**Blessed Ignatius de Azevedo and 39 Companions**

**Martyred en route to Brazil as missionaries**

**(from http://www.sjweb.info/)**

Father Ignatius de Azevedo (1526-1570) experienced so much potential for evangelization in Brazil that he successfully recruited Jesuits from Spain and Portugal to serve as missionaries; this great hope ended in disaster when French Huguenot corsairs intercepted the Portuguese flotilla carrying the Jesuits and slaughtered the missionaries. Father de Azevedo established St. Anthony's College in Lisbon and St. Paul's College in Braga, Portugal, before Father General Francis Borgia appointed him visitor to Brazil. He arrived in Bahia in 1566 and spent two years traversing the country and visiting Jesuit schools and missions to evaluate their work and see how they could best be helped. His report praised the Brazilian enterprise but noted the shortage of men. Father Borgia appointed him provincial of Brazil and sent him to recruit missionaries from the Spanish and Portuguese provinces. He gathered around 70 volunteers, some of whom were priests but most of whom were scholastics and even just novices.

Azevedo gathered the diverse group for five months of preparation near Lisbon before setting sail on June 5, 1570 in seven ships and a caravel that left Lisbon for the Madeira Islands off the coast of Africa. They arrived a week later. Rumors that French corsairs threatened the nearby ocean kept the travelers in port until finally the captain of the Santiago, the ship carrying Father de Azevedo and 43 companions, decided to take a chance on sailing for the island of La Palma. Four of the Jesuits elected not to remain on board, given the threat of being captured and killed by the French. The voyage started peacefully, with calm seas and a favorable wind, but then the wind changed as the Santiago approached La Palma Island and its captain decided to enter the bay at Tazacorte.

After some debate about an overland trip to the port of Santa Cruz de La Palma (where the missionaries could get a ship for Brazil), Azevedo decided to sail to that port. Two days later they caught sight of sails on the horizon, which turned out to be French ships under the command of a French pirate, Jacques Sourie.

The French ships were much quicker than the Santiago and easily caught it. Three pirates boarded the Portuguese vessel but were killed. Then the ships moved apart and Azevedo brought up a painting of Our Lady that Pope Pius V had personally given him; he set it up next to the main mast and led people in prayers. When the pirates succeeded in boarding the ship, they attacked the Jesuit, slashing his head and body with swords, then throwing overboard both the Jesuit and the painting he still held. The pirates then searched the ship for anyone wearing a black cassock; they killed some outright and cut off the arms of others and threw them overboard to drown.

Once Sourie controlled the ship, he had the remaining Jesuits thrown into the sea. Simon da Costa was spared on that first day of slaughter because he was not wearing a cassock, having been a Jesuit for only a few weeks. When the French corsair interviewed the crew the day after he captured the ship, da Costa revealed that he was also a missionary. Sourie ordered him beheaded and thrown into the sea. The only Jesuit to survive was John Sánchez who was spared because the pirates needed a cook. He remained on board the captured ship until it docked in the pirate's home port, La Rochelle, France.

After he escaped, he made his way to Portugal where he told his fellow Jesuits the story of the martyrdom of Azevedo and his companions: Diego de Andrade, Francisco Álvares, Gaspar Álvares, Manuel Álvares, Alonso de Baena, Álvaro Borralho (Mendes), Marcos Caldeira, Benito de Castro, Antonio Correia, Luis Correia, Simão de Costa, Aleixo Delgado, Nicolás Dinis, Gregorio Escribano, Anthonio Fernandes, Domingo Fernandes, Io&atile;o Fernandes (I), Io&atile;o Fernandes (II), Manuel Fernandes, Pedro de Fontoura, André Gonçalves, Gonçalo Henriques, Simão Lopez, Francisco de Magallaes, Juan de Mayorga, Diogo Mimoso Pires, Pedro Nunes, Manuel Pacheco, Francisco Pérez de Godoy, Bras Ribeiro, Luis Rodriguez, Manuel Rodriguez, Fernando Sánchez, Juan de San Martín, Antonio Soares, Amaro Vaz, Juan de Zafra, Esteban Zuraire, and Juan, the nephew of the ship's captain.