

OCTOBER 3  
SAINT FRANCIS BORGIA  
PRIEST, RELIGIOUS  
MEMORIAL

Francis was born in Gandia, in the kingdom of Valencia, in 1510, the eldest son of John, the Duke of Borgia. He was given the fashionable education at the court of the Emperor Charles V, and in 1529 he married Eleanor de Castro. They had eight children. He succeeded his father in 1542; but on the death of his wife he renounced his title, studied theology, and was ordained in 1551. Then he joined the Society, and was elected its third General in 1565. He served the Society well by his care for the formation and spiritual life of the scholastics, by setting up colleges in many places, and by the establishment of the Missions. He died at Rome on September 30, 1572, and was canonized in 1671 by Clement X.

From the Common of Pastors, or the Common of Men Saints, for Religious

THE OFFICE OF READINGS

Second Reading

From the Letters of St. Francis Borgia.

(Letter 717, April, 1569, to the whole Society. Original Spanish text in *Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu: S. Franciscus Borgia*, t. 5, Matriti, 1911, pp. 78-79.)

*How great a cure for all our ills is meditation on the cross of Christ!*

We are all pilgrims: by taking our vows we have put on our boots and spurs. So we make the whole of our undertaking pointless if we do not set out with enthusiasm upon the journey before us and hasten along the road of perfection, until we come to "Horeb, the mountain of God."

As I complete this summary, the first thing that occurs to me is what our Constitutions warn us of in the Tenth Part, when they treat of the preservation and increase of the Society:

The means that unite the human instrument with God and so dispose it that it may be wielded dexterously by his divine hand are more effective than those which equip it in relation to men. Such means are, for example, goodness and virtue, and especially charity, and a pure intention of the divine service, and familiarity with God our Lord in spiritual exercises of devotion, and sincere zeal for souls for the sake of glory to him who created and redeemed them and not for any other benefit (n.2).

We must pay very serious attention to these words, since they come from a Father who wrote them with such great love for his sons. Indeed, if we understand them aright, the source of all the divisions and defects that religious orders suffer is their failure to employ the means that unite the human instrument with God and make us one with his divine Spirit through charity. If the earth is dried up, it is scarcely surprising if first the flower and then the fruit dry up as well. In the same way, when our souls are dry in prayer and spiritual exercises, it follows that the flower and fruit of the spirit dry up straightaway. For the soul which spends too little time in the meditation and imitation of Christ crucified will conceive only a tepid desire to suffer and will easily fall victim to impatience. A religious who takes no care to know himself in prayer and to have some experience of this human unworthiness,

will come to have a high opinion of himself and a low one of those around him.

How great a cure for all our ills is meditation on the cross of Christ!

**Responsory** (Gal. 2:19-20)

**R.** I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

**V.** I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. It is. . . .

**Concluding Prayer**

Lord our God, you called St. Francis from a royal palace to be your servant. Grant through his prayers that all who have died to sin and renounced the world may live for you alone. 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.

**Alternative Concluding Prayer**

Lord God, in obedience to your teaching St. Francis lived only for your glory. Keep us faithful to your word, so that we may never know death but live to see the joyful day of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.