

OUR FIVE GEORGIA MARTYRS
MISSIONARIES TO THE GUALE!

INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE

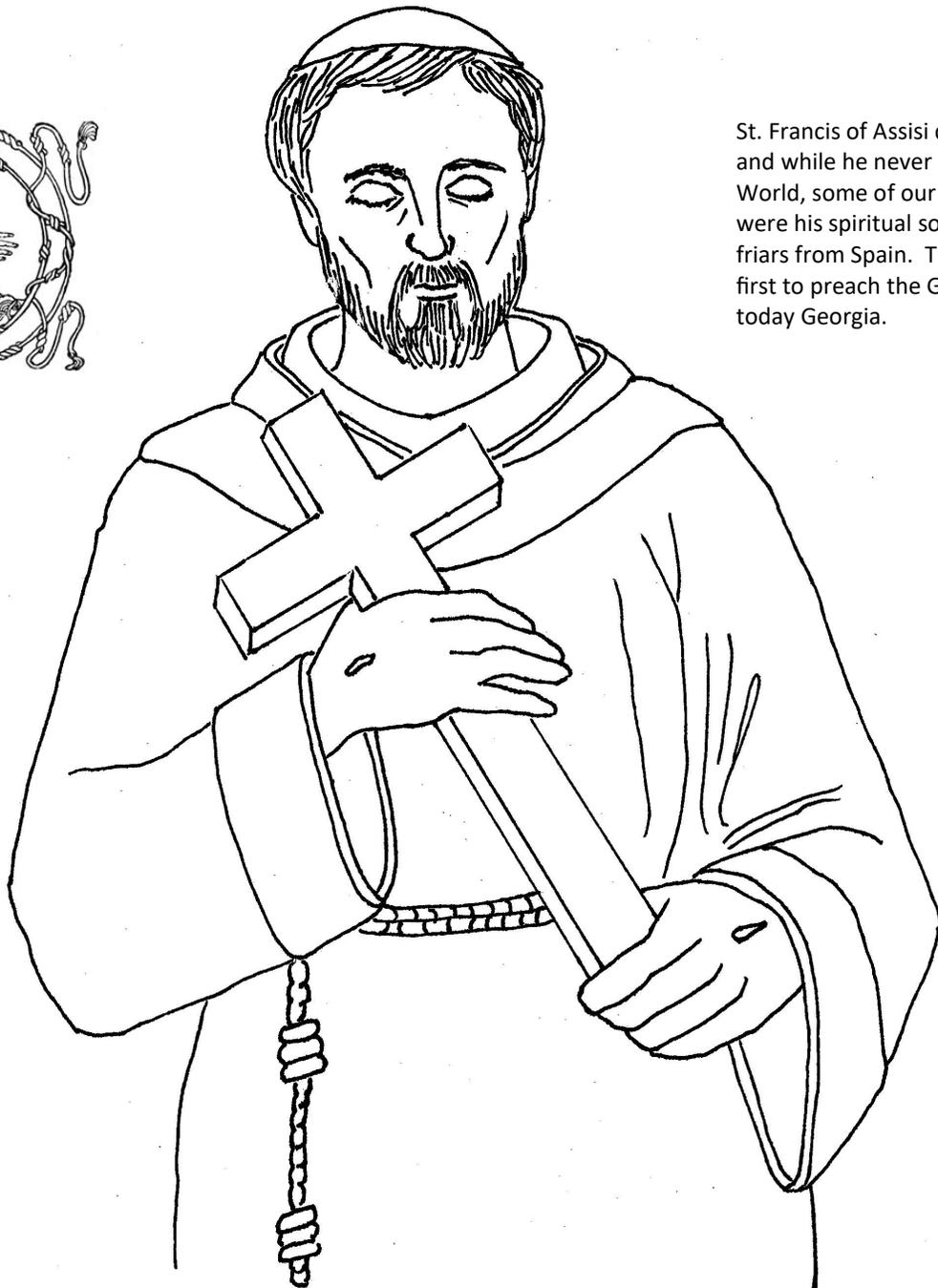
*A tool for lesson plans
with background information.*

Table of Contents

Our Southern Catholic Heritage	1
A Lexicon of Terms	2
Fray Pedro de Corpa	3
Fray Blas Rodríguez	5
Fray Miguel de Añon	7
Fray Antonio de Badajoz	9
Fray Francisco de Veráscola	11
The Amazing Lost Tribe of the Guale!	13
What did the Guale Look Like?	14
The Land of the Guale	15
The Franciscan Missions	17
What were the Missions Like?	19
The Sacrament of Holy Matrimony	21
Defining Marriage / Defending Marriage	22
Background Information	23

THE FIRST GEORGIA MISSIONS

Our Southern Catholic Heritage



St. Francis of Assisi died in A.D. 1226, and while he never came to the New World, some of our earliest missionaries were his spiritual sons, the Franciscan friars from Spain. They were among the first to preach the Gospel in what is today Georgia.

OUR FIVE GEORGIA MARTYRS

A LEXICON OF TERMS

RETABLO: A Spanish word for a religious work of art that becomes a focus for prayer. A retablo can be a painting, like an icon, and usually includes a picture of our Lord or of a particular saint. Retablos were important to the missionaries who had to introduce a new people to Christianity, and helped compensate for the initial lack of shared vocabulary as the missionaries struggled to learn the languages of each tribe or nation they encountered. The oldest sacred images were treasured by the community, because so many faithful had prayed before that image from the earliest days of the Church in their lands. The first retablos in the New World would have come from Spain with the missionaries, but the missions themselves would become places where religious arts would flourish. Many American retablos of the Spanish colonial period are quaint in their style, slightly primitive, but nevertheless very beautiful. Sometimes retablos can be huge altar pieces or reredos that can include many statues and paintings.

FRANCISCANS: The Franciscans are a religious order that follow after their founder, St. Francis of Assisi, who died in the thirteenth century. They are traditionally mendicants, that is beggars, who beg for their sustenance. They were one of the great missionary orders in the New World, and founded many missions and cities in the Western hemisphere. Franciscan men are not called monks, but friars (or sometimes frays).

MISSIONS: Since the time of St. Martin (d. 397), the Catholic Church has grown in the rural parts of the world by sending forth religious monks or friars, usually from a missionary order like the Franciscans, to establish communities and begin to introduce the Christian Faith to pagans (a term that means forest dwellers). Eventually those missions typically became a parish in a diocese, once the Church was well established in that new part of the world.



OUR FIVE GEORGIA MARTYRS
MISSIONARIES TO THE GUALE!

Fray Pedro de Corpa

Fray Pedro de Corpa was born near the great city of Madrid, and as a young man, joined the Franciscans in Astorga, Spain. His confreres knew him to be a wise man of prayer and a good preacher, and yet Fray Pedro was not content to live out his life in Spain. He volunteered to work in the missions in the New World. By the time he was thirty-seven years old, he had already spent ten years in La Florida and New Spain, which included what is now Georgia and Florida. The Padre lived among the native Guale (pronounced “Wally”) at the Tolomato Mission, which is believed to have been located near Darien, Georgia (about fifty miles south of Savannah). This was the village where the great chief (or mico) of the Guale lived.

Fray Pedro had developed a fatherly knowledge of, and love for, the Guale. Even so, he knew there are certain truths that cannot be ignored and out of both duty and love, Fray Pedro admonished the young Guale prince, Juanillo, for his polygamy (that is, having more than one wife). Governor Menéndez and the Franciscan Friars trusted and respected Juanillo’s father, the chief of the Guale, so, consequently, they also trusted his son and heir, Juanillo.

But Juanillo was outraged at Fray Pedro’s gentle reproof, and thus, the rebellion of the Guale began with the martyrdom of Fray Pedro. The Guale, led by Juanillo, killed Fray Pedro in the early morning of September 14th, 1597 as he was preparing to offer Mass on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. He had just finished praying Lauds and was about to walk over to the chapel. Accounts of the time indicate that the young men snuck up on him and clubbed him to death, chopping off his head, and shamefully displaying it upon a spike. Juanillo would go on to set off a chain of martyrdoms throughout the Franciscan missions.



OUR FIVE GEORGIA MARTYRS

Details on Fray Pedro de Corpa

The word “Fray” is Spanish for “Friar,” which means brother. The Franciscans called themselves brothers, but because most of the missionaries were also ordained priests, they were also called “Padres” (Spanish for “Fathers”).

Fray Pedro was a Castilian born in a tiny village in the diocese of Madrid in or around A.D. 1560. He joined the Franciscans in Astorga, was ordained a priest, and had served in the New World Missions since 1587. Since he was the most experienced of the six friars who served the Guale, Pedro was in charge of the Mission de la Natividad de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe (the Mission of the Nativity of Our Lady of Guadalupe) at the Guale capital, Tolomato (near Darien, Georgia), where their great chief or mico, don Francisco, lived. It was don Francisco’s son, the Prince Juanillo, who started the rebellion. Pedro de Corpa was the first to die, martyred in the early hours on September 14th, 1597 on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. He was martyred in his cell at the convent. The convent was the modest house where the friars lived and taught the villagers to read, to pray, and to sing the chants for the Mass and for vespers.

The assassins surprised Pedro and clubbed him to death with the Guale weapon called a macana. They beheaded Pedro and placed his severed head upon a pike. (In the retablo, Pedro points to his neck, indicating that he was to be beheaded). They burned the mission church and convent to the ground, as well as the Council House (somehow, the altar and an image of St. Anthony were not destroyed, as the Spaniards who came to inspect the scene weeks later testified).

Some virtues we might associate with Fray Pedro would be his prayerfulness, his wisdom, and his good preaching. He displayed heroic fortitude in defending Christian marriage and would not compromise the teachings of the Church. He loved the Guale people. The Guale respected his paternal care.

The Tolomato Mission had been established just a couple of years earlier in 1595. Indications are that the missionaries moved the mission around for some time following the restless and nomadic natives, but were hoping to establish a permanent settlement. The place most often associated with the site is “the Thicket,” five miles north of Darien on Pease Creek. But now it is thought more likely that the actual site is somewhere on Sapelo Island (the Spanish Mission on the north end of the island near the Shell Ring is dedicated to San Josef, so if the Tolomato Mission is on Sapelo, at this writing, its exact whereabouts remain unknown).

While we don’t know for certain where Tolomato was, once the Guale were driven out of their missions by the British in 1702-1704, they fled south to St. Augustine, Florida, where they established another mission in that city. They chose to call their new Florida settlement Tolomato, too. These Guale refugees built a new wooden mission chapel with a thatched roof and a four story coquina bell-tower. There they established one of the oldest known Christian burial sites in our country, the Tolomato Cemetery. When the British took St. Augustine, the remaining Guale people were forced into exile in Cuba or were otherwise dispersed. Upon occupation of the town, the British tore down their wooden church for firewood.

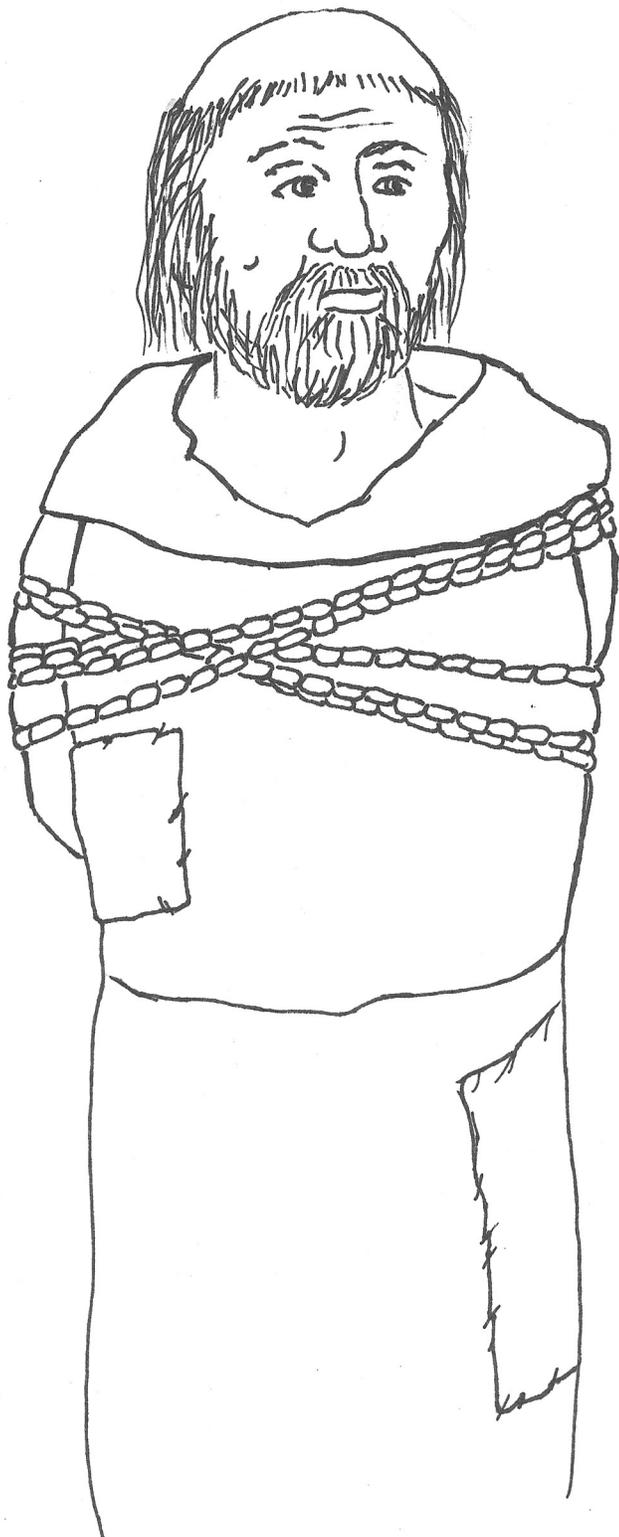
Consider how soon this was after the Protestant Reformation. England had just broken away from the Catholic Church so that their king could divorce his Spanish Catholic Queen. Spaniards were probably not ready to compromise on the Sacrament of Marriage one bit, as they had seen where such a compromise would lead a people. Our friars would have been strong defenders of the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. Fray Pedro had simply said to the community that Juanillo would make an unsuitable chief given his insistence on polygamy. As a baptized Catholic, even princes are bound to honor Christian marriage.

Father Pedro de Corpa and the other four martyrs were not alone in their heroic work of establishing the Church among the peoples of our shores. There were others whose names remain unknown to us. But these men are apostles in Georgia. The Guale Revolt was not just aimed at the Franciscan friars either. Other Christian Guale were targeted besides, and the mission churches were burned to the ground. This was an attempt to root out the Christian religion by the prince, Juanillo, and his co-conspirators. The Christian Guale who observed all of this and lived (many of whom were elders and chiefs) must have been crestfallen at this rebellion. In the end, the Franciscans returned, and Juanillo was never made mico (chief).

For prayers and/or meditation that we can associate with Fray Pedro, we might look to the Canticle of Zechariah (Fr. Pedro was praying morning prayer), or we might reflect upon the passage from the Gospel according to St. Matthew (16:24) where we read, “Then Jesus said to his disciples: If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”

OUR FIVE GEORGIA MARTYRS
MISSIONARIES TO THE GUALE!

Fray Blas Rodríguez



Fray Blas Rodríguez was forty-five years old and a Franciscan of Santa Olalla. He was of the strict order of the Alcatarian reform and “discalced,” which meant he wore no shoes, even in winter. He had been ordained for seventeen years, seven of those years spent in the New World at the missions.

Prince Juanillo and his companion renegades respected Fray Blas’ age, if nothing else, and permitted him to celebrate Mass and preach to them one last time before they executed him. He was unafraid to die, but was deeply saddened by the murderous actions of Juanillo and his companions. Fray Blas, anxious that there should be no sacrilege, would have taken the remaining consecrated hosts from the tabernacle and consumed them. After Mass, the young men watched as Fray Blas gave away his personal affects to the residents of the mission. Then they bound the priest tightly with rope (they were mindful of his vigor – they knew he would stop them from their vandalism if left untied) and made him watch as they impiously vandalized the chapel. After ripping the priestly vestments, destroying the retablos, and ruining the sacred vessels, the rebels clubbed the priest to death on September 16th, 1597 at the Mission of Tupiqui.

In the drawing, Fray Blas wears a faded, worn, and patched Franciscan habit, indicating his many years in the New World (the usual cincture, or rope belt, of a Franciscan habit with three knots to indicate the Trinity is not shown; see the previous drawing of Fray Pedro).

OUR FIVE GEORGIA MARTYRS

Details on Fray Blas Rodríguez

Fray Blas was born in Caucos, Spain around A.D. 1552. Blas joined the Franciscan Province of St. Gabriel at the Convent of Santa Olalla of the strict Alcatarian Reform discalced. Blas had been ordained a priest for almost seventeen years. Back in Spain, he had been called a confessor as he courageously stood up for the Faith there, but Blas Rodríguez did not seek praise, nor even comfort. He volunteered for the missions, and he had already served in the New World since 1590. He was martyred at the Mission of Tupiqui (thought to be somewhere near Eulonia, Georgia). Blas Rodríguez was martyred after offering the Mass on September 16th, 1597.

Fray Blas was allowed to celebrate Mass, preach to his executioners, and to distribute his personal goods before his martyrdom. He knew they were going to kill him, and he preached to them about love. He would have made certain that the tabernacle was empty of the Eucharist so that no sacrilege would occur. Thereafter, he was tied up and forced to watch the rebellious youth wreck the chapel. He was then clubbed to death, and his corpse was left rotting for days. Sadly, the raiding war party also burned the whole village to the ground (the church, the convent, the council house, and even the cacique's or leader's house). It was said that though the body of Blas had been left to the vultures, no vultures would approach it, and that a dog that approached it was miraculously struck dead. An elderly pious Christian Guale man is said to have later buried the corpse of Fray Blas Rodríguez in the forest. Later reports suggest that his skull had been smashed in three or four places.

The Guale respected Padre Blas Rodríguez who would have been venerable in years in their world. Blas was fearless, but worried for the safety of the loyal Guale residents of the mission. He was deeply saddened by the rebellious youth, and showed concern for the salvation of the souls of his executioners. In our drawing, we can recognize Blas because his hands are tied behind him and a rope is wrapped multiple times around his chest and upper arms. His executioners must have been mindful of his vigor and physical strength since they felt it necessary to tie him up. We think that the Tupiqui Mission de Santa Clara was on the mainland of Georgia, near modern day Eulonia, Georgia (which is today a Gullah town, Gullah being descendants of enslaved Africans).

We may imagine that our five Georgia Martyrs hunted and caught fish, and certainly they traveled into the back woods, paddled and hiked, lived on or near beaches, and perhaps may have spent time in the military before they became Franciscans (Spain was in its high stage of military imperialism at the time). These

were vigorous men with an expanding worldview, akin to the astronauts of our day. They came from some of the most civilized places on earth, trained in philosophy and music, history and ancient languages, and then they volunteered to go to La Florida, one of the least civilized places.

Spain had colonized lands all over the world at this time, but these men lived in exposed parts of New Spain. La Florida did not enjoy the same protections as did Mexico, so to go into these particular missions was not only going to the ends of the world, but also into territory that the French and English might also want to claim. These men were amazingly courageous. They left their families and their culture, and they moved into areas where pagans worshipped false gods and spoke foreign languages unknown to anyone outside the tribe (some of the Guale words were shared by the Mayans, but the Mayans were a different tribe).

These Franciscans were highly self-disciplined and would have been familiar with strict fasting and sleeping in uncomfortable places. Today, we might look upon their acts of penance (like fasting) as excessive, but for these men, that was training for where they were to go. As ministers among the Guale, our friars would have needed to be lean and almost oblivious to hunger, to cold, and even to insult. If their voluntary sleeping on the hard floor in Spain seemed excessive, it helped to prepare them for the hard work in the missions.

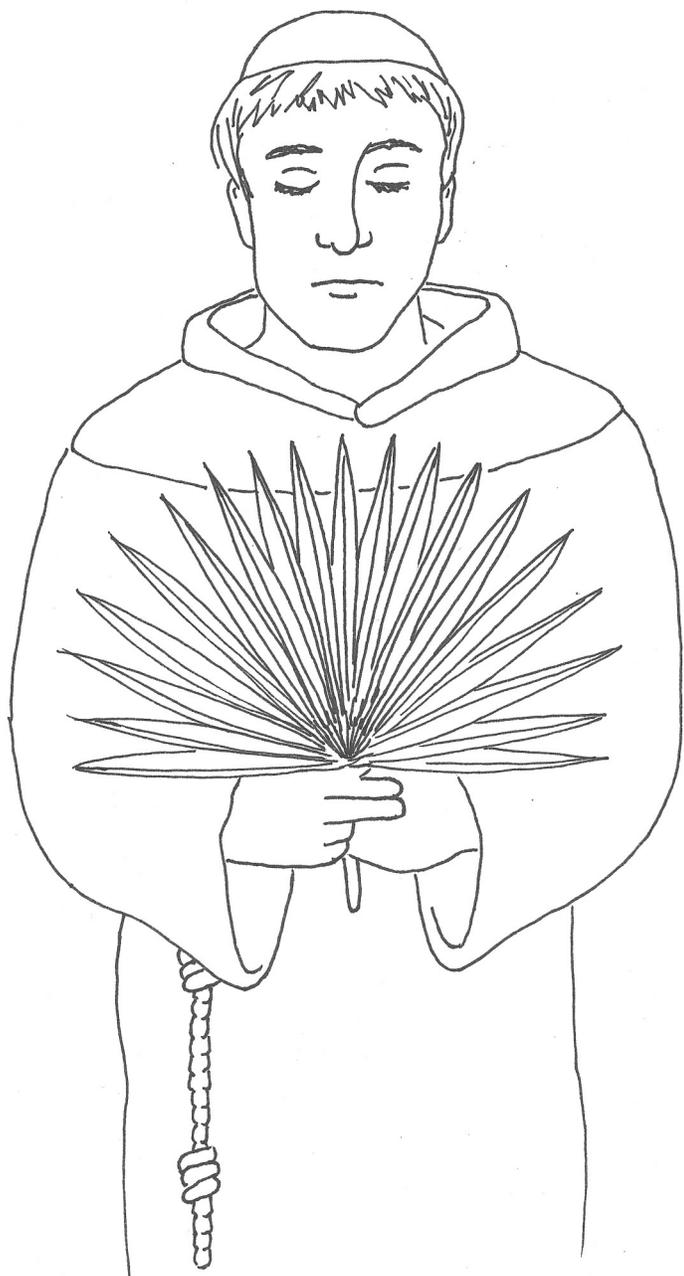
Fray Blas was named for St. Blaise of Sebaste, who was martyred for the faith 1,200 years earlier in what is today Turkey. St. Blaise had endeavored to preach the Gospel and was beheaded by the empire for having done so. St. Blaise's feast falls after Candlemas, which reminds us how the preaching of the Gospel is likened to taking a light unto the nations. Our Fray Blas was like his patron saint in many ways, preaching the Gospel in a new place, learning to survive in the wilderness, and being martyred by a prince for the Faith. Blas and his Franciscan confreres wanted to take the light of the Gospel to a new nation (the Guale and to Georgia). Just as Fray Blas longed for their conversion, he longs for our conversion! A prayer we might associate with Fray Blas would be this prayer for enlightenment:

Almighty, eternal, just, and merciful God, grant us in our misery the grace to do for you alone what we know you want us to do, and always to desire what pleases you. Thus, inwardly cleansed, interiorly enlightened, and inflamed by the fire of the Holy Spirit, may we be able to follow in the footprints of your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. And, by your grace alone, may we make our way to you, Most High, who live and rule in perfect Trinity and simple Unity, and are glorified God all-powerful forever and ever. Amen.

OUR FIVE GEORGIA MARTYRS
MISSIONARIES TO THE GUALE!

Fray Miguel de Añon

Fray Miguel de Añon had been in Georgia only two years (his brown Franciscan habit looks almost new compared to that of his confrere, Fray Blas) and would have been around the age of thirty-three. He had come from the Spanish Convento Santa Victoria and was a cultured man, the son of a nobleman. But he chose to become a devoted son of St. Francis, and therefore, renounced his father's fortune.



Padre Miguel seemed to be a man of destiny. He had been put in charge of Mission Santa Catalina, the oldest and largest mission to the Guale. He had great plans for its development: a fortified town with palisades and plazas, two wells, two white churches, a convent, and a great plaza. A bronze bell tolled to draw the Guale to prayers. So prosperous was the Mission Santa Catalina that Spain had considered moving Florida's capital there from St. Augustine. The Mission was seen more and more as the mother mission of what would eventually become dozens of missions to the Guale people.

With his own hands, Padre Miguel had erected the great cross at Mission Santa Catalina, hardly suspecting he would so soon be buried at its base. The padre was still getting to know the Guale; when he preached, he still relied on a translator (Fray Antonio de Badajoz), but the Guale clearly respected Fray Miguel. The local chief had even warned him and the others about the approaching war party, but the dedicated friars chose to stay at their posts at the mission. It might have had something to do with the liturgy for that day, September 17th, the Feast of the Stigmata of St. Francis. The Gospel reading for the Feast included the words, "Whosoever loses his life for my sake will gain it."

OUR FIVE GEORGIA MARTYRS

Details on Fray Miguel de Añon

Fray Miguel was likely the son of a Castilian nobleman. He joined the Franciscans at the Covent of Santa Victoria and was an ordained priest who had served in the Georgia Missions for only two years — he was still getting to know the Guale and their language, and he still needed a translator. Fray Miguel was martyred at the Mission of Santa Catalina on St. Catherine's Island on September 17th, the Feast of the Stigmata of St. Francis. The Gospel reading for this feast includes the words, "Whosoever loses his life for my sake will gain it."

The Guale cacique (minor chief) and elders clearly respected their young padre, and they twice tried to warn Antonio de Badajoz and Miguel de Añon so that they could escape harm, but the friars were unmoved and would not leave their post. Fray Miguel then offered the Mass and would have likely heard the confession of Fray Antonio. They then prayed together for four hours.

When the war party arrived, the cacique offered the assassins all he owned if they would not harm the missionaries, but the rebels were determined to kill these friars and accused the cacique of treason for not having killed them already. The cacique, with tears in his eyes, told the friars what awaited them, and that he would pray for them as his brothers. The chief with the elders and the villagers, who had refused to rebel, retreated into the forest, leaving the war party to their gruesome task.

The assassins bound the feet of the Franciscans and then set upon them with their macanas (akin to a tomahawk). Fray Antonio was killed first, but no one seemed to want to be the one to kill Padre Miguel. They had come to kill him, but none of them dared, so deeply respected was his holiness, and so they charged an unbaptized pagan Guale with the task (sadly, a few days later, that same assassin was said to have committed suicide, so deep was his remorse, hanging himself like Judas).

Subsequent to the martyrdom, Fray Miguel's body was mutilated and left to rot, but pious Guale later buried him beneath the Mission Cross, the same Mission Cross he had erected with his very hands just years earlier. Some of his relics (his skull and some smaller bones) were later gathered up and taken to St. Augustine. We know at least one of the dead friars was scalped, as a scalp was later found next to a breviary and missal.

Like St. Francis, Fray Miguel renounced the wealth and leisure of his high birth, and chose to serve the Gospel. He was a dignified man with a strong sense of duty. This was a man who many thought had a

destiny. He had been put in charge of what was arguably the most important of the Guale Missions, and he had great ambitions for its development.

The Jesuit fathers originally tried to found this mission, but they abandoned it within the year. Twenty-five years later, the Franciscans arrived and built up Santa Catalina as the center of the Guale missions. We know more about this mission because archaeologists located the mission site on St. Catherine's Island and studied it. In Atlanta at the Fernbank Center, they keep the artifacts that were unearthed at the site, and those artifacts include beads, crucifixes, and religious medals that the Guale people had been wearing when they were laid to rest within the mission church. The Funk Heritage Center in Waleska also has some information about these early missions, and in Tallahassee, there is the beautiful reconstructed Mission of San Luis, which can help us imagine what our Georgia missions would have looked like. The more the archeologists study the Santa Catalina Mission site, the more the story of the Guale come into focus for us.

We imagine Miguel de Añon at about 33 years old. Miguel is attired in a somewhat newer looking gray Franciscan habit that represents his not having long been in our Georgia Missions. Fray Miguel holds before him a native Georgia palm (the palm is a traditional Christian symbol of victory in iconography). Fray Miguel is the very picture of the rich young man beloved by Christ in the Bible, except Miguel *did* follow the Master. Motivated by his love of Christ, Miguel answered the call to spread the Gospel, and we should admire his courage and strength. In some ways, Miguel might have died imagining his work was unfinished or incomplete, but the preaching of the Gospel is never finished!

In thinking about Fray Miguel, we may reflect upon the words of the Entrance Antiphon from the Mass for the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi:

*Francis, the man of God, left his home behind,
abandoned his inheritance and
became poor and penniless,
but the Lord raised him up.*



OUR FIVE GEORGIA MARTYRS
MISSIONARIES TO THE GUALE!

Fray Antonio de Badajoz

Fray Antonio de Badajoz was a lay brother, Fray Miguel's interpreter, and principle catechist at the Mission of Santa Catalina. He was about thirty-eight years old. Fray Antonio had been in the missions for ten years, so he knew the languages of the indigenous peoples. In the drawing, his Franciscan habit is worn and patched at places. Like Fray Blas, Fray Antonio was of the strict order of the Alcatarian reform, so he always went barefoot. Antonio would have worn his hair with a tonsure (or shaved top) which was a sign that one belonged to holy orders or was a friar or monk. Fray Antonio clasps his hands before him, and a brown rosary is visible interwoven among his fingers.

The Rosary is a prayer that had developed over generations and had become officially standardized around the time of the Council of Trent, which had occurred only fourteen years prior to Fray Antonio's arrival in the New World. Archeologists have found parts of rosaries among the artifacts of the Spanish Missions in Georgia and Florida. Some of the rosaries found in Georgia were thought to have been on one of the voyages of Christopher Columbus when he sailed to what he called the New World. This was a New World to the Europeans, but the indigenous people had lived here for many centuries. To them, what was new was the Good News (the Gospel).

Our Lord tells us to go out into all the world and tell the good news of the Resurrection. Fray Antonio gave his life as an Apostle to the Guale. Over and over in the hours before he died, he prayed the Ave Maria. *Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with Thee. Blessed art Thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of Thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.*



OUR FIVE GEORGIA MARTYRS

Details on Fray Antonio de Badajoz

Fray Antonio was born in La Albuhera near Badajoz. Antonio de Badajoz was of the strict order of the Alcatarian reform (discalced). He was a lay brother and not a priest, though he was respected by all the ordained priests with whom he worked as the catechist and translator. He had served in the New World missions since 1587, was fluent in the Guale language, and was working as Fray Miguel's translator at the time of the rebellion. Fray Antonio was martyred together with Fray Miguel at the Mission of Santa Catalina on St. Catherine's Island off the coast of Georgia. Antonio (like Miguel) was martyred on the 17th of September. He was clubbed to death with the Guale weapon called the macana after having prayed for hours awaiting his execution. Together with Fray Miguel, his body was later uncovered from a shallow grave. They found both men's feet had been bound, and their arms and legs all broken in multiple places. If this report is true, then these friars evidently suffered a gruesome and almost ceremoniously vindictive assassination meant to bring grave pain and demonstrate power.

We could think of Fray Antonio as a model of humility, as he was something of a mentor to young Miguel. While Antonio wasn't ordained, the other friars held him in deep respect, and advocated for him to be able to preach the Gospel to the Guale, so he must have not only been gifted with the knowledge of their language, but also gifted in his ability to present Catholic truths in this new setting and to these heretofore un-evangelized people.

Antonio and Miguel had been told that a war party was coming to kill them both. One imagines that he had a remarkable sense of peace and resolve knowing, as he did, that he would be martyred. He had time to go to confession to Padre Miguel, and together they could prepare for death. Sometimes death comes swiftly and without warning, so it is a blessing for a Catholic to be able to prepare for his or her death. Naturally, Antonio would have turned to prayer, and most likely had forgiveness in his heart, as he respected and admired the Guale people whose language he had mastered.

The mission church of Santa Catalina (named for St. Catherine of Alexandria) was established in the 1570's, probably the oldest church in Georgia, and one of the oldest in America. Archaeologists have found 432 graves of Guale Indians buried under the Church floor. They were buried with rosaries and medals, and their clothes may have been beautifully studded with countless trade beads. Trade beads were often glass, and made in Europe. The Spanish would use these beads for currency, as the indigenous people admired

their beauty and assigned them value. Most of these trade beads and medals are now at the Fernbank Center in Atlanta.

The Jesuit fathers originally tried to found this mission, but they abandoned it within the year. Twenty-five years later, the Franciscans arrived. The Jesuits had actually written out a catechism in the Guale language which included grammar lessons. This now lost text may well have been the first book ever written in what is today the United States, and we can imagine Fray Antonio having studied and used that book in his work. The convento was where the friars lived, but it was also a place of learning where the Guale would have come for their Catechism classes, where the children would have been taught their prayers, and where they would learn how to chant at the Mass and Vespers. The Mass would have been in Latin, so while the friars had to learn the Guale language, they were also teaching the Guale people Latin (and likely Spanish besides). Even though they were living at the fringes of the known world, their mission was very cosmopolitan, and one where culture, language, reading, and music went hand-in-hand with learning about the Lord, the Scriptures, the saints, and about the great Church to which these Guale people now belonged.

We might associate this mission prayer with Fray Antonio:

*O God, who would have all His children to be saved
and to come to the knowledge of the Truth,
send forth, we beseech you, laborers into your harvest
and grant them all confidence to preach the Word; that
everywhere your Gospel may be heard and glorified,
and that all nations may know you, the one True God,
and Him whom you have sent,
Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Amen.*



OUR FIVE GEORGIA MARTYRS MISSIONARIES TO THE GUALE!

Fray Francisco de Veráscola

Fray Francisco de Veráscola was nicknamed “el Gigante.” He had been born into a relatively prosperous family of Basque heritage. He had arrived at the missions only two years earlier, and when the Guale boys met him, they were much impressed with this tall, broad shouldered, athletic man in his early thirties, and would coax him to join them in their football games.

Fray Francisco was a natural hunter, and despite the fact that he was a priest, the Franciscans would call upon him from time to time to be a bodyguard to visiting guests and dignitaries. He exuded strength and confidence, yet also the virtue of Christian joy. His handsome smile and gentle eyes helped the Guale trust this giant priest.

In this drawing, he has a dark stubble of beard. Our good Padre had been traveling down the low country waterways to trade with the missions to the south. The padres had to have wine and hosts to celebrate Mass, so they traded and brought things they needed up from St. Augustine. These men were rowers and would have had strong upper bodies.

Fray Francisco de Veráscola could easily have defended himself, but he did not want to harm the Guale people whom he loved. He had just returned by canoe and was about to unload the supplies for the mission, tired and happy to be home. The rebellious men attacked him by surprise, killing him as he disembarked from his journey. He had probably even waved to the assassins on the shore, but his welcome was to be a violent one.



OUR FIVE GEORGIA MARTYRS

Details on Fray Francisco de Veráscola

Fray Francisco was born in Gordejuela, Spain on February 13th, 1564 to a relatively prosperous Basque family. He was a Cantabrian Franciscan and joined the Convent of Valladolid. Francisco had been ordained a priest for a few years before coming to La Florida. He had served in the Guale Missions for only two years.

He was martyred at the Mission Santo Domingo de Asajo thought to have been on St. Simons Island. He was the last of our five martyrs to be killed, in September, 1597.

Fray Francisco de Veráscola had just returned from a trip south to trade for supplies. (At the Funk Heritage Center in Waleska, there is a dugout canoe and oar that were in use in Georgia at the time of Fray Francisco. Made of cypress, it has lasted centuries, and we can imagine Fray Francisco sitting or standing in the canoe using his oar to propel himself through the water). Francisco would have worn his straw hat to keep the strong coastal sun off his face. His assassins knew Francisco was strong, so they attacked him without warning, clubbing him to death with the macana. His body was never recovered, though his habit was later found in the possession of some of the rebels.

Fray Francisco must have been a strong man's man, full of life and adventure. He was a good hunter and fisherman (and the man the Franciscans had sometimes sent on reconnaissance into the interior). We can imagine him to have been a handsome young man in his mid-thirties, with broad shoulders, a gentle smile, full of confidence and kindness. He was probably beloved by the young children who would have been impressed with his great height. He was a natural athlete so they probably invited him to join in their games (spear throwing, wrestling, and a kind of soccer).

Francisco, like all the Franciscans, wore a tonsure. In our drawing, he has some stubble, as he has been traveling. The sleeves of his habit are pushed up, revealing the arms of a rower. The habit looks relatively new when compared to the others (denoting his recent arrival in the New World). He holds in his hand the straw sombrero that has given him shade as he has paddled his way north through the low country waterways.

Most of the folks on St. Simons Island are unaware of the lost mission (if, indeed, it was even on that island). The few experts who have some knowledge cannot point with certainty to the site, or even agree if St. Simons Island was part Timucuan, part Guale, or something else. Still, there were Spanish Missions there (though raiders and pirates left them in ruins by 1684).

The Guale apparently had a permanent village called Guadalquini, where the Mission of San Buenaventura de Guadalquini was established on the southern tip of the island (very likely where the village surrounding the lighthouse is today). In the middle of the Island was supposedly the village of San Simon. And apparently on the northern tip of the island was the Mission of Santo Domingo de Asajo (which, if so, might place it in or near the Cannon's Point site). St. Simons Land Trust is working to preserve this historical land and conserve its ecology. They are beginning the slow process of exploring the 600-acre tract of wilderness in hopes of finding archeological sites for future digs. So, the lost mission may one day be found, and if so, it will mark the place where Fray Francisco de Veráscola was martyred. Perhaps the remains of his body lie beneath that old primal forest undisturbed and forgotten these many centuries. It would be a tall skeleton!

These missionaries bathed in the sea. They were strong men that the Franciscans knew could impress the natives and win the trust of the Guale chiefs and braves. These men were not only ambassadors of Christ; they were also pioneers of Western Civilization. They were heroic men. We should not imagine them as old men with long white beards, as they did not live long enough to enjoy old age. Old men could not have survived what these men had to survive on a daily basis. These were men who knew our coastal regions with all its natural dangers, and they spent themselves there. And these five martyrs represent thousands of other missionaries like them who came from Spain to the new world to plant the Gospel. We should praise and honor these men even if they weren't martyred for the Faith!

Fray Francisco had been returning from trading. The Guale traded with other tribes far away, but one of the things the Franciscans wanted to help the Guale do was to develop a more sustainable economy and income, and trade was a part of that. With the Spanish missionaries, the Guale were being incorporated into the international world of trade. Fray Francisco was building up this mission from scratch, so he would have been bringing back things for the community. We could imagine him blessing his own Guale people with the blessing of St. Francis:

May the Lord bless you. May the Lord keep you.

May He show His face to you and have mercy.

May He turn to you His countenance and give you peace.

The Lord bless you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

OUR FIVE GEORGIA MARTYRS

THE AMAZING LOST TRIBE

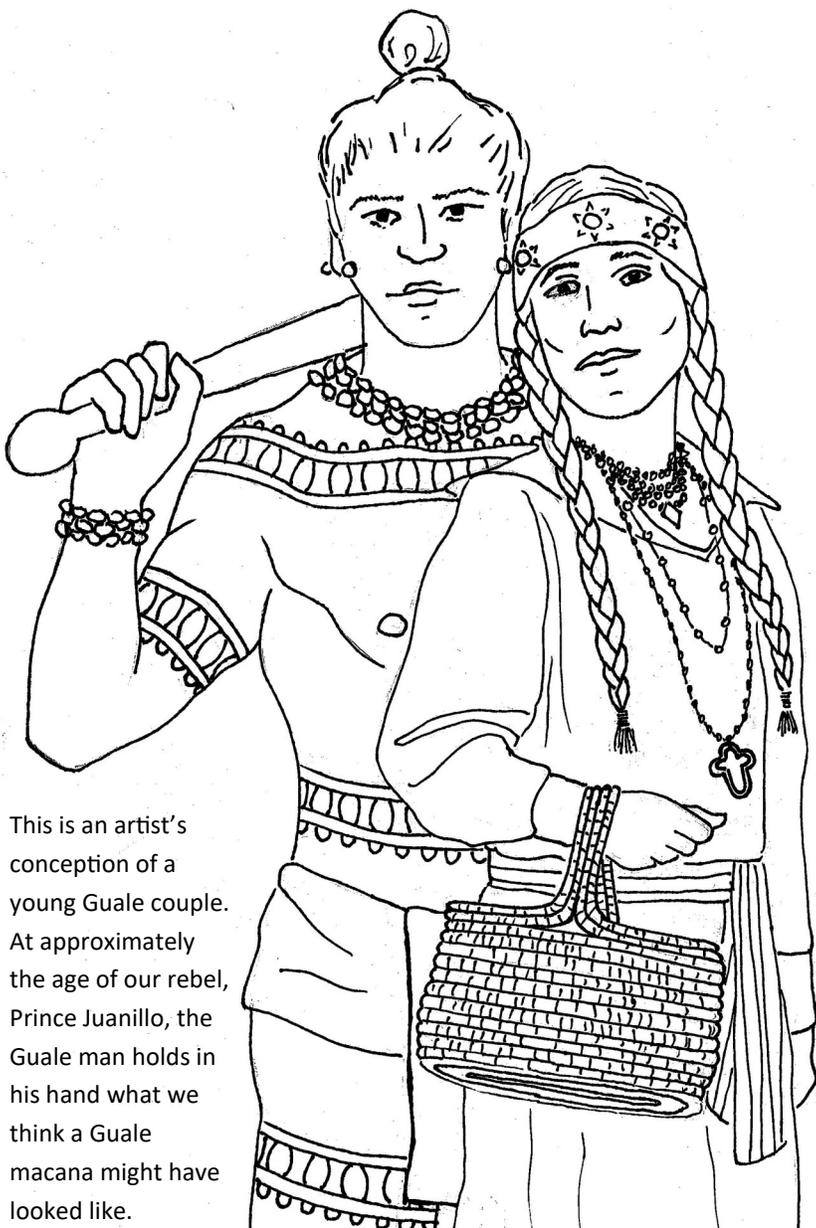
OF THE GUALE!

The Guale lived between the Ogeechee and the Altamaha rivers on the coast of what is today Georgia. Most of the Guale were enslaved or wiped out by the English pirates who raided and destroyed the old Spanish Franciscan missions of Georgia. The surviving Guale moved south to St. Augustine and regrouped, building a new settlement named after their ancient lost high chieftain's ancestral village of Tolomato that the English had destroyed. When the English came

to destroy St. Augustine, they burned the newer Tolomato to the ground, too. Consequently, some of the remaining Guale immigrated to Cuba and others moved west to what is today Mississippi. It was an ignominious end to these ancient people who had lived in this land for centuries, but while they were among the first to be driven out, they would not be the last.

The policy of the Spanish was not to drive native people off their land, but to organize and draw them into the Church through a series of missions. The Guale invited the missionaries into their lands, and accepted baptism as so many ancient European tribes had in ages past. But their story was not unlike other stories.

With the Gospel comes change, and sometimes these changes are hard to accept, so some missionaries met resistance and even death. Still, the Franciscans saw the Guale and all native people not as savages to be abandoned to their pagan gods, but a people noble and great, a people who needed to hear of the Christ, who is the King of all the nations!



This is an artist's conception of a young Guale couple. At approximately the age of our rebel, Prince Juanillo, the Guale man holds in his hand what we think a Guale macana might have looked like.

OUR FIVE GEORGIA MARTYRS

WHAT DID THE GUALE LOOK LIKE?

The Guale were native Americans living in the coastal region of Georgia. They were a loose confederation of chieftains who shared a common language and political system based on family lineages. As a people, they seemed to have been horticulturalists whose diet would have included corn and squash. They were likely semi-nomadic, living in villages for a period of time and then migrating. They practiced swidden, a slash and burn technique, to create new fields to plant. When the fields became depleted, they would move on to another place. Their original religion would have been some kind of animism, i.e., a belief in the attribution of a soul to plants, inanimate objects, and natural phenomena.



One of the important things to keep in mind about the Guale is that while their society was warrior based, it was also matriarchal with regards to lineage, title, and status, and thus the wealth was passed along by the female lines in the tribe. However, the power was still mostly concentrated among the men. When a man married a woman, he would become aligned with her family's heritage (including, interestingly enough, the animal or animals from which her family was believed to have emerged).

Therefore, polygamy was a practice whereby men obtained political and familial power, prestige, and wealth. This status and authority was very important in a culture without currency. The Franciscan missionaries would have understood this, and would have known how radical the idea of Christian marriage would be to the Guale. Traditionally, women tend to be the first pagans to convert to Catholicism, because of the radical high regard in which the Church holds women (a regard that tends to be a challenge for the conversion of men). The Franciscans taught monogamy and that women and men were complementary partners in the Sacrament of Marriage in the eyes of the Church.



What did the Guale really look like? Good question. We know more about how the Timucuan people looked, because of the drawings of Jacques Le Moyne that are the earliest known depictions of any Native Americans in the New World (see drawing on this page). The Timucuan were a different tribe living nearby, and while they shared similar words, they nevertheless spoke a different language. We see in this one drawing how they might have dressed. In Le Moyne's illustrations (there are more than one), we can also see

their weapons and get a sense of what the macana of the Timucua Indians looked like. Maybe the Guale's macana was similar.

We know from their burial site that the Guale sewed hundreds of trade beads into their clothing. The Fernbank Center in Atlanta has the trade beads that were buried with the Catholic Guale at the Mission Santa Catalina. One description of these coastal Guale Indians suggests they were a robust people who adorned their bodies with many necklace, bracelet, and anklet strings of shells and beads. They are said to have painted their breasts, biceps, and thighs with red paint, and both the men and the women are said to have worn their hair long, and to have let their fingernails and toenails grow long and even to be sharpened for warfare.



We have drawings of the neighboring tribe, the Timucuan, but no similar drawings for the Guale. Still, the Timucuan and Guale would have had a shared culture, and our written descriptions of the Guale indicate they would have looked very similar to the Timucuan.

OUR FIVE GEORGIA MARTYRS

THE LAND OF THE GUALE

The Franciscan missionaries encountered many new peoples north of the Spanish colonial capital of St. Augustine. First, they met the Mocama people (a tribe of the Timucuan), and thereafter, they encountered the Guale. The Spanish sometimes called this area the *Lingue de Guale*, meaning it was the place where the language of the Guale was spoken, which was different from the language of the Timucuan. The coastal territory of the Guale stretched north of the Altamaha River and south of the Ogeechee River.

The land of the Guale was almost not land at all. The Jesuit fathers who had abandoned the missionary work for the Franciscans had characterized La Florida as the most miserable land ever discovered by man, as one long pile of sand filled with marshes and swamps. The Jesuits thus withdrew, having little success in converts. So, the Franciscans took up the challenge. The Spaniards were there for missions, not for gold or silver or gems, which this part of the new world lacked. These coastal regions were notorious for sickness, and the Guale were also seen as not being overly receptive to the Faith. So, we should not characterize this as a colony of exploitation, and we need to see the Franciscan missionaries for who they really were – heroic for just volunteering for the task in the first place.

So the Guale were a people who lived in the low country wetlands, where the sea and the land brush together through countless golden marshes – an amazingly beautiful area that is constantly changing and difficult to map. As wild as these islands were (and are), people had lived upon them for thousands of years before the Spanish missionaries explored their many sounds and estuaries. While the archaeologists can find evidence of those ancient peoples, their pre-Columbian stories belong to prehistoric times, but with the coming of the Spanish, we begin to have a written account of their descendants, the Guale. Given that official reports of epidemics were routinely made, it is noteworthy that the Guale seemed never to have such a report given, so they may well have been a very hearty and healthy people, especially given their life near the low country with its flies and mosquitoes.

Lastly, we need to keep in mind the nature of a mission. Often the indigenous peoples the missionaries encountered might have lived in tribes that lived in migratory villages (if you will) in that they lived in quasi-permanent settlements, and moved with the seasons, or after some years. The native Americans might move around seasonally to let fields lay fallow, or to be closer to game. It was frustrating to both the missionaries and the native peoples to some extent that the missionaries

were asking the native peoples to be more stable, rooted, or settled than they might have been inclined to be. We see this all over (not just here on the Georgia coast). So a quasi-migratory people are being drawn into a religion that sets aside holy ground, and that wants to develop villages in a more permanent way around a stationary mission church. There were many advantages to this, but it could also be quite a cultural change for the indigenous people. This *may* explain why some of these missions seem difficult for us to pinpoint on any modern map today.

Now, what we today call Georgia was only established in 1733, but it was some time before the state finally took on its familiar shape on a map. That story is an interesting one, but our focus is to look before the arrival of the English to the earlier centuries of Georgia history (almost two centuries). This is a turbulent and tragic tale of ancient peoples, of Spanish missionaries, and of English pirates. Remember that the Spanish came before the British. In fact, the very first Christian Baptism in our state (and maybe in our nation) was likely in or around old Jacksonville, Georgia in the Ocmulgee River. There a Dominican priest traveling with Hernando De Soto baptized two Native Americans, Peter and Mark, in a place “where the river turns east” in 1540. When folks think of Georgia, they might think of peaches, barbeque, and fried chicken, which are great. But we just need to remember that it was the Spanish who brought the first peaches to be planted here; it was the Spanish who first introduced chickens and pigs to Georgia. Indeed, even the word barbeque is a mispronounced Spanish word for a grill.

In order to understand this period of history, we must appreciate that the land that is now Georgia was at the time disputed land, and that this dispute was caught up in a global competition between Spain and England. The Spanish (who were the first to arrive) had claimed it as part of La Florida, but the later English colonists in Virginia and Carolina saw it as a place for their expansion. This global struggle between Spain and England was a religious struggle as well. Spain remained Catholic, whereas England had abandoned the ancient Faith of their ancestors and taken up the new Protestantism. The Spanish felt compelled to expand the ancient Faith with zealous fervor, whereas the English felt compelled to subject and harass the Catholics as inferior. This global expansion of colonial powers presented differing worldviews. First of all, the Spanish sought to draw in and assimilate the indigenous peoples into the broader Catholic community (and one need only visit any Latin American country to see how well the indigenous were integrated). By contrast, the English sought more to colonize than to incorporate, and thus they segregated themselves, and saw the natives as a source of trade, forced labor, and potential allies in war.

OUR FIVE GEORGIA MARTYRS

THE LAND OF THE GUALE

Moreover, the Spanish missionaries typically preferred not to garrison or arm their missions if they could avoid it, whereas the English would, as a matter of policy, arm the native peoples and pull them into an arm's race and into wider struggles for land. Sadly, with regards to the expanding English slave trade, native peoples were either voluntarily or involuntarily compelled to take sides. There were those who raided and those who were enslaved. Spanish conquistadors had initially enslaved local natives, but they were eventually forbidden to do so by the pope. The Protestant English were not inhibited by any international law proposed by the Vatican. So while the Spanish had worked for nearly a century to build missions for the native peoples, the English and their indigenous allies harassed, raided, and ultimately destroyed those missions. Those natives the English assumed to be aligned with Catholic Spain were captured, branded, and sold into servitude. By contrast, the popes in Rome had declared the indigenous "Indians" free, and forbade them to be enslaved in Spanish lands. So while the Spanish missions had been primarily a religious outreach, they were ultimately conquered by the British, and lost to history. The American Indian tribes who survived (the Creeks and the Cherokee) had been aligned with the British (the English would later call their allies "the civilized tribes), whereas the ones that did not survive (like the Guale) were aligned with the Spanish.

By 1684, English pirates operating out of the fourteen year old town of Charleston had destroyed what was left of the Spanish Missions of Georgia, and in 1704, the English governor of Carolina burned down St. Augustine, and then commenced to destroy the missions to the Apalachee and enslave those Catholic natives of northern Florida. Thus was the Georgia coast almost depopulated by 1733 when James Oglethorpe founded the English settlement of Savannah (where, by the way, Catholics were legally excluded). This was how maps were drawn in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries.

All of this helps explain how frustrating it is to look at modern maps and try to postulate the locations of these lost missions. So beware, our map is a speculation based on other maps, and may only add to the confusion. It is safe to say that the missions existed, and that some of the missions are known by archaeologists. Perhaps in time, they will all be found, and we hope that will be the case, as they have historical importance, not to mention buried Catholics in holy ground.

Thus did the Guale enter into the annals of written history as Europeans were advancing their empires throughout the world, and the Guale found

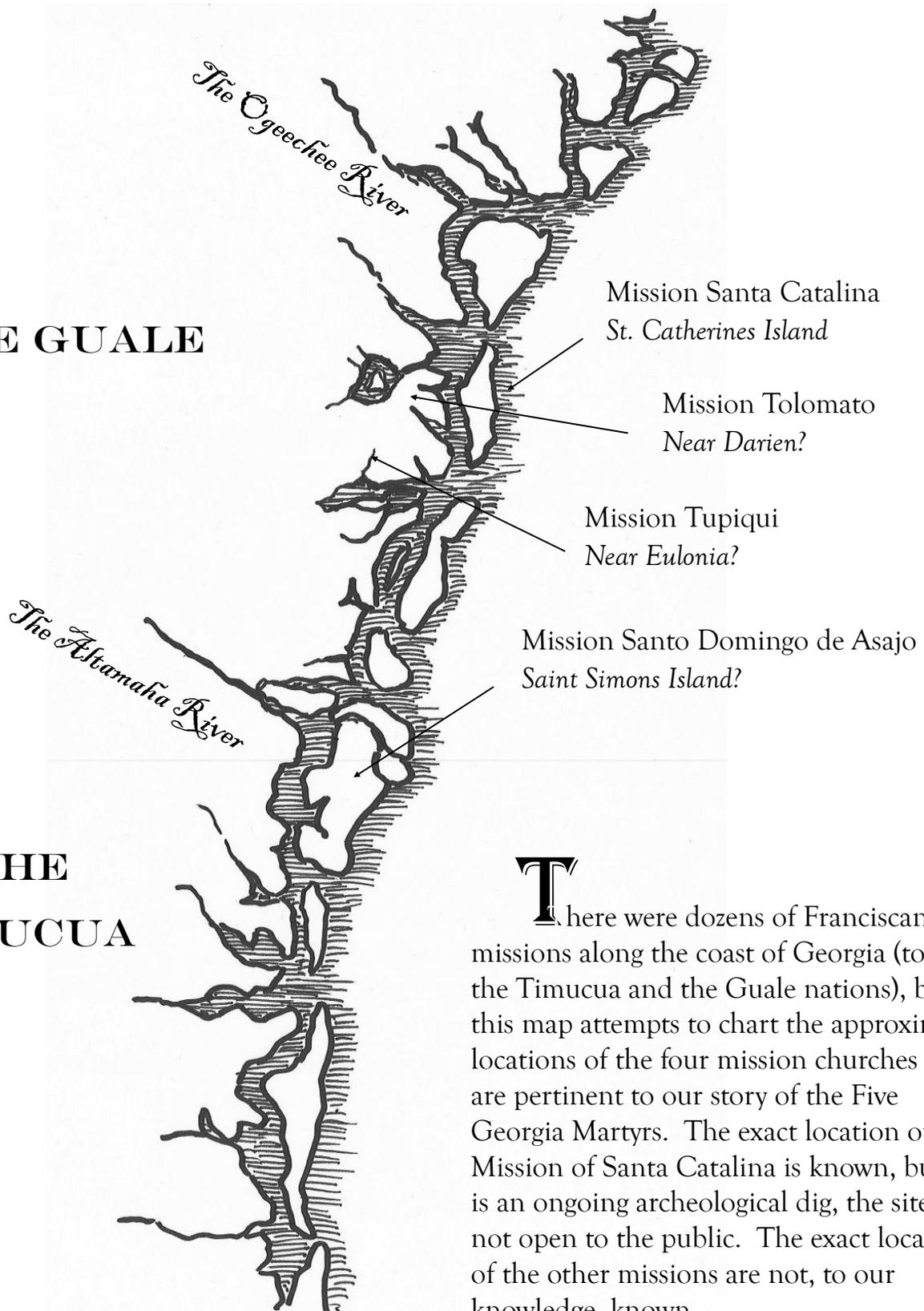
themselves geographically in a part of the world that was disputed between the Spanish and the English. The first long-term settlement of Europeans to really establish itself in any lasting way is our nation's oldest continuously occupied city, Spanish colonial St. Augustine. From there, the Spanish missionaries fanned out as they sought to preach the Gospel. The Jesuit missionaries were the first to write down the Guale language, but soon thereafter, the Franciscan friars took up the missionary work in coastal Georgia. For 116 years, the Spanish missionaries served the Guale, building numerous missions, along with missions for various other tribes of neighboring natives. The Guale were not as settled as were the Apalachee peoples and other tribes, so sometimes the Guale rebelled, perhaps urged on by global players, and they found themselves being used as pawns in geopolitical chess. But the Franciscans clearly loved the Guale, and gave their lives to bring them the Gospel and the sacraments. The story of our martyrs is not a story to shame the Guale, but only to show the depth of the love those priests, and priests before and after, showed the Guale. When we focus on the Five Martyrs, we focus on the year 1597, but the Guale story does not end there. This is just one chapter in the forgotten annals of Spanish Georgia.

The pirates of the Caribbean would eventually become a source of harassment to the English crown, but they were initially something of an invention of the English monarchy in an overall naval strategy for dominance. A privateer (or corsair) was an Englishman who owned his own ship, and who was encouraged to raid, plunder, and wreak havoc upon Spanish trade routes and its vessels of commerce for all the treasure or booty he could thus acquire. The English crown would profit from the captured cargo and stolen goods, but had invested nothing save for a royal letter giving the privateer immunity in English courts and thus a veil of legitimacy to murder, enslave, rape, terrorize, and destroy. Queen Elizabeth I encouraged and developed the privateers, because it allowed her diplomatic cover to officially deny culpability when Spain protested. After Elizabeth Tudor, the Stuart dynasty no longer sanctioned piracy, and even sought to stop privateering, though the rogue pirate's legacy was not so easily ended. England was not the first to profit from piracy, nor would it be the last, but these privateers are part and parcel of our story of the destruction of the Spanish Missions. The ports of Charleston and Savannah and the islands of our southeastern shores were in the realm of the Caribbean pirates at the time, and so stories of treasure islands remain part of our maritime lore here in Georgia.

SOME OF THE LOST MISSIONS OF GEORGIA

THE FRANCISCAN MISSIONS

THE GUALE



THE TIMUCUA

There were dozens of Franciscan missions along the coast of Georgia (to both the Timucua and the Guale nations), but this map attempts to chart the approximate locations of the four mission churches that are pertinent to our story of the Five Georgia Martyrs. The exact location of the Mission of Santa Catalina is known, but as it is an ongoing archeological dig, the site is not open to the public. The exact locations of the other missions are not, to our knowledge, known.

OUR FIVE GEORGIA MARTYRS

THE FRANCISCAN MISSIONS

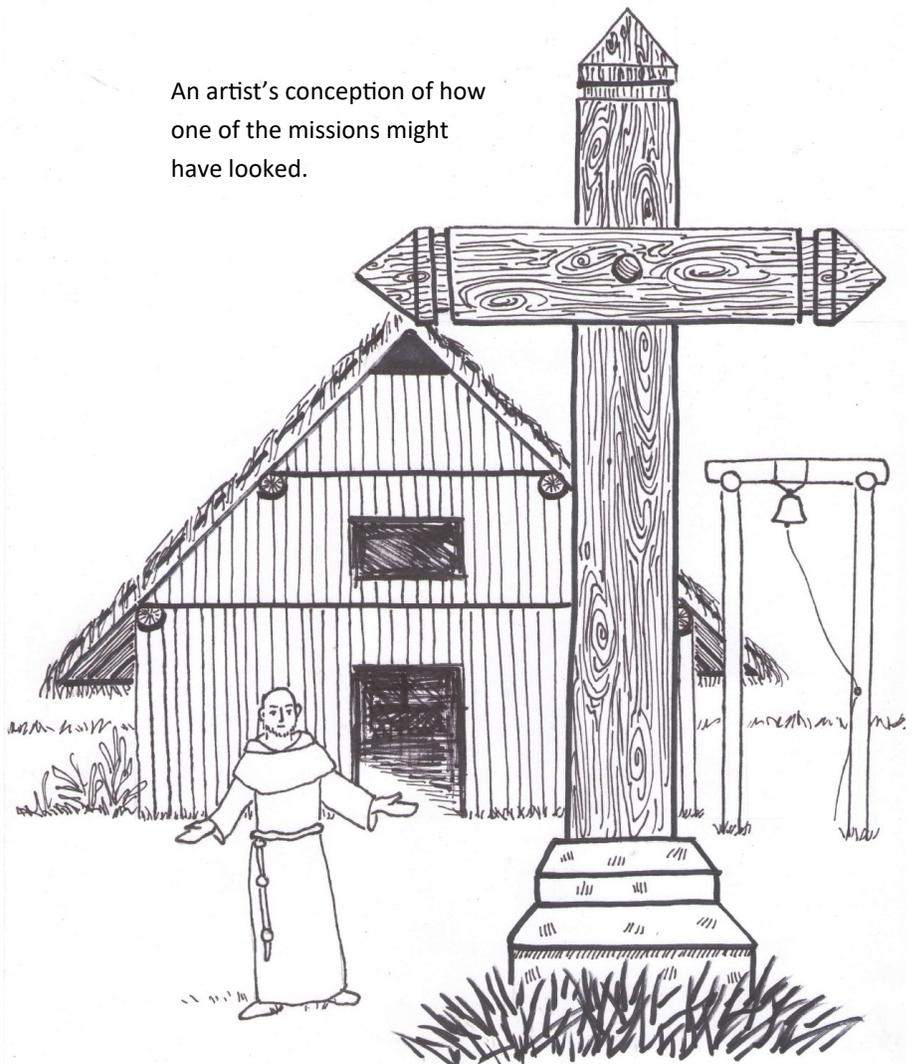
The Spanish Missions of Georgia were all burned to the ground by English pirates centuries ago. Even the knowledge of the whereabouts of the sites of these once thriving Catholic communities is, for the most part, lost. The indigenous people the missions served (like the Apalachee, the Timucua, the Guale, and others) were wiped out by the English, and with them, the memory of their customs and heritage. The low country woodlands have reclaimed these sites, but there had been dozens of Spanish missions along the coast of what is today Georgia, and in some cases, these missions were already a century or more old when the Spanish missionaries began to establish their missions on the west coast of California.

Because the living memory and sites are lost in history, we are left to speculate to some extent about how the missions might have looked. Archaeologists help us now and then when they find the sites and study them. The Catholic Church is also good at keeping lists and records that help us piece things together. We also have other Franciscan missions in similar places that did survive that help us complete the picture.

We know that the churches were painted white, made out of timber, and wattle and daub, with thatched roofs. They would have had mission bells, a mission cross, plazas, and a convent for the friars. Often times, the chief's house and council house would face the mission churches. Inside, the missions would have looked a lot like our own parish church with a high altar, an ambo, holy pictures, a baptismal font, and a confessional.

But missions were more than just a place where the Guale would come to Mass and daily prayers. They were whole villages filled with the Catholic faithful, and beneath the mission church's sandy floor were buried their Catholic forebears.

An artist's conception of how one of the missions might have looked.



OUR FIVE GEORGIA MARTYRS MISSIONARIES TO THE GUALE!

What were the missions like?

This requires some speculation, of course, as there are no extant drawings. Moreover, the missions were crude in the beginning and more developed over time, so it is hard to know what exact moment to freeze the missions in our speculation. This is always the case when you interpret the past. So what follows will be somewhat idealized.

The Franciscans would no doubt use the same construction materials as their native congregants, but they also likely would have built buildings that would have been distinguished in style from the more vernacular buildings of the Indians. It is likely that the missions would have looked different in size and style depending upon how old they were, and how large a community they served. It is probable that the Franciscans started building with wood and thatch, planked walls, and wattle and daub, but the friars might have one day rebuilt the walls with tabby or something more permanent (though tabby isn't all that permanent and would not have survived until today). The Guale of the Mission in Tolomato, when they were forced to relocate to St. Augustine, built a new Mission church with a thatched roof and a four story belfry, so while we don't know what their original church looked like, we might deduce what it looked like given how they built their second church.

If the scale and size of the reconstructed Mission of San Luis in Tallahassee (admittedly a large community) is indicative of things, we can imagine an impressive church on a great plaza, and nearby a small convent for the friars with a detached kitchen, and dormitories for the friars to sleep. We are told that Fray Pedro was martyred in the convent in the early hours before Mass. In the convent, the friars would have taught their people the prayers, their catechism, given lessons in literacy (including Latin), and taught their community how to sing the chants for the Mass and for Vespers.

The coastal islands are sand. There is no stone to use for building. So while these buildings might have been more primitive than those in other parts of the New World, we need not imagine that they were simply crude. It may well be that the architect Fray Andres de San Miguel, a Franciscan lay brother from the Pueblo monastery in Mexico, could have been called upon to design these buildings. Our Georgia Missions were remote, but the Catholic Church has always been international and global (and Fray Andres de San Miguel had once been shipwrecked in

Georgia). We will likely never know exactly what our missions looked like, and we don't even know where most of them were, but we need not assume they were unimpressive or lacking in beauty.



The excavations at the site of the Santa Catalina mission have enabled archaeologists to determine where the buildings were located. We can clearly see that a wonderful community existed around a prominent mission church.

There would have been holy pictures or paintings, and possibly even statues. One of Saint Anthony even was reported to have survived the burning of the church. The Franciscans were Catholic missionaries and they would have understood the importance of art in evangelizing folks. Oft times, paintings would have been gifts from the king of Spain to the chiefs and the peoples of the new missions. The Spanish word for holy pictures or icons is *retablo*, and the Catholic churches in Spain were filled with beautiful art at this time. There is no reason to think the missionaries to Georgia would not have wanted their congregations to foster the arts and they would have quite naturally wanted their mission churches to have been as beautiful as they could.

We know the style of the vestments the priests would have worn (small "Roman" chasubles with maniples and crossed-over stoles). They were given to the missions by the Spanish king. We know from reports that they would have used silver chalices.

We know the music they would have chanted at Mass. The Franciscans would have formed *scholas* of the best singers to chant the propers of the Mass, and to lead the community in Vespers every night. They likely knew the *Pater* in the Mozarabic chant and would have sung it in Latin. As the Spanish missions in Georgia were being suppressed, at about the same time, the Spanish missions in California were being founded, so from what scholars know from the California missions, they have a pretty good idea of how extraordinarily beautiful and sophisticated the music of the mission churches in the Colonial Spanish world would have been at the time.

Excavations at the Mission Santa Catalina reveal a rectangular central plaza, a church, a convent, and a kitchen. There were two churches found. The first one was burned in 1597, the year of the rebellion, together with the convent. Another church was built in 1604. When the convent was rebuilt, they built a separate kitchen. The church



OUR FIVE GEORGIA MARTYRS MISSIONARIES TO THE GUALE!

What were the missions like?

was a single nave plan (there was no transept or chancel), and was made of wooden planking on the elevated sanctuary end, and wattle-and-daub in the nave. There was a sacristy where the wheat hosts used in the Mass were stored. Those faithful who died were buried beneath the sandy floor of the church, where archeologists found not only skeletons of buried Catholics, but also dozens of crosses, medallions, medals and rings, some rosaries and tens of thousands of beads that might have been sewn into the clothing of the Guale or otherwise worn as jewelry. Archaeologists also found fragments of bronze bells that had been deliberately destroyed, likely in the 1597 rebellion. The artifacts from the Mission went to the Fernbank Museum of Natural History in Atlanta, and the remains of the Catholic Guale were reinterred or reburied at the old site of the church.

OUR FIVE GEORGIA MARTYRS

THE SACRAMENT

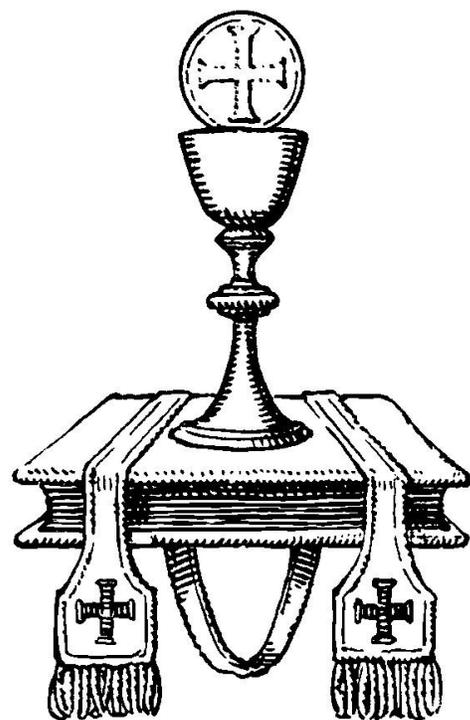
OF HOLY MATRIMONY

Today, in our world, there is so much confusion about marriage. We forget the clear teachings of our Lord and of His Church that marriage is reserved for one man and one woman, that it is for life, and that it is meant to be a Holy Sacrament of the Church, wherein the Church can bless the union of two baptized Christians who begin a life together as husband and wife. The priest presides at the wedding, but it is the man and woman who confect the Sacrament of Marriage by entering into a covenant with each other and the Lord. Their love is meant to be both unitive and procreative, that is, their love should be opened to the reality of children. While not every married couple can have children, all Catholics should see children as a blessing by which their love is manifested in new life. Children are our future, and without them, we have no future at all.

Perhaps not surprisingly then, at the time of our Five Georgia Martyrs, the great Sacrament of Holy Matrimony was also misunderstood. The new Protestant sects that were forming in the sixteenth century argued that marriage was just a contract between two persons and that the state, not the Church, should be the one who oversaw it as a legal contract. Martin Luther, a priest who started the Protestant Reformation in Germany and eventually married a nun, was not interested in what the Church had to say about marriage. The English king, Henry VIII, wanted a divorce from his Spanish queen, Catherine of Aragon, and when the pope would not give it to him, he, too, broke away from Rome.

Regardless of what the Protestants said, the Catholic Church held firm to the truth that marriage is a Sacrament in the eyes of God, and that it is something not to be trifled with. And so, when the Guale prince, Juanillo, insisted that he could have multiple wives and that the Church should accept it, our Spanish Missionaries stood up heroically for the teachings of the Church. For this reason, they were martyred.

As Catholics, our Church's teaching on marriage has often been at odds with the world's fickle notions about things, but we are meant to be steadfast voices in our day and age, too. We must stand up for the truth of the Sacrament of Marriage which models how much the Lord loves His own bride, the Church. Today, when we stand up to defend marriage, we may find ourselves, like our Georgia Martyrs, at odds with the madness of our world.



Defining Marriage / Defending Marriage.

Some people today have lost faith in the institution of marriage. Some have never known of a strong, lasting marriage, or maybe they have been wounded by divorce, either their own or their parents'. The culture itself has lost its way and its ability to defend marriage. Many couples move in together and don't even bother getting married, because they have no belief in the institution. So, not surprisingly, four out of ten children are now born to unwed mothers. In 2010, the national census indicated that the number of children living in single-parent homes had nearly doubled since 1960. Nearly one third of our young people are being raised today without a father, nearly five million without a mother. They grow up without any understanding at all of what it means to be a part of a traditional family. All of this has led to many problems: increased poverty, increased crime, increased illiteracy; the list goes on and on. The woundedness of our society is more than troubling when it comes to our broken notions of marriage and family.

Still, the Church has not lost hope in the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. While marriage is about the only institution on earth that is older than our Church, the Church also seems to be its last defender. Our Church teaches that the traditional family is the basic building block of human society, so when we undermine the institution of marriage, or try to redefine it, we are actually weakening our own culture. It is, therefore, essential for us as Catholics to defend traditional marriage, and especially Christian or Sacramental Marriage.

Sometimes, our Lord Jesus Christ deliberately spoke in parables. When asked why he used parables, He replied, "...because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand." But on some subjects, He left nothing unclear, and one such subject was marriage. He tells us from the beginning of creation, marriage was preordained by God to be between one man and one woman who would become one flesh, and that this union is indissoluble. Couples are to remain chaste until marriage, and when they are married in the Church, their love is to be life-giving. While the fall in the Garden of Eden has wounded humanity, as Christians, we are meant to live out this life to its fullest. When we do, it is a source of grace to the world.

Given the clarity of our Lord's teaching on marriage, not surprisingly, the Catholic Church sees divorce as destructive to not only our families, but also our community. Moreover, polygamy (which is the pre-Christian idea that one man can and should have multiple wives) is something that the Catholic Church has had to continuously fight, especially in places where the Gospel is new. Our Five Georgia Martyrs were taking the light of the Gospel to a pagan world. They had to make it clear that once someone accepts the Gospel and is baptized, he must be

ruled by the statutes and beliefs of the Church (even if he is a prince).

Polygamy is making a comeback in the west. Some have argued that our divorcing and remarrying is a kind of serial monogamy or staggered polygamy, and maybe it is. Regardless, our Christian understanding of marriage is clearly being challenged.

Keep in mind that our Christian notion of marriage is different from that in other parts of the world. Confucianism is polygamous. So is Islam. Muhammad, the founder of Islam, was a polygamist who married fifteen women (one only 13 years old). He also had numerous concubines. Even today, the king of Saudi Arabia has four wives (he has had over 30), and one of his ex-wives has spoken candidly about the conditions of her life in the palace. She was fifteen when she was married to the 48 year old king, and after having four daughters in four years, he divorced her as worthless because she produced no sons. Osama bin Laden, the infamous Saudi Arabian-born terrorist (and son of a billionaire and his tenth wife), was also a polygamist. He was married five or six times, divorced, separated, or had marriages annulled two or three times, and at the time of his death, had three wives (the youngest of whom was 25 years younger than he was). With all these wives, Osama bin Laden had twenty children.

Many of the old pagans of Europe (like the Celts) were polygamous before the coming of the Church. African and Native American tribes still practice polygamy. So, while the Church teaches monogamy, much of the world is polygamous in its traditions. About two billion women and children live in parts of the world where polygamy is still the rule. There are 150 countries where it is still legal, mostly in the Middle East and Africa. In these countries, the kings, sheiks, and chiefs tend to be polygamists, as well as religious leaders and politicians. In these situations, children often do not really know their fathers, whose attention is spread too thin. And now that the U.S. Supreme Court has re-defined marriage, polygamists are encouraged that their definition of marriage will also soon be accepted in the U.S.

Polygamy is detrimental to young men, who often cannot afford to compete with the rich old men who want more and more younger and younger wives. Co-wives are hardly equal to their husbands (how could they be?) and rarely do they live harmoniously with each other within such a complex family unit. Moreover, polygamy can also lead to high divorce rates (two Islamic countries have the highest and second-highest divorce rates in the world).

God created us, male and female, to join together in the Sacrament of Marriage and become one. He knows what will make us the happiest while on earth. He has told us. Will we ever listen?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

THE ANGLO-SPANISH WAR (1585-1604)

The Protestant English government supported the Protestant Dutch rebellion against their Catholic Spanish King, and that precipitated this global conflict. Off and on for nearly twenty years, Spain and England were locked in a global game of geopolitical warfare that accompanied the rise of Protestantism, the failed Spanish Armada, and the subsequent failed English Armada. As Spain continued to expand its global sphere, the emerging English were also keen to establish colonies in the New World, but during this time, it was mostly a war of unofficial harassment (aka piracy). Britain had attempted to plant a colony in Roanoke in 1584, but it was mysteriously lost to history almost immediately. Virginia and South Carolina would later be established in 1606 and 1629, but in the meantime, English ships could and would disrupt trade, thwart missionary expansion, and in all of this, our Georgia Missions were left in



ruin. It was Francis Drake, the English pirate (or privateer) who attacked many Spanish ships and forts in the Caribbean, capturing silver and gold plunder along the way. It was he who burned St. Augustine to the ground in 1586. The Spanish called Drake "*el Draque*" (meaning "the Dragon"), but Queen Elizabeth I knighted him. The England that fought this

war was not the "measured" and "orderly" House of Hanover, but the cruel and cunning reign of the Tudor queen, Elizabeth I, whose tyranny was ruthless to all things Catholic. In her realm, Elizabeth I was rooting out Catholicism and executing priests and religious. Her father, Henry VIII, had had no scruples in destroying thousand year old English monasteries. In light of this, the English would not countenance Catholicism, Catholic priests, or Catholic missions anywhere they wanted to colonize. While this global quasi-war ended more or less in a stalemate, the conflict defined the times in which our martyrdoms occurred. After the Anglo-Spanish War, the English began to put down roots and establish plantations in the American South, and over a century later, Georgia would become a Protestant English colony.

THE MISSIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The Spanish expansion into the New World (our America) is sometimes called the Age of Discovery. This was an evangelical effort, as its major impetus was to spread the Gospel to the indigenous people. Then, as now, the secular and ecclesial worlds overlapped, so there were worldly men who operated often at cross-purposes to the missionaries. But Catholics (in theory)

must ultimately submit to the authority of the pope. Today, many American Catholics live their lives contrary to the teachings of the Church, and so we should not be surprised that such was the case during the Age of Discovery. But the effort to evangelize was sincere, and the Franciscan, Jesuit, and Dominican missionaries were truly leading the charge for a spiritual conquest of the New World.

Slavery was a part of the conquest of the New World almost from the beginning. The rules of war dictated that slavery was more just than genocide, so conquistadors and governors used that as an excuse to enforce labor. We should not imagine that slavery did not already exist within the vast empire of the Aztecs, but the Spanish conquistadors also enslaved the indigenous peoples. It was a Dominican missionary, Antonio de Montesinos (d. 1545) who began to denounce all forms of enslavement of the indigenous peoples, and many voices of missionaries were added to his. Why should the priests strive to save souls if the men of the world were just going to enslave them? So back home in the Spanish universities, theologians and philosophers began to develop a defense of human rights of the colonized indigenous peoples. These Catholic scholars chastened the crown and worldly men whose search for treasure needed to be checked. Moreover, the Catholic theologians of Spain believed that no one should be conquered and forced into baptism. Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared in 1531 and brought about the peaceful mass conversions of the Mexican peoples at amazing rate. The pope declared the rights of the indigenous people and in many ways this was the birth of the Human Rights movement and of modern International Law. Thus, we should see the missionaries as defenders of the native peoples.



There are five martyrs in Georgia, but their story is told by another (a sixth man, Fray Francisco de Avila). He was himself enslaved by the Guale and treated most basely, but he escaped and lived to tell the story of Juanillo and the Guale rebellion. Still, Fray Francisco de Avila was reluctant to tell the story, because he feared the government might seek reprisal and wipe out the Guale. Under absolute obedience, Fray Francisco de Avila finally told his story months later, but this shows how the missionaries (even when they themselves were enslaved or murdered by the Guale) were such strong advocates for the native peoples they strove to serve.

THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY

While Tomas de Luis Victoria was composing some of the most beautiful music of the Counter Reformation,

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

and while St. Teresa of Avila and St. Juan de la Cruz were busy reforming the Carmelites, Franciscan Friars were exploring the wilderness of La Florida (including modern day Florida, Georgia, and the Carolinas), making contact with the indigenous people and establishing missions among them. In the New World, another priest from Avila, the Franciscan missionary Fray Francisco de Avila, who alone survived the massacre of the Juanillo rebellion, began to shed some light upon the events of the martyrdom of his five conferrers whom history knows as the Five Georgia Martyrs. The story of Fray Francisco de Avila's humiliating captivity, torture, and enslavement gives us some insight into just how vicious the Guale Revolt was towards the missionaries. His own plight was later substantiated by the sworn legal testimony of others. Without his survival, we would know virtually nothing regarding the Five Georgia Martyrs. One might wonder how he knew all that he did. Perhaps his captors themselves bragged upon the details of these martyrdoms, or faithful Catholics whispered the stories to him of how the others had died? Perhaps the stories came to him through those who sought forgiveness (which would have explained his insistence upon silence). For whatever reason, the story came months after he returned to civilization. So disturbed was he by the incident, and so fearful that his words would bring reprisals against the Guale, and perhaps for reasons all his own unknown to us, he was most reluctant to tell the story, and what we have is a secondhand recounting of his report, and yet it paints quite a picture. If Francisco de Avila was reluctant to tell the story at all, we might imagine we have just what he chose to share, and no more. The missing details might have been seen as too potentially incendiary, inflammatory, or provoking, so the friar may have given us just enough to be obedient. Still, with but these details, we have a heroic story. Keep in mind the Franciscans were not desirous of revenge. They had a fatherly love for the Guale that advocated for clemency and forgiveness, and wanted to protect the Guale from the government of Spain, which was (quite understandably) seeking justice.

SLAVERY & CATHOLICISM

Slavery is not new, and it is not over. Today in our world, there are millions of slaves, usually children and women sadly caught up in the sex trade. Most of this sex trade is in Africa, the Middle East, and the East, but it is not unknown in the United States. The history as regards slavery and the Catholic Church is a complex one, and there has not always been consistency throughout the centuries. First, the New Testament does not prohibit slavery, but it does declare the slave equal to his master in the eyes of God, which was a radical teaching.

The Christian calls Christ his Master, and Christ took upon Himself the form of a slave, and He redeems us from the slavery of sin, so throughout the New Testament the notion of slavery is intertwined. The Bible condemns the slave trader, and commends the master to receive the newly baptized slave as a brother.

Certainly the Church's first converts included slaves, and some went on to become bishops and martyrs and recognized as saints. Callistus I (d. 223) was himself a former slave, a pope, a martyr, and a saint. Early on, the Church would marry men and women from various social classes, and was an agent in serious social reform in the empire. St. Augustine had said it was not in conformity with natural law, but slavery existed then (just as it does now), so the Church strove to reach out as humanely as possible, and slowly change the world through grace. St. Patrick had himself been captured and enslaved by the Celts, and he condemned the institution without ambiguity. In the Middle Ages, the European sentiment was that slavery was incompatible with Christian charity and justice, and almost all Christians would have thought it abominable to enslave other Christians. Still, at times, the Church accommodated the reality of slavery while working towards abolition and change within the various cultures and societies in which she entered.

If slavery was a problem in Europe, it was usually because Europe was where folks went to get slaves. Often times, it was the Church that sought to redeem slaves scooped up from the coasts of Europe by pagans or Muslims, and pressed into service in northern Africa or on galley ships. In the Middle Ages, the shores of Europe were almost bereft of settlements as folks moved deeper into the interior of the continent to escape being enslaved. As late as 1801, the new U.S.A. fought the Barbary War and the Marines bombed Tripoli and Morocco, Algiers and Tunis to stop the Arab slave trade of Christians.

But slavery was not always and everywhere the same. Sometimes people would even sell themselves into slavery to pay off debts and avoid worse conditions. Still, Europe became less and less tolerable of slavery in general. While in most cases slavery was not part of the European world, during the wars with Islam, slavery was permitted. Spain had re-taken its nation from the Muslims, and slavery was a part of that struggle. The papacy, almost anticipating the discovery of the new world, condemned slavery of the native blacks of the Canary Islands in 1435, but slavery nevertheless became a part of the Age of Discovery. With the depopulation of the indigenous peoples in parts of the New World, some Europeans turned to Africa for slave labor to help develop the new world. These slaves were sold by African slavers and African kings for the most part. The popes might have called it unjust, but that did not mean every Catholic (or for that matter even every bishop) was in agreement. And so the first

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

African slaves were brought to the New World in 1501. It was unjust; it was sad. But there are many fine Americans living here now whose ancestors were brought over as slaves, so in many ways, while we can be ashamed of slavery, we can also be respectful of the resilience of these people. Certainly their story is our American story, and a story of survival and even eventual success.

The papacy condemned slavery and reminded Catholics that slaves were created in the image and likeness of God, and deserved to be treated with dignity. As a result, people in Catholic countries tended to treat slaves less harshly, and were less racist than those in non-Catholic countries. In Catholic countries, slaves were baptized, taught their catechism, and became part of the society, whereas in English Protestant countries, there were harder racial lines drawn, and in some places, it was illegal to baptize or educate a slave.

Catholicism's international outreach meant that racism was an unsustainable worldview and impossible to really reconcile with the notion that all should be one, whereas the more nationalistic Protestant sects were insular, and saw Catholicism as foreign. If these new religions equated their churches with being English or German, then they would naturally be more inclined to have a somewhat xenophobic view of the foreign, and to associate good and proper Christianity with only their "race."

In 1537, the papacy again issued a clear teaching against the enslavement of the newly found indigenous peoples of the New World. The Vatican was acknowledging that before now, slavery had not been so ethnic (or racist), but this new idea of enslaving whole peoples based on their race was clearly repugnant to Christian teaching. Ancient Roman slavery had not been racial. Any unfortunate soul could become a slave, but this new concept of slavery emerging with the new world was more and more racial, and thus utterly unjust. So again, in 1839, the Church condemned the slave trade. Sadly, the final end of the trans-Atlantic slave trade did not stop African slavery. The kings and slave traders simply turned east and continued trading with the Muslims. And even still, slavery continues in Africa and beyond, so let's not pretend it is over. This is still an issue we need to face in our own age! Finally, in the end, if we could all do our family ancestry as far back as a hundred generations, we would find we ALL have kings in our heritage, and we ALL have slaves in our heritage, because we are all one.

SAVING SAVAGE PAGAN SOULS

The word "savage" derives from the French word for "forest dweller." The word "pagan" derives from the Latin word for "country dweller." These words have a

pejorative meaning to many, but they do not necessarily have to be read as such. If, in the past, these terms were abused and overused to mean cruel or beastly, then let us now admit that there is also a modern prejudice held by often supposedly educated people that the pre-Columbian people were all peaceful and loving and that they only learned violence and war and even scalping from the Spaniards. This is patently absurd and embarrassingly stupid. Put bluntly, the pre-Columbian people *needed* the Gospel. The Spaniard conquistadors were tough as iron to be sure, but they were shocked at the brutality of the Aztecs and others, who enslaved folks, practiced human sacrifice on an epic scale, and were outright cannibals. On one level, the Aztecs were one of the most advanced civilizations in the world, but on another, the most barbarous.

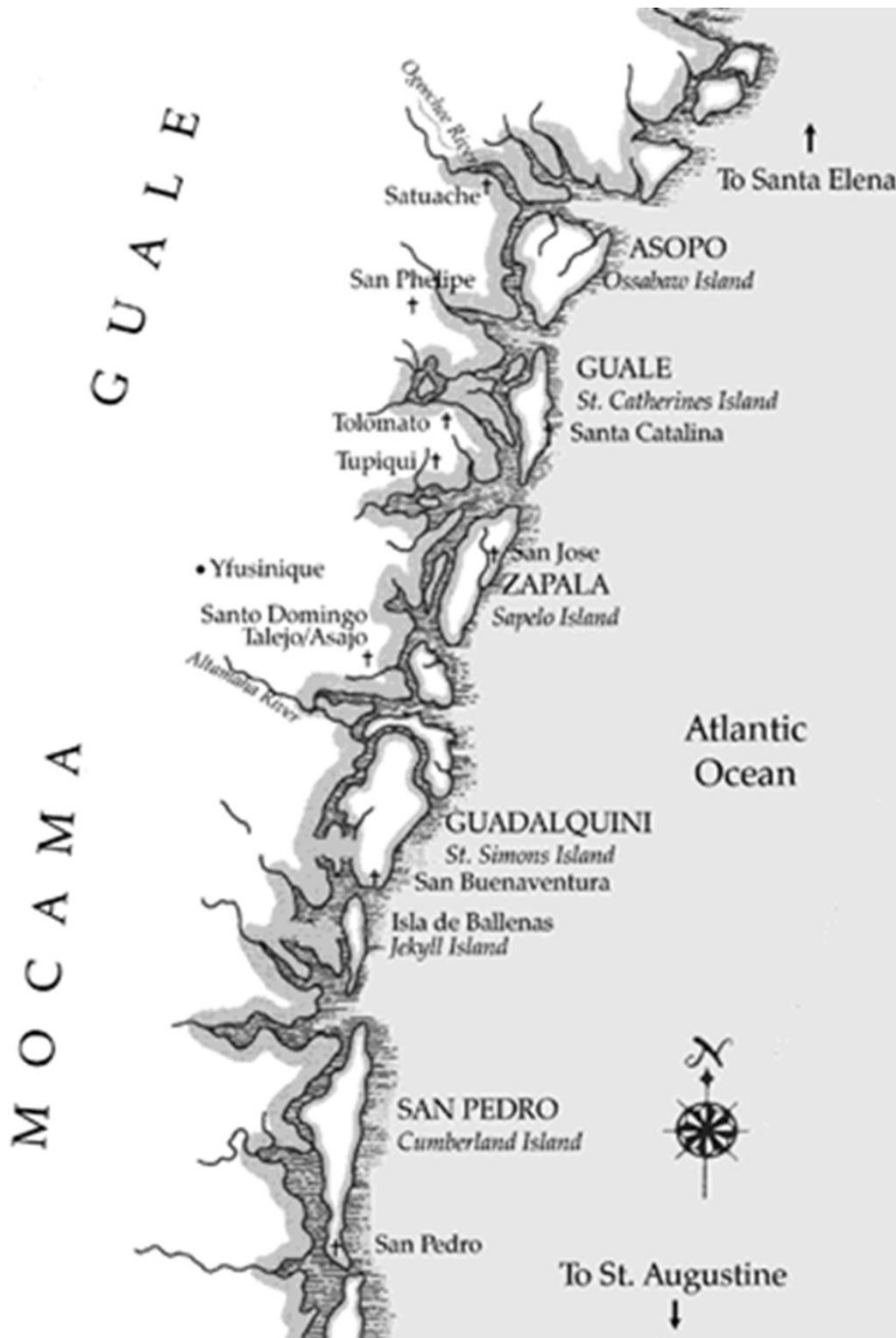
Thus, Spanish missionaries to the New World were under no illusions about the dangers they faced, and while the Guale people were by no means as cruel as the Aztecs, they were capable of great cruelty (as the story of the Five Georgia Martyrs demonstrates). The Franciscan friars knew this. They went in with their eyes wide open. And they loved the Guale! In order to understand the motivations of the Franciscan missionaries, one must understand their belief (indeed our belief) that the Gospel needs to be preached for the salvation of souls. Our martyrs suffered under no delusion of universalism. These friars were anxious to preach the Gospel to bring the Guale to salvation. No one would have lived the life these friars lived except that they truly believed the Gospel would change the world, and would bring them, and those they ministered to, into heaven.

We all tend to forget that in our own veins runs the blood of our pagan ancestors, who were no less in need of the Gospel, and by no means less cruel. One need only read the means of death of the apostles to see how cruelly the old world treated its first evangelists. The Gospel is about the least politically correct thing ever, and is rarely, if ever, welcomed by the powerful. In many ways, by looking at the Five Georgia Martyrs, we see in them a reminder of our need to revitalize the evangelical mission of the Church in our own times.

These missionaries are also an example to current-day priests who are sometimes not welcomed unanimously by their flock. The people of God can reject the very priests who give their lives for the sake of those very same people's salvation. The Five Georgia Martyrs were cruelly rejected, but at all times, their motivations were love of Christ, love of the Church, and love of their enemies (even their murderers), because the Franciscans understood that the Guale (even the Guale who sought their lives) were their brothers and sisters in Christ. To Him be the glory, and the power, forever and ever. Amen.

OUR FIVE GEORGIA MARTYRS

The Lost Spanish Missions of Georgia



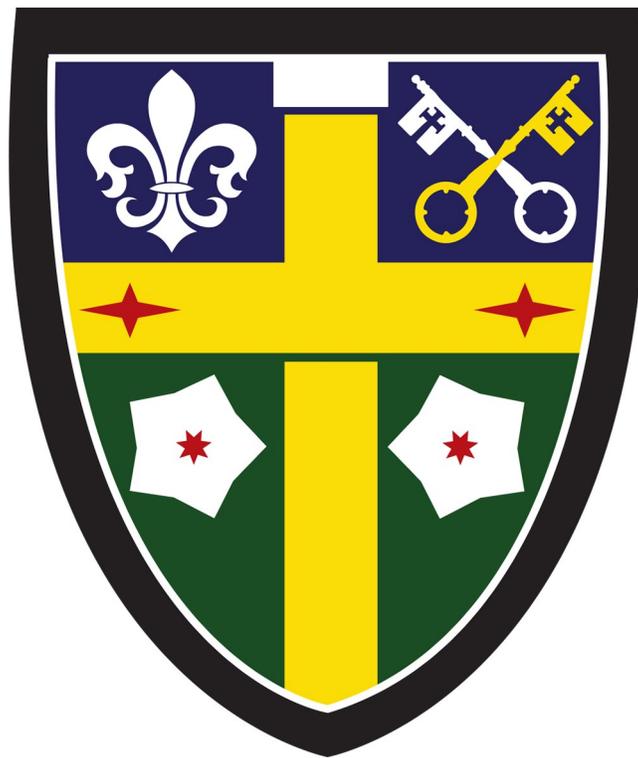
The illustrations in this book are by the catechist and children's book artist, Pamela Gardner. They are based on a retablo that is part of the parish patrimony of Our Lady of the Mountains Catholic Church in Jasper, Georgia. The retablo was painted by the Georgia native and Florida resident artist, Dan Nichols.

The research gathered in this Instructor's Guide was compiled by the pastor and catechists of Our Lady of the Mountains Catholic Church in Jasper. Dr. Paul Thigpen (the acting co-postulator for the cause of the Five Georgia Martyrs) was helpful in pulling together some of this work, and pointing to other resources. We hope we have been responsible compilers of the available historical accounts and known details, and that our work may further the cause of making known the heroic and saintly Franciscans.

Katheryn Ragan was also helpful with the archeological and anthropological aspects regarding the Guale, a people we have attempted to honor in the telling of this story. The pastor also visited many of the places on the Georgia coast in an effort to both glean from local traditions (few though they may be), but also speak to local historians in the area. While some of our research was original, much of it was aided by the work of many (often not specifically credited). This information was compiled in 2014, and subsequent research will no doubt cast a brighter light on some of the more obscure parts of our story.

We do not seek to profit from any of this material. We make this freely available in hopes that other parishes will use it freely to teach the Catholics of the American South about this important chapter in our Catholic heritage. You can find a coloring book student handout in both English and Spanish, and this Instructor's Guide on our website, olmjasper.com. Click on the *About* tab, then click on *Parochial Patrimony* and scroll to the links at the bottom and click on *Our Five Georgia Martyrs*.

OUR LADY OF
THE MOUNTAINS
ROMAN CATHOLIC
CHURCH



JASPER, GEORGIA