

NOVEMBER 13
SAINT STANISLAUS KOSTKA
RELIGIOUS
MEMORIAL

Born of a noble family at Rostkow in Poland in 1550, Stanislaus began the study of the classics in Vienna in 1564. Invited by Our Lady to join the Society, he fled in 1567, in order more effectively to overcome his father's opposition. He travelled on foot first to Germany and then to Rome, where Saint Francis Borgia admitted him to the novitiate. There he died, remarkable for his mature sanctity, on August 15, 1568. He was canonized by Benedict XIII in 1726.

From the Common of Men Saints, for Religious

THE OFFICE OF READINGS

Second Reading

From the Annual Letters of the Jesuit College at Vienna, and from the Letters of Saint Peter Canisius, Priest and Doctor of the Church.

(Annual Letters of the College of Vienna, September 1, 1567; *Arch. Rom. S.I., Epist. Germ.*, 140, ff. 75 r.-v., and *B. Petri Canisii, S.I., Epistolae et Acta*, ed. O. Braunsberger, S.I., Vol. 6, Freiburg/Breisgau, 1913, pp. 63-64.)

Day and night he thought of Jesus and the Society.

A young man from Poland of noble family and even nobler virtue, a pupil of ours throughout two years at Vienna, was eager to join the Society. But because of his parents' opposition to the idea it did not seem right to accept his request, not only because he had been a boarder here and a full-time student at the gymnasium but for other reasons as well. Therefore we always rejected his request. A few days ago he gave up hope of entering the

the Society here and set off elsewhere, to try to achieve his purpose, if possible, in another place.

His perseverance and piety were exemplary; everybody loved him and none disliked him. A boy in years but a man in discretion, he was small of stature but had a great and noble soul. He went to Mass twice a day, went to confession and communion more often than the others, and spent more time in prayer. He not only equalled his fellow pupils in rhetoric, but at times he even surpassed those by whom he had previously been beaten.

Day and night he thought of Jesus and the Society, and from time to time he begged his superiors with tears to admit him, even going so far as to approach the Papal Nuncio, asking him to use his influence with our fathers. All in vain. That is why he decided, against the wishes of his parents, brothers, relatives, and acquaintances, to go elsewhere and try to enter the Society another way. Should he be equally unsuccessful elsewhere he has decided to be a pilgrim for the whole of his days and pass his life in a humble, poor condition for the love of Christ. Our fathers, on realizing his intentions, tried to dissuade him, and encouraged him to return with his brother, who was supposed to be soon leaving for home; they told him that his parents, on seeing his perseverance, would perhaps grant a candid request. The young man, however, could not be persuaded and said that his parents would never give him leave; they were better known to him than they were to others, and besides he had the duty to fulfill a promise made to Christ. His masters and his confessors failed to make any impression; and one morning, having received the Blessed Sacrament, he set out without the knowledge

of his master or his brother, leaving behind him a very wealthy inheritance and taking with him, not the clothes he wore at home and at school, but a cheap linen cloak and a stick in his hand. His appearance as he left Vienna was that of a poor country lad.

God alone knows how it will all end. But we hope that his departure did not occur without God's plan. He was so persevering that it must have been some divine inspiration rather than some childish whim that drove him on.

This was also the view of Saint Peter Canisius, then Provincial of Upper Germany. When Stanislaus arrived at Dillingen, he sent him on to Rome with this letter to the General, Saint Francis Borgia:

The young man who under Christ's leadership brings you this letter is being sent to you from this province. He is an excellent, intelligent young man whom our fathers at Vienna would not admit to the Society for fear of antagonizing his family. On his arrival here he was so eager to carry out his long-standing ambition—some years ago he committed himself unreservedly to the Society, though not yet admitted to it—that he was tested here for a time as a boarder in the college. He was faithful to the duties entrusted to him and showed himself persevering in his vocation. He was very eager to be sent to Rome to be as far away as possible from any harrassment by his family, and also to advance as much as he could in the path of holiness. He never lived among our novices, though he serves them as a very good example of what a true probationer ought to be. We hope for great things from him.

Responsory (Ps. 26:13, 4; Phil. 1:21)

R. I am sure that I shall see the Lord's goodness in the land of the living. There is one thing I ask of the Lord, for this I long, to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.

V. To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. There is....

Concluding Prayer:

Lord our God, you looked on Saint Stanislaus with love as he dedicated his youth to you with such generosity of heart. Renew us in spirit so that we may be eager and joyful as we walk the way of your commandments. Help us to fill our days with good works and so redeem the shortness of this life. 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.