

Saint John Southworth

John Southworth came from Samlesbury Hall, Blackburn. He was ordained a priest in 1618, and was sent on the mission on 13th October, 1619.

He was arrested and condemned to death in Lancashire in 1627, and imprisoned first in Lancaster Castle. However, John was let off but not before seeing Fr Arrowsmith being led to his execution.

Afterwards John Southworth went to the Clink, London, (built for housing people who disobeyed the religious rules). In 1636 he had been released from the Gatehouse, Westminster and often visited the plague-stricken homes of Westminster to convert the dying. He helped them all despite being imprisoned on several occasions.



In 1637 he took up his home in Westminster, where he was arrested on the 28th November and again sent to prison. On 16th July he was again set free, but by 2nd December he was again in the Gatehouse. The Gatehouse was the prison in Westminster Abbey and although it was a prison it was very much an open prison and it is during this time that Fr Southworth would have visited and helped the Catholics in the alleyways of Westminster.

Southworth's final arrest was in 1654. After his final imprisonment he was tried at the Old Bailey. He pleaded "guilty" to being a priest, despite being encouraged by people, including the judge himself, to plead not-guilty – Fr Southworth was well liked by Catholics and non-Catholics alike. However, Southworth could not deny his priesthood. He was allowed to make a long speech at the gallows:

"I die for Christ's law, which no human law, by whomsoever made, ought to withstand or contradict... To follow His holy doctrine and imitate His holy death, I willingly suffer at present....."

On 28th June he was dragged to the gallows at Tyburn. He was to be hung, drawn and quartered. However, the executioner felt such pity for the 62 year old John that he let him hang to death - he was executed at Tyburn during a thunderstorm. He was the last priest to die for his faith in England.

Discuss in pairs:

- **What sacrifices did this saint make?**
- **Why do you think this saint is a good role model?**
- **What 3 words would you use to describe your House Saint?**