

Introduction (Mr. Johnson):

The Florida Martyrs, or “Martyrs of La Florida,” refers to a group of numerous individuals from the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries who are reported to have died for the faith within the land that was once known as La Florida (including modern day Florida and surrounding areas of the southeastern United States).

On February 14, 2022, Bishop William A. Wack of the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee submitted to Rome a list of fifty-seven individuals for whom credible evidence of martyrdom exists. These fifty-seven are a diverse group of men, women, and children, both Native Americans and European missionaries, all of whom died for the Faith.

Among the most well-known of these is Antonio Cuipa, a Appalachee Native who lived at the mission of San Luis, in what is now Tallahassee. The youthful, charismatic, and highly regarded Antonio Cuipa was an inija (“noble/leader”) of the Apalachee nation, second only to the chief.

Antonio and other men from San Luis traveled to a neighboring mission to help defend it against invading Creek and English forces. Captured by the invading forces, Antonio and his companions were tied to a stake with fires lit at their feet. During this agonizing torture, Antonio declared that the Most Holy Virgin appeared to him and was helping him to endure his martyrdom.

The extraordinary faith and holy death of Antonio and his companions captured the admiration of the Spanish King, Philip V, who directed his ambassador in Rome to inform the Pope of this event. Antonio’s martyrdom and Our Lady’s visitation to him are depicted in the stained glass windows in the Eucharistic Adoration Chapel at Holy Spirit Catholic Church in Pensacola.

Opening Prayer - Noah Renshaw

Loving God, instill in us the same gifts of faith and courage which were instilled upon The Martyrs of La Florida. Let us be steadfast in the faith, on fire with the Holy Spirit, advocates for the Gospel, and filled with strength to defend the faith as they were. Let the death of these beloved martyrs not be in vain, but rather a beacon of inspiration and an example of how to carry out Your love into the world today. Heavenly Father, guide us on our path to sainthood, and may we all strive to follow in the footsteps of Antonio Inija and his Companions. We ask all this in Your name. Amen.

Beloved Martyrs of La Florida, Pray For Us!

(written by Noah Renshaw, 12th grade)

Meditation/Reflection: Faustina Arredondo

The Florida Martyrs faced all of their challenges with faith, and no matter how much suffering they went through, they remained strong in their beliefs. As Catholics we should strive to face all challenges with bravery and confidence in God, just as the Florida Martyrs did. Even in the face of death, they refused to disregard their beliefs. We should all have the same confidence in God, and respect all his works. May the Florida Martyrs inspire us to face every challenge with faith and prayer, and to never forget the sacrifice Jesus made for us.

Today, let us speak their names, known and unknown, and let us ask together for their intercession.

Speaking of the Names:

Prefect, House Augustine:

We will now speak the names of the 57 Martyrs of La Florida, and ask for their intercession for our school, our supporters, our community, and for our nation. May the peace of Jesus reign in our hearts! The response to each name is “pray for us”.

DECLATORY!

House Augustine:

Fr. Diego de Tolosa

Br. Fuentes

Sr. Luis de Cancer

Father Pedro Martinez

Fr. Luis Francesco de Quiros

Br. Gabriel de Solis

Br. Juan Bautista Mendez

Fr. Juan Bautista de Segura

Br. Pedro de Linares

Br. Sancho Cevallos

Br. Gabriel Gomez

Br. Cristobal Redondo

House Ambrose:

Fray Manuel de Mendoza OFM

Unnamed Sacristan

Native two-year old child and native woman of Patate

Three Franciscan Friars

Lt. Governor Claudio Luis de Florencia

Juana de Leiva y Artega

Antonia

Maria

Unborn Child of Maria

Young sons of Maria

House Chrysostum:

Fray Luis Sanchez OFM

Unnamed Sacristan

Young Indian Cacique

Antonio Inija

Cui Domingo

Cuipa Feliciano

Fray Juan de Parga Aruujo, OFM

Baltasar Francisco

Don Pedro Marmolejo

The 15 Apalachee Indians

House Athanasius:

Timucuan Cacique of San Pedro

Timucuan Cacique of San Mateo

Fray Augustin Ponce de Leon OFM

Fray Domingo Griado OFM

Don Patricio & Wife

Fr. Phelipe Orbalaes Abreo

Fray Tiburcio de Osorio OFM

Athanasius Prefect: *Holy Spirit, reign in us, and let these beautiful martyrs, by their gospel witness, be a guide and inspiration to us always. Now, let us recite together the prayer for the Beatification of Antonio Inija and companions :*

O God, Father of many nations,

Who through the grace of baptism have chosen us

to be citizens of Your one Kingdom:

You called Antonio Inija and Companions

to accept Your gift of faith,

professing their hope in Your Only Begotten Son.

Help us with Your grace to imitate their courage and humility

in the face of suffering and death.

May the blood of the martyrs of La Florida

inspire our hearts to follow You without delay.

And, if it be Your Holy Will,

grant the Beatification of

Antonio Inija and Companions, and through their intercession,

grant the request we hereby make (state your intention),

in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.