

NOVEMBER 26
SAINT JOHN BERCHMANS
RELIGIOUS
MEMORIAL

John was born in the village of Diest, in Brabant, in 1599, studied classics from 1612 in Mechlin and was admitted to the Society there in 1616. In 1618 he was sent to Rome to study and, after a brief illness, died there happily on August 13, 1621. All who knew him loved him because of his sincere piety, his real charity, and his unflinching cheerfulness. Leo XII canonized him in 1888.

From the Common of Men Saints, for Religious

THE OFFICE OF READINGS

Second Reading

From the letters of Saint John Berchmans, Religious
(Extract from a letter sent to his parents in August, 1616. Flemish text in T. Severin, S.J., *S. Jean Berchmans, Ses Ecrits*, Louvain, 1931, pp. 35-38.)

*I have therefore most willingly decided to offer myself to
Christ Jesus*

(John was seventeen at the time and wanted both to explain to his parents his own intentions and to stop them from making any other plans for him. Therefore he wrote the following letter to them from Mechlin:)

Dear Father and Mother,

For four months now God has been knocking on the door of my heart but up to now I have to some extent kept it shut against him. Since then I have noticed that during my studies and my relaxation, while I was walking about or doing anything else, the only thought that kept coming to

my mind was to wonder what sort of life I ought to adopt. So after many communions and good works I decided in the end to make a vow to serve God in the religious life, provided he helps me with his grace.

I know that friends and parents are always upset by the departure of those they love. But I look at it in a different way. Supposing that my father and mother were here on the one side, together with my sister and other relatives, and on the other Our God and Lord with his, and I hope, my Blessed Mother; and suppose my parents said, "Dear son, we beg you, do not leave us; we ask this in return for the labors and cares we have endured for your sake. . . ." And suppose Jesus said, "Follow me. I was born for your sake, scourged for you, crowned with thorns and crucified for you. See the five sacred wounds I suffered for you. Have you forgotten that I have fed your soul with my holy Body and given it my sacred Blood to drink? Are you not ashamed of your lack of gratitude to me?" Dear Father and Mother, whenever I think on this my heart is on fire, and I would wish if I could to enter the religious life on the spot. My mind and heart have no peace until they find their beloved.

I have therefore most willingly decided to offer myself to Christ Jesus and fight his wars in his Society. My only hope is that you will not show yourselves so unreasonable as to set your minds against him.

I commend myself to your holy prayers, and I ask the Lord to grant me perseverance in my intention to the end of my life, and at the end to grant eternal life to you and to me.

Christ's obedient son and yours, John Berchmans.

Responsory (Apoc. 3:20; Mt. 24:46)

R. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

V. Blessed is that servant whom his master when he comes will find so doing. I will

Concluding Prayer

Lord our God, you invite us always to give you our love, and you are pleased with a cheerful giver. Give us a youthful spirit, to be like Saint John, always eager to seek you and to do your will. 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.