Saint Philip Evans

Born 1645: Monmouth

Philip Evans was educated at the college of Saint Omer in France. He could play the harp and enjoyed the early form of tennis. He entered the Society of Jesus on 7 September 1665 and was ordained at Liege, Belgium ten years later. He returned to southern Wales in 1675 to fulfil his mission. Although he worked openly as a priest no action was taken against him until the Titus Oates Plot lead to further persecution of Catholics.

In November 1678, John Arnold, Justice of the Peace at Llanvihangel Court offered a reward of £200 for his arrest. Despite the danger Father Evans would not abandon his people and refused to hide. He was arrested at Christopher Turberville's house, Sker, Glamorganshire on 4 December 1678 and imprisoned in Cardiff Castle, sharing a cell with Father John Lloyd. They were brought to trial in Cardiff on Monday, 5 May 1679. Neither was charged for association with the "plot" concocted by Oates. Several men were beaten for refusing to testify against either priest, but later a woman and her aged mother were coerced into admitting they had seen them say Mass. They were tried for being priests and entering the principality of Wales contrary to the provisions of the law. When found guilty, they were condemned to die by hanging, drawing and quartering at Gallows Field, Cardiff on 22nd July 1679.

Saint Philip Evans was the first to be executed and said ‘Adieu, Father Lloyd! Though only for a little time, for we shall soon meet again'. Saint John Lloyd spoke very briefly saying, ‘I never was a good speaker in my life', before witnessing his friend’s suffering and death.