Saint Edmund Campion • Saint stories

How much is your Catholic faith worth to you? If you were offered a million dollars in return for giving up your Catholic faith, would you?

I hope not and pray that you would be like St. Edmund Campion!

It was the year 1580. Campion was a Jesuit brother and a Catholic priest living in France. Even though he was from England, Father Campion chose NOT to live in England.

“You are a traitor to England if you are a Catholic priest!” declared the queen of England. “Death to all traitors!” (Thus, Father Campion did not choose to live in England.)

“But what about those many Catholics who still lived in England?” worried the Catholic Church leaders. “We don’t have any Catholic priests in England. We need some priests to go back there to bring the faithful the sacraments. The Catholic faith must continue in England even if it is illegal!”

Father Campion and another priest were the first Jesuit priests chosen to go back to England. “We need you to help bring the sacraments to the hidden Catholics,” they were told. Both priests accepted the assignment.

Can you imagine what it must have been like? As a priest you must pretend you are just a regular man. Mass must be celebrated in secret. The holy items used during Mass need to be kept hidden. Life is constantly dangerous. If caught, you are tortured and then killed!

Though Father Campion was cautious with who he told about his priesthood, he never knew if there were spies nearby pretending to be Catholic … which is what happened one day.

When a priest arrived in an area, the Catholic villagers secretly spread the word among other nearby Catholics that Mass would be said the next morning. Toward the end of the year 1581, Father Campion arrived at a home and word spread about the Mass. All went smoothly. Father celebrated Mass and then climbed on his horse and rode off.

Somehow, there was some miscommunication and a few hours after he left, a group of nuns arrived. (They dressed as if they were “regular folk” to not be caught.) Of course they were disappointed to have missed father. A messenger quickly rode off on his horse to try to catch up with Father Campion and see if he would return and say another Mass the next day. When the messenger caught up with him, Father Campion agreed to return. Word quietly spread. “Two Masses in two days! Lucky us!”

Unfortunately a traitor also heard about the Mass and sent word to the authorities (police) who arrested Father Campion and tortured him. The government wanted to know the names of the other Catholic priests in England and where they were hiding. Bravely, Father Campion refused to answer their questions. They also offered him a bunch of money and freedom if he would deny his faith. Again, Father Campion refused.

He suffered a brutal death Dec. 1, 1581.

Feast day: Dec. 1

St. Edmund Campion, pray for us!

Activity: How Silly Can You Be?

You need at least two people to play this game and a small pile of yummy treats.

Sit opposite each other to play.

Person A: You can not laugh or smile. You must remain serious!

Person B: You have 10 seconds in which you must make “Person A” smile – but you can not touch that person at all!

If you can make “Person A” smile, then “Person A” must give you one of their treats. But, if you can’t make him/her smile, you must give up one of your treats.

Then switch places.

After you both have had a couple of turns, eat your yummy treats together! (Now you BOTH can smile!)