

NOVEMBER 3
BLESSED RUPERT MAYER
PRIEST, RELIGIOUS
OPTIONAL MEMORIAL

Rupert Mayer was born at Stuttgart on January 23, 1876, was ordained priest in 1899, and entered the Society in 1900. On the completion of his formation, he worked for some years as a preacher of missions to the people, until, in 1912, he was appointed chaplain to the immigrants in Munich. It was there, too, that he played a part in the founding of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family. During the first world war, he carried out his duties as a military chaplain in a heroic way, but on December 30, 1916, he was seriously wounded on the Rumanian front and his left leg had to be amputated. On his return to Munich, he resumed his apostolic works, devoting himself in a special way to the poor. On November 28, 1921, he was appointed Director of the Marian Congregation for men in Munich, which flourished remarkably under his leadership.

He was one of the first to be aware of the true nature of Hitler's movement in its early days and already in 1923 he declared publicly that a Catholic could never be a Nazi. He continued his struggle against the Nazis even after Hitler came to power in 1933 and was, as a result, repeatedly put into prison. Finally, in 1939, he was confined in the concentration camp at Sachsenhausen. There his health deteriorated so badly that the Nazis, fearing that he would die as a martyr, sent him on August 5, 1940, under house arrest to the Abbey of Ettal, where he remained in solitary confinement until the end of the second world war. Once more he took up his priestly work in the Bavarian capital, but on November 1, 1945, he suffered a stroke and died at the altar as he was giving a homily. Pope John Paul II beatified him at Munich in 1987.

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

THE OFFICE OF READINGS

Second Reading

From a sermon of Cardinal Julius Döpfner (d. 1976)

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”

How appropriate are these words in the case of Father Rupert Mayer! God was truly his passion, leading him, indeed driving him, unwaveringly in one direction. He was filled with a deep, manly love of God. In his favorite prayer, we find again and again the one refrain: “Lord, how—when—what—because you will. . . .” The Lord and his will constituted the magnet of his life. “. . . for they shall be satisfied”: We know the circumstances of Father Rupert Mayer’s death. After proclaiming the same Gospel passage we have heard today, he was preaching about the poor. And then he said three times, with his last breath: “The Lord—the Lord—the Lord.” That was for him the fulfillment of the promise: “They shall be satisfied.” Throughout his whole life, he kept finding satisfaction in his encounter with God, but now he experienced the final fulfillment, in accordance with the word we heard earlier in the reading: “We shall see him as he is [1 Jn. 3:2].”

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” If we wanted to illustrate the truth of that in the case of Father Rupert Mayer, we should never come to an end. The antennae of his great heart were ever on the alert for every human need. He was always ready to listen and ready to act, watching out for every opportunity to help. So, as an army chaplain, he was always to be found where the

action was fiercest. Sensitive to every need, compassionate love drove the city priest. He saw the needs of ex-prisoners, of the working classes, of families. He founded the congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family, he arranged to have Mass celebrated at the main railway station. He sensed the spiritual confusion of the post-war years and was to be found in numerous meetings, bringing some word of clarification and encouragement. The confessional and the pulpit claimed a large part of his working day. The rest he literally gave away through more discreet, more personal help. He preached where he was needed. He spoke to his men in the Congregation and in the priests' house: always from deep faith and in a plain, everyday, gripping way.

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Even and especially here does Father Rupert Mayer show us the way by example. Throughout his life, concern for justice was a characteristic. His noble courage reached its perfection during the time of the Nazis. His discernment—precisely in the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount—is remarkable. There is one more thing that we must not overlook: the man bursting with activity had to carry the heavy burden of no longer being able to do things for people. This brought about a purification deep within him. In the following of his crucified Lord, the even greater love of self-offering matured in him.

Responsory

R. I bear witness to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and fear nothing. I am not ashamed of the Gospel.

V. I will not count my life of any worth, so long as the Word may be proclaimed. I am not ashamed of the Gospel.

Concluding Prayer

Loving Father, you made the blessed priest Rupert a steadfast confessor of the faith and a selfless helper of the poor. Through his intercession, raise up in the Church new, exemplary heralds of the Gospel and give us all a heart open to the needs of others. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.