

READINGS
FOR
THE PROPER OF THE SAINTS
VOLUME VI

JANUARY

2 January

SAINT BASIL THE GREAT
and
SAINT GREGORY NAZIANZEN
Bishops and Doctors of the Church.

Memoria.

Basil was born of a Christian family at Caesarea in Cappadocia in the year 330. outstanding in learning and virtue he began to lead a retired life but in the year 370 he was appointed Bishop of Caesarea. He combated the Arian heresy, wrote much of value, especially the monastic rules, which even today are followed by many monks of the Eastern Church; and he was outstanding in helping the poor. He died on 1st January 379.

Gregory was born near Nazianzus in the same year, 330. He journeyed much in order to acquire knowledge and he followed his friend Saint Basil in undertaking a life of solitude, but he was ordained a priest and bishop. In 381 he was chosen Bishop of Constantinople. However, because of the divisions he encountered in the diocese he returned to his native Nazianzus where he died on 25th January in either 389 or 390. He was a man of outstanding knowledge and eloquence and was called the Theologian.

From the Common of Pastors, or of Doctors of the Church

Second Reading: *Or. 43: 15, 16-17; 19-21*

Like a single soul animating two bodies.

A reading from the discourses of St. Gregory Nazianzen, bishop.

We were at Athens at the time. We had been separated, like the current of a river, leaving the one native source to go abroad by different routes in our pursuit of learning. But we had come together again, as though by agreement, God so willing it.

During this period, not only did I myself hold my friend, the great Basil, in high regard for his seriousness of character and the maturity and prudence of his discourse, but I also persuaded other young men who did

not know him to share my sentiments. For he was already respected by many of them since his renown had preceded him.

The result was that he was accorded the special distinction of being almost the only new student to escape the treatment generally given to newcomers.

This was the prelude to our friendship. This was the spark that enkindled our union. It was thus that we were struck by mutual love.

As time went on we admitted our affection to each other and acknowledged that philosophy was the common object of our ambition. From then on we were all in all to each other, sharing the same roof, the same table, the same sentiments, our eyes fixed on the one goal, as our mutual affection grew ever warmer and stronger.

We were driven on by equal hopes in the pursuit of learning, a thing especially open to jealousy. But there was no jealousy between us and competition intensified our zeal. For there was indeed a contest between us. But it was not as to who should have first place for himself but how he could yield it to the other. For each of us regarded the achievement of the other as his own.

We seemed to have a single soul animating two bodies. And, while those who claim that all things are in all things are not readily to be believed, we, at least, had to believe that we were in and with each other.

The sole ambition of both of us was virtue and a life so led in view of future hopes, as to sever our attachment to this life before we had to depart from it.

With this in view we directed our life and actions, following the guidance of the divine precept, and at the same time spurring each other to virtue. And, if it is not too much to say it, we were for each other a rule and a scale for the discernment of good and evil.

Different men have different names, derived from their ancestors or their own pursuits and deeds. Our great concern, our great name, was to be Christians and to be called Christians.

Responsorial. *Dan. 2: 21-22; 1 Cor. 12: 11*

R: The Lord gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; * he reveals deep and mysterious things, and the light dwells with him.

V: It is one and the same Spirit who does all this; he gives a different gift to each man, as he wishes;

R: he reveals deep and mysterious things, and the light dwells with him.

7 January

**SAINT RAYMUND OF
PENYAFORT, Presbyter**

Optional Memoria.

Born near Barcelona about the year 1175. He became a Canon of the Cathedral, but later joined the Dominican Order. At the command of Gregory IX he edited the 'Book of Decretals': He was chosen Master General of his Order and governed it with wise laws. His most outstanding writing was his 'Summary of Cases' which gave rules for the fruitful administration of the Sacrament of Penance. He died in the year 1275.

From the Common of Pastors.

Second Reading: *Mon OP Hist. 6, 2; pp. 84-85*

May the God of love and peace set your hearts at rest.

A reading from a letter of St. Raymund of Penyafort, presbyter.

If the preacher of the truth is really not deceiving us when he says that all who want to live godly lives in Christ will suffer persecution, then no one, I think, is exempted from this general rule. If he is, it is because he neglects or does not know how to live a sober, upright and religious life in this present age.

I should hope that you would not be counted among their number. Their homes are peaceful and complacent. They live in security and never feel the touch of the Lord's rod. They pass their days in plenty and in the end go straight to hell.

Your purity of life, your devotedness, deserves and even demands that since God has made you his own and loves you, this goodness of yours should be refined into absolute integrity by many blows. Even if you are threatened with the sword two or three times over, you should consider the very threat a sign of love and a cause for joy.

Your struggles in the world and the fears in your heart are a sharp, two-edged sword. Interiorly, the threat of this sword is doubled or tripled when the cunning evil spirit disturbs the depths of your soul with his deceits and his flattery. You have already experienced a fair share of this kind of warfare, or else it would have been impossible for you to reach the splendid inner peace and serenity that you have.

The threat of the sword in the external world is doubled or trebled when persecution breaks out against the Church without reason, over spiritual things. Here the most serious wounds are those dealt by friends.

All of this is the cross of Christ, which we should long for as the source of our happiness. Andrew accepted it joyfully, with true manliness. Paul, God's chosen instrument, tells us that we must seek our glory only in the cross.

Look to Jesus, the, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith; he suffered even at the hands of his own people, though he was perfectly innocent, and was reckoned among criminals. When you drink from the precious cup of the Lord Jesus, thank the Lord who gives us everything that is good.

And may he, the God of love and peace, fill your hearts with peace, and speed you on your way. May he hide you for a while from all human disturbances in the shelter of his presence, until he brings you totally into the fullness of glory. There you will sit enthroned forever in splendour and peace, in the tents of his faithful love, in abundance and at rest.

Responsorial.

R: He brought light to those who dwelt in darkness by the splendour of his teaching: * He freed those who were bound by poverty or chained in prison by the fire of his charity.

V: He brought out the lost from the paths of sin and delivered the poor man from the tyranny of the strong;

R: he freed those who were bound by poverty or chained in prison by the fire of his charity.

Concluding Prayer

Almighty God, you inspired St. Raymund with an immense passion for sinners and captives. Grant us through his prayers, freedom from sin and the grace to do your will. We make our prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ.

10 January
SAINT GREGORY OF NYSSA, Bishop

Second Reading.

The desire for the vision of God.

A reading from the Treatise “The life of Moses” of St. Gregory of Nyssa, bishop.

The great Moses having begun the climb of that ladder at the summit of which is God, did not ever cease to climb, and never fixed a limit to his climbing, but climbed always, from one step to the other, without ever stopping, in order to reach a still higher step. In fact after having reached such an elevated sublimity, he burnt still more with a desire so unquenchable that, finding insufficient that of which he always enjoyed, he begged to see God, not according to his own capacity, but as he is in himself the object of his desire. I think that perhaps taken by a desire so great and ardent of God, enlightened by visions, it would have been impossible for him not to push from that which he understood to all that which was still hidden: lover of the supreme beauty, considering the things already seen as an image of the good that still remained invisible, he desired to enjoy of its original reality.

This is what he wanted with that audacious request that he made on the mountain, of being able to enjoy that beauty not anymore as in a mirror and in images, but face to face. The divine voice granted him that which he asked for and at the same time it denied him, revealing to him in a few words an immense abyss of truth. It granted him what he had asked for, but it did not promise him the ceasing or the satiety of this desire, because no one can see God in this way and after having seen him cease to desire him. In fact, once having seen God, he will not stop contemplating him anymore.

You have, in this brief meditation, my opinion with regard to the perfections of the life lived praiseworthy: in fact I have spoken to you of the life of Moses as of an exemplary of perfection from whom each one of us, with the imitation of his teachings, will be able to portray in himself the characters of the beauty that has been shown to him. And that Moses had reached all the perfection that is possible to man is assured by the testimony

of the divine voice that says: “I have known you by name”. By God himself he is proclaimed friend of God (cfr. Ex. 33: 12, 17; Nm. 12: 7-8).

Other than this, when God angry, wanted to destroy everyone because of the sins of the people and Moses affirmed that he preferred to die with the people rather than to live without them, then God, in order to bend himself to the desires of his friend, calmed down; all these things manifest that he had arrived to the peak of human perfection.

Therefore since we were asking ourselves which was the perfection of the human life, and for as much as it is possible that we have found it, nothing more remains for us if not to live in conformity to this example and, transferring to the life all that is highest of the history that we know presents us with, in order to be known by God and to make ourselves his friends.

Perfection consists in this: not abandoning the vices for fear of the punishment, like a slave, nor embracing the virtues in the hope of the rewards as if we were pushed like a merchant of business or contracts; but, having abandoned also those promises that the hope keeps for us, retaining that there is only one terrible evil: to be far away from the friendship with God; only one desirable good: the friendship of God; only through this, according to me, the life of man will reach perfection. When this will have been achieved, the spirit lifted up will tend towards the more elevated and more excellent things, and this will be a common gain in Christ Jesus our Lord to whom belongs honour and glory in eternity. Amen.

Responsorial. *Ps. 41: 2-3; Phil. 1: 23*

R: Like the deer that yearns for running streams, so my soul yearns for you, O God. * My soul thirsts for God, for the living God: when shall I come and see the face of God?

V: I yearn to be freed from the body, in order to live with Christ.

R: My soul thirsts for God, for the living God: when shall I come and see the face of God.

Oration: Look on us with goodness, O Lord God, through the intercession of the holy bishop Gregory who with the brightness of his life and doctrine sang your praises wonderfully; grant that we also, may forget the past and stretching out towards the future, may happily reach the reward of the divine calling. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

13 January
SAINT HILARY
Bishop and Doctor of the Church.
Optional Memoria

Born in Poitiers at the beginning of the fourth century, Hilary was elected bishop of that city in the year 350. He combated the Arians relentlessly, for which reason he was exiled by the Emperor Constantine. For the purpose of strengthening the Catholic faith and interpreting sacred scripture he published works which are outstanding in their wisdom and learning. He died in the year 367.

From the Common of Pastors, or of the Doctors of the Church.

Second Reading: *De Trin. 1: 37-38*

May I serve you in preaching you.

A reading from the Treatise on the Trinity by St. Hilary, bishop.

I realize indeed, Almighty God and Father, that the over-riding duty of my life to you, is that you should be the subject of all my words and all my thoughts.

This gift of speech which you have granted to me can have no greater reward than to serve you by preaching you and showing you for what you are, as Father, Father indeed of the Only-begotten God, and this, whether to an age ignorant of you, or to the heretics who deny you.

So far, this is only the expression of my will. But I must also pray for the gift of your help and your mercy, that you may fill the sails which we have spread of our belief and confession of faith with the breath of your Spirit, and so drive us along the course of preaching you which I have begun. For he who said: "Ask and it will be given you; seek and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (Mt: 7:7), will not be unfaithful to his promise.

Of course, in our need we shall pray for those things which we lack, and shall apply ourselves with determined zeal to the study of the words of your prophets and apostles, and we shall knock at every door where knowledge is locked in. But it is for you to bestow what is prayed for, to be there when we seek, and to open when we knock.

For we are dull through some sluggishness in our nature, and we are held back by the feebleness of our mind, within the confines of our

ignorance concerning things divine. But an eagerness for your teaching trains us for the understanding of divine knowledge, and the obedience to the faith draws us beyond natural reasoning.

It is our hope that you will prompt our first trembling steps in this venture, and will strengthen us as we progress; and that you will call us to share in the spirit of the prophets and apostles, so that we may understand their sayings just as they meant them, and assign the right shade of meaning to every utterance they made.

We shall speak of things which they announced in a mystery: that you are the eternal God, the Father of the eternal Only-begotten God: that you alone are unborn, and that the one Lord Jesus Christ comes from you in eternal birth, and is not to be thought of as one of a number of gods by difference of nature, nor is it to be proclaimed that he was not begotten of you, who are the one God, nor is he to be acknowledged as other than true God who has been born of you, the true God the Father.

Bestow on us then the right use of terms, give light to our understanding and an agreeable style to our words, grant us loyalty to the truth. Grant that what we believe we may also speak, about you the one God the Father, and the one Lord Jesus Christ, as we learn from the apostles and prophets, and that we may succeed now in proclaiming against the denial of the heretics that you are God, yet not alone, and in preaching Jesus Christ as true and no false God.

Responsorial. *1 Jn. 4: 2-3; 6: 15*

R: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus the Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but any spirit which will not say this of Jesus is not from God: * this is how we can tell the spirit of truth from the spirit of falsehood.

V: If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God:

R: this is how we can tell the spirit of truth from the spirit of falsehood.

Oration.

Almighty and merciful God, grant to your people the grace to know and to profess, in the true faith of the fathers, the divinity of Christ your Son, of whom the bishop Hilary was a tenacious witness and teacher. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ.

17 January
SAINT ANTONY, Abbot

Memoria

This outstanding father of all monks was born in Egypt about the year 250. After the death of his parents he gave his worldly goods to the poor and went into the desert to live a life of penance. Many became his followers. He worked for the Church, supporting the confessors of the faith in their sufferings during the persecution of Diocletian, and Athanasius in his struggle against the Arians. He died in the year 356.

From the common of Men Saints: Religious.

Second Reading. *Life Ch. 2-4*

On the calling of St. Antony

A reading from the Life of St. Antony by St. Athanasius, bishop.

After the death of his parents, Antony was left alone with an only sister who was very young. He was about eighteen or twenty years old, and undertook the care of the household and his sister. Less than six months had passed after the death of his parents, and he was going to the Church, as was his custom, turning over in his mind the way that the apostles had left everything to follow the Saviour, and also how those people in the Acts of the Apostles had sold their possessions and had laid the proceeds at the feet of the apostles for distribution among the needy. He was also thinking of the great hope stored up in heaven for these people. With these things in his mind, he went into the Church. It happened that the Gospel was just being read, and he heard what the Lord had said to the rich man “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, and come, follow me” (Mt. 19: 21).

As though the reminder of the saints had been sent to him by God, and as though that passage had been read specially for his sake, Antony went out immediately, and gave to the villagers the possessions he had inherited from his ancestors – they consisted of some three hundred very pleasant and fertile acres – so that they would not be an encumbrance to him and to his sister. He sold all his possessions and gave the considerable sum he raised to the poor, keeping back only a little of it for his sister.

Again when he went into the Church, he heard what the Lord said in the Gospel, “Do not be anxious about tomorrow” (Mt. 6: 34). He could not wait any longer, but went out and gave away even what he had kept back to the poor. He left his sister in the care of some well-known, trustworthy virgins, putting her in a convent to be brought up, and he devoted himself to his ascetic life not far from his home, living in recollection and practising self-denial.

He laboured with his own hands, for he had heard that “If anyone will not work, let him not eat” (2 Thes. 3: 10). And of what he earned, part he spent on food, and part he gave to the poor.

He prayed frequently, for he had learned that one ought to pray in secret, and pray without ceasing (cfr. 1 Thes. 5: 17). He was so careful in his reading of scripture that nothing escaped him, but he retained it all; so that afterwards his memory served him in place of books.

And so all the people of the village, and the good men with whom he associated saw what kind of man he was, and they called him ‘The friend of God’. Some loved him as a son, and others as though he was a brother.

Responsorial. *Mt. 19: 21; Lk. 14: 33*

R: If you wish to be perfect, go and sell what you own and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; * then come, follow me.

V: None of you can be my disciple unless he give up all his possessions;

R: then come, follow me.

Oration.

O God, you who inspired St. Antony to withdraw into the desert, in order to serve you in a new way of Christian life, grant also to us through his intercessions the grace to overcome our egoism in order to love you above everything. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ.

20 January
SAINT FABIAN,
Pope and Martyr.
Optional Memoria

In the year 236 he was chosen to be Bishop of Rome, and in the year 250, at the beginning of the persecution of Decius, he was crowned with martyrdom, as St. Cyprian testified. He was buried

in the cemetery of Callistus.

From the Common of Martyrs: for One Martyr, or of Pastors

Second Reading. *Lett. 9: 1 and 8: 2-3*

Fabian gives us an example of faith and virtue

A reading from the letters of St. Cyprian and of the Church of Rome on the martyrdom of Pope Fabian.

When St. Cyprian had heard of the death of Pope Fabian he sent this letter to the presbyters and deacons at Rome.

“We heard a vague rumour of the death of that good man, my fellow bishop, my dear brethren, and we did not know what to believe. Then I received the letter which you had sent to me by the subdeacon Crementius. In it I was given a full and detailed account of his glorious death. I rejoiced greatly that so upright a tenure of office had culminated in such an honourable end.

“I also offer you my warmest congratulations on the fact that you honour his memory with such solemn and clear witness. Through you we can see quite clearly both what an honour for you is the glorious memory of your leader and what an example of faith and virtue it offers us”.

“For just as the ruin of a leader can lead to the danger of the falling away of his followers, so on the other hand is it a valuable and salutary thing when the bishop sets an example by the firmness of his faith”.

Apparently before Cyprian received this letter, the Church of Rome was already giving the Church of Carthage proof of its faithfulness in time of persecution:

“The Church here stands firm in its faith, even though some have fallen away, driven by the terror itself, perhaps because they were persons of rank, perhaps through human fear when they had been arrested. However, we do not abandon even those who have separated from us, but we have encouraged them and we urge them to repent, to try somehow to obtain pardon from him who can forgive, for fear that, if we abandon them, they may become worse.

“You see, then, brethren, that you too ought to do this, so that, thanks to your warning, even those who have fallen away may change their minds. Then, if they are arrested again, they may confess their faith and so correct their former error. There are other duties which fall to you which we must

add. For example, if those who have fallen into this temptation should be taken ill and repent of their action and want communion, they ought certainly to be aided. There ought to be someone to minister to widows or to the oppressed who cannot show themselves in public either because they are in prison or because they have been driven from their homes. Catechumens too, who are ill, ought not to be disappointed of the assistance they hope for.

“The brethren who are in chains, the presbyters and the whole Church, which watches with great solicitude over all who call on the name of the Lord, send you greetings. In return we ask that you remember us.”

Responsorial. *Phil. 1: 23; 3: 8; 1: 21; 2: 17*

R: I want very much to leave this life and be with Christ and so I have accepted the loss of everything and look on everything as so much refuse if only I can have Christ; * life to me is Christ, but then death would bring me something more.

V: If my blood has to be shed as part of your own sacrifice and offering – which is your faith – I shall still be happy and rejoice with all of you;

R: life to me is Christ, but then death would bring me something more.

Oration.

Lord God, you crown your priests in glory; grant that by the intercession of Pope Saint Fabian, we may grow as a community of faith and love. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

20 January also
SAINT SEBASTIAN, Martyr
Optional Memoria

He suffered martyrdom in Rome at the beginning of the persecution of Diocletian. His tomb in the place named Ad Catacumbas on the Via Appia has been venerated by the faithful from the earliest times.

From the Common of Martyrs; for one Martyr.

Second Reading. *On Ps. 118: 20, 43-45, 48*

A faithful witness of Christ

A reading from a commentary on Psalm 118 of St. Ambrose, bishop.

“Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” (Act. 14: 22).

If there are many persecutions, there are as many chances of proving ourselves; where there are many crowns to be won, there are many contests to be fought. It is then in your interest that there are many persecutions, so that among them you may find out more easily how to win the crown.

Let us take as an example the martyr Sebastian whose anniversary it is today.

He was a native of Milan by birth. Perhaps the persecutor had already gone away, or had not yet arrived in those parts, or maybe he was less violent. Sebastian realized that there was no struggle there, or else that it was not severe.

So he set out for Rome, where the persecutions were raging fiercely on account of the faith. This was the scene of his suffering, where he won his crown. And so it was at Rome, where he came as a stranger, that he found his true home of everlasting immortality. If there had been only one persecutor, this martyr would certainly not have received his crown.

But what is worse, not only are there persecutors who can be seen but also there are those who are unseen, and these are more numerous.

For just as one king who is a persecutor would send out to many orders for persecution so that there were many persecutors throughout the different cities and provinces, so also the devil as well directs his many servants to carry out their persecutions not only externally, but also within, in the souls of individuals.

It was said of these persecutions: “All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Tm. 3: 12). Notice that Saint Paul says, “All who desire”, he makes no exceptions. For who could be excepted when the Lord himself bore the trials of persecution?

How many martyrs of Christ are there every day in secret and how many confess Jesus to be the Lord? The Apostle knew this martyrdom and this faithful witness to Christ when he said: “This is our boast and the witness of our conscience” (2 Cor. 1: 12).

Responsorial.

R: For his God, Sebastian fought up to death, and he overcame the trial: * he was founded on the rock which is Christ.

V: He sacrificed his life for the love of his God, in the hope of the kingdom of heaven:

R: he was founded on the rock which is Christ.

Oration.

Grant us Lord, the spirit of fortitude. Teach us, by the example of Saint Sebastian, to render obedience to you rather than to men. We make our prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ.

21 January
SAINT AGNES,
Virgin and Martyr
Memoria

She suffered martyrdom at Rome either in the second half of the third century or, more probably, at the beginning of the fourth century. Pope Damasus embellished her tomb with sacred verses, and many of the Fathers, following the example of St. Ambrose, spoke of her with great praise.

From the Common of Martyrs: for One Martyr, or of Virgins.

Second Reading. *Bk. 1Ch. 2: 5, 7-9*

She was still too young for punishment, but already ripe for victory.

A reading from the Treatise on Virgins of St. Ambrose, bishop.

It is the feast of a virgin – let us imitate her chastity. It is the feast of a martyr – let us offer our sacrifice. It is the feast of St. Agnes. Her martyrdom is said to have taken place in her twelfth year; and the more hateful was the cruelty which did not spare even so young a child, surely the greater was the power of faith which found a witness in one of such tender years.

Was there even room for a wound in her little body? Yet even if she did not have space to take the sword, she was able to overcome the sword. Girls of that age cannot even take the angry looks of their parents, and they usually cry at the prick of a needle as though it were a wound. But Agnes was fearless under the bloody hands of the executioner – she was unmoved by the heavy weight of the clanging chains. She offered her whole body to the sword of the raging soldier. She had as yet no experience of death, but

she was ready for it. If she was dragged unwillingly to the altar of sacrifice, she was ready to stretch forth her hands to Christ amidst the flames- and even in the fires of sacrilege to give the triumphant sign of the Lord who conquers all; she was ready to put her hands and neck into the iron bands, even though none of the chains was small enough to enclose her little limbs.

Is this a new kind of martyrdom? Where the girl was still too young for punishment, but old enough for victory; too young for battle, yet ready to win the crown? Her tender age was a disadvantage, but she won the trial of virtue. If she had been a bride, she would not have so hastened to the marriage-couch as she, being a virgin, hurried with joyful step to the place of execution, her head adorned with Christ instead of plaits, and with her own virtues instead of garlands of flowers.

All were weeping but she was dry-eyed. Everyone marvelled that she was so spendthrift with her life, which she had hardly tasted, but was now giving up as though she had finished with it. All were astounded that she should come forward as a witness to the Godhead, when she was still too young to be her own mistress. It was her final achievement, that men believed that she had received from God what could not come from man; for what is beyond nature comes from the Author of nature.

You can imagine with what threats the executioner tried to frighten her; and the allurements to persuade her, and how many people there were who would have wished to marry her. But her reply was, "It would be an insult to my spouse to think that I would consent to you. He who chose me first shall possess me. Why do you delay, executioner? Let this body perish which could be loved by eyes which I do not want". She stood in prayer and bowed her head.

You could see the executioner trembling, as though it were he who was condemned. You could see his right hand shaking, his face growing pale at her danger, though the child had no fear of her own. In one victim, then, you have a two-fold witness in martyrdom, to modesty and to religion. She both remained a virgin and achieved martyrdom.

Responsorial.

R: Let us keep the feast of blessed Agnes, and recall the kind of suffering she endured: * in the full flower of her youth she died, and found life.

V: She chose to love the Author of life alone;

R: in the full flower of her youth she died, and found life.

Oration.

Almighty and eternal God, you choose what is weak in the world to shame what is strong. Grant that, as we celebrate the martyrdom of Saint Agnes, we may follow her example of steadfastness in faith. We make our prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ.

22 January
SAINT VINCENT
Deacon and Martyr
Optional Memoria

Vincent a deacon of the Church of Saragossa, suffered terrible tortures and died the death of a martyr at Valencia, in Spain, during the persecution of Diocletian. Veneration for him quickly spread throughout the Church.

From the Common of Martyrs: for One Martyr.

Second Reading. Ser. 276: 1-2

St. Vincent conquered in him, through whom the world is overcome.

A reading from the Sermons of St. Augustine, bishop.

“It has been granted to you”, he says, “that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake” (Phil. 1: 29).

The deacon Vincent received both these gifts – belief and suffering – and held on to them. For if he had not received them, what would he have had? He had confidence in his speech, he had endurance in his sufferings.

Therefore let no one presume on his own powers when he speaks; let no one trust in his own strength when he undergoes temptation, since in order to speak well and prudently, we must have wisdom from the Lord; and in order to bear misfortune bravely, we must receive the gift of endurance from him.

Remember the warnings of the Lord Christ to his disciples in the gospel; recall how the King of martyrs equipped his army with spiritual weapons, telling them of the battles they would have, bringing help to them, and promising them rewards. He said to his disciples: “In the world you will have tribulation”; but at once to relieve their fears, he added, “but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (Jn. 16: 33).

What wonder then is it, brethren, if Vincent conquered in him by whom the world has been overcome? “In this world”, he says, “you will have tribulation”, to the extent that if it presses on us, it does not overwhelm us, if it attacks us, it does not subdue us.

The world has a double attacking strategy against the soldiers of Christ: it flatters to deceive – and it frightens to intimidate. Let our own pleasures not capture us, let the cruelty of others not frighten us and then the world has been conquered.

Christ comes to the rescue against both forms of attack, with the result that the Christian is not defeated. If we consider only as human the endurance that Vincent showed in his passion, it becomes incredible. But if we recognize the power of God, it ceases to be astonishing.

They cruelly ravaged the martyr’s body, and yet he spoke with tranquillity. They inflicted savage tortures on his limbs and yet his words were composed. You would have thought that while Vincent was suffering it was not the speaker but someone else who was being tortured.

And brethren, that is what it was. That it most certainly was. Someone else was speaking. For Christ promised this in the gospel to his witnesses, when he was preparing them for struggles of this kind: “Do not be anxious how you are to speak, or what you are to say: for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you” (Mt. 10: 19-20).

The flesh suffered and the Spirit spoke; and when the Spirit spoke, not only was impiety overcome, but weakness itself was strengthened.

Responsorial. *cfr. Job. 23: 10-11; Phil. 3: 8, 10*

R: The Lord has tested me in the crucible, and I have come forth as pure gold. My footsteps have followed close in his; * I have walked in his way without swerving from my course.

V: I have accepted the loss of everything in order to know Christ and to share his sufferings;

R: I have walked in his way without swerving from my course.

Oration.

O God, source of every good, give us the strength of your Spirit which animated the deacon and martyr Vincent, and made him invincible in the midst of tortures, so that our fragile humanity also maybe sustained by the power of your love, we ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ.

24 January
SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES
Bishop and Doctor of the Church
Memoria

Born near Annecy in Savoy in the year 1567. After his ordination as a priest he worked strenuously for the renewal of the faith in his country; and after his election as Bishop of Geneva he showed himself to be a true shepherd towards his clergy and the faithful, being an example in all things, and helping all by his writings and work. He died at Lyons on 28 December 1622, and was buried at Annecy on 24th January 1623.

From the Common of Pastors, or of Doctors of the Church.

Second Reading. *Part 1, ch. 3*

The devout life takes many forms.

A reading from the “Introduction to the Devout Life” of St Francis de Sales.

At the creation God commanded the plants to bear fruit each according to its kind and he likewise commands Christians, the living branches of the vine, to bear fruit by practising devotion according to their state in life.

The practise of devotion must defer for the gentlemen and the artists, the servant and the prince, for widow, young girl or wife. Further, it must be adapted to their particular strength, circumstances and duties.

Is the solitary life of a Carthusian suited to a bishop? Should those who are married practice the poverty of a Capuchin? If workmen spent as much time in Church as religious, if religious were exposed to the same pastoral calls as a bishop, such devotion would be ridiculous and cause intolerable disorder.

Yet this foolish mistake is often made. True devotion never causes harm, but rather perfects everything we do; a devotion which conflicts with

anyone's state of life is undoubtedly false.

The bee sucks honey from the flowers without injuring them. Leaving them as whole and fresh as when it found them. Devotion goes further, not only is it un-harmful to any state of life, it adorns and beautifies it. Precious stones of all kinds when steeped in honey become more brilliant thereby, each one according to its colour, so everyone becomes more loveable and more perfect in his vocation if he combines it with devotion.

It makes the care of family peaceful, the love of husband and wife more sincere, the service of one's king more faithful, and every task more pleasant and a joy.

It is not only erroneous, but a heresy, to hold that life in the army, the workshop, the court, or the home is incompatible with devotion. Purely contemplative, monastic or religious devotion cannot be practised in these callings, yet, these are not the only kinds of devotion; there are many others suitable for those who live in the world and capable of leading them to perfection.

Wherever we find ourselves we not only may, but should, seek perfection.

Responsorial. *Ep. 4: 32; 5: 1; Mt. 11: 29*

R: Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other as readily as God forgave you in Christ. * Try, then, to imitate God, as children of his that he loves.

V: Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart.

R: Try, then, to imitate God, as children of his that he loves.

Oration.

Grant, Lord, that in the service of our fellow-men we may always reflect your own gentleness and love, and so imitate Saint Francis de Sales, whom you made all things to all men, for the saving of souls. We make our prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ.

25 January
**THE CONVERSION OF
SAINT PAUL THE APOSTLE**

Feast

First Reading. Gal. 1: 11-24

He made His Son known in me so that I could preach his gospel.

A reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Galatians.

For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it; and I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned to Damascus.

Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother. (In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!) Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cili'cia. And I was still not known by sight to the churches of Christ in Judea; they only heard it said, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." And they glorified God because of me.

Responsorial. Gal. 1: 11-12; 2 Cor. 11: 10, 7

R: The gospel you heard me preach is no human invention. * I did not take it over from any man, I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

V: As the truth of Christ lives in me, it is God's gospel that I preached to you.

R: I did not take it over from any man, I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Second Reading. Hom. 2 on St. Paul

For the love of Christ, Paul endured all things.

A reading from a homily by St. John Chrysostom, bishop.

It was St. Paul more than anyone else who showed what man is and how great is the nobility of our nature, as well as what capacity for virtue this human animal has. Every day he advanced in stature, every day he fought with ever renewed keenness against the dangers threatening him; he showed this when he said: “I forget what lies behind and strain forward to what lies ahead” (cfr. Phil. 3: 13). When he was expecting to die he summoned others to share his joy, saying: “You should be glad and rejoice with me” (Phil. 2: 18). Again he actually leaped with joy at the dangers and insults and every dishonour which pressed on him, as he wrote to the Corinthians: “I am content with weaknesses, insults, persecutions” (Cfr. 2 Cor. 12: 10). He called these the weapons of righteousness, showing that from them the greatest benefits are reaped.

Therefore he was always undefeated by his enemies. Everywhere he was beaten, insulted, and reviled. He treated it all as though it were a triumphal procession setting up trophies of victory everywhere on earth, glorying in them, giving thanks to God, saying: “Thanks be to God who in Christ always leads us to triumph” (Cfr. 2 Cor. 2: 14). So he sought death more than we seek life, and poverty more than we seek riches; and he looked for work to do more than others look for rest. It was not simply that he looked for more, he looked for much more.

There was one thing, and one thing only that he feared and shunned, and that was to give offence to God. Just as there was one thing he longed for, to please God.

He was rich with the love of Christ which was the greatest of all things to him. While he had this, he reckoned himself the most blessed of men. Without it he had no wish to be numbered among princes and rulers and powers. Possessing love he wished to be among the lowliest of men, among those being chastised, rather than without love to be among the loftiest and honoured. There was one torment for him, to fall away from this love. That for him was hell, that was damnation. That was the sum of all evils.

Even so to find this love was joy. This to him was life, it was the whole world, his angel, things present, things to come, the kingdom and the promise. This was the sum of all blessings. Anything else which was not

concerned with this he regarded neither as painful nor as pleasant. Things visible he considered of no more worth than withered grass. Tyrants or peoples breathing fury seemed to him like gnats. Death, torture, and a thousand torments he thought of as child's play, provided only he could endure something for Christ's sake.

Responsorial. *1 Tm. 1: 13-14; 1 Cor. 15: 9*

R: Because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, God dealt with me mercifully; * the grace of our Lord was lavished upon me, with the faith and love which was ours in Christ Jesus.

V: I persecuted the Church of God and am therefore not fit to be called an apostle;

R: the grace of our Lord was lavished upon me, with the faith and love which was ours in Christ Jesus.

Or.

Second Reading. *Disc. On the changing of names 1*

He is an elected instrument for us.

A reading from the “Discourses on some passages of the New Testament” of St. John Chrysostom, bishop.

Paul is praised not because he devastated the Church, but because he built it, not because he took up the Word of God, but because he spread it, not because he moved war against the apostles and dispersed the flock, but because he gathered it again wherever he had dispersed it.

What a more wonderful thing than this could happen? The wolf has become a shepherd: he who had drunk the blood of the sheep has not hesitated to shed his own blood for the salvation of the sheep. Do you want to know how his tongue dripped blood? “Saul in the meanwhile, was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples” (Act. 9: 1). Listen, above all, in what way he who, breathing threats and slaughter shed the blood of the saints, shed for them his own blood: “If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus for merely human reasons what have I gained – he said – but every day I face death” (1 Cor. 15: 32, 31); and elsewhere: “We are treated like sheep for the slaughter” (Rom. 8: 36). And this is said by him who was

present when they shed the blood of Stephen and who approved his death. Do you see, how the wolf has ended up by becoming the shepherd?

Does it scandalize you perhaps to hear that he was first persecutor, blasphemer and offender? But see that his preceding accusation does nothing else but increase his praises. I was telling you in the last gathering how all the miracles that have followed the cross have been greater than those which have preceded it and I have shown you this with the miracles and with the love of the disciples. Before, at the command of Christ, the dead rose; afterwards, his servants, in his name, did even greater miracles, I spoke to you about the enemies whose conscience he terrified. And afterwards the whole world was submitted to him. Therefore, the miracles that were worked after the cross were greater than those accomplished before.

Well, what miracle is there that is greater than that which is verified in Paul? He who when alive was denied by Peter, dead has been confessed by Paul. The miracle which is greater than all the others is therefore that of Paul, who drew near to Christ after his passion and burial. For this Christ permitted that he should first show all his hate and then he called him, so that the proof of his resurrection and the teaching of his doctrine could be absent of every suspect.

If in fact Christ had not risen, who could have reconciled a man who was so cruel and inhuman to himself, who could have drawn to himself a man who was so hostile and furious? And not only did he reconcile him, but he also made him so familiar, he won him over him so much to his love as to entrust him with the diffusion of the whole Church: "This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings" (Act. 9: 15); and in this way he persuaded him to work more than the other apostles for the Church which he fought against before.

Responsorial. *Cf. Act. 9: 15; Gal. 2: 9*

R: You, Paul, are for me a chosen instrument, preacher of the truth in the whole world, * through whom all the nations will know the grace of God.

V: Great is St. Paul, chosen instrument, truly worthy of glory,

R: through whom all the nations will know the grace of God.

Gospel. *Mk. 16: 14, 15-18*

A reading from the Gospel of St. Mark.

Afterward he appeared to the eleven themselves and said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.

Third Reading. Lett. 5

*We believe as we have been baptised;
we feel as we believe.*

A reading from the "Letters" of St. Gregory of Nyssa, bishop.

We confess that the doctrine of Christ, that which he taught to His disciples handing over to them the mystery of love, is the foundation and the root of a solid and healthy faith and we believe that there is nothing more sublime, more reassuring and more certain than this tradition.

The doctrine of the Lord is this: "Go and teach all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt. 28: 19). With the gift of the Most Holy Trinity, those who have been regenerated from death to eternal life become participants of his vivifying power, and by means of the faith are made worthy of this grace; therefore the grace is imperfect if in the baptism which gives salvation is omitted one of the names of the Most Holy Trinity whoever it may be. In fact the sacrament of regeneration cannot be accomplished only in the Father and in the Son without the Holy Spirit; and if the Son is passed over in silence, the baptism does not lavish the perfect life only in the Father and in the Holy Spirit. Nor does the grace of our resurrection reach perfection in the Father and in the Son, if the Spirit is omitted. For this all the hope and faith of the salvation of our souls rests in the three Persons who are made known to us under these names. And we believe in the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the source of life, and in the Only-begotten Son of the Father, who is the author of life, as the Apostle says (Act. 3: 15), and in the Holy Spirit of God, of whom the Lord said: "It is the Spirit that gives life" (Jn. 6: 63).

Since therefore in the holy baptism is given, to us who have been redeemed from death, the grace of immortality by means of the faith in the

Father and in the Son and in the Holy Spirit, urged by this reason we believe that nothing servile, created or unworthy of the majesty of the Father can be numbered in the Most Holy Trinity. One only is the life that we have received through faith in the Most Holy Trinity: it comes from God Lord of the universe almost from the principle source, proceeds through the Son and is accomplished in the Holy Spirit. Having this certainty and conviction, we are baptised as we were commanded, we believe as we have been baptised and we feel as we believe, in a way that there is no discord between baptism and faith and our sentiment with regard to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Responsorial. *2 Cor. 3: 3; Rm. 8: 15*

R: You are a letter of Christ, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, * not on tablets of stone, but on the tablet of the flesh of your hearts.

V: You have not received a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adopted children.

R: not on tablets of stone, but on the tablet of the flesh of your hearts.

Oration.

Today, Lord, we celebrate the conversion of St. Paul, your chosen vessel for carrying your name to the whole world. Help us to make our way towards you by following in his footsteps, and by witnessing to your truth before the men and women of our day. We make our prayers through your Son our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

26 January
SAINT TIMOTHY
and SAINT TITUS, Bishops.
Memoria.

Timothy and Titus were disciples and helpers of the apostle Paul, the former being placed in charge of the Church at Ephesus, the latter the Church of Crete. Saint Paul wrote his pastoral epistles to them, containing much useful advice for the instruction of the clergy and the people.

From the Common of Pastors.

Second Reading. *Hom. 2 on St. Paul.*

I have fought the good fight.

A reading from the Homily of St. John Chrysostom, bishop.

Paul was living in prison as though it was heaven itself and he bore the wounds and the lashes with more pleasure than others who grasp the prizes. He loved the sufferings no less highly than the rewards; indeed, he regarded the sufferings as a reward. This is why he calls them grace. You must weigh carefully the meaning of this. Surely the prize for him was ‘to depart and be with Christ’ (Cfr. Phil. 1: 23). To remain in the flesh was the struggle, but nevertheless he chose to remain rather than to depart; for he says that it was more necessary.

But for a curse to come upon him from Christ – that indeed was the struggle and the suffering for him – or something even beyond struggle and suffering. To be with him was the prize. But it was for the sake of Christ that he chose the struggle rather than the prize.

Perhaps at this point someone might say that all this was in fact pleasant to him because of Christ; and I agree with this because the things that cause us to lose heart were the source of great joy to him. Then why, you may ask, do I mention the dangers and the other burdens he had? Well, St. Paul was in deep dejection. As he himself says: “Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is made to fall and I am not indignant?” (2 Cor. 11: 29)

But I urge you not only to admire, but also to follow his example of virtue. For in this way we will be able to share in the same crown of victory.

If you are surprised at my suggesting that if we have the same success as Paul, we shall win the same prize, listen to his own words: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing” (2 Tm. 4: 7-8).

You see how he calls everyone into the same fellowship with him. Since the same crown of glory is offered to us, let us try to be worthy of the good things promised to us. We should not only think of the immensity and dignity of his virtues, but also of the intensity of his zeal through which he won so much grace, and also of the fact that we share the same nature, for he had all things in common with us. In this way what is most difficult for us will seem light and easy, and after labouring for but a short while we shall wear for ever that ageless and immortal crown through the grace and

mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ whose is the glory and the power now and forever and for all ages. Amen.

Responsorial. *1 Tm. 6: 11-12; Tit. 2: 1*

R: As a man dedicated to God, you must aim to be saintly and religious, filled with faith and love, patient and gentle. * Fight the good fight of the faith and win for yourself eternal life.

V: What you preach must be in keeping with wholesome doctrine.

R: Fight the good fight of the faith and win for yourself eternal life.

27 January

SAINT ANGELA MERICI, Virgin.

Optional Memoria.

Born about the year 1470 at Desnzano near Brescia. She took the habit of the Third Order of Saint Francis and gathered together girls whom she formed in the works of charity. In 1535 she formed at Brescia the institute of the Ursulines, a society of women with the task of teaching poor girls to be good Christians. She died in 1540.

From the Common of Virgins or of Woman Saints: Educators.

Second Reading.

He orders all things graciously.

A reading from the Spiritual Testament of St. Angela Merici.

Firstly, then, my dearest Mothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ, strive with God's help to acquire such an attitude of mind and heart that you are moved to care for and govern the Company only through love of him and concern for the salvation of souls.

Then all your actions and decisions, being rooted in this twofold charity, cannot but produce meritorious and beneficial effects, for as our Saviour says, "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit" (Mt. 7: 18).

By the 'good tree' he means that a heart and mind animated by charity cannot perform other than good and holy works, in the same way Saint Augustine said, "Love and do what you will". That is to say, have love and charity, and then do what you wish: which is the same as saying explicitly: charity cannot commit sin.

Next, I ask you to be concerned with all your daughters individually, having each and everyone deeply fixed in your hearts and minds; and not just their names, but their background and character, and everything concerning them. This will not be difficult, if you enfold them in real love. You can see that mothers of families, even if they had a thousand sons and daughters, would still find room for every single one in their hearts, because that is how true love works. It even seems that the more children a mother has, the greater is her love and care for each one individually. With still more reason spiritual mothers can and should act, since spiritual love is beyond comparison more powerful than human love.

Therefore, dearest Mothers, if you love these dear children of yours with true and selfless charity, it will be impossible for you not to have them all clearly present in your memory and in your heart.

I ask you, please, do try to bring them up with love, with a gentle and kindly hand, not overbearingly nor harshly. Try to be kind always. Notice what Jesus Christ says, “Learn from me for I am gentle and humble of heart” (Mt. 11: 29). And of God we read, “He orders all things graciously” (Wis. 8: 11). That is, he arranges and governs all things gently. And again Jesus Christ says, “My yoke, my service, is light and sweet” (Mt. 11: 30).

That is how you yourselves must try to act, using all possible gentleness. And above all, be careful not to use force, because God has given free will to everybody and wants to force nobody, but only points out, invites and counsels. I do not mean, however, that at times one must not make use of some restraint, even of severity in some cases, depending on the importance of the circumstances and the need of the individuals. But even then, we must be moved solely by charity and zeal for souls.

Responsorial. *Eph. 5: 8-9; Mt. 5: 14, 16*

R: You are light in the Lord; be like children of light, * for the effects of the light are seen in complete goodness and right living and truth.

V: You are the light of the world; your light must shine in the sight of men,

R: for the effects of the light are seen in complete goodness and right living and truth.

28 January

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Priest and Doctor of the Church.

Memoria.

Born about the year 1225, a member of a noble family of Aquino. He studied first at Monte Cassino and then at Naples; later as a member of the Dominican Order he completed his studies at Paris and then at Cologne with Saint Albert the Great as his teacher. He was an outstanding writer and teacher of philosophy and sacred theology. He died at Fossanuova on 7 March 1274. He is venerated on 28th January for on that date in the year 1369 his body was reburied at Toulouse.

From the Common of Doctors of the Church.

Second Reading. *Conf. 6 on the Creed.*

The cross provides an example for every virtue.

A reading from the Conferences of St. Thomas, presbyter.

Was it necessary for the Son of God to suffer for us? It was very necessary, and on two counts: First as a remedy for our sins, and secondly as a model for us in our behaviour.

In the passion of Christ we find a remedy for all the evils which come upon us on account of our sins.

But the passion is not less useful to us as an example. Indeed the passion of Christ is sufficient in itself to instruct us completely in our whole life. For if anyone wants to live a perfect life, he has only to despise the things that Christ despised on the cross, and to desire what Christ desired. The cross provides an example of every virtue.

If you are looking for an example of charity, “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (Jn. 15: 13). This was what Christ did on the cross. If he gave up his life for us, it ought not to be a burden for us to put up with every evil, whatever it be, for his sake.

If you are looking for patience, you will find it in its highest form on the cross. The greatness of patience is measured by two things, either when someone puts up patiently with grievous things, or when he suffers things which he could have evaded but did not. Christ suffered greatly and with patience on the cross: “when he suffered, he did not threaten (1 Pet. 2: 23); like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, he opened not his mouth” (cfr. Is. 53: 7; Act. 8: 32). That is how great was the patience of Christ on the cross: “Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus,

the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame” (Heb. 12: 2).

If you are looking for an example of humility, look at the cross. There, God willed to be judged by Pontius Pilate and to die.

If you are looking for an example of obedience, follow him who was obedient to the Father, even unto death. “For as by one man’s disobedience”, (this refers to Adam) “many were made sinners, so by one man’s obedience many will be made righteous” (Rm. 5: 19).

If you are looking for a model of contempt for earthly things, follow him who is the “King of kings, and Lord of lords, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2: 3). He was naked on the cross, derided and spat upon, struck and crowned with thorns, and finally given vinegar to drink. Do not, then, be attached to fine clothes and riches, for “they divided my garments among them” (Jn. 19: 24). Do not seek for honours, for he knew mockery and beating (cfr. Is. 53: 4). Do not seek honourable rank, because “they plaited a crown of thorns and placed it on my head” (cfr. Mk. 15: 17). Do not seek after fine foods, because “for my thirst, they gave me vinegar to drink” (Ps. 68: 22).

Responsorial. *Wis. 7: 7-8; Jam. 1: 5*

R: I prayed, and understanding was given me; I entreated and the spirit of wisdom came to me. * I esteemed her more than sceptres and thrones; compared with her, I held riches as nothing.

V: Your purpose none may know, unless you grant your gift of wisdom, sending us from heaven your own Holy Spirit.

R: I esteemed her more than sceptres and thrones; compared with her, I held riches as nothing.

31 January

SAINT JOHN BOSCO, Presbyter.

Memoria.

Born near Castelnuovo in the diocese of Turin in the year 1815. He had a difficult childhood in poverty but eventually was ordained priest. He put every effort into the education of youth and founded Religious Congregations to teach them and to bring them up in the Christian way of life. He wrote some short works in defence of the faith. He died in the year 1888.

From the Common of Pastors, or of Men Saints: Educators.

Second Reading. Letters 4: 201-205

All my work was inspired by love.

A reading from the Letters of St. John Bosco, presbyter.

If we want to be thought of as men who have the real happiness of our pupils at heart and who help each to fulfil his role in life, you must never forget that you are taking the place of parents who love their children. I have always worked, studied, and exercised my priesthood out of love for them. And not I alone, but the whole Salesian Order.

My sons, how often in my long career has this great truth come home to me! It is so much easier to get angry than to be patient, to threaten a boy rather than persuade him. I would even say that usually it is so much more convenient for our own impatience and pride to punish them than to correct them patiently with firmness and gentleness.

I recommend to you the love Saint Paul had for his new converts. When he found them inattentive and unresponsive to his love, that same love led him to tears and prayers.

Be careful not to give anyone reason to think that you act under the impulse of anger. It is difficult to keep calm when administering punishment. But it is very necessary if you are not to give the impression that you are simply asserting your authority or giving vent to your anger.

Let us look on those over whom we have a certain authority, as sons. Let us be determined to be at their service, even as Jesus came to obey and not to command. We should be ashamed to give the least impression of domineering. We should only exercise authority in order the better to serve the boys.

This was how Jesus treated his apostles. He put up with their ignorance and dullness and their lack of faith. His attitude towards sinners was full of kindness and loving friendship. This astonished some and scandalized others, but to others it gave enough hope to ask forgiveness from God. He told us therefore to learn from him to be meek and humble of heart (cfr. Mt. 11: 29).

Because the boys are our sons, we must put aside all anger when we correct their faults, or at least restrain it so much that it is almost completely suppressed. There must be no angry outburst, no look of contempt, no hurtful words. Instead, like true fathers, really intent on their correction and

improvement, show them compassion at the present moment and hold out hope for the future.

In serious matters it is better to ask God's help in humble prayer, than to make a long speech that wounds those who hear it and does no good at all to the guilty ones.

Remember that the education is a thing of the heart, and that God alone is the master, and that we will not be able to do anything if God does not teach us the art, and if he does not put the keys in our hands.

Let us learn to make ourselves loved, to insinuate the sentiments of duty, of the holy fear of God, and we will see with marvellous ease that the doors of many hearts will open to us and unite themselves to us in order to sing the praises and the blessings of he who wants to make himself our model, our way, our example in everything, but particularly in the education of the youth.

Responsorial. *Mt. 10: 13-14; Mt. 18: 5*

R: The people were bringing little children to Jesus, for him to touch them. The disciples turned them away, but when Jesus saw this, he said to them, * Let the children come to me; do not stop them, for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.

V: Anyone who welcomes a little child like this in my name, welcomes me.

R: Let the children come to me; do not stop them, for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.