

St. Rita's Centre

Augustinian Recollect Spirituality Centre

St. Rita's Centre Reg. Charity 232501

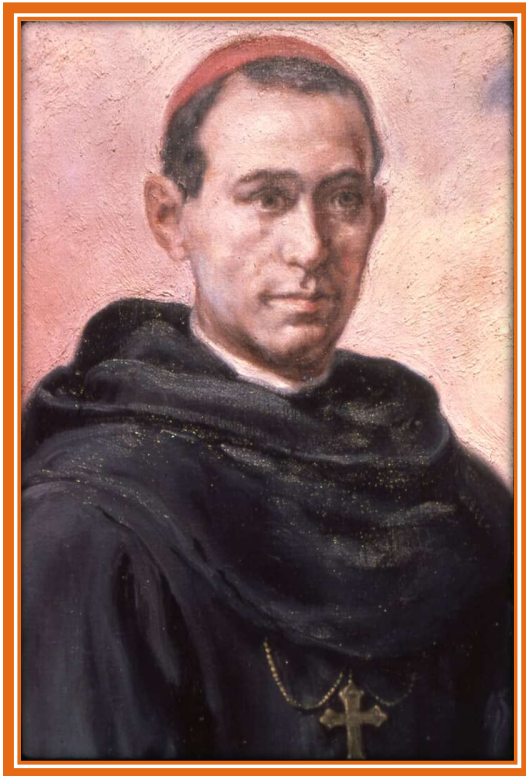
Ottery Moor Lane, Honiton EX14 1AP

01404 42635 (office) 01404 42601 (friary)

stritascentre@outlook.com

www.stritascentre.org

SAINT EZEKIEL MORENO OAR, PATRON SAINT OF CANCER PATIENTS



Dear friends and devotees,

God chooses the humble to do great things. Humble, indeed, was the man we want to introduce you to with this special newsletter: Saint Ezekiel Moreno, an Augustinian Recollect friar who laboured in the Philippines, Spain and Colombia, as a religious, a priest and later as bishop. During the latter part of his life he suffered many trials due to civil unrest, the persecution of the Church and the affliction of cancer. Throughout all these difficulties he remained a good shepherd to his people and a faithful disciple of the Lord.

Saint John Paul II said these words about him: *"Saint Ezekiel Moreno, by his life and evangelizing work, is a model for pastors, especially those of Latin America, who, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit wish to respond with new zeal, new means and a new expression to the great challenges which confront the Church of Latin America"* (Saint John Paul II).

Besides his great example of religious and apostolic life as an Augustinian Recollect friar, missionary priest, and bishop, **he is more popular among the faithful as a Patron Saint of cancer patients.** So many people, especially people who get cancer and their relatives, pray to Saint Ezekiel Moreno asking for relief and healing from this cruel and hard illness as well as for consolation and patience to bear this cross.

This year we are pleased to invite you to join in our novena prayers and Masses to Saint Ezekiel Moreno, that begins on 11th August and finishes with his Feast Mass on 19th August. I do hope that you will pray with us to Saint Ezekiel, asking for his intercession for us and for all the people close to us who suffer from cancer, and other diseases, including those who suffer from the coronavirus. The Augustinian Recollect community of Honiton will remember you all in the Mass on St. Ezekiel Moreno's feast day with a prayer of thanksgiving for your continued support.

Fr. Jose Romero OAR

SAINT EZEKIEL MORENO OAR

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES



St. Ezekiel arrives to the Philippines

Ezekiel Moreno was born in Alfaro, Spain, on April 9, 1848. He was the third child of a pious couple, poor in material goods but rich in virtue. His father, Felix, a tailor by trade, and his mother, Josefa Diaz, were models of dignity and Christian customs. They raised their five children with these very same principles of Christian life. Following the example of his older brother, Eustaquio, he received the habit of the Augustinian Recollects in the monastery of Monteagudo (Navarra, Spain) in 1864, and professed his vows on September 22, 1865.

Ezekiel was sent to the Philippines where he was ordained priest in 1871. He laboured there in different places for 15 years. The intensity of his religious life, his missionary and pastoral zeal and, in particular, his concern for the sick and abandoned impressed all who knew him. It was in the remote island of Palawan that he first contracted malaria that would accompany him around the world adding a new mortification to the austere ascetism he already practised.

In 1885, he was chosen to become the prior of the novitiate in Monteagudo, Spain, where he would help the future missionaries to form their consciences and inspire apostolic zeal in their hearts. Ezekiel got to Monteagudo shortly before a cholera epidemic struck the town and the monastery. Soon afterwards it would be a smallpox outbreak, then a famine because of the extreme poverty of the people. Ezekiel again took care of the sick and needy making this his priority. It is said that up to five hundred sick and hungry people would arrive at the priory on many days to be given what help could be provided by Ezekiel and his community. At the same time, he was anxious to deepen the religious devotional life of the neighbouring parishes where his work in the pulpit and the confessional was particularly appreciated.

In 1888 Ezekiel volunteered to lead a small group of Spanish friars in an attempt to revive the once thriving Recollect province in Colombia with its then neglected mission territory of Casanare. He restored the community religious life, re-established the novitiate and enhanced the pastoral ministry due in no small part to the long hours Ezekiel himself spent in pulpit, confessional and the care of the sick. Eventually he made a pastoral visitation to Casanare, where Ezekiel found great poverty, material and spiritual. An Apostolic Vicariate was created there to meet these needs, and in 1893 Ezekiel Moreno was named the first Vicar Apostolic of Casanare.



Fr. Ezekiel Moreno in 1894



Bishop Ezekiel Moreno (1894)

Early in 1895 Ezekiel was appointed bishop of Pasto, Colombia. His life there would be characterised by the same dedication to duty in the service of the Church and for the salvation of souls, the only thing that mattered to him. His own profound interior life, always directed towards God, and his love of contemplation attracted a group of like-minded souls around him. These he directed with clarity and wisdom along the paths of sanctity.

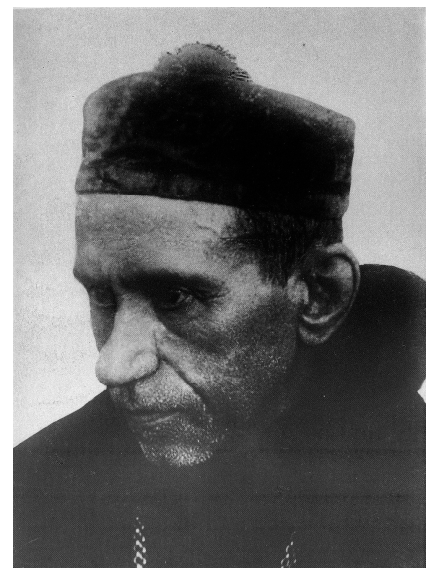
His life as bishop was not easy due to the horrors of a cruel civil war, a period of rising anticlericalism, and persecution of the Church. He suffered humiliations, rejections, calumnies, persecutions, and, even, as it seemed, a feeling of being abandoned by the authorities of the Church. It was to be an authentic “dark night” by which God purifies the soul calling it up to great sanctity.

In the year 1905 he was afflicted with a fatal malignant palatine-nasal cancer; it was to become an agonizing illness, a chalice of suffering. The physicians recommended that he travel to Europe for an operation, but he resisted saying, in his own words, that he “would rest gently in the arms of Jesus”. The pleas of the faithful, the priests and religious of the diocese finally convinced him to make the journey to Spain where he arrived early in the year 1906. In the month of February, he underwent an extremely painful operation performed almost entirely without anaesthetic. According to the surgeon, he withstood the pain with the heroism of a saint and blessed soul. The same operation was repeated in March of the same year. The operations were not successful, and his condition continued to deteriorate, with hearing and speech severely affected.

Aware of the fact that his days were coming to an end, Fr. Ezekiel Moreno returned to the monastery of Monteagudo, where, in a friar’s cell near the image of Our Lady of the Way, his beloved Mother, he spent his final hours offering his life to God.

From the 19th June he was confined to bed as the cancer got worse, taking over more and more of the brain, his eyesight failing too, the terrible suffering increasing for the final two months of his life. He received the Sacrament of Reconciliation and heard Mass every day in his room. He was eventually unable to communicate with anyone and his thoughts seemed all for the next life. His silent sermon was all about resignation and complete acceptance of God’s will. Food, eventually even water, became impossible to take. It took half an hour to administer the Viaticum.

Ezekiel died peacefully at half past eight on the morning of the 19th August, 1906. He was fifty-eight. Much suffering had been crammed into those years, all patiently accepted and offered up and Ezekiel Moreno had died a martyr in all but name. Bishop Ezekiel was buried in the church of the monastery of Our Lady of the Way in Monteagudo.



His last picture in 1906

PATRON SAINT OF CANCER PATIENTS

After his death, his reputation for holiness spread far and wide, particularly in Colombia. Many cures have been attributed to his intercession, especially among victims of cancer. Having been a victim of cancer himself, Saint Ezekiel is especially close to those who suffer from the same disease. In fact, two outstanding miracles were given in evidence of his holiness during the process of beatification and canonization.



The miracle for beatification

Carmela Jurado, a native of Pasto, where Saint Ezekiel Moreno was bishop, suffered from a malignant palatine-nasal cancer, the same kind of cancer from which San Ezekiel Moreno had died. After two months of treatment in hospital, the doctors advised the family to take her back home to die, as nothing more could be done for her. On the night of February 11, 1947, she was already in agony after having received the last sacraments. In the weeks before, she had prayed two novenas with her family to St. Ezekiel Moreno and in a miraculous way Carmela Jurado woke up that morning completely healed and without any physical damages.

The miracle for canonization

Maria de Jesús Náñez, a Colombian woman, had been operated on for cancer in her right leg, but the cancer had already metastasized to her left breast. She entrusted herself to Ezekiel Moreno and on the night of July 18, 1986, she was miraculously cured.

Ezekiel Moreno was beatified in 1975 by Saint Paul VI and canonized in the Dominican Republic by Saint John Paul II in 1992 at the close of the 5th Century Celebration of the Evangelization of Latin America.



PRAYER TO SAINT EZEKIEL MORENO

Loving God, in St. Ezekiel Moreno you have given us a model of courage in times of suffering.

I turn to you at this moment of my life for strength. Grant, through the intercession of St. Ezekiel, that **N.** may receive your healing comfort and be restored to health of mind and body, should it be your holy will.

I also offer this prayer for those who are suffering from cancer and other life-threatening diseases, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.