

MAY 16
SAINT ANDREW BOBOLA
PRIEST AND MARTYR
MEMORIAL

Andrew was born in 1591 in the Palatinate of Sandomir and entered the Society in 1611. After his ordination in 1622, he first served at Vilna as a preacher and director of the Sodality. From 1636 he worked as a traveling missionary and, at a time when the Church was subject to fierce persecution, strengthened a great number of Catholics in the faith. In 1657 he fell into the hands of the Cossacks and after being subjected to savage torture died a martyr's death in the town of Janow. He was canonized by Pius XI in 1938.

From the Common of One Martyr, or of Pastors

THE OFFICE OF READINGS

Second Reading

(From the Decrees of Pope Pius XI. [Decree dated April 17, 1938; A.A.S. XXX, 1938, pp. 257-259.]

*Great achievement and great endurance are the
marks of a Christian.*

Andrew Bobola devoted himself entirely to his priestly work, first in Vilna, then in Bobrujsk. Nothing could quench his zeal: not endless toil, or the severities of the climate, or the threats of his enemies, not even the epidemic which was rife in those parts for three years on end. He worked to strengthen everyone in Christian virtue, and strove to bring light and consolation to minds that were in the grip of perplexity or superstition. He taught Christian doctrine unsparingly in both town and country. By frequent visits to the squalid hovels that served as houses for the poor, he

endeavored to win over the hearts of the people, so that they would allow him to speak to them as a friend about the teaching of the Church. He did not overlook convicts and the sick, and never tired of visiting them. Andrew's love of his fellow-man was most evident when a virulent plague broke out in Poland, first in 1625 and again four years later. He became "all things to all men," and with a small band of companions he gave a wonderful example of heroic charity. With unflinching cheerfulness he made light of the danger of contracting the plague, and devoted himself to the nursing of the sick, and above all to their spiritual welfare. On feast days he preached the Gospel so passionately and effectively that a great number of people came to hear him, including the leading members of the royal court. For these reasons he was known everywhere as a true apostle.

Coupled with Andrew's zeal for spreading God's glory was his longing for pain and hardship. This led him to inflict frightening penances on his body and to fast for several days before setting out on a missionary expedition. It also explains the great serenity with which he contemplated the possibility of martyrdom.

He did not have long to wait. Poland was suffering under a Cossack invasion. The invaders set themselves to uproot the Catholic faith, and on May 16, 1657, Andrew fell into their hands near Janow, in the district of Peredil. After beating him with clubs and whips, they roped him behind a horse and by this cruel means dragged him to Janow for execution. In this last encounter the Polish martyr equalled the heroism of the greatest martyrs of the Church. He was asked, "Are you a Latin priest?" "I am a

Catholic priest," Andrew replied. "I was born in the Catholic faith and I wish to die in it. My faith is the true faith, which leads to salvation. As for you heretics, unless you repent and do penance you will never attain salvation. If you embrace my faith, you will know the true God and save your souls."

These words only served to increase the Cossacks' cruelty. Not content with one torture or two, they inflicted on him all the most savage torments they knew. They first scourged him and fixed a crown of spikes on his head; they hacked him with scimitars and scalped him; they applied torches to the wounds in his chest, back, and other parts of his body. When he showed himself unbroke in spirit, and repeated his profession of faith, they cut off his ears and nose, tore out his tongue, and put out his eyes. At last, when Andrew was at the point of death, one of the executioners with two sword-blows brought his painful martyrdom to an end.

In work and suffering Andrew is an example to us. His strenuous efforts to spread the Kingdom of God recall to our minds the truth that the Catholic Church was born on the cross from Christ's opened side, and washed white in his blood. He can inspire the people of our day with courage to bear even the severest sufferings for the sake of God and the Church. It has truly been said that "Great achievement and great endurance are marks of the Christian."

Responsory (cf. 1 Pet. 2:21, 24)

R. Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps (P.T. alleluia).

V. He bore our sins for us in his body, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness, that you. . . .

Concluding Prayer

Lord our God, your Son gave himself up to death to bring your scattered children into unity. Grant us perseverance in Christ's work of reconciliation, for which Saint Andrew died a martyr's death. 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.