

JANUARY 19
EUROPEAN MARTYRS
OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS
OPTIONAL MEMORIAL

Today we commemorate the Blessed Martyrs of the Society of Jesus who were killed for the Catholic Faith after the Reformation. They are: James Salès and William Saltemouche (d. February 7, 1593, in France, beatified 1926 by Pius XI); Ignatius de Azevedo (d. July 15, 1570) and thirty-nine companions (d. July 15 and 16, 1570), who were martyred while sailing for Brazil and were beatified by Pius IX in 1854. Also commemorated are those who died for the faith in France during the Revolution, namely James Bonnaud (d. September 2, 1792) and twenty-two companions (d. September 2-5, 1792); they were beatified by Pius XI in 1926.

From the Common of Several Martyrs, or of Pastors.

THE OFFICE OF READINGS

Second Reading

(From the Homilies of Pope Paul VI. Homily delivered on the occasion of the solemn canonization of the forty Martyrs of England and Wales, October 25, 1970. [A.A.S., 62 {1970}, pp. 747-748. English translation from *Letters and Notices*, 76 {1971}, pp. 7-8, slightly adapted].)

The Church continues to grow and develop through the heroic love shown by the martyrs.

Our times need Saints, and particularly the example of those who gave the supreme testimony of their love for Christ and his Church. "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (Jn. 15:13).

These words of the Divine Master, which refer in the first instance to the sacrifice that he himself made on the cross, offering himself for the salvation of the whole of mankind, can also be applied to the great and glorious host of martyrs of all times, from the first persecution of the newborn Church to the persecution of our days, perhaps less overt but equally cruel.

The Church of Christ was born from the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, and she continues to grow and develop in virtue of the heroic love of her most authentic sons and daughters. "The seed is the blood of Christians" (Tertullian, *Apologeticus*, 50). Like the shedding of Christ's blood, so the martyrs' offering of their lives becomes in virtue of their union with Christ's sacrifice a source of life and spiritual fertility for the Church and for the whole world. The Constitution *Lumen Gentium* (n. 42) states the reason very concisely: "By martyrdom a disciple is transformed into an image of his master, who freely accepted death on behalf of the world's salvation; he perfects that image even to the shedding of blood. The Church, therefore, considers martyrdom as an exceptional gift and as the highest proof of love."

Responsory

R. While we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

V. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

Concluding Prayer

Lord God, you honored these brothers of ours by making them one with your Son, Jesus, in the shedding of their blood. Hear their prayers, and gather into perfect unity all who believe in him. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

SEPTEMBER 7
SAINTS STEPHAN PONGRÁCZ,
MELCHIOR GRODZIECKI
JESUIT PRIESTS
AND
MARK KRIZEVCANIN
CANON OF ESTERGOM
MARTYRS
MEMORIAL

At the beginning of the 17th century, at a time of disturbance and religious wars, these three, full of zeal for the salvation of souls, were taken prisoner at Košice. On their refusal to deny the Catholic faith, they were subjected to the cruellest tortures and finally executed on September 7, 1619. On July 2, 1995, Pope John Paul II canonized them at Košice.

From the Common of Martyrs

THE OFFICE OF READINGS

Second Reading

From the Homilies of John Paul II: "On the Canonization of the Martyrs of Košice"

The triple testimony of blood for Christ and the Church

The communion of saints is full of all manner of examples of virtue; and today we are delighted to stand and recall those whom we commonly designate the Martyrs of Košice. In the political unrest that marked the opening of the 17th century, they, together with many others, stood out as victims of fierce persecution, and without hesitation exposed their lives to danger for the sake of Christ and his gospel.

First of the three was Mark of Krizevci, a canon of Estergom in Hungary. Born in Croatia, he migrated to Slovakia and there devoted himself to pastoral duties, at a time when the diminishing number of priests made the care of Christians that much the more a pressing need. Mark, therefore, following in the steps of the Good Shepherd, and unlike the hireling, who deserted the flock (cf. Jn. 10:11-15), refused to desert his flock, but faithfully and with marvelous zeal, served Christ's mission and accepted death fearlessly.

Stephan Pongrácz, a Jesuit priest, came even closer to the examples of heroes. He was Hungarian by birth and had given his whole life to God and his brethren. Even so, he went further and exposed himself to certain danger. He could have lived an honorable worldly life in his native Transylvania. Instead he chose to preach the gospel in eastern Slovakia. While he boldly preached in Košice, the Lord granted him the palm of martyrdom, to which he had always looked forward as the highest reward for his activity.

Melchior Grodziecki was also a Jesuit, by birth a Silesian, by nationality a Pole. To him it seemed a nobler thing to endanger his life here (that is, in Košice), for the Christian faith, rather than continue his peaceful and worthwhile work in Prague, where he had devoted himself to the apostolate of preaching and teaching above all among the young. At the outbreak of the Thirty-Years' War, however, driven from one place to another with his Jesuit brethren, he finally ended up in Košice. Here his total dedication to Christ and the service of his brethren, above all in his journeying through Moravia and Slovakia, finally led

to his martyrdom by the shedding of his blood.

Today, therefore, we keep with wonder the feast of these three remarkable heralds of the Gospel. No snares, no torments, not even the prospect of death in the midst of their dangers could deter them from professing their fidelity towards Christ and his Church. Their supreme and marvelous witness should shine before all of us as an example of evangelical steadfastness. In these difficult and uncertain times may we learn to look upon it in the hope that something different may emerge from them for us.

Responsory (cf. Gal. 6:14; Phil. 1:29)

R. We must glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; in him is our salvation, life, and resurrection. Through him we have been saved and set free.

V. It has been granted to you, not only to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for him. Through him. . . .

Concluding Prayer

O God, you gave to your people in the holy martyrs of Košice, Stephan, Melchior, and Mark, fearless shepherds and vigorous defenders of the faith. By their intercession grant also to us help in our troubles and an ever greater constancy in faith. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

OCTOBER 14
 SAINT JOHN OGILVIE
 PRIEST, RELIGIOUS, MARTYR
 MEMORIAL

John Ogilvie was born of noble Calvinist parents in 1579 at Drumna-Keith in Banffshire, Scotland. As a boy he was sent to the Continent to further his education. With the help of Father Cornelius van den Steen (a Lapide) he was received into the Catholic Church, and was a student at the Scots College in Louvain and at other centers of learning. He entered the Society of Jesus on November 5, 1599, and after the usual studies was ordained priest at Paris in 1610. Finally, after insistent pleading, he was allowed to return to his native country, where his ministry was cut short by his betrayal and capture in Glasgow. After extreme suffering he was hanged on March 10, 1615. The principal cause of his martyrdom was his insistence on the primacy of the Pope in spiritual matters, a primacy he affirmed with great constancy to the very end. He was enrolled among the saints by Pope Paul VI on October 17, 1976.

From the Common of One Martyr, or of Pastors

THE OFFICE OF READINGS

Second Reading

From the deposition made by St. John Ogilvie at Glasgow on October 15, 1614, and from a letter written by him to the Superior General of the Society of Jesus

(Deposition: see *Original Letters relating to the Ecclesiastical Affairs of Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1851, vol. II, n. 266, p. 387; Letter: see *Relatio Incarcerationis et Martyrii P. Ioannis Ogilbaei*, Douai, 1615, pp. 5-6)

He affirmed constantly that the Pope's jurisdiction extended over the King's dominions in spiritual matters, and would die for it.

The priest named himself John Ogilvie, son to Walter Ogilvie of Drum. He has been out of the country these

twenty-two years, and studied in the colleges of Olmutz and Graz, and remained in Olmutz two years and in Graz five years. He has received the order of priesthood in Paris, and came home to Scotland before now, and remained six weeks or thereby, and now came home about May last or thereby. He confessed that he was one of the ordinary Jesuits, and, being asked whether the Pope's jurisdiction extended over the King's dominions in spiritual matters, affirmed constantly the same, and would die for it.

The following letter, written secretly in prison a short time before his death and addressed to Father Claude Acquaviva, the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, reveals the courage and humility with which St. John faced martyrdom:

Dearest and wisest of veterans [a discrete pseudonym for the General, used in correspondence during the persecution of Catholics in Great Britain], after Christ and his angels and saints the most tender love of my heart. My sufferings are terrible, the tortures severe. Your Paternity's charity will ensure that you pray for me, that I may die with great generosity for the ever-victorious Jesus. My Christ long protect you, the most expert leader of his chosen and tested soldiers, as the bulwark of his Church.

Your Very Reverend Paternity's little servant in Christ and most unworthy child,

John Ogilvie.

Responsory

R. How blessed are you when they curse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of falsehood against you, because of me; rejoice and be glad, your reward will be great in heaven.

V. How blessed are those who suffer for doing what is right; the kingdom of heaven is theirs. Your reward. . . .

Concluding Prayer

Lord God, you revealed the power of the Holy Spirit in the life and death of your martyr St. John. Through his example and prayers give us strength to serve the Church under the banner of the Cross, and to carry out in every land the work entrusted to us by the successor of St. Peter. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.