

November 30, 1544*

Fray Juan De Padilla, OFM



Fray Padilla was 28 years of age when he left Spain for Mexico in 1528. During 1529 and 1531, he accompanied the expeditions of Nuño de Guzman to Nueva Galicia and Culiacán, and prevented the oppression of the natives while acting as military chaplain.

From 1531 to 1540, Fray Padilla made missionary tours. He founded the convent of Tzapotlan, becoming its first superior, and erected another at Tuchpan, making it the headquarters for missionary friars. He established the monastery of Tulantcingo, governing it until 1540, when he resigned to follow Father Marcos de Niza, the discoverer of Arizona and New Mexico. It was later that same year that he began serving as chaplain on the expeditions lead by Francisco Vasquez de Coronado.

On June 29, 1541, the Coronado entourage crossed a turbulent river (the Arkansas). After crossing the river, Fray Padilla offered a Mass, the first in what is now Kansas, at a location east of present-day Dodge City.

He engaged in missionary work at a village of Quivira Indians near the present site of Lyons. He returned to the village the following year. After serving as a missionary here for some time, Fray Padilla spoke of visiting a neighboring Kansa tribe, an enemy of the Quivira. Despite protests, Fray Padilla and his aides departed. Two days later, the party was attacked by hostile warriors. Fray Padilla's body was pierced by arrows.

Father Padilla is considered the protomartyr of the Americas. The exact date and place of his death are not known.

*Source: the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1913 edition.