



Saint John Houghton

Born 1487: Essex. Graduate of Cambridge;
Degrees in Canon and Civil Law

John Houghton was ordained in 1501 and served as a parish priest for four years. A Carthusian monk, he joined the London Charterhouse in 1515 and made his final vows in 1516. He was elected Prior of the Beauvale (Carthusian Charterhouse) at Eastwood in

Nottinghamshire in 1531, becoming Prior of the London Charterhouse later in the same year.

In 1534 he was the first person to oppose King Henry VIII's Act of Supremacy and was imprisoned with Humphrey Middlemore. When the Oath of Supremacy was modified to include the phrase 'in so far as the law of God permits', John felt he could be loyal to Church and Crown; he and several of his monks signed the oath, despite misgivings. Father John was released. A few days later, troops arrived at the Chapter house to force the remaining monks to sign the oath.

On 1 February 1535, Parliament required that the original, unmodified oath be signed by all. Following three days of prayer, Father John, with Robert Lawrence* and Augustine Webster*, contacted Thomas Cromwell to seek an exemption for themselves and their monks. The group was immediately arrested and were committed to the Tower of London. He did not defend himself in court, but refused to cooperate or sign the Oath. The jury could find no malice to the King, but when threatened by Cromwell with prosecution themselves, they found John and his co-defendants guilty of treason.

John Houghton was hanged, drawn and quartered on 4th May 1535 at Tyburn, London. His dying words, 'And what will thou do with my heart, O Christ?' were uttered as he was being disembowelled. He is traditionally represented as a Carthusian monk carrying a noose; or with a rope around his neck and holding his heart in his hand.