

Father Juan De Padilla

(located in the gathering space to the left of the worship space entrance)

Father Padilla, a Franciscan friar who accompanied the Coronado expedition, celebrated the first Mass in what is now Kansas on June 29, 1541. The Coronado Cross east of Dodge City commemorates that liturgy which was offered on a high hill after the expedition crossed a turbulent river.

This portrayal shows the Arkansas River, and the conquistadores along with the Quivira natives that Father Padilla would later encounter and evangelize. Both the Quivira and conquistadors are armed, though peaceful, to signify equality.

The gold that Coronado sought but never found is revealed here in real treasure: the sacramental chalice and paten. Also shown are examples of the earth's bounty: the wheat and sunflowers of Kansas.

The palm branch signifies Father Padilla's martyrdom at the hands of the Quivira who some believe killed the priest out of jealousy when he was en route to share his God with enemy tribes. Father Padilla is thought to be the protomartyr of all the Americas. Work is underway to initiate his cause for sainthood.

