BUTLER'S SAINT FOR THE DAY

PAUL BURNS

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CONTENTS

Introduction xi

January 1

1. St Odilo of Cluny 1
2. St Basil the Great 3
3. St Genevieve of Paris 5
4. St Elizabeth Ann Seton 6
5. St John Neumann 7
6. St Raphaela Mary Porras 8
7. St Raymund of Peñafort 9
8. St Wulsin 11
9. St Adrian of Canterbury 12
10. St Gregory of Nyssa 14
11. St Paulinus of Aquileia 15
12. St Margaret Bourgeoys 16
13. St Hilary of Poitiers 18
14. St Sava of Serbia 20
15. St Arnold Janssen 21
16. Bd Joseph Vaz 23
17. St Antony of Egypt 24
18. St Wulfstan 26
19. St Macarius the Elder 28
20. Bd Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi 30
21. St Agnes 31
22. St Vincent Pallotti 33
23. St Ildephonsus of Toledo 34
24. St Francis de Sales 36
25. St Paul 38
26. SS Timothy and Titus 40
27. St Angela Merici 42
28. St Thomas Aquinas 44
29. St Joseph Freinademetz 46
30. St Alban Roe 47
31. St John Bosco 49

February 53

1. St Brigid of Kildare 53
2. St Théophane Vénard 55
3. St Blaise 56
4. St Gilbert of Sempringham 57
5. St Agatha 59
6. St Paul Miki and Companions 60
7. Bd Pius IX 62
8. St Josephine Bakhita 64
9. St Miguel Febres Cordero 66
10. St Scholastica 68
11. St Caedmon 69
12. St Benedict of Aniane 70
13. Bd Jordan of Saxony 71
14. St Valentine 74
15. St Claude La Colombière 75
16. SS Cyril and Methodius 76
17. The Martyrs of China 78
18. St Colman of Lindisfarne 80
19. Bd John of Fiesole (Fra Angelico) 81
20. St Peter Damian 83
21. St Robert Southwell 84
22. St Margaret of Cortona 86
23. St Polycarp 87
24. St Ethelbert of Kent 88
25. St Walburga 90
26. St Porphyry of Gaza 91
27. St Anne Line 92
28. (in leap years) BB Mark Barkworth and Roger Filcock 94

29. (28 in non-leap years) St Oswald of Worcester 95

March 98

1. St David 98
2. St Chad 99
3. St Katharine Drexel 101
4. St Casimir 103
5. The Martyrs of Ukraine 104
6. St Agnes of Bohemia 107
7. SS Perpetua and Felicity 108
8. St John of God 109
9. St Frances of Rome 111
10. St John Ogilvie 112
11. The Martyrs of Córdoba 114
12. Bd Aloysius Orione 115
13. Bd Agnellus of Pisa 117
14. St Matilda 118
15. St Louise de Marillac 120
16. St Clement Mary Hofbauer 122
17. St Patrick 123
18. St Cyril of Jerusalem 125
19. St Joseph 127
20. St Cuthbert 129
21. SS Joseph Bilczewski and Sigmund Gorazdowski 131
22. St Nicholas Owen 132
23. St Turibius of Mogrovejo 134
24. St Rebecca Ar-Rayes 136
25. St Margaret Clitherow 137
26. St Joseph Sebastian Pelczar 139
27. St Rupert 140
28. St Stephen Harding 142
29. St John Climacus 143
30. Bd Restituta Kafka 145
31. St Stephen of Mar Saba 146

April 149

1. Bd Vilmos Apor 149
2. St Francis of Paola 151
3. St Aloysius Scrosoppi 152
4. St Isidore 153
5. St Vincent Ferrer 155
6. St Maria Crescentia Höss 156
7. St Jean Baptist De La Salle 157
8. St Julie Billiart 160
9. St Gemma Galgani 162
10. St Magdalen of Canossa 163
11. St Stanislaus of Kraków 164
12. St Joseph Moscati 165
13. St Martin I 167
14. Bd Lydwina of Schiedam 168
15. Bd Damien De Veuster 169
16. St Bernadette 171
17. Bd Kateri Tekakwitha 172
18. Bd Mary of the Incarnation (Barbe Acarie) 174
19. St Leo IX 177
20. Some English Martyrs 178
21. St Anselm 181
22. St Adalbert of Prague 183
23. St George 184
24. St Wilfrid 185
25. St Mark 187
26. Bd Mary of the Incarnation (Marie Guyart) 188
27. Bd Gianna Beretta Molla 189
28. St Peter Chanel 191
29. St Catherine of Siena 192
30. St Peter Betancurt 194

May 196

1. St Pius V 197
2. St Athanasius 199
3. SS Philip and James 201
4. St Antoninus of Florence 203
5. St Hilary of Arles 204
6. Bd Francis of Quebec 206
7. St John of Beverley 208
8. Bd Mary-Teresa of Jesus Gerhardinger 209
9. St Pachomius 211
10. Bd Ivan Merz 212

11. St John of Avila 214
12. St Epiphanius of Salamis 216
13. St Andrew Fournet 217
14. St Matthias 219
15. St Isidore the Farmer 220
16. St Brendan of Clonfert 222
17. St Paschal Baylon 223
18. St Peter Celestine 225
19. St Dunstan 226
20. St Bernardino of Siena 229
21. St Godric of Finchale 230
22. St Gregory VII 232
23. St Mary Magdalen de'Pazzi 234
24. St Madeleine Sophie Barat 235
25. St Bede the Venerable 237
26. St Philip Neri 239
27. St Augustine of Canterbury 241
28. St Aldhelm 243
29. St Ursula Ledóchowska 245
30. St Joan of Arc 246
31. Bd Christopher Magallanes and Companions 249

June 253

1. Bd John Baptist Scalabrini 253
2. The Martyrs of Lyons and Vienne 255
3. Bd John XXIII 257
4. St Charles Lwanga and Companions (Martyrs of Uganda) 260
5. St Boniface 261
6. St Marcellin Champagnat 263
7. Bd Baptista Varani 265
8. Bd Mariam Mankidiyan 266
9. St Columba of Iona 268
10. St Ephraem 269
11. St Barnabas 271
12. Bd Ignatius Maloyan 273
13. St Antony of Padua 275
14. St Methodius of Constaninople 277
15. St Vitus 278
16. St Germaine of Pibrac 280
17. St Juliana Falconieri 281
18. Bd Osanna of Mantua 283
19. St Romuald 284
20. The Martyrs of the Titus Oates "Plot" 285
21. St Aloysius Gonzaga 286
22. SS John Fisher and Thomas More 288
23. St Etheldreda 291
24. St Alban 292
25. St Paulinus of Nola 294
26. St Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer 295
27. St Cyril of Alexandria 298
28. St Irenaeus of Lyons 299
29. St Peter 301
30. Bd Raymund Lull 303

July 306

1. St Oliver Plunkett 306
2. St Bernardino Realino 308
3. St Thomas 309
4. St Elizabeth of Portugal 310
5. St Antony Zaccariah 311
6. St Maria Goretti 313
7. St Willibald 314
8. Bd Eugene III 315
9. St Augustine Zhao Rong and Companions 316
10. SS Antony and Theodosius Pechersky 318
11. St Benedict 319
12. St Veronica 321
13. Bd James of Voragine 323
14. St Camillus of Lellis 324
15. St Bonaventure 326
16. Bd Anne Marie Javouhey 328
17. St Hedwig of Poland 330
18. St Leo IV 331
19. St Macrina the Younger 333

20. Martyrs of the Spanish Civil War 334
21. St Laurence of Brindisi 337
22. St Mary Magdalene 338
23. St Bridget of Sweden 341
24. BB Paul Peter Goydić and Vasil' Hopko 343
25. St James the Greater 345
26. Bd Titus Brandsma 347
27. St Simeon Stylites 348
28. St Peter Poveda 349
29. SS Martha, Mary, and Lazarus 352
30. St Leopold Mandic 354
31. St Ignatius of Loyola 355

August 359

1. St Alphonsus de'Liguori 359
2. Bd Maria Stella Mardosewicz and Companions 361
3. St Peter Julian Eymard 362
4. St John Vianney 364
5. St Ethelwold 365
6. St Sixtus II and Companions 367
7. St Cajetan 368
8. St Dominic 369
9. St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross 372
10. St Laurence 374
11. St Clare of Assisi 375
12. Bd Mary McKillop 377
13. St Radegund 379
14. St Maximilian Kolbe 381
15. St Mary, the Blessed Virgin 383
16. St Stephen of Hungary 385
17. St Joan of the Cross 386
18. St Helena 388
19. St Alberto Hurtado 389
20. St Bernard 392
21. St Pius X 394
22. Bd Thomas Percy 396
23. St Rose of Lima 397
24. St Bartholomew 399
25. St Louis of France 400
26. St Joseph Calasanz 402
27. St Monica 403
28. St Augustine 405
29. St John the Baptist 407
30. St Margaret Ward 409
31. St Aidan 410

September 414

1. St Giles 414
2. Martyrs of the French Revolution 415
3. St Gregory the Great 417
4. St Hildegard of Bingen 419
5. Bd Teresa of Calcutta 421
6. Bd Maria Euthymia Üffing 423
7. Bd John Duckett and other English, Welsh, and Scottish Martyrs 424
8. Bd Frederick Ozanam 426
9. St Peter Claver 427
10. St Nicholas of Tolentino 429
11. St Ambrose Barlow 431
12. Bd Anton Schwartz 432
13. St John Chrysostom 433
14. St Peter of Tarentaise 435
15. St Catherine of Genoa 436
16. St Cyprian 438
17. St Robert Bellarmine 439
18. St Joseph of Copertino 441
19. St Januarius 443
20. The Martyrs of Korea 444
21. St Matthew 446
22. Bd Emily Tavernier 447
23. St Pius of Pietrelcina 448
24. St Theodore of Canterbury 450
25. St Sergius of Radonezh 452
26. SS Cosmas and Damian 453
27. St Vincent de Paul 454

28. St Wenceslas 456
29. St Lioba 458
30. St Jerome 459

October 464

1. St Thérèse of Lisieux 464
2. St Francis Borgia 466
3. Bd Francis Xavier Seelos 468
4. St Francis of Assisi 469
5. St Mary Faustina Kowalska 472
6. St Bruno 474
7. Bd Contardo Ferrini 475
8. St Pelagia the Penitent 477
9. St John Leonardi 478
10. St Daniel Comboni 479
11. St Philip the Deacon 481
12. St Lull 482
13. St Edward the Confessor 483
14. St Callistus I 485
15. St Teresa of Avila 486
16. St Margaret Mary Alacoque 489
17. St Ignatius of Antioch 490
18. St Luke 492
19. The Proto-Martyrs of North America 494
20. St Paul of the Cross 495
21. St Gerard Majella 497
22. St Philip Howard 498
23. St John of Capistrano 500
24. St Antony Mary Claret 501
25. The Forty Martyrs of England and Wales 503
26. St Cedd 506
27. Bd Louis Guanella 507
28. SS Simon and Jude 508
29. St Hilda of Whitby 509
30. St Winifred 511
31. St Alphonsus Rodríguez 512

November 515

1. The Solemnity of All Saints 515
2. Commemoration of All Souls 516
3. St Martin de Porres 518
4. St Charles Borromeo 519
5. Bd Joan de Maillé 521
6. St Illtyd 522
7. St Willibrord 524
8. Bd John Duns Scotus 525
9. Bd Elizabeth of the Trinity 527
10. St Leo the Great 528
11. St Martin of Tours 530
12. St Josaphat 532
13. The Martyrs of Bulgaria 533
14. St Laurence O'Toole 535
15. St Albert the Great 537
16. St Margaret of Scotland 538
17. St Elizabeth of Hungary 539
18. St Philippine Duchesne 541
19. St Hugh of Lincoln 543
20. St Edmund of Abingdon 545
21. Bd Mary Siedliska 547
22. St Cecilia 549
23. St Clement of Rome 550
24. St Columbanus 551
25. Bd Michael Pro 553
26. BB Louis and Mary Beltrame Quattrocchi 555
27. St Cuthbert Mayne and other English Martyrs 556
28. St Roque González and Companions 559
29. Bd James Alberione 560
30. St Andrew 562

December 565

1. St Edmund Campion 565
2. Bd John Ruysbroeck 567
3. St Francis Xavier 568
4. St John Damascene 570
5. St Sabas 572
6. St Nicholas 573
7. St Ambrose 575

8. Bd Anuarite Nengapeta 577
9. St Juan Diego 579
10. The London Martyrs of 1591 and other English Martyrs 581
11. St Damasus I 583
12. St Jane Frances de Chantal 585
13. St Virginia Centurione Bracelli 587
14. St John of the Cross 589
15. St Venantius Fortunatus 591
16. Bd Philip Siphong and Companions 592
17. St Melania the Younger 594
18. St Winnibald 595
19. Bd Urban V 597
20. St Thorlac 598
21. St Peter Canisius 600
22. St Frances Xavier Cabrini 602
23. St Margaret d'Youville 604
24. Bd Bartholomew dal Monte 605
25. St Peter Nolasco 607
26. St Stephen 608
27. St John 610
28. St Gaspar del Bufalo 612
29. St Thomas Becket 614
30. St John-Francis Régis 616
31. St Catherine Labouré 617

Chronological List of Saints by Date of Death 620

Glossary 631

INTRODUCTION

This is a revised edition of the volume published in 2003 with the title, *Butler's Lives of the Saints: New Concise Edition*. The title has been altered to give a clearer idea of its purpose, which is to present a concise account of one saint (or "blessed") for each day of the year, chosen originally from those featured in the "New Full Edition" of *Butler's Lives of the Saints* published in twelve volumes from 1995 to 2000 and now including some twenty-five more recent entries, mainly adapted from my "Supplement of New Saints and Blesseds," published in 2005. This volume includes many "blessed"—beatified but not, or not yet, canonized—as well as "saints" in the official meaning of those canonized by the Catholic Church.

The process of canonization itself has changed over the centuries: it was originally a decision of a local Church or council, made in response to popular demand, but was officially reserved to the papacy from about 1200, though earlier "local" saints were still recognized as such and accepted into the Roman Martyrology, first compiled by Cardinal Baronius in the sixteenth century, as "equivalently" canonized. Its latest edition, published by the Vatican in 2001 (the first revision since 1956) includes blesseds as well as saints for the first time, an implicit recognition that beatification is the most important step in the four-stage process: "servant of God," "venerable," "blessed," "saint" (see Glossary, pp. 631–2).

From among the saints, some one hundred and fifty are singled out for inclusion in the Universal Calendar of the Roman Catholic Church (last revised in 1969). Their inclusion means that devotion *should* be paid to them, as opposed to the devotion that *may* be paid to those not included. As a general rule, those in the Universal Calendar comprise the entry for the day of their commemoration here. When there is no official universal commemoration (on the majority of days in the year, at just under two hundred), the selection uses the following criteria: interest for the English-speaking world and increasingly for the New World; an emphasis on recent canonizations and beatifications (increased by some twenty-five new entries in this revised edition); a wide geographical spread; and a fairer gender division. These last two reflect the declared policy of the late Pope John Paul II, whose papacy produced more new saints (over four hundred and fifty) and blessed (some fifteen hundred) than all previous papacies since the reservation of the process to the papacy. Pope Benedict XVI has clearly inherited a considerable backlog from his predecessor's reign, and no discernible change in policy has yet emerged. He has,

though, reverted to the earlier practice of entrusting beatifications to the local archbishop.

From an early date, records were kept of the date of martyrs' deaths. Christian thinking saw this date as their "birthday into heaven," and this was when Christians gathered to remember and honour their martyrs, and later other holy men and women. These did not, however, die on conveniently spaced dates: some days have a plethora of deaths of major figures, others very few from any period and none of outstanding significance. In some cases here, then, entries have been transposed from an actual date of death to a nearby "vacant slot." When this has been done, it is noted in the introductory paragraph(s) preceding each month's entries.

The selected list of other familiar names at the end of each month gives those names in the new Roman Martyrology (in Latin only, as I write) that can reasonably be said to be current in English-speaking countries. They are offered as suggestions for baptismal, or confirmation, names for children born on these days and also as a suggestion that we might especially remember anyone we know called by these names in our prayers on that day. They represent less than a quarter of the names in the Roman Martyrology, but readers are unlikely to know anyone named Archelais, Asclas, Bassian, Blathmac, Catellus, Cosconius, and the like, or to want to name their babies after them (please, parents, do not be tempted!). Many of the names here, especially where there are a larger number of male names on a particular day, are those given to converts, especially in Asia.

Butler's original purpose, expressed over two hundred years ago, remains the basic inspiration: "Example instructs without usurping the authoritative air of a master. ... In the lives of the saints we see the most perfect maxims of the gospel reduced to practice." This may seem obvious today, but Butler in his day was in fact being a pioneer in this approach to the saints. They were earlier seen principally as intercessors, members of the "Church triumphant" to whom we in the "Church militant" prayed for help. While this aspect is certainly still a strong aspect of popular piety (and was the main emphasis in liturgical prayers at least until Vatican II), Butler's approach and changing times have led to a greater emphasis on achievement and less on the miraculous in saints' lives. Women feature more often than in traditional collections, most selected equally for their achievements. As Kathleen Jones has written in her *Women Saints: Lives of Faith and Courage* (1999):

> Traditionally, women saints have been classified as virgins, matrons and widows—that is by status rather than by their own achievements [classifications abandoned in the new full *Butler's Lives*]. Yet we do not write of "St Jerome, bachelor," or "St Peter, married man," and if a male saint became a widower, we assume that the loss was his private affair, not a description of his personality. Women have been treated by ascription, men by achievement; but a holy life is

> essentially a matter of achievement. Women do not become saints by being somebody's wife, somebody's daughter, or somebody's mother. They become saints by the way in which they deal with the problems of living.

A contemporary version of Butler's thesis is provided by the theologian Jon Sobrino, writing from El Salvador:

> Stories from the past shed light on those of the present but are also, in turn, illuminated by these. The first and foremost story, in effect, is always real life. The narrative of Jesus' life sheds light on our lives, but it is also true that ours shed light on his. The base communities express this simply by seeing present-day lives that resemble Jesus' and telling their story. As [Gustavo] Gutiérrez rightly says: "Calling to mind, for example, the life and death of a man of our time such as Archbishop Romero is telling, faithfully and creatively, the life and death of Jesus in the Latin American present" (*Christ the Liberator*: Maryknoll, NY, 2001, p. 249).

This element of "telling, faithfully and creatively," has always been present in writing Lives of the saints. "Faithfully," of course, has not always meant ideas of historical accuracy that do not predate the nineteenth century. "Creatively" has often included rereading the "life and death of Jesus" as presented in the Gospels into the lives of particular saints: one thinks of the period in the wilderness, miracles of healing, and years of preaching attributed to so many. Saints are presented as faithful to the spirit of Jesus, and if in the process they come to mirror his life, this is natural enough. Today we have more care for "historical accuracy" and generally also have far more information and so fewer gaps to fill. Perhaps we need to take care not to lose the element of storytelling. Lives of the saints are still an important way of retelling the story of Jesus, and if we do not keep doing this, Christianity will have no meaning for most people. Theology and christology, with their vocabulary of natures and persons, procession and the like easily lose sight of the reality of the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth. The saints show what following him means, in almost as many ways as there are canonized and beatified individuals. Their lives and the Lives written (or told) about them bring us back to the essential narrative—without which there can be no salvation. They are not just a pious add-on for those given to daily devotion; they are a basic component of the faith of the Church as a whole.

The principal source for this book is the twelve volumes of the new full edition of *Butler's Lives of the Saints* (1995–2000), and my first thanks are to the revisers of those volumes (other than January and February, for which I was responsible) for permitting me to paraphrase entries written by them. They are: Dame Teresa

Rodrigues, OSB (March); Peter Doyle (April, July, and October); Dr David Hugh Farmer (May); Prof. Kathleen Jones (June and December); John Cumming (August); Sarah Fawcett Thomas (September and November). This single volume is designed to be a popularization of—and, let me hope, an introduction to—that considerable work, and it does not pretend to fresh research, except for those (few) entries that deal with beatifications since it was completed. Most entries here are shorter than those in the full edition; some are longer and here other publications have proved useful: Kathleen Jones' *Women Saints* (1999), for Agnes, Mary of the Incarnation (Barbe Acarie), and others; *Lives of the Saints You Should Know*, vol. 2 (1996), by Margaret and Matthew Bunson, for the entry on Kateri Tekakwitha. In May, the quotations from the *Navigation of Brendan* (16th) are taken from E. C. Sellner, *Wisdom of the Celtic Saints* (1993); the entry on St Dunstan (19th) owes much to Douglas Dales, *Shepherd and Servant: The Spiritual Legacy of Saint Dunstan* (2001); the stories about Godric of Finchale (21st) and animals can be found in Helen Waddell, *Beasts and Saints* (1934; new edn. 1995); quotations from Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, in the entries on John of Beverley (7th), Augustine of Canterbury (27th), and elsewhere, are from the translation by Leo Sherley-Price (revised edn. 1990); the words of Joan of Arc (30th) are translated from Bernard-Marie and Jean Huscenot, *Paroles de Saints* (1994). In June, the quotations from Eusebius' *History of the Church* in the account of the martyrs of Lyons and Vienne are taken from the Penguin Classics translation by G. A. Williamson (revised edn. 1989); that from Adomnán of Iona's *Life of St Columba* is from the translation and edition by Richard Sharpe (1995); the Prayer of St Ephraem is translated from the French text in Olivier Clément, *Trois Prières* (1993); information on the development of the Camaldolese Congregation (St Romuald; 19th) is taken from Peter Day, *Dictionary of Religious Orders* (2001); quotations from Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* are from the translation by Leo Sherley-Price, revised by R. E. Latham (1968). In September, quotations from Bede in the entry on St Theodore of Canterbury are, as usual, taken from the 1990 Penguin Classics edition, translated by Leo Sherley-Price; Kathleen Jones' *Women Saints* has again proved useful, particularly for the entries on St Hildegard of Bingen (4th) and Catherine of Genoa (15th) but also for comments on Paula in St Jerome (30th). In October, once again I am indebted to Kathleen Jones for the entry on St Pelagia the Penitent (8th) and to the Penguin Classics edition of Bede for quotes relating to St Cedd (26th). I have deliberately not looked at corresponding entries in Michael Walsh's *New Concise Butler's Lives* ... (new edn., 1991) or Robert Ellsberg's *All Saints* (1997) for fear of unconscious plagiarism, but I am grateful to both as predecessors. Further back in time, Donald Attwater's (1959) revision of Henry Sebastian Bowden's (1877) *Miniature Lives of the Saints* deserves mention as a begetter, and I have occasionally followed Attwater's technique of extracting a relevant quotation and putting it at the end of the entry in order to leave a more historical "Life."

JANUARY

The Church's Universal Calendar dedicates the first day of the year to Mary as Mother of God, and this is followed in the full edition of *Butler's Lives of the Saints*, in which Mary is commemorated on her various feasts throughout the year. Here, following a strict "one saint per day" formula, she will feature on the date of her "birthday into heaven," 15 August, the Feast of the Assumption. Generally, January saints and blessed are presented on the day they feature in the new Roman Martyrology, which is the anniversary of their death. However, holy people did not conveniently space out their "birthdays into heaven" day by day, so some days have more than one major figure and others have none, requiring some adjustments here.

On the 12th, St Margaret Bourgeoys, Canada's first saint, has been chosen over either of two very strong monastic candidates (and attractive figures) from earlier times, St Benedict Biscop and St Ailred of Rievaulx. On virtually every day, the saint chosen died on that actual day. St Wulfstan is moved forward two days from his (new) date of the 20th, which is given to the first West African to be beatified, Bd Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi. The 25th is properly The Conversion of St Paul, and he shares 29 June with St Peter as the major feast commemorating the two great pillars of the Church; as it would be impossible to give them both anything like adequate treatment in the same entry in this work, however, Paul is considered here, with 29 June reserved to St Peter. St Joseph Freinademetz is moved forward one day, from the 28th (St Thomas Aquinas) to the 29th. St Alban Roe and his companion Bd Thomas Reynolds were executed on 21 January according to the reformed Gregorian calendar then in use in England, and the new Roman Martyrology restores them to that date (which here belongs to St Agnes); St Alban is here moved forward one day from his Benedictine feast-day, the 31st, which belongs to St John Bosco.

1

St Odilo of Cluny (962–1049)

The great monastery of Cluny, near Mâcon in the Burgundy region of eastern France, stands at the forefront of so much reform and innovation in the history

of the Church that Odilo, one of its prominent early abbots, seems an appropriate figure to pick from the saints commemorated on the first day of the year.

Cluny was founded in 910 by a duke of Aquitaine named William the Pious. Its first abbot was Berno of Baume, who set high standards of observance. His successor was St Odo, and under his rule the reform spread widely in southern France and into Italy. Odo was followed by Aymardus, then Majolus, and then Odilo, who was thus the fifth abbot.

He entered the monastery at a young age, was made coadjutor in 991, and was elected abbot only three years later. His rule as abbot was marked by an expansion of the Cluniac reform throughout Western Christendom and an increase in devotion, especially to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Monasteries that embraced the reforms were made directly dependent on Cluny, which helped administrative efficiency but departed from the Rule of St Benedict and so led to the historical division between Cluniac monks and Benedictines.

Odilo was severe with himself and in his government, but gentle with others and especially toward the poor, going so far as to melt down the monasteries' precious vessels and ornaments to raise funds to help relieve a famine in 1006. He was also a man of peace and established the "Truce of God" or "Peace of God," periods when local warring warlords who ravaged the lands agreed to abstain from fighting. These periods, originally the sacred seasons of Christmas and Easter, were then extended to Advent and Lent, then to every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, so encompassing a considerable portion of the year. This truce eventually spread through most of the provinces of France.

One innovation of his is still observed throughout the Church—the commemoration of All Souls on 2 November. He started this as an observance for the monks of Cluny and all the other communities in the Cluniac family, requiring them, on the day following All Saints, to pray for deceased monks. The practice soon grew into the custom of saying three Masses for the souls in purgatory and was officially extended to the whole Western Church in 1748. After the First World War it developed into a universal observance, with one Mass being said for a particular person or group, one for all the dead, and one for the pope's intentions.

Odilo's rule as abbot lasted for fifty-six years. During this time he travelled widely, spreading the Cluniac reform. He made several journeys to Rome, also visiting the abbey of Monte Cassino. He was responsible for considerable building works at Cluny itself, especially for the church and cloister, which he found in wood and left in marble. He died while visiting the monasteries under his control, on 1 January 1049. Cluny itself is now a ruin, the result of the ravages of the French Revolution, when the buildings were sold to a local builder, who blew up the church to make the stone more accessible for quarrying. At one time this church had been the largest in Christendom until the rebuilding of St Peter's, and it was influential in spreading many features,

especially stone vaulting, more fire-resistant than wooden beams, and carved portals, of which the finest surviving example is perhaps that at Vézélay. Cluny also played a major role in the development of Gregorian chant and illuminated manuscripts.

Today, the nearby Taizé Community draws many thousands of mainly young people to the area each year and has a worldwide influence through its teaching, music and prayers, not entirely unlike that of Cluny in Odilo's time.

Why would we doubt that our offerings for the dead bring them some consolation? Let us not hesitate to help those who have died and to offer our prayers for them.

St John Chrysostom, homily on 1 Corinthians, cited in *The Catechism of the Catholic Church,* 1032

2

St Basil the Great (329–379)

The "Cappadocian Fathers"—Basil, his lifelong friend Gregory Nazianzen, commemorated with him today, and his younger brother Gregory of Nyssa (see 10 Jan.)—were immensely influential in the development of monastic spirituality in both East and West and vital figures in the struggle between orthodox doctrine and Arianism, which took up so much time and energy at the early ecumenical councils. Of the three, Basil was outstandingly the socially concerned man of action.

He was born into a wealthy and saintly family in Caesarea, the capital of the Roman province of Cappadocia (now eastern Turkey). His paternal grandmother, mother, father, one sister, and two brothers are all venerated as saints. He received the education proper to a young man of his social standing at Constantinople and then Athens, returning to teach rhetoric in Caesarea. The influence of his sister, St Macrina, seems to have diverted his course from that of potential prominent lawyer to the religious life. He was baptized and set off on a tour of monasteries in Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and Mesopotamia to study the religious life at first hand. On his return he settled at Pontus, where Macrina, his widowed mother, and several other women were living as a religious community. Basil gathered disciples around him, and so formed the first monastery in Asia Minor. He lived in this way for five years only, but in that time he produced the "long" and "short" Rules, which were to become known to St Benedict and through him permeate monastic life in the West, as well as being directly influential in the East.

He left the monastery to become a hermit with his brother, Gregory, but was summoned out of his solitude by Archbishop Eusebius of Caesarea to refute the teachings of Arius. Eusebius then became jealous of his success, so he retired to his hermitage once more. Gregory seems to have persuaded him to return to Caesarea, where he effectively governed the diocese for five years. He was then elected to succeed Eusebius on the latter's death in 370. A model administrator, he soon won the support of the fifty suffragan bishops over whom he exercised authority as "metropolitan." He gave away his family inheritance for the sake of the diocese, organized soup kitchens for the poor in times of famine, and built a vast hospital complex just outside the gates of Caesarea, known as the Basiliad and regarded as one of the wonders of the world. The land on which it was built was donated by the Arian emperor in the east, Valens, who had originally wanted Basil banished (or converted to Arianism) but was impressed by his adamant refusal to compromise. This was based on his reflections on the source of church and state authority, which convinced him that there was a limit to the Christian duty of obedience to the State, a vital insight at a time when Christianity was in danger of losing its way by becoming the official religion of the Roman Empire.

Basil died on 1 January (the date on which his feast is still kept in the East) in 379. He had given monasticism a theological content and transformed it into an intellectual movement from the popular and evangelical movement it had been before. He saw monks simply as Christians seeking the most effective way to salvation through observing the gospel commandment to love one another. His monasteries had schools attached, to prepare children either for the monastery or for life "in the world" outside it. His monks took part in all the social activities of the Church, in which he himself had been such a pioneer. His teaching was that individuals are formed for the spiritual life not in isolation but by integration into an ideal society.

In the West, he is venerated as one of the Four Greek Doctors of the Church. This reflects the decisive nature of his interventions on trinitarian theology in the debates with Arianism over the divinity of the Son and definition of the place of the Holy Spirit. It was he who formulated the classic definition of the Trinity as three Persons in one Nature. He is also venerated as one of the patron saints of Russia.

Do you, Basil, there also welcome me in your dwelling, when I have departed this life; that we may live together and gaze more directly and perfectly at the holy and blessed Trinity, of which here on earth we have been granted but fleeting glimpses.

from the funeral oration for Basil preached by St Gregory Nazianzen

3

St Genevieve of Paris (about 422–500)

Genevieve, though piously presented as poor, probably came from a wealthy Gallo-Roman family. She took the veil of a dedicated virgin at the age of fifteen. After the death of her parents she lived with her godmother in Paris and devoted herself to an energetic course of charitable works—to the point where she aroused envy and perhaps the fury of merchants who saw her giving away goods that they might have sold. She was supported by St Germanus of Auxerre, who at one point laid his hand on her head (ordaining her deacon?) and at another sent her blessed bread as a mark of his esteem.

Her charity and energy brought her to prominence during the siege of Paris by the Franks, which reduced the population to starvation. Genevieve is reputed to have led an expedition up the Seine by boat to Troyes, coming back laden with grain to relieve the famine. From this point on she was an inspiration to the people of Paris. At her request they built a church in honour of St Dionysius, or Denis, and it was her bravery and exhortation that made the people stay and pray rather than flee before the advance of Attila the Hun—who turned away and marched on Orleans instead. She may have been influential in persuading King Clovis of the Franks to become a Christian, and she is said to have inspired him to begin building the church of SS Peter and Paul in Paris. She was buried there, and the fame of miracles worked at her tomb spread all over France, so that the church became known as St Genevieve's.

Belief in the power of her intercession was apparently confirmed most spectacularly in 1129, during one of the epidemics of ergotism ("burning fever" or "holy fire," brought on by eating rye bread infected by the ergot fungus) that ravaged many parts of Europe during the Middle Ages. This epidemic abated after the casket containing Genevieve's bones was carried in solemn procession to the cathedral. Pope Innocent II visited Paris the following year and ordered an annual procession to commemorate the miracle. When Paris became capital of France, her importance increased. Her church was rebuilt in the neoclassical style in the eighteenth century but secularized in the French Revolution as the Panthéon, a shrine to its heroes. Genevieve's shrine was destroyed, but devotion to her continued, and Puvis de Chavannes painted frescoes of her life around the Panthéon in 1877. Besides being patron saint of Paris, she is invoked against drought as well as flooding and other disasters. Her part in assuring the safety of Paris led to her being proclaimed patron of French Security Forces, a title confirmed by Pope John XXIII in 1962.

4

St Elizabeth Ann Seton (1774–1821)

Born just two years before the United States won its independence, she is the first native-born American citizen to be canonized. Both her parents belonged to prominent non-Catholic families in the then colonies, and she was born Elizabeth Ann Bayley on 28 August 1774. Her father, Dr Richard Bayley, was a distinguished physician and professor of anatomy at King's College (which later became Columbia University) and the first health officer of New York City. Her mother, daughter of the rector of the Episcopal church of St Andrew's on Staten Island, died when Elizabeth was only three, leaving her to be educated—well, if eccentrically—by her father. Her upbringing left her with a deep desire to devote herself to nursing the sick, especially the sick poor.

At the age of twenty she married William Magee Seton, a wealthy young shipping merchant, and the couple went on to have two sons and three daughters. Elizabeth had the means to put her youthful ideals into practice and founded an organization called the Society for the Relief of Poor Widows with Sick Children, which caused her to become known as "the Protestant Sister of Charity." Then disaster struck: William lost many of his ships in the Napoleonic wars, and his business went bankrupt. He then developed tuberculosis and took Elizabeth to Italy to seek a cure in a sunnier climate, but he died there in December 1803. She stayed on in Italy for some months and returned to the States determined to become a Catholic, being received in March 1805 in the face of unrelenting opposition from her family and desertion by her friends.

In dire financial straits, she tried running a school and then a boarding house for boys in New York. She was rescued by a priest from Baltimore, who invited her to open a school for girls there. This opened in June 1808 and flourished. Elizabeth, feeling herself supported by God, gathered a group of like-minded women around her and contemplated starting a religious Congregation. She took her first vows in March 1809 and in June that year moved her school and infant community to nearby Emmitsburg, to what became known as the Stone House. The school took in poor children without charging for tuition, and Mother Seton, as she was known from then on, trusting in God's help, rapidly developed her Congregation, which became known as the Daughters of Charity of St Joseph.

By 1812 their numbers had grown to twenty. They opened a home in Philadelphia in 1814 and an orphanage in New York three years later. By the time of her death in 1821, there were twenty houses spread across the country.

She and her Congregation are rightly regarded as founders of the parochial school system. Their work has spread to South as well as North America, to Italy, and to mission territories; they staff hospitals, child-care institutions, homes for the aged and disabled, and schools at every level. Elizabeth Ann Seton was beatified by Pope John XXIII in 1959 and canonized in the presence of over a thousand Sisters of her Congregation in 1975. Her body lies in the chapel of the National Shrine in the provincial house of the Daughters of Charity in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

[I do] realize it—the protecting presence, the consoling grace of my Redeemer and God. He raises me from the dust to feel that I am near Him, He drives away all sorrow to fill me with his consolations—He is my guide and friend and supporter. With such a guide can I fear, with such a friend shall I not be satisfied, with such a supporter can I fall?

Elizabeth Ann Seton, in *Elizabeth Seton: Selected Writings*, edited by E. Kelly and A. Melville (1987)

5

St John Neumann (1811–1860)

John's father was German and his mother Czech. He was the third of six children, born in Prachatitz in Bohemia, now half of the Czech Republic, then part of the Austrian Empire. He went to school first in Prachatitz and then, at the age of twelve, in Budweis (of beer fame). He was a bright boy with a special talent for languages and seemed destined for the priesthood. In 1831 he entered the diocesan seminary in Budweis, from where he went on to theological studies at the Charles Ferdinand University in Prague.

He was due to be ordained in 1835, but the elderly bishop of Budweis considered that he had enough priests and cancelled the ordinations for that year. This was the spur for John to put his missionary dreams into action. He sailed for the United States, where he was ordained by the bishop of New York the following year. He worked tirelessly for four years in the Buffalo–Rochester area, ministering to German immigrants and to Native Americans. He was, however, working very much on his own and felt the need for a community. The Redemptorists had recently arrived in the United States, and after meeting their superior, John was accepted into the Congregation.

He began his novitiate in Pittsburgh in 1840 and took his vows two years later. The fact that he spoke eight languages made him an ideal preacher

among immigrant communities, and he was in great demand in both Pittsburgh and Baltimore. His religious superiors in Europe recognized his holiness and zeal by appointing him vicar of all the Redemptorists in America. He worked tirelessly for causes such as the education of African-American children, became an American citizen, and in 1852, much to his surprise, was appointed fourth bishop of Philadelphia. His friend Francis Patrick Kenrick, recently appointed from there to be archbishop of Baltimore, had, it turned out, placed his name on the *terna*—list of three candidates—sent to Pope Pius IX.

Philadelphia was a sprawling diocese with a polyglot population and a large debt. With, perhaps, a touch of desperation at the task ahead of him, John took as his episcopal motto *Passio Christi, conforta me!*—"Passion of Christ, strengthen me!" He set about putting his apostolic zeal to good effect: he built schools and churches, completed the cathedral, introduced new devotions, and founded a Congregation of religious Sisters to staff the crowded schools, the population of which doubled during his short time as bishop. He somehow also found time to write two German Catechisms. He was overtaxing himself to an impossible extent, and he collapsed in the street and died on 5 January 1860, at the age of only forty-eight. He was buried in the Redemptorist church of St Peter in Philadelphia, which has come to be known as the "National shrine of St John Neumann." He was declared Blessed by Pope John XXIII in 1963, but John died before the ceremony could be carried out, so he was actually beatified by Pope Paul VI, who also canonized him in 1977.

6

St Raphaela Mary Porras (1850–1925)

Rafaela Porras y Ayllón was born near Córdoba in the southern Spanish region of Andalusia on 1 March 1850. Her father, mayor of the small town of Pedro Abad, caught cholera through nursing the sick during an epidemic and died when Rafaela was four. Her mother died when she was nineteen, leaving her and her elder sister, Dolores, in charge of the household. The two sisters decided to become nuns. They could have had no idea what was in store for them as they became caught up in a web of religious hostility.

A certain Fr Ortíz Urruela, who had at one time studied in England under Bishop Grant of Southwark, had invited the Society of Mary Reparatrix to Córdoba, and the sisters were received into its convent there. But the bishop of Córdoba, Mgr Ceferino González, resented the community's presence and ordered them out of the diocese. They left sixteen novices behind, with Sr Rafaela in charge of them. He then announced that he had drawn up a new Rule for them, quite different from the one they had intended to vow them-

selves to. Rather than submit to something alien to them or face being returned to their homes, the novices decided to escape. With the connivance of Fr Ortíz, they fled by night to Andújar, some forty miles east of Córdoba, where he had arranged for them to be sheltered by the nuns who ran the hospital. Both the diocesan and the civil authorities tried to evict them, but both failed: the bishop discovered that he had no jurisdiction over them in canon law, since they were not a canonically constituted Congregation (for which he had himself to blame). Fr Ortíz had time to appeal to church authorities in Madrid on their behalf before dying suddenly. A Jesuit named Fr Cotanilla invited them to Madrid, where they were allowed to settle. Rafaela and Dolores eventually made their solemn profession in the Congregation that took the name of Sisters of Reparation of the Sacred Heart in 1877.

For a time things went relatively smoothly. The Congregation grew, opening other houses in Spain and spreading to other countries, including England and the United States, where its members worked in schools and organized retreats. In 1886 it was granted Vatican approval and changed its name to Handmaids of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Then Rafaela and her sister quarrelled: Rafaela had been elected superior general at the time of the approval, but Dolores, now Mother María del Pilar, objected to her administrative methods and led a faction against her, forcing her to resign in 1893, whereupon she took over as superior general.

Rafaela accepted this with complete humility and for the remaining thirty-two years of her life lived simply in the Congregation's house in Rome, where she did the housework and took no office whatsoever until she was appointed mistress of novices when Dolores was removed from office. For the spirited escapee and determined foundress this cannot have been easy, but she bore it all with courage and charity: she is on record as saying, "God wants me to submit to all that happens to me as if I saw him there commanding it." She died on the Feast of the Epiphany, 1925, and was beatified in 1952 and canonized by Pope Paul VI in 1977.

7

St Raymund of Peñafort (about 1175–1275)

Raymund began his extraordinarily long and productive life in Catalonia sometime between 1175 and 1180, so was probably between ninety-five and ninety-nine when he died. His family was descended from the counts of Barcelona and related to the kings of Aragon. He was a brilliant student at Barcelona, where he was teaching philosophy by the age of twenty. Around 1210 he went to Bologna to take doctorates in both Civil and Canon Law.

Bologna was then one of the leading emerging universities, and among those attracted by its reputation was Dominic of Guzmán (see 8 Aug.), founder of the Order of Preachers, who was to die there in 1221. Raymund is likely to have known him or at least to have been influenced by him, and he joined the Dominicans eight months after Dominic's death.

He had returned to Barcelona in 1219 and spent his time between study and preaching aimed at the conversion of Moors (who still occupied large portions of Spain) and Jews (who had flourishing communities there). In 1230 Pope Gregory IX summoned him to Rome to be his confessor. He enjoined on Gregory the duty of acting promptly on all petitions presented to him by the poor. He was commissioned to use his expertise in canon law to gather all the "Decretals"—decrees issued by popes and councils since they were last collected by Gratian in 1150—into one body. There were over two thousand of them, and the task took three years and produced five volumes, which became the foundation of a Code of Canon Law that was to last until a new Code was promulgated in 1917. His work formed a major link between the Middle Ages and modern times. Exhausted by this great work, he retired once more to Barcelona.

He refused the archbishopric of Tarragona, pleading that he preferred his life of solitude, study, and preaching, but in 1238, when he was already over sixty, he was chosen to be the third master of the Dominicans, following the death of Jordan of Saxony (see 13 Feb.). He spent a very active two years visiting the houses of the rapidly growing Order on foot and making revisions to its constitution. One of these was that superiors should be able to resign their post voluntarily with good reason, and in 1240 he availed himself of this provision on the grounds that he had reached the age of sixty-five—still the official "retirement age" in many countries.

He did not exactly retire, however: his remaining thirty-four years encompassed preaching and working for the conversion of the Moors, encouraging St Thomas Aquinas (see 28 Jan.) to write the *Summa contra Gentiles*, establishing friaries, some actually on Moorish territory, and instituting the study of Hebrew and Arabic. In his final days King Alfonso of Castile and King James of Aragon came to receive his blessing. He died in Barcelona on 7 January 1275 and was canonized in 1601. His greatest achievement was in the field of canon law, but legends surrounding him—such as that he sailed from Majorca to Barcelona in half an hour, using only his cloak for a boat and sail and his staff as a mast—suggest that his energy made him a more dashing personality than his academic career might suggest.

8

St Wulsin (died 1005)

Wulsin, whose name is also spelt Wulfsin or Wulsige, was a monk at Glastonbury under St Dunstan (see 19 May), who restored Benedictine monastic life for men in England and went on to become archbishop of Canterbury. The monasteries he restored or founded were closely dependent on the royal family for protection against local lords and were notable for the integrity and learning of the abbots chosen to lead them, of whom Wulsin was typical. Dunstan is said to have "loved [Wulsin] like a son with pure affection." He was bishop of London for two years, during which time he acquired land and restored the abbey of Westminster, advising King Edgar to place Wulsin in charge of the monks there. Wulsin was appointed its first abbot in about the year 980.

In 992 or 993 he was moved again, to Sherborne in Wessex, then one of the largest dioceses in the west of England, where the cathedral was administered by secular canons. Wulsin seems to have intended from the start to make radical changes. In 998 he obtained a charter from King Ethelred ("the unready") authorizing him to eject the canons and install Benedictine monks in their place. So the cathedral of the diocese was from then on also an abbey church, and it was usual in such cases for the bishop of the diocese to be abbot as well. So Wulsin held both offices, though the abbey would have been administered by a prior: he is on record as warning his monks that the combination of both offices in one person would cause difficulties in the future. The magnificent *Sherborne Missal,* produced at the abbey in about 1400, has an illustrated page for his feast-day, in which he is shown receiving black-robed monks with his right hand while dismissing canons wearing white fur tippets with his left. The canons are then shown being received into a sumptuous building by a bishop—possibly St Osmund at Old Sarum, the precursor of Salisbury Cathedral—so they were not exactly cast into outer darkness.

In keeping with the tone of Dunstan's reform, Wulsin was energetic in spreading the ideals of the monastic renewal far and wide. The principles of the good life as embodied in the Rule of St Benedict were applicable to other priests and to lay people too, and were arousing considerable interest among rural priests and their parishioners. As a monk, Wulsin was accustomed to writing in Latin, which would have been lost on many of the audience for his pastoral letters, but he had the good sense to employ a scholar named Aelfric, then abbot of the nearby monastery of Cerne Abbas, to translate a pastoral letter dealing with matters of clerical duty, observance, and conduct into English.

He also set about developing Sherborne Abbey in keeping with the architectural and musical reforms emanating from Cluny (see 1 Jan.). He built a huge porch at the west end, with a musicians' gallery let into the thickness of the wall. This was subsequently pulled down; its foundations were discovered in the course of a nineteenth-century restoration, but all that remains of Wulsin's west wall is the south door. He was evidently regarded at least locally as a saint from soon after his death. His remains were moved to a prominent shrine in the abbey when building work had progressed to a point where they could be worthily received, in about 1045 or 1050. This "translation" is also recorded in the *Sherborne Missal*, for the Mass of 28 April, where the remains of another local saint, Juthwara, said to have been murdered by her brother, are shown being moved with his. His memory was brought back vividly to life in 1998, when Sherborne organized a festival to celebrate the millennium since the coming of the Benedictines.

A bishop and confessor of noble blood in the city of London, and for because he was given unto virtue in youth, his friends put him into Westminster, where he was abbot, and after that bishop of Sherborne, a man of hard life great perfection and many miracles.

Description of Wulsin in the Martyrology compiled by Wynkyn de Worde, the great printer who took over Caxton's business in London and ran it successfully until his death in 1535

9

St Adrian of Canterbury (died 709 or 710)

The main source of information on Adrian (or Hadrian), as for most of his contemporaries, is the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* by the Venerable Bede (see 25 May). In Chapter 1 of his Book Four he writes:

> On the fourteenth of July in the above-mentioned year [664], when an eclipse was suddenly followed by plague ... Deusdedit the sixth archbishop of Canterbury died. ... The see of Canterbury was then vacant for a considerable time, until Wighard, an English priest with great experience in church administration, was sent to Rome. ... On his arrival in Rome, where Vitalian was ruling the apostolic see, Wighard explained to the pope the reason for his journey; but shortly afterwards he and nearly all his companions fell victim to a plague that broke out at the time.

Deusdedit had been the first Englishman to occupy the see of Canterbury, and his death, so closely followed by that of Wighard, who had been picked to succeed him by King Egbert of Kent and King Oswy of Northumbria, left the pope with a considerable problem. Making "careful enquiry," he consulted the abbot of a monastery near Naples, Hadrian, who was "a native of Africa ... very learned in the scriptures, experienced in ecclesiastical and monastic administration, and a great scholar in Greek and Latin"—who, in other words, seemed to be the ideal candidate. Adrian, however, considered himself unfit for such high office and proposed instead a monk named Andrew, who "was considered worthy of a bishopric by all who knew him," but Andrew too excused himself, on the grounds that his health was not up to the job. Pope Vitalian asked Adrian to think again, and this time he proposed "a monk named Theodore [see 24 Sept.] ... learned both in sacred and in secular literature, in Greek and in Latin, of proved integrity, and of the venerable age of sixty-six." (Adrian had considered himself too young for the post.) So Vitalian agreed to consecrate Theodore, who was indeed to prove an excellent choice, "but made it a condition that Hadrian himself should accompany him to Britain, since he had already travelled through Gaul twice on various missions and had both a better knowledge of the road and sufficient men of his own available." He was also to act as a sort of theological watchdog, making sure that Theodore, who came from Tarsus in the east, did not introduce "into the Church which he was to rule any Greek customs which conflicted with the teachings of the true faith." Theodore was a simple monk but was rapidly ordained and consecrated bishop, setting out, with Adrian, on 27 May 668.

Adrian arrived some time after Theodore, having been detained for a time in France by Ebroin, "mayor of the king's palace" and effective ruler of the Frankish kingdom, who suspected him of dubious political intrigue to his disadvantage. But he realized that Adrian was innocent and eventually allowed him to cross to Britain. In Canterbury, Theodore "appointed him abbot of the monastery of blessed Peter the Apostle ... for when he left Rome the apostolic Pope had instructed Theodore to provide for him in his diocese."

For the next twenty-one years Adrian accompanied Theodore on visits to every part of the island. He also made his monastery (later named St Augustine's) a major seat of learning, teaching Greek, Latin, Roman law, scripture and patristics, poetry, and astronomy. Its students, drawn from all over Britain and also from Ireland, included many future bishops and archbishops. Among these was Aldhelm (see 28 May), who became the first bishop of Sherborne and who declared that the teaching there was superior to anything available in Ireland. Adrian carried on teaching for almost twenty years after Theodore's death, dying probably in 710. "Never," declares Bede, "had there been such happy times as these since the English settled in Britain." Perhaps something of his character can be glimpsed in the fact that many of the "miracles" for which his tomb became famous worked to the benefit of boys in trouble with their masters.

10

St Gregory of Nyssa (about 330–395)

The younger brother of St Basil the Great (see 2 Jan.) was educated by Basil and their sister, Macrina, which suggests that their parents died while he was young. He studied rhetoric, became a professor, and was married by the time Gregory Nazianzen persuaded him to place his intellectual prowess at the service of the Church. Apparently at Basil's suggestion, he was elected bishop of Nyssa, in Lower Armenia, in 372. Nyssa was a hotbed of Arianism, and Gregory lacked Basil's administrative and diplomatic skills in dealing with theological adversaries who were quite capable of furthering their cause by underhand means. He was accused of embezzling church funds and arrested by the governor of Pontus. He escaped from captivity, which his enemies saw as an admission of guilt, but did not return to his see until 378. Shortly after this, Basil died, soon followed by Macrina.

He may have lacked some skills, but his intellectual gifts, shown in his numerous writings against Arianism and in support of orthodoxy, soon caused him to become known as the "common mainstay of the Church." He was sent on missions to counter heresy in Palestine and Arabia, and he was the chief proponent of trinitarian doctrine at the First Council of Constantinople in 381, which safeguarded the true humanity as well as divinity of Christ. And as Christ is truly one person in two natures, Mary is truly *theotokos*, "God-bearer," Mother of God. His reputation remained high for the rest of his life, but then gradually works originally by him were attributed to others (authors were not given to asserting their "moral rights" over a text in those days) and his stature was less appreciated. It was not until the second half of the twentieth century that investigations by a number of scholars, including Hans Urs von Balthasar and Jean Daniélou, brought to light just how much the Church owes to him.

Developing the work of Basil and Gregory Nazianzen, he provided a mystical basis for monasticism that formed a bridge between Clement and Origen and the flowering of the high Middle Ages. He was steeped in the Greek and Roman classical philosophers, but made his own entirely Christian and biblically-based synthesis of their work. His meditations, through a series of biblical commentaries and a second series of spiritual works aimed more directly at the monastic life, start with an intuition drawn from a passage from the Bible or the Fathers, move through his own personal philosophical reflections, and finally unfold in a return to the Bible. Being Christian is, for him, imitating God as revealed in Christ, and this imitation assimilates us to

what God actually is. Life is a conflict between sin and the will of God; learning is the ability to distinguish between good and evil; its source is the word of God as received in the tradition of the Church; the place where its effects can best be put into effect is the cenobitic (communitarian) life within the bosom of the Church. He is now seen as a precursor and inspirer of Pseudo-Dionysius, whose remarkable mystical works (gaining extra credibility from long being attributed to Paul's disciple) were a direct influence on St John of the Cross (see 14 Dec.) and most medieval and later mysticism.

Just as he who looks at the sun in a mirror, even if he does not fix his eyes on the sky itself, nevertheless sees the sun in the mirror's brightness, so you also, even if your eyes could not bear the light, possess within yourselves what you desire, if you return to the grace of the image that was placed in you from the beginning.

Gregory of Nyssa, *Oration on the Fifth Beatitude*

11

St Paulinus of Aquileia (about 726–804)

Aquileia, whose relative size and importance have declined considerably since Paulinus' time, lies in what is now the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region of north-eastern Italy, north of the Gulf of Trieste. Paulinus was born there to a farming family and managed to combine working on the family farm in his youth with becoming famous as a professor of grammar. This brought him to the attention of the emperor Charlemagne, who in around 776 invited him to his court at Aachen, where he became one of the circle of intellectuals responsible for what has become known as "the Carolingian Renaissance." Charlemagne also gave him the anomalous (because there are no patriarchs in the Western Church other than the pope) title of Patriarch of Aquileia.

The court school at Aachen was directed by Alcuin, who came there from the cathedral school of York a few years after Paulinus, for whom he always expressed great respect. It developed into a sort of academy, with regular meetings to discuss important topics and to exchange learning, poems, and even riddles. Its importance can be seen in Alcuin's "General Admonition" of 789, laying out fundamental reforms in Church and State designed to promote lasting peace and order in both.

Paulinus was instrumental in tempering the severity of the emperor's missionary efforts, which generally consisted of forced conversion at swordpoint. Paulinus objected to baptizing "barbarians" before they had received instruc-

tion. Charlemagne respected his learning and teaching and sent him on a series of journeys to attend the synods he was convening to stamp his rule on western Europe. At that of Frankfurt in 794, Paulinus claimed for Charlemagne the right to a say in theological as well as political matters, so laying the foundations for a "Christian empire." He praised Charlemagne as *"rex et sacerdos,"* "king and priest," contributing to a decisive shift in power from pope to emperor. Charlemagne came to see the papacy as coming under his responsibility and could lecture Pope Leo III on his duties in terms similar to those used by Pope Gregory the Great two hundred years earlier addressing the Frankish kings.

Theological controversies also involved Paulinus. He helped resolve the "adoptionism" debate (over whether Christ should be seen as the adoptive son of God), and to define the "procession" of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son—the *Filioque* question that was later to split the Western Church from the Eastern. In 796 he presided at the Synod of Bavaria, held to define missionary methods. Here his pastoral vision came to the fore: conversion, he insisted, was God's work, not human, so instruction should be in terms that "rough and unreasoning people" could understand, not based on fear. Several of his books and sermons have survived, and in these he is concerned with the duties of king and nobles. Here he was instrumental in forming a specifically lay, as opposed to clerical, conscience. He also addressed clerics, insisting that their pastoral effectiveness—through making sermons intelligible to the "simple faithful" and conducting sacramental rites properly—was more important than their own inner spirituality. This pastoral legacy may well be seen today as more valuable than his—inevitably time-conditioned—contributions to politics and trinitarian theology.

12

St Margaret Bourgeoys (1620–1700)

Margaret's family came from Troyes, on the River Seine upstream from Paris—and where St Genevieve (see 3 Jan.) sailed to in search of grain to relieve the famine in Paris. Her father was a wax-chandler there, and Margaret was the sixth of twelve children. She sought to enter the religious life when she was twenty, but for some reason she was rejected by both the Carmelites and the Poor Clares. A priest, Abbé Gendret, told her to take this as an indication that she was destined for an unenclosed religious life and formed a group of "extern Sisters" with Margaret and several other young women, who taught children in the poor districts of Troyes for several years. This initiative was, however, discouraged by the religious authorities. At the time, this was only to be

expected: it was only a few years since the papal Bull *Pastoralis Romani Pontificus* had decreed that Mary Ward's embryonic Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary was to be "suppressed, extinct, uprooted and abolished." "Galloping girls"—as her I.B.V.M. Sisters (now the Company of Jesus) were called—were not a required feature of the ecclesial scene, and what Margaret was to call her *vie voyagère*, "travelling life," was not far from this.

Her opportunity to follow her missionary calling came when the governor of the French settlement of Ville-Marie in Canada (then just a fort, now the city of Montreal) came to visit his sister in the Augustinian convent in Troyes in 1652. He was looking for a schoolmistress, and Margaret accepted the post. She landed at Quebec in September 1653 and reached Ville-Marie a month later. For the first few years she helped the two hundred people living in the fort, looking after children, working in the hospital, and gradually becoming the life and soul of the little settlement. Convinced of the importance of families, she concentrated on the education of women. She opened her first school in 1658, with twelve pupils, taught by herself and an assistant. From the following year she made herself responsible for welcoming and looking after young women sent out from France with a royal dowry to enable them to marry and so build up the population of the colony. She had the foresight to see that future growth would require more teachers and made a return visit to France, coming back a year later with three young women recruits. The school did grow rapidly, along with the colony, especially when the fort began to develop into the town of Montreal after the Iroquois War of 1667. Margaret was back in France looking for more teachers from 1670 to 1672, when she received civil authorization for her work from King Louis XIV.

She had always planned a religious community, and she and her fellow-teachers were canonically formed into the Congregation of Notre Dame by the first bishop of Quebec, Mgr Laval, in 1676. He, however, held to the official line and wanted them to be an enclosed community. Margaret had a different vision, based on her experience in Troyes, but was unable to gain approval for it, despite another journey to France to seek ecclesiastical approval. In 1683 their convent was destroyed by fire, worsening their already desperately poor situation. Mgr Laval tried to persuade them to amalgamate with the Ursulines, but Margaret held out. It was not until 1698 that twenty-four Sisters were allowed to make their simple profession as members of a separate Congregation, and by that time Margaret, aged seventy-eight, had ceased to act as superior.

Her foundation had already made progress, despite hardships and opposition. A first boarding school was opened in 1673, and a first mission school for Native American children three years later. Two young Iroquois women joined the community in 1679, as did Lydia Langley, the first New England girl to become a nun. She had been captured by Abenaki Indians, then ransomed in Montreal, where she became a Catholic. After the Iroquois massacred everyone not protected by the fort of Ville-Marie in 1689, Mgr Laval's successor relaxed

his opposition to the point of allowing the Congregation to start a school in Quebec. The number of its schools was eventually to reach over two hundred.

Margaret, the first schoolmistress of Montreal, was an indomitable pioneer, an example of unfailing courage and of devotion to her children, her community, and all those with whom she came into contact. She overcame early rejection and continued disapproval from Church authorities to make her vision reality. She resigned as superior in 1693, and from that point on her health declined until her death on 12 January 1700. She was beatified in 1950 and canonized in 1982, thereby becoming Canada's first saint. She is venerated as "Mother of the Colony" and as co-foundress of the Church in Canada.

13

St Hilary of Poitiers (about 315–367)

Hilary is one of the great figures of the decades following the conversion of Constantine and the Church's adaptation from—periodically—persecuted minority to official State religion. He is roughly contemporary with St Basil the Great (see 2 Jan.) and occupies as prominent a place in the Western Church as Basil does in the Eastern. Born into a wealthy pagan family of Poitiers, in central south-western France, he became an orator, married, and had a daughter, Afra. His studies brought him into contact with the scriptures, and he was converted and baptized in 350. While he was possibly still a layman, the Christian people of Poitiers chose him as their bishop: it was more usual to select bishops from among the priests or deacons of a place, but not unknown to choose a layman of good repute. Hilary accepted and was plunged into the confused period of theological controversy and endless synods that followed the Council of Nicaea in 325.

Orthodoxy was being shaken by Arius' teaching "that the Son was created out of non-being, that there was a time when he did not exist, that his nature was capable of good and evil, that he is a creature and created." Theology being then inseparable from politics, the controversy threatened to split the empire, so Constantine summoned a council to settle the question. This met at Nicaea in Phrygia (part of modern Turkey) in 325, defined the doctrine that the Son was "of one being" with the Father, and excommunicated Arius, whose views nevertheless continued to gain ground in the East. When Constantine's son Constantius, who had ruled the eastern empire, became sole emperor, he promoted Arianism, against the pope. Hilary avoided two synods convoked in Gaul by the emperor to get the French bishops to support Arius but had to attend a third, at which he refused to sign a pro-Arian document. He was exiled to Phrygia but apparently travelled and resided there in reasonable comfort, and

he used the three years he spent in exile to compose a treatise on the Trinity, another on synods, and a historical work of which only fragments remain.

In 358 Pope Liberius effectively capitulated to the emperor's views, leaving Hilary as virtually sole champion of orthodox belief in the West. Two synods, one for the East and one for the West, were proposed, with the purpose of making all the bishops support a compromise formula, that the Son was "of like nature" to the Father. The Western bishops, who assembled at Rimini, on the Adriatic coast of Italy, threw this out and insisted on holding to the formula of Nicaea, "of one being." But the Arian faction managed to trick the emperor into not allowing the bishops to return to their sees until they had signed a quite different document, which Hilary (still in exile and so unable to attend the Rimini synod) called "the Sirmium blasphemy"—Sirmium being the city where the eastern synod was held. The Arians then persuaded the emperor that Hilary was more of a nuisance to them in exile in Phrygia than he would be back in Gaul, so Constantius sent him home.

His journey back, through the Balkans, Italy, and Toulouse became something of an orthodox campaign, as he made converts all along the way. He received a hero's welcome in Poitiers, from where he and his former pupil Martin of Tours (see 11 Nov.) made Gaul a bastion of orthodox belief. He summoned all its bishops to a synod in Paris in 361, at which he made them sign their allegiance to the Nicene Creed in full. In 364 he presided over a synod of Italian bishops in Milan, the purpose of which was to depose its Arian bishop, Auxentius. But Auxentius managed to persuade the pope—falsely—of his orthodoxy, and Hilary had to be content with expressing his views in a book, "Against Auxentius." He died in 367, not yet sixty but worn out by his travels, exile, and struggles.

He was venerated as a saint while he was still alive. Many of his writings have survived: they earned him the title of "Athanasius of the West," and St Jerome (see 30 Sept.) called him "the trumpet of the Latins against the Arians." His work was wider and more eirenic in scope than this, however, as he sought to interpret the East to the West as well as the other way round, as in his treatise "Concerning the Faith of the Eastern Church." His major surviving work is on the Trinity, and part of a treatise on miracles came to light as late as 1887, together with some poems and hymns, which make him the earliest writer of Latin hymns. He was declared a Doctor of the Church in 1851, and his feast-day traditionally marks the beginning of the Hilary Term (spring semester) at Oxford and Cambridge Universities and in the British law courts.

Anyone who fails to see Christ Jesus as at once truly God and truly man is blind to his own life: to deny Christ Jesus, or God the Spirit, or our own flesh, is equally perilous.

from St Hilary's *Treatise on the Trinity*

14

St Sava of Serbia (1174–1237)

Sava was the youngest of three sons of Prince Stephen I, who established Serbia as a State independent from Byzantium and made his family, named Nemanya, the ruling dynasty. At the age of seventeen, Sava joined one of the monasteries on Mount Athos, and in 1198 his father abdicated his throne and joined him there. Together they set up a new monastery for Serbian monks, named Khilandari. This became a focus for Serbian religious and secular culture, and it still survives as one of the seventeen "ruling monasteries" on Mount Athos. Sava was appointed abbot and was known for his gentle manner in training young monks.

He returned to Serbia in 1206 in order to try to settle a quarrel over inheritance between his two brothers, Stephen II and Vulkan. He took several monks from Khilandari with him, and they found Christianity in Serbia at a low ebb, with few clergy, mainly ignorant, and lax practices mixed with paganism. Sava and his monks set out to re-evangelize the country; he settled at the monastery of Studenica, from where he established smaller satellite monasteries from which his monks could engage in pastoral and missionary work.

The Church in Serbia had been governed from either Constantinople or Ohrid in Bulgaria; the religious leaders in both regarded the Serbs as barbarians and neglected the care of their churches. Sava and his brother, King Stephen II, saw that if the Church was to develop it would need its own hierarchy. Stephen sent Sava to Nicaea to argue this case with the emperor, Theodore II (who was, conveniently, related to the Nemanya family), and the patriarch, Germanus I, who had taken refuge there from the Crusaders, who had seized Constantinople. The emperor supported the Serbs' cause and persuaded an unwilling patriarch to ordain Sava as bishop, whereupon he appointed him metropolitan of the new hierarchy with his archbishop's see at Zica, where he built a church.

Sava returned via Mount Athos, where he collected up a number of books that had been translated there, including a Psalter and a Ritual translated by him, and gathered more monks to aid in his campaign to re-educate and reorganize the Church in Serbia. In a gesture that could be seen as asserting a measure of independence, he crowned his brother as king, despite the fact that he had previously been crowned by the papal legate. He established bishoprics, built monasteries and churches, and worked tirelessly to reconvert the half-

Christianized Serbs. By the time he was fifty he had reformed the religious life of his country and sealed the dignity of its rulers. He had also played a major part in the development of Serbian literature through the composition in the vernacular of two Rules for his monastery at Studenica, a *Life and Office* of his father (who had been canonized as St Simeon—his name in religion at Mount Athos—in 1216), and the *Laws of Simeon and Sava,* which provides a valuable insight into the conditions of life in Serbia at the time. In his later years he made two journeys to Palestine, and he died in Bulgaria on his way back from the second.

He is regarded as the patron saint of the Serbs and as the author of their separation from Rome and adherence to (Greek) Orthodoxy—a powerful contributory factor to conflict and hatred in the Balkans over many centuries. Nevertheless, he personally should be seen as a potentially healing rather than divisive figure. He is venerated in Roman Catholic Croatian dioceses as well as in Orthodox Serbian ones and features as St Sava *Prosvtitely,* "the Enlightener," in several Latin calendars.

15

St Arnold Janssen (1837–1909)

Arnold was the second of ten children born to Gerhard Johann Janssen and his wife, Anna Katharina. The family home was in Goch, a small town near the Rhine in the diocese of Münster, now just inside Germany over the border with Holland. His father was involved in farming and transportation; his mother looked after the numerous children and the farm animals and devoted what time she could to prayer. The atmosphere in the family was intensely religious. Arnold was obviously a bright boy, and when a middle school was opened in Goch in 1847, its first principal persuaded his parents to send him there. He progressed from there to the diocesan minor seminary, then to Borromeo College in Münster, and then to Bonn University, from where he returned to Münster to study theology. He was ordained priest in August 1861.

He spent the next ten years teaching mathematics and natural sciences in Germany, but he felt increasingly drawn to mission activity, which was at the time forbidden in Germany under the cultural revolutionary laws promulgated by Chancellor Bismark. Arnold therefore looked to nearby Holland, where he was able to buy an old inn at Steyl, on the banks of the Meuse. He converted this into his own seminary, devoted to training priests for the missions, in 1875. It started with nine students and had grown remarkably five years later, with Arnold continuing to build, using money "already there, in the pockets of the good people who will give it to you at the proper time." The community took

the form of a religious Order as the Society of the Divine Word.

Arnold was a pioneer in the use of mass-circulation printed material in evangelization. In 1874 he had started the "Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart" to promote his ideas, and at Steyl he set up a press to print it, soon adding another magazine, *Stadt Gottes* (City of God), which still flourishes as the highest-circulation illustrated Catholic magazine in Germany. The printing works expanded, and he added Divine Word Missionary Brothers to the priests in order to man them. By 1900, they outnumbered the priests. The aim of the Order was defined, at its first general chapter in 1886, as "proclamation of the word of God on earth, through missionary activity ... in the first place [among] the non-Christian peoples especially in the Far East." The first two missionaries had been sent to Hong Kong in 1879, and one of them, Joseph Freinademetz, was to be martyred (and beatified and canonized with Arnold Janssen himself; see 29 Jan.). Others followed, and the Divine Word missions spread throughout China, to Japan and other Asian countries, and widely in Latin America. In 1876 the Sisters of Divine Providence, who had been expelled from Germany, took refuge at Steyl, initially to cook and do the laundry. But soon they had applicants who wished to work in the missions, and so the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters were formed, in 1892.

One of Arnold's convictions, clung to sometimes in the face of ecclesiastical opposition, was that missionaries needed to be learned in the natural sciences in order to understand what they found. This led to the publication of the journal *Anthropos*, for studies in ethnology and linguistics, with a corresponding Institute, the members of which are Divine Word missionaries from all over the world.

When the Prussian government reversed Bismark's policies, it offered Arnold the exclusive right to establish mission seminaries and do mission work in German colonies. The resulting expansion led to new foundations in Germany. Shortly before his death, he extended his mission to the United States, where St Mary Mission Seminary was built in Techny, Illinois, near Chicago. This was followed in 1922 by Bay St Louis Seminary, which has produced well over a hundred African-American priests, of whom six have gone on to become bishops.

Arnold died on 15 January 1909 and was promptly referred to as a saint by Pope Pius X. He was beatified by Pope Paul VI on World Mission Sunday in October 1975 and canonized by Pope John Paul II on 5 October 2003, when the pope said of him that "obstacles did not dismay him". The press at Steyl has continued to grow, embracing modern printing technology to pursue its founder's aim.

16

Bd Joseph Vaz (1651–1711)

The recent (1995) beatification of Joseph Vaz sets the seal of church approval on a style of mission activity that has not always been the hallmark of Christian evangelists: free of political or economic manipulation, untainted by cultural imperialism, respectful toward non-Christians, and relying solely on personal sincerity and charity. His background is the very imperialist struggles between the Portuguese and Dutch in colonial Asia. Through an arrangement with the papacy known as the *Padroado,* the (Catholic) Portuguese crown enjoyed extensive jurisdiction over local churches established there in the sixteenth century. In the following century most of Portugal's Asian possessions were seized by the (Protestant) Dutch, and Catholic missionaries fled or were expelled.

Joseph Vaz was born in Goa, one of the few Portuguese enclaves left. His family belonged to the Brahmin caste and were Catholic converts. He was ordained in 1676 and found himself caught up in struggles between Rome—now appointing vicars apostolic in Asia since Portugal could no longer fulfil its responsibilities—and Portugal, still clinging to its rights under the *Padroado.* Joseph refused to become embroiled in these quarrels and so gained the reputation of being a true *sanyasi,* a holy ascetic, with people of all religions, but not with the Portuguese ecclesiastical authorities in Goa, who accused him of disloyalty.

As a "native," he was barred from the mainstream religious Orders, who confined their candidates to those of European blood. He therefore joined a group of Goanese clergy who were seeking to form their own Congregation. He was elected their superior and established the community on the Oratorian model. He had, however, long been concerned by the plight of Catholics in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), where the Dutch East India Company controlled the ports and allowed no Catholic priests to land on the island. So he resigned as superior and, with a former family servant named John Vaz, managed to make his way there in disguise. They arrived sick after a dreadful crossing and were rescued from death by a woman who brought them a little rice gruel every day.

He could then only beg for a living, but the rosary he wore round his neck brought him protection by established Catholic families, who found him a safe haven. Then the Dutch increased their anti-Catholic measures, flogging the most prominent Tamil Catholics to death and forcing Joseph to take refuge in the still independent Buddhist kingdom of Kandy. His luck turned when, after

a spell in prison, the coming of the monsoon rains after a long drought was attributed to his prayers. He sent John back to Goa with a letter asking for help, and volunteers from the Goan Oratory began to arrive. Since they worked dressed usually as coolies and could blend in with the local population, they managed to exercise their ministry even beyond the borders of Kandy without being caught by the Dutch authorities. Joseph expected them to master the two vernacular languages, Sinhalese and Tamil. He himself composed hymns and prayers in both. The missionaries supported themselves, Buddhist-style, on alms alone, and such was the response of their flock that they were able to give surplus rice to the poor, making, at Joseph's insistence, no distinction between Catholics and those of other faiths.

He was revered by the Buddhists, especially for his care of the sick during an epidemic of smallpox. His work even reached the ears of Pope Clement XI, who offered him a bishopric. He refused this, fearing that papal recognition would enrage the Portuguese authorities in Goa and make them prevent any more missionaries from being sent to Ceylon. By the time of his death, on 16 January 1711, there were seventy thousand Ceylonese Catholics, of whom forty thousand were former Catholics whose faith had been revitalized and thirty thousand fresh converts. The Goan Oratory continued to provide the island with missionaries until it was suppressed by an anti-Catholic Portuguese government in 1834. The cause of his beatification was started just two years after his death but met with a number of procedural (political?) obstacles, and it was not until 1995 that he was declared blessed, by Pope John Paul II during a special papal visit to Sri Lanka.

It is simply a matter of the way of the cultural tradition in which the faith is presented. If we cling to the past, we simply become irrelevant. If we have the courage to change, then the message comes through in a way that is meaningful to people. That is the hope.

Bede Griffiths, OSB

17

St Antony of Egypt (about 251–356)

Antony is described as an abbot, and as the first monk. He was the most famous of the *abbas* of the Egyptian desert, who were not elected superiors, as modern abbots are, but were simply those who had been tested by long years in the desert. St Athanasius, who knew him, wrote a Life of him, and this

became one of the most popular books in medieval monastery libraries, thereby making Antony the inspiration for countless monks.

Antony's parents were wealthy landowners and Christians; they died when he was about eighteen or twenty. He was then struck by the words from the Gospel of Matthew: "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give the money to the poor ... then come, follow me." This was not too "harsh" a saying for him, and he followed it quite literally. Having sold or given away all his possessions, he became the disciple of a local hermit. When this proved not a strict enough way of life, he retired farther into the desert for another twenty years. Eventually he emerged and founded monasteries, or collections of hermits' huts. He also took part in a disputation with the Arians in Alexandria, supporting Athanasius, after which he retreated again to a remote hut on top of a mountain. But even there disciples sought him out, asking for a "word of wisdom." These "words" were collected and included in the "Sayings of the Desert Fathers," endlessly repeated, translated, copied, and published, as recently in Thomas Merton's *Wisdom of the Desert.*

The teaching these sayings embody can be summed up as "flight from the world." With the end of major persecutions at the beginning of the fourth century, many devout Christians saw extreme asceticism as a substitute for martyrdom and went voluntarily into the deserts into which they had previously been driven by the Roman authorities. But the "desert" was also in one's nature: it was a spiritual place where one faced up to one's own demons. (This is perhaps the origin of the "Temptations of St Antony" beloved of late medieval painters. Antony himself, in fact, said that the demons could not be visible and could be given "body" only inside oneself.) Conquering one's demons where they are strongest—in solitude—is to win the final victory over them and so earn the right to teach others.

Antony's spiritual teaching has come down in a number of surviving letters, which confirm much of the material in Athanasius' Life as authentic in tone. He emerges as above all a teacher of charity, with strictness of principle softened by gentleness of application. Despite his quest for solitude, he saw relationships with others as the key to the spiritual life: "If we gain our brother, we gain Christ; but if we scandalize our neighbour, we sin against Christ."

He is said to have visited St Paul the Hermit, who had preceded him in this way of life, at the age of ninety. Paul told him that he had been sent by God to bury him and asked him to fetch the cloak Athanasius had given him, in which to wrap his body. Antony went to fetch this and returned to find Paul dead and two lions digging his grave. When Antony himself died, apparently at or around the age of one hundred and five (a tribute to moderation in diet and a healthy climate), he was buried secretly on top of his mountain, but his remains were disinterred a few years later and taken first to Alexandria and then to Constantinople. In the eleventh century, according to a Western version of events, the emperor gave them to the French count Joscelin, who took them to

France. This version is not accepted in the East, and the story may belong to the scramble for relics at the time of growth in pilgrimage: Antony was famous through Athanasius' Life, and his relics would be a considerable possession. They were claimed by La-Motte-Saint-Didier in the Isère region of France, which was renamed Saint-Antoine-en-Dauphiné.

They soon brought him fresh fame as a healer: two noblemen claimed to have been cured of ergotism (see St Genevieve; 3 Jan.), which was also known as St Antony's fire, through his intercession, and founded the Hospital Brothers of St Antony in gratitude. As incidences of ergotism spread during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, their numbers grew, until they were running three hundred and sixty hospitals. When the epidemics later declined, so did their numbers, until they died out in 1803. His attributes and patronages derive from these Hospitallers rather than from his actual life or from Athanasius. They wore black cloaks with a T-shaped cross on them, representing a walking-stick, presumably as a tribute to the great age to which Antony lived; they rang bells to announce their alms-seeking missions, and they kept pigs: a stick, bell, and pig all appear in depictions of St Antony. The pigs have made him the patron saint of butchers and of brush-makers (from hogshair bristle); because he supported himself by making rush mats, he is also patron of basket-weavers; because of his association with ergotism, he is invoked against skin diseases. In Eastern Churches he is revered as "first master of the desert and pinnacle of holy monks."

Abbot Antony taught Abbot Ammonas, saying: You must advance yet further in the fear of God. And taking him out of the cell he showed him a stone, saying: Go and insult that stone, and beat it without ceasing. When this had been done, St Antony asked him if the stone has answered back. No, said Ammonas. Then Abbot Antony said: You too must reach the point where you no longer take offence at anything.

The Wisdom of the Desert (1997 edition, pp. 57–8)

18

St Wulfstan (about 1009–1095)

Wulfstan was born in Warwickshire in the English Midlands and was educated by Benedictine monks, first at nearby Evesham and then at Peterborough. He trained for the priesthood as a member of the household of Bishop Brihteah of Worcester, but after his ordination he took the unusual step of refusing a richly endowed living and instead joined the Benedictines in the priory adjoining Worcester Cathedral. There he first taught children in the school run by the monks, and after

holding various other offices he was appointed prior in 1050. Twelve years later the see of Worcester became vacant when the bishop was appointed to York: previous incumbents had been allowed to hold both sees, but the papacy had decided that this plurality was no longer appropriate. Papal legates advised King Edward the Confessor (see 13 Oct.) that Wulfstan would be a suitable appointment; the king and his council agreed, and he was duly consecrated.

He was still also prior but carried out his dual responsibilities admirably. He was the first bishop on record to make a systematic visitation of all the parishes in his diocese. He encouraged church building and undertook a rebuilding of Worcester Cathedral—not totally successfully: only the crypt and a few walls of his building survive, the remainder having succumbed to fire and the collapse of the central tower in 1175.

Edward the Confessor, who had spent some years in exile in Normandy, saw the Church in England as remote from continental reform movements and replaced Anglo-Saxon bishops and other ecclesiastics with Normans. Edward died in 1066, Harold seized the throne, and Wulfstan was caught up in the struggle for the succession and the further division between "old" and "new" factions in the Church following Harold's death and William the Conqueror's victory at the battle of Hastings. William was supported by the papacy, and monastic bishops were generally more supportive of Continental-style reform (enforced by Lanfranc, archbishop of Canterbury from 1070) than were secular ones. Wulfstan was one of the first bishops to make his submission to William. This political move was embroidered into a legend involving Edward the Confessor's tomb (see below).

After a dispute between the provinces of Canterbury and York was resolved to Canterbury's advantage by Pope St Gregory VII, Worcester became a suffragan bishopric of Canterbury, and Wulfstan was instrumental in carrying out Lanfranc's reforms there. He had in fact already introduced most of them, including strict insistence on clerical celibacy. He was responsible for a major social reform when his preaching persuaded the merchants of Bristol to stop the trade in slaves sent from there to the Vikings in Ireland. He defended the castle of Worcester for William in the barons' uprising of 1074, and again against the Welsh in 1088, this time for William II, but he was more than a typical medieval "warrior" bishop. He was renowned for his generosity to the poor, making sons of gentleman being educated at the priory school wait on poor people at table.

By the time he died he had been bishop for thirty-two years, during which he had been a major force for peace, calm, and reform not only in his diocese but also in a troubled and war-torn Church and nation. A cult soon developed at his tomb, which William Rufus had covered in gold and silver (which Wulfstan would have been more likely to give to the poor), and later kings, especially John and Edward I, had a great devotion to him, the latter more on account of his defence of Worcester against the Welsh than for his more truly Christian qualities.

Summoned by the Norman Archbishop Lanfranc to resign his see, as being too simple to govern it, Wulfstan refused: he had, he declared, received his pastoral staff from King Edward by authority of the Apostolic See, and to him alone would he resign it. Thereupon, it is said, he went up to the king's tomb and placed his staff upon it, saying, "Take this, my master, and deliver it to whom you will." The staff remained embedded in the stone; no force would dislodge it. So Lanfranc reinstated him in his see, and bade him ask his holy master King Edward to restore him the staff. Wulfstan did so, and the staff yielded to his hand at once; and all praised God who is wonderful in his saints.

Bowden

19

St Macarius the Elder (about 300–390)

This Macarius is also known as the Egyptian, or the Great, to distinguish him from St Macarius of Alexandria, who died just four years after him. As a young man he drove camels carrying the form of salt used for embalming or mummifying bodies, called *natron,* from its source, the Wâdi 'N Natrûn. His story is not unlike that of St Antony of Egypt (see 17 Jan.) but has enough personal elements to make him worth including only two days later. He first answered a call to the ascetic life by becoming a "village hermit," devoting himself to prayer and supporting himself by weaving rush baskets, like Antony before him. The story of how he eventually moved to the desert of Skete is a cautionary tale appropriate to an age of widespread teenage pregnancy. It is recounted among the "sayings" of the Desert Fathers:

> When I was young and lived alone in my cell, they took me against my will and made me a cleric in the village. And since I did not wish to remain there, but fled to another village where a pious layman helped me out by selling my work, it happened that a certain young girl got herself into trouble and became pregnant. And when her parents asked who was responsible for it, she said: "That hermit of yours committed this crime." [Her parents beat him and made him provide for her, and he meekly gave in.] And I said, "Well, Macarius, now you've got yourself a wife, you will have to work harder in order to be able to feed her." So I worked day and night in order to make her a living. But when the poor thing's time was up, for several days she was tormented by labour pains and could not bring forth her child. And when she was asked about it she said, "I pinned the crime on that hermit when he was innocent. For it was the young man next door who got me in this condition." ... Hearing this, and fearing that people would come and bother me, I quickly made off and came to this place.

This happened when Macarius was about thirty years old, and the story shows him as having achieved a high degree of the peace of soul that hermits sought to achieve by self-denial. He was ordained priest ten years later, probably as a result of a visit he made to St Antony (fifteen days away on foot), who persuaded him to accept ordination since there was no Eucharist being celebrated in Skete. He spent a further fifty years in the desert, becoming the revered elder of all the hermit-monks in Skete. He was evidently a great spiritual master, to judge from the considerable body of writing attributed to him, a popularizer rather than an original thinker, drawing on the mystical and spiritual teachings of Gregory of Nyssa (see 10 Jan.). He gives practical directions as to how the community should be organized, on a basis of mutual help, with manual work appreciated but not allowed to encroach on the prayers of others—basing himself here on the gospel story of Martha and Mary. He dwells on the significance of Jesus washing his disciples' feet to show the pre-eminence of work in the service of others. In general, he combines St Gregory's intellectual originality with a certain folk wisdom and common sense deriving from the collective experience of the early monastic community in Skete, where the teaching of the "sayings" attributed to the *abbas* (and, less often, the *ammas*) formed the basis for the way of life, rather than a fixed Rule.

He was almost certainly banished to the Nile Delta when the emperor Valens expelled all monks who supported the orthodox, as opposed to Arian, doctrine concerning the two natures in Christ, around 374, but was reinstated by popular demand. He died at an age almost as advanced as that of Antony, another tribute to personal and climatic virtues. (There is no record of hermits in Ireland, where this way of life was much copied, living to a comparable age.)

Once Abbot Macarius was on his way home to his cell from the marshes, carrying reeds, and he met the devil with a reaper's sickle in his path. The devil tried to get him with the sickle, and couldn't. And he said: I suffer great violence from you, Macarius, because I cannot overcome you. For see, I do all the things that you do. You fast, and I eat nothing at all. You watch, and I never sleep. But there is one thing in which you overcome me. Abbot Macarius said to him: What is that? Your humility, the devil replied, for because of it I cannot overcome you.

The Wisdom of the Desert, pp. 50–51

20

Bd Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi (1903–1964)

The first Nigerian, or indeed West African, to be beatified was born in south-east Nigeria in 1903. His parents followed the traditional religion of the Ibo people, but his father died while he was young, and his mother sent him to be educated by the Irish Holy Ghost Missionaries. He was baptized when he was nine, adding the baptismal name Michael to his given name Iwene, studied to become a teacher, and was appointed headmaster of St Joseph's when he was only twenty-one. He was then drawn to the priesthood and was ordained in Onitsha Cathedral in 1937.

In 1939 he started a new parish, where one of his catechumens was a boy who was later to become Cardinal Arinze, who has said that Fr Michael, the first priest he knew, was, "under God," his inspiration and that he "wanted to be like him." He was a brilliant preacher, ascetic in his personal life, and a great community leader, setting an example for building a weekly boarding school by treading mud bricks himself. He confronted supposedly spirit-possessed members of a secret society with a stick and the words, "The spirit has been confronted by a more powerful Spirit," and he was unusually forthright in condemning corruption among the wealthy and powerful. His long-felt desire, however, was to become a contemplative monk, and there were no monasteries for these in Nigeria,

In 1950 he was accepted by Mount St Bernard Abbey, near Leicester in England, and took the name Cyprian in religion. The original intention was that he and any other Nigerian postulants should eventually return to Nigeria to found a monastery there, which would depend on Mount St Bernard as its motherhouse. But these plans were not put into effect, largely through lack of money, and in 1953 Cyprian and another Nigerian, Fr Clement, both made the decision to stay at Mount St Bernard. Though ordained priests, they had to go through the full training process as novices, which included working in winter fields very much colder than anything they had experienced in Nigeria.

Fr Cyprian's reputation for holiness in his home country brought him frequent visitors, to whom he would expand on the contemplative life. In the community he was "quiet ... conscientious ... self-effacing and thinking of others." By 1959 he was suffering from a recurrence of an old stomach ulcer and was an invalid for two years. In 1963 plans for an African foundation finally began to take shape, but it was to be in Cameroon, not in Nigeria. Despite his disappointment at this, Cyprian was due to go there as novice-master, but his

health was failing. He was able to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of his ordination in December 1963, but an aortic embolism led to his death in Leicester Royal Infirmary on 20 January 1964, as he was preparing for an operation on his stomach.

The then Fr Arinze was determined that his memory should be perpetuated and began collecting documentation of his life with a view to instituting a diocesan process in 1974. The bishop of Nottingham waived the normal right for this process to be held in the diocese in which he had died, ceding this to the archdiocese of Onitsha, and it became an African process, formally opened in 1984. The promoter general of the Trappist Order suggested that Fr Cyprian's remains should be brought back to Nigeria, and when they were, a remarkable cure of an apparently terminally ill young woman was attributed to his intercession. He was declared venerable in 1995 and beatified in Onitsha in 1998. Cardinal Arinze declared that his beatification sends a clear message to African Christians that "Saints are ordinary men and women from your own villages." At Mount St Bernard a wall statue of him has been put up in the abbey church.

When we see others as brothers and sisters, it is then possible to begin the process of healing the divisions within society and between ethnic groups ... We must be convinced that each of us, according to our particular state in life, is called to do no less than what Father Tansi did. Having been reconciled with God, we must be instruments of reconciliation, treating all men and women as brothers and sisters, called to membership in the one family of God.

Pope John Paul II, homily at the Mass for the beatification of Fr Tansi, 22 March 1998

21

St Agnes (perhaps 292–305)

Agnes, according to stories circulating about a hundred years after her death, was a beautiful thirteen-year-old Christian girl from a wealthy Roman family. Many suitors sought her hand in marriage, but she rejected them all, saying that her only spouse was Christ. She was dragged before statues of gods and told to sacrifice to them; she refused and was then ordered by the prefect to become a vestal virgin (serving in the temple of Vesta); again she refused, so she was stripped naked and exposed in a brothel, whereupon her hair instantly grew to cover her. The prefect's son tried to rape her and was struck blind (or

even dead in some versions) but was restored by her prayers. She was finally condemned to death by burning and was dragged out to die in this way in the Stadium of Domitian, now the Piazza Navona, where a church named after her stands.

She is not just a legend, as is proved by the marble tomb erected for her by her parents on the Via Nomentana, some two miles outside the walls of Rome. She was evidently venerated there not long after her death. Before the end of the fourth century, Pope St Damasus I composed an inscription for her tomb; this was then lost for many centuries, but it was rediscovered under the floor of the church on the site during restoration work in 1792. St Jerome, who was Damasus' secretary for three years, wrote that "The life of Agnes is praised in the literature and speech of all peoples, especially in the churches, she who overcame both her age and the tyrant, and consecrated by martyrdom her claim to chastity." St Ambrose preached a sermon about her and wrote a hymn, which became very influential in the growth of her fame. This suggests, probably correctly, that she was not burned but stabbed in the neck with a sword, the normal Roman method of execution. The great Spanish-Roman poet Prudentius gathered this and other stories circulating about her into a hymn, which then became the basis for further development of her story.

Her extreme youth seems to have been discarded in artistic representations. In the procession of virgins in the mosaics of St Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna she comes fourth and has a lamb at her feet. The lamb came from the similarity of her name (which actually came from the Greek *agneia,* meaning "pure") to *agnus,* the Latin for lamb, also a symbol of purity in the imagery of the Book of Revelation. This led to her association with the wool used to make the *pallium* (woollen collar) sent by popes to archbishops around the world. Every year on her feast-day two lambs are brought into her church on the Via Nomentana (St Agnes outside the Walls) and blessed. They are then taken out and kept until they are ready to be sheared. Their wool is laid on the high altar of St Peter's on the feast of SS Peter and Paul (29 June), then taken to be woven to make these signs of archbishops being united to the see of Rome.

She became extraordinarily popular in the Middle Ages, together with other virgin saints, such as Barbara, Dorothy, Margaret of Antioch, and others, many of whom have now been relegated to the status of myth. They prove the enduring value attached to virginity through the ages. It signifies power to resist—men, authority, the world—rather than just the rather more docile concept of "purity." It has been suggested that nothing of her story is true and that it was all simply attached to a play on the word *agneia.* That there was a historical figure, a girl who was killed, began to seem more rather than less likely in sceptical modern times, however, when the body of a young girl, headless, was found in a reliquary under the church on the Via Nomentana in 1605. This was again excavated and measured in 1901: the body would seem to the right size for a girl of twelve or thirteen. A head was found in the Lateran

Palace the following year: the teeth suggested a child of about twelve. (The separation of the head from the body was a practice of the time, intended to provide two focuses for veneration, and does not indicate that she was beheaded.) The head is now venerated in the church in the Piazza Navona, on the supposed site of her execution. Historical or legendary, however, she remains an abiding symbol and powerful focus of veneration.

22

St Vincent Pallotti (1795–1850)

One of ten children (of whom five died in infancy) born in Rome to Paolo Pallotti and his wife, Maria Maddalena de Rossi, Vincent had decided by the age of fifteen that he wanted to be a priest. He was ordained in 1818 and awarded a doctorate in theology and philosophy two months later. He taught theology at the Sapienza College for the next ten years. He then decided to renounce the prestige of an academic career and also that of a "career priest" advancing through the parish system, in order to concentrate on a purely spiritual pastoral ministry.

He lived at a time of great change in urban society as a result of the industrial revolution, and he saw that a new type of ministry was needed to reach people. In 1835 his ideas took shape in the "Pious Union [later the Society] of the Catholic Apostolate," which included both clerics and lay people, aiming to renew the apostolic spirit in the Church: "An evangelical trumpet calling all, inviting all, awakening the zeal and charity of all the faithful of every state, rank and condition to serve the Catholic Apostolate as it is instituted by Christ in the Church." The union included a group of priests who devoted themselves full time to its aims; they became the Congregation of the Catholic Apostolate. The use of the term "apostolate" offended some bishops, who thought it should be reserved to those who claimed descent from the apostles, and it was not until a century after Vincent's death that this controversy was resolved in the context of a new understanding of mission and apostolate. Next came a group of women religious, brought into being to look after girls orphaned in the cholera outbreak of 1837. They were formed into the Sisters of the Catholic Apostolate, later the Pallottine Missionary Sisters.

In Rome, Fr Vincent became close friends with the future Cardinal Wiseman, and even effectively told him to open a college in England for the foreign missions. Wiseman passed this counsel on to Herbert Vaughan (later to be the third cardinal-archbishop of Westminster), who put it into effect with the founding of St Joseph's Missionary Society at Mill Hill. Wiseman in turn advised Pallotti to recruit John Henry Newman, then a convert studying in

Rome, into the Union. This did not happen, but the acquaintance led to Pallotti taking a deep interest in the foundation of the London Oratory and the progress of the missions in London. He was appointed rector of the church of Santo Spirito dei Neapolitani in Rome, where poor people flocked to hear his sermons, again arousing resentment among senior clerics. He had the ear of Pope Pius IX, and from him obtained full canonical status for the Society, with all the privileges granted to regular Orders and Congregations.

In the year of revolutions, 1848, when Pius IX was forced to flee from the Papal States in disguise to escape an anticlerical mob in the newly proclaimed Roman Republic, Vincent took refuge in the Irish College in Rome. From there he issued a stream of letters of advice to lords spiritual and temporal, lamenting the evils of the time. By the time Pius was restored with the aid of French troops the following year, Vincent was in poor health and felt that he was dying. He put all the affairs of the Society in order, contracted pleurisy, and died on 22 January 1850.

Development of the Society after his death was initially slow, but by 1900 there were thirty houses in eight countries. The Missionary Sisters spread to England, Poland, Switzerland, and the USA, and the Pallottine Fathers have some two thousand members worldwide. They arrived in the USA in the first decade of the twentieth century and are now engaged in every type of missionary activity. Pallotti's great achievement, however, lies in his mobilization of the energies of lay people in mission. It was only with the establishment of Catholic Action in the early twentieth century that his prophetic voice was truly appreciated throughout the Church. Pope John XXIII, who canonized him in 1963, said that "the foundation of the Society of the Catholic Apostolate was the starting-point in Rome of Catholic Action as we know it today."

Vincent Pallotti anticipated a discovery by almost one hundred years. He discovered in the world of laypeople a great capacity for good work. This capacity had been passive, dormant, and timid, unable to act. Vincent Pallotti has awakened the conscience of the laity.

Pope Paul VI

23

St Ildephonsus of Toledo (died 667)

The Church in Spain entered on a period of relative power and of intellectual, spiritual, and pastoral development following the conversion of the Visigothic

king Recared from the prevailing Arianism to orthodox Catholicism. Recared was hailed as a new Constantine at the Third Council of Toledo in 589. He established his capital in Toledo, which was also the ecclesiastical capital, the only city in the West to fulfil both functions. Its archbishop had the right to summon national councils and to summon other bishops to make five-yearly visits to him. Toledo retains the primacy of Spain to this day.

Ildephonsus came from a distinguished family and eventually succeeded an uncle, also canonized, St Eugenius of Toledo, as archbishop. He had become a monk at an early age, and was appointed abbot of the community he joined, at Agalia, near Toledo. As abbot, he attended councils of Toledo held in 653 and 655. His uncle died in 657, so he was archbishop for nine years only. His period in office saw increasingly close links between Church and State, a condition that was to recur throughout subsequent Spanish history, not always to the advantage of either. In this way, he helped to develop a "medieval" concept of the relationship between Church and State several hundred years in advance of its time.

His greatest contribution to the life of the Church was in the sphere of devotion. He may have been a pupil of St Isidore of Seville, and he certainly carried on that great master's intellectual and spiritual work. He increased veneration of Spanish saints, while at the same time promoting a special devotion to the Virgin Mary, which might be seen as a national characteristic ever since. His "Book of the perpetual virginity of Mary" became a landmark in the cult of Mary in Spain and beyond. Sentences from it were copied into Books of Hours for many centuries, and a whole body of work was written in imitation of it, so that much of what has been attributed to him is more probably "school of Ildephonsus." He was also deeply concerned with the education of the laity and wrote a treatise especially for "ordinary" baptized people rather than for the religious elite who gathered around monasteries.

His devotion to Mary gave rise to legends and determined the way he was later represented in art. In one popular story Our Lady herself appeared to him seated on his own bishop's throne and holding out a chasuble to him as a gift. This passed into many twelfth- and thirteenth-century collections of legends about Mary, and also became the subject of paintings by El Greco (who lived and worked in Toledo from 1577 to his death), Velázquez, and others.

Virgin Mother of God, may I cleave to God and to you, wait on your Lord and on you, serve your Son and you: Him as my maker, you as the mother of my Maker; Him as the Lord of Hosts, you as the handmaid of the Lord; Him as my God, you as the mother of my God.

Prayer of St Ildephonsus

24

St Francis de Sales (1567–1622)

This great bishop and spiritual writer was born in what is now Switzerland, then the independent Duchy of Savoy. He was the eldest child in what was eventually to be a large family, belonging to the lesser nobility. He was sent to Paris to study rhetoric, philosophy, and theology when he was fifteen and already determined to become a priest, contrary to the wishes of his elderly and stern father. He returned home after six years to find his father planning a career for him as a soldier or, failing that, a lawyer. After six months he went away to university again, this time to Padua, from where he emerged with a brilliant doctorate in law in 1591.

He met the Benedictine bishop of Geneva, who had been forced out of that city when it became a Calvinist stronghold and was living in nearby Annecy. The bishop was so impressed with Francis' intellect that he told him that if he was ordained he would certainly eventually become a bishop. Francis was too humble by nature to let this influence him, but he still felt the call and faced up to his father, who accepted his son's decision with bad grace. He was ordained in Advent 1593, by which time he had already become famous as a preacher and been appointed to the provostship of Geneva, a post ranking second to the bishop.

Greater demands were, however, soon made of him. He and his cousin Louis were chosen by the bishop to win back for Catholicism the poor and mountainous district of Chablais, south and east of Geneva, which had swung between Catholic and Protestant in seemingly endless dynastic and religious wars. In 1591 the Calvinists had reoccupied it and driven out all Catholic priests. Francis toiled at the task for four years, in danger from cold, violent Calvinists, ordinary ruffians, and even wolves. His father had not forgiven him and refused him any financial help. By the end of four years, during the last of which he had been seriously ill, he was able to celebrate High Mass before a crowd of thirty thousand and put on processions and a mystery play.

He travelled to Rome in 1598 to be appointed coadjutor bishop of Geneva. There he met Robert Bellarmine (see 17 Sept.), the Oratorian Juvenal Ancina, who became a close friend, and the future Pope Paul V. On his return (with the appointment as coadjutor for some reason unconfirmed) he conceived a grandiose scheme for a "Hostel for all the arts and sciences" in the middle of the Chablais district. It was never built as such, but he was to put the principles underlying it into practice in his ministry. Over the next few years he struggled

with the religious and political affairs of the diocese and the duchy and also made his mark at the French court in Paris, where the convert king, Henry IV, called him "a gentleman" and offered him a rich bishopric if he would stay in France, to which Francis replied, "Sire, I have married a poor wife and I cannot desert her for a richer one." On his way back to Geneva he learned of the bishop of Geneva's death, which meant that he would take over as bishop.

He was consecrated on the feast of the Immaculate Conception in 1602 and set about bringing a diocese of some four hundred and fifty parishes into line with the reforms of the Council of Trent. His main weapons were to be preaching, which he did tirelessly; education of the clergy, with all candidates to the priesthood examined by him personally; and writing, through a series of lengthy letters. He acquired a reputation—possibly undeserved—for severity when he suppressed Valentine cards. It is perhaps ironic, then, that the rest of his life was to be transformed by a great love—a spiritual one, certainly, but his meeting with a young widow, Jeanne-Françoise Frémyot, known to history as St Jane Frances de Chantal (see 12 Dec.) proved to be a fruitful meeting of hearts and minds to a degree rarely encountered. It was to produce a new religious Order and a remarkable correspondence, and to console them both in depression and disaster. The first of the latter came when Francis' youngest sister, whom he had sent to live with Jeanne and her children, died of a fever at the age of fourteen. Francis wrote to Jeanne expressing his grief in a letter that contains a phrase that has come to serve as his motto: *Je suis tant homme que rien plus*, "I am so much a man as to be nothing more."

Francis was becoming convinced that anyone could serve God in any walk of life, but that this required an elevation of the spiritual aspirations of the many, not a reduction in those of the few. A series of spiritual exercises he devised for the wife of a cousin developed into his best-known book, the *Introduction to the Devout Life*. It became an immediate bestseller, going into several editions in French and being translated into several languages, including English, within a few years. It in fact puts across a very demanding ideal and addresses the concerns of the leisured classes, despite being addressed to "those ... obliged to lead outwardly at least an ordinary life."

Jeanne de Chantal had been making a regular annual visit to him, and by 1610 he had decided that she must move to Annecy and start a new Order. A house was found, and the Order of the Visitation of Mary came into being. Despite having its critics (among them, most probably, those who saw the foundation as a means of keeping Jeanne near him), the Order prospered and spread, cultivating the new inner-directed spirituality embodied in Francis' teaching. It was approved by the pope in 1618, on condition that the Sisters accepted enclosure. (This was just thirteen years before the Vatican condemnation of Mary Ward and her "galloping girls.")

Francis remained endlessly busy with visiting parishes, preaching, and fresh political disputes and debates over the proper spheres of Church and State

power. In 1613 he visited the shrine of St Charles Borromeo (see 4 Nov.), who had been canonized three years earlier, and he wept over the Shroud of Turin when it was publicly unwound in a ceremony at which he preached. His spiritual counselling of the Visitation nuns led to the book he really wanted to write, the *Treatise on the Love of God,* which also became a solid success in several languages, though not on the scale of the *Introduction.* (After his death, a collection of his homilies to the nuns was published in a pirated edition, to Jeanne de Chantal's fury.)

By this time he was famous and regarded as a living saint. In Paris, where he went to pursue marriage negotiations for the duke of Savoy's daughter, great crowds flocked to hear him preach. He met the man known as "Monsieur Vincent," the future St Vincent de Paul (see 27 Sept.), and established a deep friendship with Angélique Arnaud, later the Jansenist abbess of Port-Royal. He still wrote twenty or thirty letters a day, many of them long; he preached constantly, yet somehow found time for prayer. His health was now failing, with problems associated with high blood pressure. An arduous and, as it turned out, unnecessary journey over the Alps to Turin, at the pope's request, almost killed him. Another journey, this time in winter to Avignon at the duke of Savoy's request, finally did. He had a last meeting with Jeanne in Lyons on his dreadful journey back and then suffered a stroke. Asked by a nun for a last word of advice, he wrote HUMILITY three times on a piece of paper. He was canonized in 1655, declared a Doctor of the Church in 1877, and named patron saint of writers and journalists in 1923.

My advice . . . is that we should either not utter words of humility, or else use them with sincere inner feeling that matches our outward words. Let us never lower our eyes except when we humble our hearts. Let us not appear to want to be the lowest unless we want it with our whole heart. I take this rule to be so general that I allow no exception to it.

St Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*

25

St Paul (died about 64)

What we know of Paul comes from his own Epistles and from the Acts of the Apostles, neither of which is designed to be in any way "biographical" in a modern sense: the letters are theological in purpose and only incidentally autobiographical, while the author of Acts (Luke) presents the story of Paul as

the second part of his Gospel. Furthermore, the later letters are now generally taken to be attributed to Paul rather than written by him, which makes them less useful as a source of information about the later part of his life.

He is at pains to stress the exemplary and zealously Jewish nature of his upbringing. He writes in Greek but is clearly at home in Hebrew. He is generally thought to have been born about 4 BC in Tarsus and to have been educated in Jerusalem: Acts speaks of him sitting at the feet of the distinguished Rabbinic teacher Gamaliel. It then refers to his conversion in the context of the stoning of the first martyr, St Stephen (see 26 Dec.), of which he (still named Saul) approved. The famous story of the "road to Damascus" appears only in Acts, where it is repeated in three differing versions, whereas Paul himself refers to it only indirectly. Whatever happened, its consequences were seen as crucial for the development of the early Church. Stephen's death can be dated with some certainty to the year 36. The descriptions of the event in Acts may well be based on earlier stories, and the writer's concern is with calling rather than with conversion.

After his conversion, Paul withdrew to Arabia to pray—for three years, he says, though the "three" may be symbolic rather than accurate. He then went to Jerusalem and spent time with Peter, after which he began to travel and preach the message that Jesus was "the Messiah and the Son of God." This message aroused such hostility among the Jews (for whom calling Jesus "Son of God" was blasphemy) that Paul retired to his home town of Tarsus (in what is now southern Turkey) for safety. His own account indicates a long period of fourteen years before he went to Jerusalem again. What then took place has come to be referred to as the Council of Jerusalem and is generally placed in the year 49. Essentially, Paul persuaded Peter that Gentiles should be admitted to the Church without previously being converted to Judaism and without having to comply with Jewish dietary and other laws. He thus opened up the missionary effort to the Gentile world and brought in what has been called the "second age" of the Church, which was that of the continuation of his mission in the cultures descended from classical Greece and Rome. This was to last until the "true universalization" of the Church's mission at the Second Vatican Council of 1962–5.

His famous journeys—including being let down in a basket from the prison walls in Damascus and being shipwrecked on Malta—around the eastern and central Mediterranean are split into three in Acts, but this may be less historical than to press home a point: that Paul was three times rejected by the Jews, three times turned to the Gentiles, and three times claimed that this fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament. He is said to have done this first at Antioch in Asia Minor, then at Corinth in Greece, and finally in Rome itself. His missionary activity in fact finished in Jerusalem, where Roman soldiers took him into protective custody when a hostile crowd was threatening. He appealed to the emperor on the grounds that he was a Roman citizen and was

taken to be tried in Rome. This enabled Luke to provide a satisfying end to the story of how the gospel spread from Jerusalem to the capital of the great empire.

Paul's call to be an apostle and his subsequent teaching shifted Christianity from a Jewish sect to a world religion. This is a huge claim, and to exaggerate it by saying that he "invented" Christianity, as some have done, would be going too far. Paul's whole teaching is rooted in the experience of Jesus Christ crucified and raised from the dead, and what he expresses with unique vividness is rooted in the primitive Church. His great themes are the Kingdom of God, conversion, revelation, the centrality of the cross, the universal application of Jesus' message, justification through grace, and love as fulfilment of the Law. These have provided the basic material for virtually all subsequent Christian theology.

Exactly how and when he died in Rome is uncertain. He seems to have been kept under a fairly mild regime of house arrest, which allowed him to communicate with the Jewish community in Rome. He was then released for a time and re-arrested. He was executed at Tre Fontana, in the year 64 or 65. As a Roman citizen, he would have had the privilege of being beheaded instead of suffering one of the more barbarous forms of judicial execution used on non-citizens. The belief that he died on the same day as St Peter probably arose from their shared feast-day. His body was buried where the basilica of St Paul without (outside) the Walls was built in the fourth and fifth centuries. The original stood until it was destroyed by fire in 1823; it was rebuilt to the same plan and reopened in 1854. Paul is the patron saint of Greece and Malta, as well as of the Cursillo movement and, by implication, of all forms of Catholic action. Today's feast now marks the closing day of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" He asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."

Acts 9:3–6

26

SS Timothy and **Titus** (First Century)

The New Testament contains two letters addressed to Timothy and one to Titus, the three being referred to collectively as the Pastoral Epistles. They are

said to be from Paul, but this is a convention used to impart authority to their writers, who are almost certainly unknown. They date from around the end of the first century or the early years of the second, long after Paul's death, and cannot be relied upon to provide biographical information about the persons to whom they are addressed. This does not mean that nothing can be known about these. Both are referred to in the Acts of the Apostles and in letters certainly written by Paul, indicating that they were connected with him.

In Acts, Timothy is described as "the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer; but his father was a Greek . . . well spoken of by the believers in Lystra and Iconium" (16:1–2). In 2 Timothy 1:5 we learn that his mother's name was Eunice and his grandmother's Lois and that both were Christians. Paul took him as a companion and had him circumcised to make him acceptable to Jewish Christians. He went with Paul to Macedonia and from there came to Corinth, arriving at the time Paul was turning his back on the Jews and resolving, "From now on I will go to the Gentiles" (Acts 18:6). Paul then sent him back to Macedonia, with Erastus, while he himself stayed on in Asia (19:22). He was later in Greece with Paul and others and returned to Syria by way of Macedonia after a plot against them (20:4). Later tradition, recorded by the historian Eusebius, made Timothy bishop of Ephesus, and "Acts of St Timothy," written in Ephesus in the fourth or fifth century, gives an account of his martyrdom. This document is the earliest reference to it, but its sober tone indicates that it has at least a basis in historical fact. It claims that he was killed by pagans for opposing their festivals at a feast of Dionysius in which participants carried a club in one hand and an idol in the other, ready weapons with which to beat Timothy to death. His supposed relics were transferred to Constantinople in 356 (perhaps after "Acts of St Timothy" was written), and cures at his shrine became a common experience.

Titus accompanied Paul on the journey to Jerusalem that led to the debates that came to be known as the Council of Jerusalem (see Gal. 2:1ff). There Paul won the day, arguing that Gentiles should not be subjected to the Mosaic law before becoming Christians. In accordance with this, he did not insist that Titus, who was a Greek, should be circumcised. Titus went to Corinth to encourage the Corinthians to give as generously to the support of the communities as their poorer brethren in Macedonia were doing. He was later urged to come to Nicopolis and was then sent to Dalmatia, after which he seems to have stayed in Ephesus. He is believed to have been the first bishop of Crete, where he had to deal with a population the letter to him describes as "always liars, vicious brutes, lazy gluttons" (Titus 1:12). There are further stories about him in a fictitious "Acts of Titus," supposedly written by the "Zenas the lawyer" referred to in Titus 3:13. His body was supposedly buried at Gortyna in Crete; the head was detached and taken to Venice in 823.

Both are called "loyal child in faith" in the letters addressed to them. Timothy is sent to the Corinthians to remind them of Paul's "ways in Christ" (1

Cor. 4:7). Paul describes him to the Thessalonians as "our brother and co-worker for God" (1 Thess. 3:2), and he tells the Philippians that they will find "no one like him who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare" (2:20). Titus is described in similar terms: Paul tells the Corinthians that he is his "partner and co-worker in your service" (2 Cor. 8:23) and that "since he is more eager than ever," he is going to them of his own accord (8:16). Less can be gleaned of their characters from the letters addressed to them, but in general the writers are expecting them to be wary of new ideas, of the influence of rich people in their communities, and of the leadership exercised by women. They are being urged not to go against the grain of patriarchal Greco-Roman society: hence the insistence, especially in 1 Timothy, on the subjection of women, children, and slaves to their masters, an attitude not characteristic of the letters actually written by Paul, but here given his authority and so handed down through generations.

27

St Angela Merici (about 1470–1540)

Angela came from a family of farmers on her father's side and of lesser nobility on her mother's. She was born in either 1470 or 1474, the fifth of six children, of whom four died young, closely followed by both parents. She was then cared for by the family of an uncle who lived on the banks of Lake Como in northern Italy. Accounts of her childhood make her pious, rebelling against the fashions of the age, devoted to the legend of St Ursula, and the recipient of a vision showing a great company of virgins and other saints coming down from heaven to her. They included a dead sister, who invited her to form a great "Company of Virgins," which was what Angela had actually done by the time the account was written.

She became a Franciscan tertiary and spent some years as a companion to a widowed friend, back in her home town of Desenzano. With a group of other young women, many of them also Franciscan tertiaries, she then formed a sort of "support group" for unmarried girls in the area. The venture flourished, and she was invited to open a similar one in the larger city of Brescia. There she developed acquaintances among the leading families of the city and became the focus of a group of devout women and men. In 1494 Brescia had been invaded by Louis XIII of France; at first, at least the aristocracy collaborated, but the merchant classes eventually rose up against the French. This led to terrible reprisals in 1512, when troops under Gaston de Foix slaughtered, it is said, ten thousand of the seventy-five thousand inhabitants in a single day. For the next five years it was fought over by French, Venetians, and Spanish, creating chaos

and deprivation on a vast scale. This was the climate in which Angela pursued her mission.

She went on pilgrimage to the Holy Land and on the way, in Crete, was mysteriously struck blind. She insisted on completing the journey, but she could only listen to her companions' descriptions of places she could not see. On the return journey, in the same place, she just as mysteriously recovered her sight. Her work became widely known: she was received in audience by the pope and invited to move to Rome, but she saw her calling as attending to local needs. Young women who neither married nor joined religious Orders—and convents were mainly places for the aristocracy to dump surplus daughters—had nowhere to go except into prostitution or menial service. Angela, personally austere but still capable of enjoying the company of aristocrats, devoted herself to these young women, effectively re-creating the "social class of virgins" (L. Fossato) revered in the early Church, seen as relating primarily to Christ out of free choice, not from failure to secure husbands. Angela and her helpers grew into a "Company," echoing the contemporary foundation of the Company of Jesus. Its "members" had to join freely, seeing themselves as acquiring a dignity that would be the envy of empresses, queens, and duchesses.

A structure gradually emerged, and on military lines. The "first daughters" still lived with their families but met together for instruction, gathered into groups by district under the command of a "virgin-mistress." These were older women, often widows, who were responsible for the physical, economic, and moral welfare of their "virgins." Any problems they could not handle were referred upward to four "widow-matrons" or "colonels" chosen from among the aristocracy of Brescia. Angela herself and some companions moved together into a house near the church of St Afra in November 1535, and the foundation of the Congregation of the Ursulines is generally dated to this move, though formal papal approval dates from 1544.

She had many supporters but also made enemies, especially among the upper classes, who suspected her of attempting to lure their marriageable daughters away from prestigious alliances. But she won through, with absolute confidence that her work would last. And so it has: the Ursulines are now the largest teaching Order in the Church and active worldwide. In her *Testament* she left her followers the precious message that their strength lay in unity: "There is only one sign that is pleasing to the Lord, that of loving and being united to one another."

Angela died on 27 January 1540, just before the opening of the Council of Trent. (Had she lived a generation later, she might well have found her unenclosed Congregation blocked by the Inquisition.) Her body lay unburied for thirty days while canons of St Afra quarrelled with those of the cathedral over where it should be buried. It was not until 1768 that a reliable account of her life was written, and she was canonized in 1807.

She had such a hunger and thirst for the salvation and good of her fellows that she was disposed and most ready to give not one, but a thousand lives, if she had had so many, for the salvation even of the least. . . . With maternal love, she embraced all creatures.

from the "Declaration of the Bull" establishing the Ursulines as a religious Congregation, issued by Pope Paul III in 1544

28

St Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274)

This great medieval theologian and philosopher died at the early age of forty-nine, leaving a body of work that would have taken three normal lifetimes to compose. He was born mid-way between Rome and Naples, near the small town of Aquino, of which his father was count. He started his schooling at the nearby Benedictine abbey of Monte Cassino, but war between the emperor and the pope, in which his family sided with the emperor and the Benedictines with the pope, led to his removal at the age of fourteen, whereupon he studied for a further five years at the new university of Naples.

At Naples he was drawn to the Dominican Order, founded twenty years earlier, largely on account of the scholarship its members were already demonstrating in university circles. Despite being locked in a castle and tempted with a courtesan by his parents (who considered that the mendicant Dominicans could not offer the same career prospects for their son as the established Benedictines), he joined the Order in 1224. He studied under Albert the Great (see 15 Nov.), first at Paris and then at Cologne. The Dominican house of Saint-Jacques in Paris was where the brightest Dominican students were sent, and the university was in a ferment of new learning, largely revolving around the rediscovered works of Aristotle. Thomas was in the forefront of commentary on him in the light of Jewish and Islamic commentaries and so helped to make Paris outstanding in European intellectual life. He was ordained priest during his time in Cologne, where Albert prophesied that "the lowing of this dumb ox"—Thomas was physically large and spoke little—"would be heard all over the world."

He was appointed to a lectureship in Paris in 1252, and four years later, at the early age of thirty-one, he was made a master of theology, which imposed the threefold task of lecturing, disputing, and preaching. He encountered quite ferocious opposition, mainly from the leader of the secular clergy, William of Saint-Amour, who saw the mendicant Orders and their poverty as heralding

the arrival of the Antichrist. Thomas and his Franciscan contemporary Bonaventure (see 15 July) composed replies to the tracts attacking them. Before he left Paris, Thomas began work on the *Summa contra Gentiles*, undertaken at the request of Raymund of Peñafort (see 7 Jan.), who wanted an authoritative text to help combat the Moors and Jews in Spain. In 1264, at the request of Pope Urban IV, he composed the office for the new feast of Corpus Christi, and some of the magnificent hymns he wrote for this are still in use.

After three years as master in Paris, Thomas was called to Italy, where he taught at several places, including Orvieto, Viterbo, and Rome, for the next ten years. In Rome he lectured at the recently opened university of the Roman Curia, completed the *Summa contra Gentiles*, and began work on the vast *Summa theologica*. He then returned to Paris for three years, where he was appreciated at court as well as at the university and was a frequent guest of King (later Saint) Louis IX. The Dominicans recalled him to Italy in 1272, to reorganize their house of studies at Naples. There, while saying Mass one day, he had some sort of visionary experience that caused him to stop work on the *Summa theologica* and declare that he was done with writing, as "All I have written seems to me like straw compared with what I have seen and what has been revealed to me." He gave no further details of the experience (which could have involved a minor stroke) to anyone.

Pope Gregory X summoned him to take part in the Council of Lyons in 1274. He set out on what would have been a long and arduous journey, but after only a few hours he suffered a major stroke. He was taken to the castle of Maenza, which belonged to a niece, and then at his request transferred to the monastery of Fossanuova, where he died on 7 March. (His feast-day was, unusually, moved from the day of his death to today, which actually marks the day on which his relics were eventually interred in Toulouse in 1368, in the calendar reform of 1969.)

His writings are too extensive in number, scope, and achievement to be presented here in any meaningful summary. He insisted that the Christian faith rests on reason and that therefore the object of philosophy as well as of theology is God, while both must recognize that "the ultimate human knowledge of God is to know that we do not know God." God is always greater. His influence has increased rather than diminished over the centuries. He was canonized in 1323 by Pope John XXII, who showed considerable understanding of his teaching, but his system of thought remained one of several. He was highly praised at the Council of Trent, and in 1567 the Dominican Pope St Pius V declared him a Doctor of the Church, and he is generally known as the "Angelic Doctor." But it was not until three hundred years later that "Thomism" was made an officially established system, which led to the dominance of "neo-Thomism" in Catholic philosophy and theology until the Second Vatican Council. Both have since been freed from what had become a straitjacket, enabling his achievement to be seen more as a "model"

than as a rule. But he himself was more than a towering intellect: he was an exemplary religious and was observed to reach ecstatic states in contemplative prayer. His work sprang not so much from a disputatious disposition as from his own experience of following Christ, nourished by deep spiritual reading and reflection. He is the patron saint of Catholic schools, colleges, and universities, of their teachers and students and, by extension, of education in general, so he has been adopted by booksellers as their patron also.

29

St Joseph Freinademetz (1852–1908)

Joseph came from a poor family in the Tyrol district of Austria and originally spoke the local dialect, Ladino. He was obviously a very bright child, needing more than the local school could offer, and a philanthropic local weaver found him a place in a German-speaking school in the cathedral city of Bressanone. He moved on from there to the Imperial Grammar School and then to the cathedral choir school, where he learned Latin, Italian, and some French. He then progressed to the diocesan seminary, being ordained in 1875. Finding life as a parish priest too easy, he wrote to Arnold Janssen (15 January), who came to see him, secured his bishop's permission to take him for his Divine Word Missionaries, educated him for the task at Steyl, and sent him as one of the first two from the Congregation to go to China.

Joseph and his companion, Johann Baptist von Anzer, were blessed on their way by Pope Leo XIII and reached Hong Kong on 21 April 1879. The Divine Word missionaries were assigned an area of South Shantung, and after re-learning Chinese twice to make himself understood locally, Joseph embarked on a wandering mission to the peasant population. Catholics in the area had been reduced by persecution to some one hundred and fifty in number. Through dressing like the peasants, trying to understand them, and obviously loving them (while largely ignoring the aristocracy) Joseph had a thousand catechumens by 1888, spread over some thirty villages.

Foreign missionaries in China relied on protection—often more military than diplomatic—from European powers, which enjoyed "concessions" of land wrung from the Chinese along the seaboard. They were either tolerated or persecuted, depending on the attitude of the local mandarin. Joseph and his companion saw that if Christianity was not to be forever the "religion of the Europeans" there had to an indigenous priesthood. In 1885 Anzer was summoned back to a general chapter in Steyl, leaving Joseph as administrator of the region and so less able to travel. Anzer returned as a bishop and appointed Joseph pro-vicar and administrator of several districts. By now several more

Divine Word missionaries had come to join them. They built a seminary, and the first two Chinese priests from it were ordained in 1896.

Widespread persecution broke out with the "Boxer Rebellion" of 1900, though South Shantung was not as badly affected as some areas. Joseph was forced to flee at one stage, but he returned and managed to restore order. He was appointed first provincial, responsible for the religious life of all the missionaries in his province. The Boxer Rebellion was put down, Western influence in China grew, and the number of converts increased. But Joseph was clear-sighted enough to see that growing westernization was a threat to the missions. He had come to identify with the Chinese and despised the European adventurers whom he saw as undermining the values of the country: "The greatest scourge for us, as well as for the Chinese, are the crowds of morally inferior Europeans without any religion who swarm all over China," he wrote.

Anzer had gone back to Europe once more, leaving Joseph as his vicar. The day after an audience with the pope, Anzer died suddenly in Rome. Joseph was not appointed as his successor, to general surprise and his relief. In 1907 the new bishop left him as provincial and administrator while he went on a visit to Europe, but Joseph's health had been ruined by his efforts during an outbreak of typhus, and he died on 28 January 1908.

A popular movement for his beatification soon began in his native Tyrol. A one-time pupil of his in the Chinese seminary, Cardinal Tien, wrote of him: "Of all the missionaries of China I know of no holier one than Fr Freinademetz. He was all things to all men." He was, above all, a friend to the local people who loved them and admired them and saw that the future of Christianity in China depended on Chinese virtues and Chinese leaders. Pope Paul VI beatified him with Arnold Janssen on World Mission Sunday, 19 October 1975, and they were canonized together by Pope John Paul II on 5 October 2003. His example has become more relevant than ever since John Paul II apologized to the Chinese people for mistakes made by Western missionaries in the past (see St Augustine Zhao Rong and Companions; 9 July).

30

St Alban Roe (1538–1642)

Alban Roe (or Rouse, Rolfe, or Rosse) was born to Protestant parents and christened Bartholomew. He studied for a time at Cambridge University, but his religious education there failed to provide him with answers to questions asked of him by an uneducated Catholic named David, whom he visited in prison in order to show him "the errors and absurdities of his religion." He

withdrew from this encounter confused, read books and contacted Catholic priests, and eventually became a Catholic and sought to be a priest.

Study for the priesthood then meant studying overseas, and Bartholomew was sent to the English College established at Douai in northern France. Like all students, he was required to take an oath never to disturb the peace of the college; he seems to have found three years the limit for tolerating this, as in 1611 he was sent back to England, accused of misleading the young and questioning the decisions of superiors. Early in 1613 he joined the Benedictine community at Dieulouard in Lorraine (which was to move to England as the founding community of Ampleforth Abbey in Yorkshire in 1802).

The missionary spirit of the English monks at Dieulouard was much to his liking. He was professed in 1614, taking the name Alban in religion, and was shortly sent on the English mission. His superiors considered him "thoroughly qualified by a long practice of all religious virtues for the apostolic functions." He spent less than three years as a missioner in England before being captured and thrown into Maiden Lane prison in London. He spent five years there and was then released and banished under pain of death should he return to England. This he did a few months later, and again he spent three years on the mission before being arrested once more. This time he was imprisoned in St Albans, the terrible prison in which he had earlier started his conversion process.

Mercifully, he was transferred to the Fleet prison in London, where conditions were easier and from where he was able to carry out the most fruitful period of his ministry. Over the next sixteen years he preached inside and outside the prisons, and many were converted through his words. He also became known as a great teacher on prayer and translated works on prayer for his own use and that of others. He was often seriously ill but had a cheerful disposition that saw him through: he was even accused of unbecoming activities such as drinking and gambling, but was more charitably credited with becoming increasingly cheerful as the prospect of gaining heaven drew nearer.

He was eventually transferred to the more severe Newgate prison and brought to trial for treason in 1642. He attempted to avoid being tried by a jury, so that others would not be involved in responsibility for his death, but it was a jury that brought in the inevitable guilty verdict. He thanked them "for the favour which he esteemed very great and which he had greatly desired." He and Thomas Reynolds were dragged together on a hurdle to Tyburn, and Alban encouraged his companion (who was eighty-two years old, in poor health, overweight, and understandably not inclined to be so cheerful) to the last. They gave one another absolution, and Alban also ministered to three criminals who were to die with them, joking the while. According to an eyewitness, his was a "death showing joy, contentment, constancy, fortitude and valour." They were allowed to hang until they were dead. Both Alban and Thomas were beatified in 1929, and Alban was canonized as one of the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales on 25 October 1970.

31

St John Bosco (1815–1888)

This pioneer of modern education methods was born in Piedmont (now in north-western Italy) in the year of the Treaty of Vienna, which tried to establish a new order after the Napoleonic wars, and lived through the age of revolutions, Marx, Italian reunification under Garibaldi, and changing and often acrimonious Church–State relations. His illiterate but devout and common-sensical mother prepared him for his First Communion and, when he later told her of his intention to become a priest, commented, "If you have the misfortune to get rich, I shan't set foot in your house again." Fortunately for them both, he never did, and she was able to become one of his main helpers in his later life.

He received an excellent formation in Turin, and after his ordination in 1841 he began, influenced by St Joseph Cafasso (23 June), to devote himself to looking after the needs of those who were flocking into the rapidly industrializing city looking for work. Thousands of young people were roaming the streets with no pastoral care, on a course that would land them in prison. John Bosco made them his special concern. The virulently anticlerical government of Turin closed all religious houses in 1855, but "Don" (as he became universally known) Bosco gathered his abandoned boys into what he called an "Oratory," thereby evading these laws. He developed a "total dedication" approach to his charges, expressed in all-day Sunday outings with a full agenda of Mass, work, and games. The Oratory acquired a house, his mother came to help, and it was soon housing six boys—a number that was eventually to grow to over eight hundred.

But lodging was not enough: the boys had to be under constant good (his) influence, which meant finding occupation for them. Don Bosco started opening workshops: one for tailors and shoemakers in 1853, soon followed by a book-bindery, a joinery, a printing works, and an iron foundry. He was regarded as either subversive of the parish and political order or mad, or both. Other clergy came to join him and so formed the nucleus of the new Congregation that had been taking shape in his mind. During a cholera epidemic in Turin in 1854, in which thousands died, he formed his boys into teams to carry the sick to hospital and the dead to mortuaries. Not one of them died, and he acquired a reputation as a miracle-worker: he had told all his boys that they would be spared as long as they trusted in God—and washed their hands with the vinegar he gave each of them after handling the sick and dead. An

apparently prophetic dream about "great funerals at court" led him to write to the king warning him not to sign the law closing religious houses. The king took no notice, and four members of his family died within a few months, whereupon he virtually accused Don Bosco of causing their deaths by supernatural means and signed the law.

Don Bosco somehow found time to write: he produced histories of the Church and of Italy, several biographies and a series of educational textbooks, including a simple explanation of the metric system. One of these was in its 118th edition by the time of his death. His educational methods are now generally regarded as old-fashioned, but there is no questioning the basic impulse that lay behind them: total love and dedication. He divided human needs into four foundational spheres: home, school, Church, and society; in these, everyone experiences belonging, learning, meaning and social interaction. All these needs must be met if people are to be happy and fulfilled.

In his day he earned such respect that he was able to form his Salesian Congregation despite the laws prohibiting religious Orders and even with the help of the anticlerical minister who had devised them. His devotional preferences were very much of his time: he ardently believed that "we have to believe and think as the pope believes and thinks," and he was a great promoter of the new devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus: he was largely responsible for raising funds to build the church of the Sacré Coeur in Montmartre, Paris, a major symbol of that devotion.

He is the first known saint in history to submit to a press interview, at which journalists seem typically to have concentrated on his supposedly supernatural powers: his comment was that he did what he could and trusted in God and the Blessed Virgin to do the rest. He was also the first to take a stand at a major exhibition, when in 1884 the National Exhibition of Industry, Science and Art featured "Don Bosco: Salesian Paper Mill, Printing Works, Bindery and Bookshop." Those who expected well-intentioned clerical amateurism found themselves looking at a thoroughly professional presentation of the complete process of book manufacturing.

The Congregation was founded in 1854; by the time Don Bosco died thirty-four years later it had almost eight hundred members, with thirty-eight houses in Europe and twenty-six in America. Today it numbers some seventeen thousand, working in one hundred and thirteen different countries. A parallel Order for women grew just as rapidly, as did a lay organization of "Salesian Cooperators." Don Bosco is recognized as one of the great "social saints" of all time, even if he has been criticized (as Mother Teresa was a century later) for being an activist in limited areas rather than trying to reform society as a whole, as his contemporary Karl Marx was attempting to do. He said that political action belonged to "more educated" Orders, while "We go straight to the poor."

Virtually the entire population of Turin lined the streets for his funeral. He was canonized on Easter Sunday 1934 by Pope Pius XI, who as a young priest