



### **Saint Peter Chanel – (1803 – April 28, 1841)**

Anyone who has worked in loneliness, with great adaptation required and with little apparent success, will find a kindred spirit in Peter Chanel.

Born in France, Peter's interest in the missions began in school, when he read letters missionaries to America sent back home. As a young priest, Peter revived a parish in a "bad" district by the simple method of showing great devotion to the sick. Wanting to be a missionary, he joined the Society of Mary, the Marists, at 28. Obediently, he taught in the seminary for five years. Then, as superior of seven Marists, he traveled to Western Oceania. The bishop accompanying the missionaries left Peter and a brother on Futuna Island northeast of Fiji, promising to return in six months. He was gone five years.

Meanwhile, Peter struggled with this new language and mastered it, making the difficult adjustment to life with whalers, traders, and warring natives. Despite little apparent success and severe want, he maintained a serene and gentle spirit, plus endless patience, and courage. A few natives had been baptized, a few more were being instructed. When the chieftain's son asked to be baptized, persecution by the chieftain reached a climax. Father Chanel was clubbed to death.

Within two years after his death, the whole island became Catholic and has remained so. He was canonized by Pope Pius XII in 1954. Peter Chanel is the first martyr of Oceania and its patron.

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**Reflection** - Suffering for Christ means suffering because we are like Christ. Very often the opposition we meet is the result of our own selfishness or imprudence. We are not martyrs when we are "persecuted" by those who merely treat us as we treat them. A Christian martyr is one who, like Christ, is simply a witness to God's love, and brings out of human hearts the good or evil that is already there.

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### **Saint Peter Chanel is the Patron Saint of:**

Oceania