up" no one moved – you could have heard a pin drop. Khrushchev continued, "you now know, comrade, where I was when all these atrocities were taking place"

Unlike the man in the audience, as catholic Christians, we must not hide our identity when our faith is dismissed by certain elements of present day society. Like him or loath him at least Donald Trump did stand up for the unborn child unlike his challenger. Jesus said in today's gospel, "when your faith is challenged, that will be your opportunity to bear witness". How do we fare in this regard? Do we tend to dodge these issues?

The martyrs of England and Wales didn't sit on the fence. In our bid these days to be more ecumenically appealing there is a tendency to skim over the self-sacrifice of those who gave their lives for the Catholic faith in this country and see it as the product of a less enlightened, more barbaric age. I know we won't be hung drawn and quartered because of our catholic faith but there is an element in society which would prefer us to keep our beliefs to ourselves. Today we remember those who fell in war in defence of their country, something we must never forget but, as Catholics, neither should we forget those who gave their lives for the faith in this country.

Knowledge of the martyrs should be part of the school curriculum especially in secondary schools. Maybe it is. These brave men and women gave their lives for Christ. But we're not just talking about what happened centuries ago. There were more canonised martyrs in the 20th century than all the previous centuries put together. For instance a few years ago Saint John Paul 11 canonised over 400 people who died for the faith during the Spanish Civil War of the 1930's. Last Saturday the present Pope canonised 38 Albanian martyrs who died on account of their faith during communist times.

In this Diocese there is the shrine to the Padley martyrs. It is interesting to note, however, that one of them was betrayed by his own uncle. This re-echoes the words of Jesus: "you will be betrayed even by relations and friends". In return the uncle was given a sizeable portion of monastic land which his decedents hold to this day.

At the time of the Reformation people didn't just suddenly develop an appetite for the new religion – the promise of land was behind it. People were even prepared to betray members of their families to be on the 'land list'. Of course Jesus, himself, was betrayed for thirty pieces of silver.

Of all the saints in the Church's calendar, after Our Lady, the martyrs hold pride of place. May we resolve to emulate their courage and resilience in our day as they did in theirs?