

# **Moslems and the Roman Catholic Liturgical Calendar: *Documentation***

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Frank Henderson's Page on Liturgy and Medieval Women  
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## **Introduction**

The encounter of Christians with Moslems over the centuries has influenced the history of Roman Catholic liturgy. This relatively little known aspect of liturgical history deserves to be re-examined today, as Christians increasingly become aware of Islam and as efforts are being made on many fronts to promote good relations between Christians and Moslems.

Here I present documents that show ways in which Moslems influenced and were referred to in the liturgical calendar of the Roman Catholic liturgy.

The presentation of these texts is part of a broader investigation that includes similar studies of the Lutheran and Roman Catholic liturgies. This of course is merely a first step in what should be a broader and deeper study of this subject, carried out by many. These texts need to be placed in context with respect to the place and period of their composition. All deserve further analysis and reflection. Implications for Christian-Moslem relations in the past, the present and the future need to be drawn out, especially regarding ways in which Christians today do or might refer to Moslems in their liturgies.

For many centuries, Christians often referred to Moslems as Turks, Saracens, and Moors.

The Roman Catholic liturgical year and calendar and year have two main parts. One is

called the temporal cycle and includes Sundays, the seasons, and feasts of Christ; this does not refer to Moslems. The second is called the sanctoral cycle and includes commemorations or feasts of holy women and men – the saints, including Mary the mother of Jesus. Some of these saints are commemorated throughout the church, while others are remembered only in individual countries, regions or dioceses..

The liturgical calendar is laid out in several liturgical books. One is the Martyrology; this gives brief notes on the rather large number of saints who are commemorated each day of the year. A smaller number of these saints – those considered of greater importance – are named in the Missal and in the Breviary. The information given below comes from the brief notices in the Martyrology; the collect (opening prayer) that is in both the Missal and the Breviary; and the information that is given in the lessons at Second Nocturns of Matins (the night office). This is a mixture of history, legend and pious imagination..

In addition, commentaries on the liturgical year give further information and excerpts from some of these are given here. I have especially referred to Butler's *Lives of the Saints*, but occasionally also to the commentaries of Parsch, Gueranger and Schuster noted below. Butler, originally published between 1756–1759 and subsequently revised several times, was for more than two hundred years an important source of information about the saints for English speaking Catholics.

Moslems enter the picture if they were in some way connected with the life or death of the saints, and such connections take a variety of forms. So far as the texts considered here are concerned, Moslems were held responsible for the death of some saints, who are considered to have died because of their Christian faith and are named here as martyrs. They are here divided into three groups – those connected with the city of Cordova in Spain, members of the Franciscan order, and a few from the Middle East.

Other saints commemorated in the liturgical calendar are associated with ransoming Christians who were held captive by Moslems. Two main orders of “ransomers” existed, and their founders and important figures are among the saints.

Still other feasts commemorated victories of Christian armies over Moslem (Turkish) armies. As these Christian victories are attributed to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, they are named as her feasts.

Finally, a few other saints whose lives touch those of Moslems are included as well.

The liturgical calendar from which the following excerpts are taken was in use up until the 1970s.

Omissions in the excerpts are indicated by [. . .].

The following is a helpful reference with respect to the Cordovan and Franciscan martyrs:

John V. Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination*. New York: Columbia University Press 2002

It in turn includes the following reference, which I have not seen:

Jessica Coope, *The Martyrs of Cordoba: Community and Family Conflict in an Age of Mass Conversion*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press 1995

### **Sources**

For the convenience of modern readers, I have used English translations.

Martyrology:

*The Roman Martyrology*. The Third Turin Edition. Translated by Raphael Collins. Westminster MD: Newman 1946

Missal:

*Saint Andrew Daily Missal* by Dom Gaspar Lefebvre. Saint Paul MN: Lohmann: 1940

Breviary:

*Roman Breviary in English*, 4 vol. New York: Benziger Brothers, 1950

Butler's Lives:

*Butler's Lives of the Saints*. Complete Edition edited, revised and supplemented by Herbert Thurston and Donald Attwater. 4 vol. Westminster MD: Christian Classics 1956

Commentaries (English translations of older European works):

Pius Parsch, *The Church's Year of Grace*, 5 vol. Collegeville: Liturgical Press 1964

Abbot Gueranger, *The Liturgical Year*, 15 vol. Powers Lake, ND: Marian House 1983

Ildefonso Schuster, *The Sacramentary (Liber Sacramentorum)*: Historical & Liturgical Notes on the Roman Missal, 5 vol. New York: Benziger Brothers 1924

## MARTYRS OF CORDOVA

### January 13. Gumesind and Servideus

*Martyrology:* At Cordova, the holy martyrs Gumesind, priest, and Servideus, monk.

### March 11. Eulogius

*Martyrology:* At Cordova in Spain, St Eulogius, priest, who deserved to be associated with the martyrs of that city because, in writing of their trials for the faith, he had envied their happiness. On account of his own fearless and intrepid confession of Christ, he was scourged and beaten with rods, and finally beheaded during the Saracen persecution.

*Butler's Lives* (vol I, p 561): St Eulogius has been described as the principal glory of the Spanish church in the ninth century. The descendant of a stock which had owned land in Cordova since the Roman occupation, he was one of a family of four brothers and two sisters. Cordova was then in the hands of the Moors, who had made it their capital, and Christianity, although to a certain extent tolerated, was hampered by vexatious restrictions; public worship was allowed on payment of a monthly tax, but Christians were forbidden under pain of death to make converts. At the same time many of them held high office under their conquerors, and the saint's youngest brother Joseph was an important officer in the court of Abdur Rahman II.

Eulogius received his early education from the priests of Saint Zoilus, and when he had learnt all they could teach him he placed himself under the illustrious writer and abbot Sperandeo. Here he had as fellow pupil Paul Alvarez, and they contracted a lifelong friendship, Alvarez afterwards becoming his biographer. Their studies completed, Eulogius was raised to the priesthood, whilst his friend married and took up a literary career. The two carried on a voluminous correspondence, but agreed to destroy their letters as being too effusive and lacking in polish. In his *Life of St Eulogius*, Alvarez gives a delightful description of his friend, whom he represents as pious, mortified, learned in all branches of knowledge, but especially in the Holy Scriptures, of an open countenance, so humble that he often deferred to the opinions of those whose judgement was greatly inferior to his own, and so kindly that he won the love of all who had dealings with him. Visiting hospitals and monasteries was his recreation, and he was in such high esteem that he was asked by the monks to draw up new rules for them. To do this he not only went to stay in Spanish houses, but also visited monasteries in Navarre and Pamplona, comparing their regulations and selecting what was best in each code.

In 850 the Moors started a sudden persecution of Christians in Cordova, either because certain Christians were indiscreet in inveighing openly against Mohammed, or else because they had attempted the conversion of some of the Moors. Matters were made worse for the faithful when an Andalusian bishop called Reccared, instead of defending the flock of Christ, opened the door of the fold to the fury of the wolves. Why he should have turned against his own clergy is not clear; probably he was a "moderate" man and preferred peace and toleration to missionary zeal and persecution. Whatever the reason, it was he who was responsible for the arrest of the priests of Cordova and of their bishop. They were shut up in prison and Eulogius, who was of their number, occupied himself in reading the Bible to the rest and in encouraging them to remain faithful to God. From his dungeon he wrote his *Exhortation to Martyrdom*, addressed to two maidens, Flora and Mary. "They threaten to sell you as slaves and dishonour you", he said,

“but be assured that they cannot injure the purity of your souls, whatever infamy they may inflict upon you. Cowardly Christians will tell you in order to shake your constancy that the churches are silent, deserted and deprived of the sacrifice on account of your obstinacy; that if you will but yield temporarily you will retain the free exercise of your religion. But be persuaded that, for you, the sacrifice most pleasing to God is contrition of heart, and that you can no longer draw back or renounce the truth you have confessed.” The girls were spared the threatened humiliation and were executed with the sword, declaring with their dying breath that as soon as they should find themselves in the presence of Jesus Christ they would ask for the release of their brethren. Six days after their death the prisoners were set free, and Eulogius immediately composed a metrical account of the passion of the martyrs in order to induce others to follow in their footsteps. His brother Joseph was deprived of his office at court and he himself was compelled to live from thenceforth with the traitor Reccared, but he continued to instruct and confirm the faithful both by his voice and by his pen.

In 852 several others suffered martyrdom, and that same year the Council of Cordova forbade anyone to provoke arrest of set purpose. As the persecution waxed hotter under Abdur Rahman’s son and successor, the zeal of Eulogius only increased, and he kept numerous weak Christians from falling away, besides encouraging others to martyrdom. In the three volumes which he entitled *The Memorial of the Saints* he described the sufferings and death of all who perished in that persecution. He also wrote an *Apologia*, directed against those who denied to these victims the character of true martyrs on the grounds that they had wrought no miracles, that they had sought death instead of awaiting it, that they had perished at one blow without previous torture, and that they had been killed, not by idolaters, but by men who acknowledged the one true God. In defending these he was also defending himself, because he had approved and encouraged their action.

After the death of the archbishop of Toledo, the clergy and people cast their eyes upon St Eulogius as the most prominent leader of the Church, but although he was canonically elected he did not live to be consecrated. For his activities he was a marked man and could not long escape the fate to which he had urged others. There was a young woman in Cordova called Leocritia who had been converted to Christianity by a relative and baptized, though her parents were Moslems. For a follower of Islam to become a Christian was punishable by death, and the girl’s parents discovering her change of faith beat her and treated her cruelly in order to induce her to apostatize. She made her sufferings known to St Eulogius, who with the help of his sister Anulona assisted her to escape and concealed her amongst faithful friends. Her place of hiding, however, was discovered, and she and all those concerned in her escape were brought before the kadi. Eulogius, undaunted, offered to show the judge the true road to heaven, and declared that the prophet Mohammed was an impostor. The kadi threatened to have him scourged to death. The martyr replied that it would be to no purpose as he would never change his religion. The kadi then gave orders that he should be taken before the king’s council. There one of the council led him aside and said, “Although ignorant people rush headlong to their death, a man of your learning and standing ought not to imitate their folly. Be guided by me. Say but one word – since necessity requires it; afterwards you may resume your own religion and we will promise that no inquiry shall be made.” Eulogius replied with a smile, “If you could but conceive the reward which awaits those who persevere in the faith until the end, you would resign your dignities in exchange for it!” He then began boldly to proclaim the gospel to them, but the council, to avoid

listening, promptly sentenced him to death. As he was being led away, one of the servants struck him on the face for having spoken against Mohammed; he at once turned the other cheek and meekly received a second blow. He was led out of the city to the place of execution, and with great composure allowed himself to be decapitated. St Leocritia suffered four days later.

### **March 13. Ruderic and Solomon**

*Martyrology:* At Cordova in Spain; the holy martyrs Ruderic, a priest, and Solomon.

### **March 15. Leocritia or Lucretia**

*Martyrology:* At Cordova in Spain, St Leocritia, virgin and martyr. She suffered various cruel tortures and was beheaded for the faith of Christ during the Arabian persecution.

*Butler's Lives* (vol I, p 597): St Leocritia, or Lucretia, Virgin and Martyr (A.D. 859). St Leocritia lived in Cordova when it was a Moorish city and when the conversion of a follower of Islam was punishable by death. Her parents were wealthy and influential Moslems, but she herself had been converted to Christianity by a relation called Litiosa, and had been baptized. At first she kept her religion secret, but as time went on she practised it more openly and admitted her faith to her parents. Angry and alarmed, they sought to make her apostasize by entreaties, by threats and finally by blows and confinement. She managed to send word to St Eulogius, asking if he could find her a refuge with his sister Anulona, and the messenger brought back a favourable answer. She now awaited an opportunity to escape. Her apparently passive attitude had led her parents to think she was about to comply with their wishes, and they accordingly gave her permission to attend a wedding; she contrived to slip away from the gathering and to rejoin her Christian friends. Her absence was soon discovered and a great hue and cry was raised, followed by the arrest and examination of any Christians suspected to having had communication with her. Leocritia was handed on from one Christian family to another, St Eulogius visiting her from time to time to instruct her more fully and to strengthen her for the fate that awaited her. At length she was discovered, and both she and St Eulogius were brought before the judge. When St Eulogius was asked why he had concealed her, "I have been entrusted with the office of a preacher", he replied, "and it is my holy duty to enlighten all who seek the light of the faith. To no seeker may I refuse to show the way of life. What I have done for her I would also have done for you, if you had asked me." They were both flogged and condemned to death. After St Leocritia had been decapitated, her body was thrown into the Guadalquivir. It was afterwards deposited at Oviedo, beside that of St Eulogius.

### **April 17. Elias, Paul, Isidore**

*Martyrology:* At Cordova in Spain, the holy martyrs Elias, a priest, and the monks Paul and Isidore, who were slain in the Arab persecution for the profession of the Christian faith.

### **April 18, Perfectus**

*Martyrology:* At Cordova, St Perfectus, priest and martyr, who was slain with the sword by the Moors, because he argued against the sect of Mohammed and firmly insisted on the Catholic faith.

### **June 5, Sancho.**

*Martyrology:* At Cordova in Spain, blessed Sancho, a youth brought up in the royal court, who did not hesitate to undergo martyrdom for the faith of Christ during the persecution by the Arabs.

*Butler's Lives* (vol II, p 482). St Sanctius, or Sancho, Martyr (A.D. 851). St Sanctius, or Sancho, was born at Albi in the south of France, but was captured as a boy by the Moors and conveyed by them as a prisoner of war to Cordova. There he was enrolled amongst the young cadets who were trained to arms as doncellos or janissaries. Fired, as it seems, by the example of St Isaac, Sanctius openly declared himself to be a Christian and refused the prophet Mohammed. He was tried and condemned to death. Several other Christians suffered at the same time and for the same cause, but Sanctius alone appears to have undergone the terrible ordeal of being extended on the ground and impaled while still alive – this torment being doubtless meant as a warning to those who had been his comrades. His corpse, like that of St Isaac, was afterwards exposed for several days. It was then burned to ashes which were scattered in the river.

### **June 7. Peter and companions**

*Martyrology:* At Cordova in Spain, the holy martyrs Peter, a priest, Wallabonsus, a deacon, Sabinainus, Wistremund, Habentius, and Jeremias, all of whom were monks. Their throats were cut at the time of the arab persecution because they had confessed Christ.

### **June 26, Pegagius**

*Martyrology:* At Cordova in Spain, under the Saracen king Abderahman, the birthday of St Pelagius, a young man who gloriously completed his martyrdom for the faith by having his flesh torn to pieces with iron pincers

*Butler's Lives* (vol II, p 649): St Pelagius, Martyr (A.D. 925). The name of the boy martyr, Pelagius (Pelayo), is still famous throughout Spain, and many churches have been dedicated in his honour. He lived in the days when Abd-ar-Rahman III, the greatest of the Omayyads, was ruling at Cordova, and was left as a hostage in the hands of the Moors by his uncle. He was then a child of ten. Three years went by, the expected exchanges never arrived, and Pelagius remained unredeemed. By this time he had developed into a handsome lad, spirited, and entirely untainted by the corrupt influence of his prison associates. Favourable reports of him having reached Abd-ar-Rahman, he sent for the boy and told him that he might have his liberty, with horses to ride, fine clothes to wear, money and honours, if he would renounce his faith and acknowledge the prophet Mohammed.

Pelagius, however, stood firm. "All that means nothing to me", he answered, "A Christian I have been, Christian I am, and Christian I shall continue to be." Promises and threats proving equally unavailing, he was eventually condemned to death. Accounts vary as to the manner of his execution. According to one report he was sentenced to be racked on the iron horse and to be swung up and down till he expired; according to another, he was suspended from the forked gallows usually reserved for slaves and criminals, and then dismembered, his limbs being thrown into the river Guadalquivir. His remains were rescued by the faithful and preserved in Cordova until 967, when they were translated to Leon; in 985 the relics were removed for safety to Oviedo.

### **June 28. Argyrimum**

*Martyrology:* At Cordova in Spain, St Argyrirum, monk and martyr, who was slain for the faith of Christ during the persecution of the Arabs

**June 11. Abundius**

*Martyrology:* At Cordova in Spain, St Abundius, a priest, crowned with martyrdom while preaching against the sect of Mohammed

**July 16. Sisenand**

*Martyrology:* At Cordova in Spain, St Sisenand, cleric and martyr, who was strangled by the Saracens for the faith of Christ.

**July 19. Aura**

*Martyrology:* At Cordova in Spain, St Aura, virgin, the sister of the holy martyrs Adulphus and John. A Mohammedan had persuaded her to apostasize for a while, but quickly repenting of what she had done, in the second trial overcame the enemy by the shedding of her blood

**June 20. Paul**

*Martyrology:* At Cordova in Spain, St Paul, deacon and martyr. For rebuking Mohammedan princes for their impiety and cruelty, and preaching Christ with constancy, he was put to death and went to his reward in heaven.

**August 6. Monks and Stephen**

*Martyrology:* At Burgos in Spain, in the monastery of St Peter of Cardegna, of the Order of St Benedict, two hundred monks, with their abbot Stephen, who were put to death for the faith of Christ by the Saracens, and buried in the monastery by Christians

**August 20. Leovigild and Christopher**

*Martyrology:* At Cordova, during the persecution of the Arags, the holy martyrs Leovigild and Christopher, monks, who were thrust into prison for the defense of the Christian faith, and soon after, being beheaded and cast into the fire, thus obtained the palm of martyrdom

**August 26. Victor**

*Martyrology:* In Spain, St Victor, martyr, who merited the crown of martyrs by being slain by the Moore for the faith of Christ

**September 15. Emilius and Jeremias**

*Martyrology:* At Cordova in Spain, the holy martyrs Emilius, deacon, and Jeremias, who ended their martyrdom in the persecution of the Arabs by being beheaded after a long stay in prison

**September 19. Pomposa**

*Martyrology:* At Cordova in Spain, St Pomposa, virgin and martyr. Because of her fearless witness to Christ she was beheaded in the Arab persecution, and thus obtained the palm

of martyrdom

### **September 27. Adolph and John**

*Martyrology:* At Cordova in Spain, the holy martyrs Adolph and John, brothers, who won the martyr's crown in the Arabian persecution. Their sister, the blessed virgin Aurea, was inspired by their example to return to the faith and later bravely suffered martyrdom on the 19<sup>th</sup> of July.

### **October 22. Nunilo and Alodia**

*Martyrology:* At Huesca in Spain, the holy virgins Numilo and Alodia, sisters, who endured martyrdom by being condemned to capital punishment by the Saracens for the confession of the faith.

*Butler's Lives* (vol IV, p 178): SS Nunilo and Alodia, Virgins and Martyrs (A.D. 851). The great era of the martyrs in Spain began in the year 850, under the Moorish Abdur Rahman II, and these two maidens were among the numberless martyrs who in those days sealed their fidelity to God with their blood. They were sisters, living at Huesca, their father being a Mohammedan and their mother a Christian. After the death of her first husband, she was so foolish as to take a second who also was a Mohammedan. Her two daughters, who had been brought up in the Christian faith, had much to suffer from the brutality of their stepfather, who was a person of importance. They were also pestered by many suitors to marry, but having decided to serve God in the state of virginity they obtained leave to go to the house of a Christian aunt. When the laws of Abdur Rahman were published against the Christians, they were too well known by their family and the repute of their zeal and piety not to be soon arrested. They appeared before the kadi not only undaunted but with a holy joy. He employed flattery and promises to try to work them into compliance, and proceeded to threats. When these failed him, he put them into the hands of wicked women, hoping these would be able to insinuate themselves into the hearts of the Christian women. But Christ enlightened and protected them, and the temptresses were obliged to declare to the judge that nothing could conquer their resolution. He therefore condemned them to be beheaded, which was accordingly done, and their passion is mentioned in the Roman Martyrology on this day.

### **November 24. Flora and Mary**

*Martyrology:* At Cordova in Spain, the holy virgins and martyrs Flora and Mary, who after a long imprisonment were slain with the sword in the Arab persecution

*Butler's Lives* (vol IV, p 419): SS Flora and Mary, Virgins and Martyrs (A.D. 851). In the reign of Abdur Rahman II, king of the Moors at Cordova in Spain, Flora, being of Mohammedan birth by her father but secretly brought up in the Christian faith by her mother, was impeached by her own brother before the judge of the city. This magistrate had her scourged brutally, and then put her into the hands of her brother that he might overcome her resolution. After some time she made her escape and took shelter with a sister. Having lain concealed some time, she ventured back to Cordova and prayed publicly in the church of St Acisclus the martyr. There she met with Mary, sister to a deacon who had lately received the crown of martyrdom, and they agreed to give themselves up as Christians to the magistrate, by whose order they were confined where no one had access to them but some loose women. St Eulogius, who was at that

time detained in another prison, wrote them an exhortation to martyrdom, in which he told them that no involuntary infamy could harm their souls and that to yield temporarily in hope of better things must not be considered. The two girls were eventually beheaded together, declaring they would intercede in Heaven for the release of St Eulogius and the other brethren; and they were in fact set free a week later.

## FRANCISCAN MARTYRS

### **January 16. Berard, Peter, Otto, Accursius and Adjutus**

*Martyrology:* At Morocco in Africa, the martyrdom of the five Protomartyrs of the Order of Friars Minor, Berard, Peter, and Otto who were priests, and Accursius and Adjutus who were lay brothers. For preaching the Catholic faith, and because of their hatred for the Mohammedan Law, after various torments and mockeries by the Saracen king, they were beheaded.

### **February 4. Joseph**

*Martyrology:* In the town of Amatrice, in the diocese of Rieti, the death of St Joseph of Leonessa, a Capuchin priest who suffered greatly from the Mohammedans. As he was celebrated for his apostolic labors and miracles, he was placed on the list of holy confessors by the Sovereign Pontiff, Benedict XIV

*Butler's Lives* (vol I, p 253): St Joseph of Leonessa (A.D. 1612). This saint was born in 1556 at Leonessa in Umbria, and at the age of eighteen made his profession as a Capuchin friar in his native town, taking the name of Joseph, whereas he had previously been called Eufranio. He was humble, obedient and mortified to a heroic degree, and three days of the week he took no other sustenance but bread and water. He generally preached with a crucifix in his hand, and the fire of his words kindled a flame in the hearts of his hearers. In 1587 he was sent to Turkey as a missionary among the Christians at Pera, a suburb of Constantinople. There he encouraged and served the Christian galley-slaves with wonderful devotion, especially during a virulent pestilence in which he himself caught the infection, though he afterwards recovered. He converted many apostates, and, by preaching the faith to the Moslems rendered himself liable to the utmost severity of the Turkish law. Joseph was twice imprisoned, and the second time he was condemned to a cruel death. He was hung on a gibbet by one hand which was pierced with a sharp hook at the end of a chain, and was suspended by one foot in the same way. However, after he had been thus tortured for many hours, he was released and his sentence commuted to banishment. He landed in Venice and, after an absence of two years, arrived back at Leonessa, where he resumed his labours with extraordinary zeal. Towards the end of his life he suffered greatly from cancer, for the removal of which he underwent two operations without the least groan or complaint, holding all the while a crucifix on which he kept his eyes fixed. When it was suggested before the operation that he should be bound, he pointed to the crucifix, saying, "This is the strongest bond; this will hold me better than any cords could do". The operation proving unsuccessful, St Joseph died happily on February 4, 1612, at the age of fifty-eight. He was canonized in 1745.

### **May 24. John**

*Martyrology:* At Morocco in Africa, the passion of blessed John of Prado, priest and martyr of the Order of Friars Minor. While preaching the Gospel, he was bound, imprisoned, and scourged, and after enduring with fortitude many other torments for Christ, fulfilled his martyrdom by fire.

*Butler's Lives* (vol II, p 385): Bd John of Prado, Martyr (A.D. 1613). Amongst the heroes of the Friars Minor of the Observance, great honour is paid to Bd John of Prado, who won the crown of martyrdom in Morocco in the seventeenth century even as the Franciscan prisoners, Bd Berard and his companions, had won it there in the thirteenth. He was born of a noble Spanish family at Morgobejo in Leon, and, after being educated at Salamanca University, received the habit as a Franciscan in the year 1584. From the day of his ordination to the priesthood he desired to go as a missionary to the pagans, but his aspirations could not be realized for some time. His superiors set him to preach in his own country and he also filled the offices of novice-master and guardian in several convents. Though one of the holiest and humblest of men he became the victim of cruel calumny, and his provincial removed him from his post of superior. He accepted the disgrace with resignation. "God wills that I should suffer," he said. "May His will be done. The only thing that grieves me is the discredit it may bring upon our order and the scandal it may cause to the weak." His innocence was, however, afterwards completely vindicated and in 1610 he was made minister of the newly formed province of San Diego.

Three years later a widespread epidemic of plague carried off all the Franciscans who were labouring in the Moroccan mission. Bd John's term of office had just expired and he begged to be sent to the relief of the Christians. Pope Urban VIII accordingly named him missionary apostolic with special powers. Accompanied by Father Matthias and Brother Genesisius, he arrived in Morocco and immediately embarked upon the work of ministering to the Christian slaves. Though ordered to leave they continued their labours, administering the sacraments to the faithful and reconciling those who had apostasized. They were consequently arrested in Marakesh, cast into prison, and set to grind saltpetre for gunpowder. After a while they were brought into the sultan's presence, but when they still boldly explained Christianity, they were scourged and ordered back to their dungeon. On the occasion of a second public examination, Bd John ignored the sultan and addressed himself to some apostates who were standing by. Whereupon Muley-al-Walid struck the old man to the ground, and he was pierced by two arrows. He was taken away to be burned alive; as the flames mounted he urged his tormentors to follow Christ, till one of them crushed his head with a stone. Bd John of Prado was beatified in 1728, and he is one of the few beati named in the Roman Martyrology.

### **October 10. Daniel and Companions**

*Martyrology:* At Ceuta in Morocco, the passion of seven holy martyrs of the Order of Friars Minor: Daniel, Samuel, Angelus, Leo, Nicholas, Ugolino, and Domnus, all of whom were priest except Domnus. Because they had preached the Gospel and put to silence the doctrines of Mohammed, they suffered insults, fetters, and scourgings from the Saracens in that place. They were at last beheaded and thus obtained the palm of martyrdom

*Butler's Lives* (vol IV, p 81): SS Daniel and his Companions, Martyrs (A.D. 1227). Five Franciscan missionaries having glorified God by martyrdom in Morocco in the year 1220, as has been related under January 16, seven years later six other of the same order received permission

to go to Africa with the same object: announcing Christ to the Mohammedans. Their names were Samuel, Angelo, Leo, Domnus, Nicholas and Hugolino. On the way through Spain they were joined by Brother Daniel, minister provincial of Calabria, who became the superior of the band. On September 20, 1227, they reached Morocco, and spent ten days in preparation for their mission at a village near Ceuta which was inhabited by European merchants. On Saturday, October 2, they made their confessions and washed one another's feet, spent the night in prayer, and early on Sunday morning entered Ceuta and began to preach in the streets.

Their appears provided an uproar, they were badly hustled, and eventually taken before the kadi. When he saw their rough clothes and uncovered shaved heads he took them to be mad. They were imprisoned, freely exposed to the insults and ill-treatment of the Moors, whose religion the friars rejected with contempt. Daniel wrote a letter to the Christians of the village in which they had stayed, saying what had happened to them and adding, "Blessed be God, the Father of mercies, who comforts us in all our tribulations!" The following Sunday, it having been ascertained that they were missionaries and not madmen, the seven friars were invited to renounce their faith, first corporately and then individually in private. Neither threats nor bribes could move them, they continued to affirm Christ and to deny Mohammed, so they were ordered to be put to death. Each one of the martyrs went up to Brother Daniel, knelt for his blessing, and asked permission to give his life for Christ; and they were all beheaded outside the walls of Ceuta. Their bodies were mangled by the infuriated people, but the local Christians managed to rescue and bury them. Later on the relics were carried into Spain, and in 1516 Pope Leo X permitted the Friars Minor to observe the martyrs feast liturgically.

## MIDDLE EASTERN MARTYRS

### February 21. Peter

*Martyrology:* At Damascus, St Peter Mavimenu, who was killed by some Arabs who visited him in his sickness, because he said to them: "Whoever does not embrace the Christian and Catholic faith is lost, like your false prophet Mohammed".

### May 16. Monks

*Martyrology:* In Palestine, the martyrdom of the holy monks massacred by the Saracens in the monastery of St Sabbas.

## RANSOMING OF CAPTIVES

### January 28. Peter

*Martyrology:* St Peter Nolasco, confessor, who founded the Order of Our Lady of Ransom for the redemption of captives, and who fell asleep in the Lord on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December

*Collect:* O God, who as an example of thy love didst divinely inspire blessed Peter to beget within thy Church a new family for the ransom of the faithful: grant through his

intercession, that it we may be loosed from the bonds of sin, and enjoy freedom for evermore in our heavenly country: Who livest.

*Breviary* (II Nocturn): Lesson iv. Peter Nolasco was born at Recaudun, near Carcassonne, in France, of noble parents, and showed a remarkable love toward his neighbor. It was considered a foreshadowing of this virtue, when as a child he was crying in his cradle and a swarm of bees lighted upon him, and formed a honeycomb on his right hand. He lost his parents early in life. The Albigensian heresy was at that time making way in France; Peter, detesting that sect, sold his estates and withdrew into Spain. This gave him an opportunity to fulfill a vow which he had taken long before, at the shrine of our Lady of Monserrat. After this he went to Barcelona; and having there spent all his money in ransoming the faithful of Christ from slavery to their enemies, he said often that he would sell himself to free them, or that he would like to be bound by their chains.

Lesson v. How agreeable to God was the desire of this holy man, the following event showed. He was one night praying, and deeply considering in his mind help for the Christians languishing in captivity, when the blessed Virgin appeared, and suggested that he would be most dear to her Son and herself, if he would institute, in her honor, an order of religious men who would especially devote themselves to the ransom of captives from the infidels. He complied immediately with this heavenly suggestion, and founded the Order of Our Lady of Ransom for the Redemption of Captives, aided by St Raymond of Pennafort, and James I, king of Aragon, both of whom had that same night received the like revelation from the Mother of God. The religious of this order are bound by a fourth vow to remain as hostages in the pagan's power, if necessary for freeing the Christians.

Lesson vi. Having taken a vow of virginity, he kept his chastity perpetually unspotted. He excelled marvelously in patience, humility, abstinence and other virtues. He foretold future events by the illustrious gift of prophecy; one especially noteworthy may be mentioned: when king James was attacking Valencia, occupied by the Moors, he first obtained assurance from Peter that he would gain a victory. He was frequently consoled with the apparition of his Guardian Angel, and of the Virgin Mother of God. At length, worn out with old age, receiving a revelation of his approaching death, he fell ill and, being refreshed with the holy sacraments, exhorting his brethren to love towards captives, and devoutly reciting the Psalm: I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; at the words: The Lord has sent redemption to his people; he gave up his soul to God at midnight of Christmas Eve in the year 1256. Alexander VII commanded his feast to be kept on January 31.

*Butler's Lives* (vol I, p 185): St Peter Nolasco, Founder of the Order of Our Lady of Ransom (A.D. 1258). Peter, of the noble family of Nolasco in Languedoc, was born about the year 1189. At the age of fifteen he lost his father, who left him heir to a great estate: and he remained at home under the tutelage of a mother who encouraged all his good aspirations. Being solicited to marry, he set himself first to ponder seriously the vanity of earthly things; and rising one night full of those thoughts, he prostrated himself in prayer which continued till morning, consecrating himself to God in the state of celibacy and dedicating his whole patrimony to His service. Some authors affirm that Peter took part in the campaign of Simon de Montford against the Albigenses. The count vanquished them, and in the battle of Muret defeated and killed Peter, King of Aragon, and took his son James prisoner, a child of six years old. The conqueror is further said to have given him Peter Nolasco, then twenty-five years old, for a tutor, and to have

sent them both together into Spain. But it is now generally admitted that there is no adequate evidence for connecting St Peter with the Albigensian campaign or with the education of the future King James.

The Moors at that time were masters of a great part of Spain, and numbers of Christians who had been made slaves groaned under their tyranny both there and in Africa. Compassion for the poor had always been the distinguishing virtue of Peter. The pitiful spectacle of these unfortunates, and the consideration of the dangers to which their faith and virtue stood exposed under their Mohammedan masters, touched his heart, and he soon spent his estate in redeeming as many as he could. Whenever he saw any slaves, he used to say, "Behold eternal treasures which never fail". By his fervent appeals he moved others to contribute larger alms towards this charity, and at last formed the project of instituting a religious order to maintain a constant supply of men and means whereby to carry on so charitable an undertaking. This design encountered many difficulties; but it is said that our Lady appeared to St Peter, to the king of Aragon and to St Raymund of Penafort in distinct visions on the same night and encouraged them to carry the scheme into effect under the assurance of her patronage and protection. St Raymund was the spiritual director both of St Peter and of King James, and a zealous promoter of this work. The king declared himself the protector of the order, and assigned them quarters in his own palace by way of a commencement. On August 10, 1223 the king and St Raymund conducted St Peter to the church, and presented him to Berengarius, Bishop of Barcelona, who received his three religious vows, to which the saint added a fourth, to devote his whole substance and his very liberty, if necessary, to the work of ransoming slaves. The like vow was exacted of all his followers. St Raymund preached on the occasion, and declared that it had pleased Almighty God to reveal His will to King James, to Peter Nolasco and to himself, enjoining the institution of an order for the ransom of the faithful detained in bondage among the infidels. [note: Members of the Order of Our Lady of Ransom are commonly called Mercedarians: Spanish merced = ransom. They now engage in general apostolic and charitable work, though the vow to ransom captives is still taken at profession.] This was received by the people with acclamation. St Peter received the new habit from St Raymund, who established him first master general of the order, and drew up for it rules and constitutions. Two other gentlemen were professed at the same time with St Peter. When Raymund went to Rome, he obtained from Pope Gregory IX in 1235 the confirmation of the foundation and its rule.

King James having conquered the kingdom of Valencia, founded in it several houses of the order, one of which was in the city of Valencia itself. The town had been taken by the aid of Peter Nolasco's prayers, when the soldiers had despaired of success, and it was in fact to the prayers of the saint that the king attributed the great victories which he obtained over the infidels, and the entire conquest of Valencia and Murcia. St Peter, touching the main work of the order, ordained that two members should always be sent together amongst the infidels, to treat about the ransom of captives, and they are hence called ransomers. One of the two employed at the outset in this way was the saint himself, and Valencia was the first place which was blessed with his labours; the second was Granada. He not only comforted and ransomed a great number, but by his charity and example, was the instrument of inducing many Mohammedans to embrace the faith of Christ. He made several other journeys to those regions of the coast of Spain which were held by the Moors, besides a voyage to Algiers, where he underwent imprisonment. But the most terrifying dangers could never make him desist from his endeavours for the conversion of

the infidels, burning as he was with a desire of martyrdom.

St Peter resigned the offices of ransomer and master general some years before his death, which took place on Christmas day 1256. In his last moments he exhorted his religious to perseverance, and concluded with those words of the psalmist: "The Lord hath sent redemption to His people; He had commanded His covenant for ever". He then recommended his soul to God, appealing to the charity which brought Jesus Christ from Heaven to redeem us from the captivity of the Devil, and so died, being in the sixty-seventh year of his age. His relics were honoured by many miracles, and he was canonized in 1628.

### **January 31. Peter and Raymund**

(Missale Romanum: Missae Propriae totius ordinis Sancti Benedicti, 1933)

*Collect:* Deus, qui in tuae caritatis exemplum, ad fidelium redemptionem sanctos Petrum et Ramundum Ecclesiam tuam nova prole fecundare divinitus docuisti: ipsorum nobis intercessione concede, a peccati servitute solutis, in caelesti patria perpetua liberatate gaudere: Qui vivis et regnas

### **February 6: John and Felix**

(Missal Romanum. Missae Propriae totius ordinis Sancti Benedicti, 1933)

*Collect:* Deus, qui per sanctos Joannem et Felicem ordinem sanctissimae Trinitatis, ad redimendum de potestate Saracenorum captivos, caelitus instituere dignatur es praesta, quaesumus; ut, eorum suffragantibus meritis, a captivitate corporis et animae, te adjuvante, liberamur. Per dominum.

### **February 8. John**

*Martyrology:* St John of Matha, priest and confessor, founder of the Order of the Most Holy Trinity for the redemption of captives, who went to repose in the Lord on the 17<sup>th</sup> of December

*Collect:* O God, who by heavenly power, and through holy John, didst found the Order of the most holy Trinity for ransoming prisoners from the power of the Saracens: grant we beech thee, that by virtue of his helpfu merits pleasing for us we by thy help, be delivered from all bondage, whether of soul or body. Through our Lord. XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

*Breviary (II Nocturn):* Lesson iv. John of Matha founder of the order of the most holy Trinity for the ransom of captives, was born at Faucon in Provence, of parents conspicuous for their nobility and piety. He went for his studies in Aix, afterwards to Paris, where, after having completed his theological course, he received the master's degree, and was eminent for learning and virtue. This led the bishop of Paris to promote him, in spite of his humble resistance, to the holy order of priesthood, that he might stay in Paris and be an example of wisdom and virtue to young students. While celebrating his first Mass in the bishop's chapel, in the presence of that prelate and several other persons, he was honored by a signal favor from heaven. For an Angel appeared, in a white and shining robe, bearing on his breast a red and blue cross. His arms were crossed, and held over two captives, a Christian on one side, and a Moor on the other. The man of God was rapt in ecstasy at the sight, and understood at once that he was destined to ransom captives from the infidels.

Lesson v. That he might the more prudently carry out so important an undertaking, he

went into solitude, and, by divine Providence, there met Felix of Valois, who had been living in the same desert for many years. He joined him and spent three years in prayer, contemplation and the practice of every virtue. It happened once that, while they were speaking of divine things near a fountain, a stag approached, bearing between its horns a red and blue cross. And when Felix wondered at this strange sight, John told him of the vision he had at this first Mass; and thereupon they gave themselves more fervently than ever to prayer, and having been thrice advised in sleep, they resolved to set out for Rome, there to obtain permission from the Sovereign Pontiff to found an Order for the ransom of captives. Innocent III, who had shortly before been elected, received them kindly, and while he deliberated upon their proposals, it happened that as he was celebrating Mass in the Lateran, on the second feast of St Agnes, there appeared to him, during the elevation of the sacred Host, an Angel robed in white, bearing a cross of two colors, and acting as though he would free prisoners. Whereupon the pontiff gave his approbation to the institute, and ordered it to be called the order of the most holy Trinity for the ransom of captives, bidding its members wear a white habit, with a red and blue cross.

Lesson vi. The order being thus established, the holy Founders returned into France, and built their first Convent at Cerfroid, in the diocese of Meaux, and Felix was left to govern it; John, accompanied by a few of his brethren, returned to Rome, where Innocent III gave them the house, church, and hospital of St Thomas de Formis on the Coelian Hill with many revenues and estates. He also gave them letters to Miramolin, king of Morocco, and thus the work of ransom was favorably begun. John afterwards went into Spain, a great part of which was under the Saracen yoke. He stirred up kings, princes, and others of the faithful to compassion for the captives and the poor. He built monasteries, founded hospitals, and saved the souls of many captives by purchasing their freedom. Having at length returned to Rome, he spent his days in good works. Worn out by incessant labor and sickness, and burning with a most ardent love of God and his neighbor, it was evident that his death was at hand. Wherefore, calling his brethren round him, he earnestly exhorted them to labor in the work of ransom, which heaven had entrusted to them, and so he fell asleep in the Lord, on the sixteenth of the Calends of January (December 17), in the year of salvation 1213. His body was buried with due honor in the same church of St Thomas de Formis.

*Butler's Lives* (vol I, p 276): St John of Matha, Co-Founder of the Order of the Most Holy Trinity (A.D. 1213). St John was born at Faucon, on the borders of Provence, and when a young man was sent to Aix, where he learned grammar, the use of arms, riding and other exercises suitable for his position. His chief interest, however, lay in the works of mercy and in prayer, and upon his return home he retired to a little hermitage not far from Faucon, with the intention of living away from the world, united to God by penance and contemplation. However, he found his solitude so frequently broken in upon that he obtained leave from his father to study theology in Paris, where he gained his doctor's degree and was ordained priest. During his first Mass he resolved, by a special inspiration from God, to devote himself to the task of ransoming Christian slaves from the Moslems – a work which impressed him as one of the greatest acts of charity since it benefitted both their souls and their bodies. However, before he entered upon so important an undertaking, he thought it desirable to spend some time in retirement and prayer. Accordingly, having heard of a holy hermit, St Felix of Valois, he went to him at Cerfroid and begged to be admitted to his solitude and to be instructed in the way of perfection.

One day, as they sat together on the bank of a stream, John told Felix of his plan to

rescue the Christians who were held in bondage by the Mohammedans, and he spoke so eloquently that Felix offered to join him in his enterprise. They set out for Rome in the depth of winter – it was the close of the year 1197 – to obtain the Pope’s benediction. Innocent III, convinced that these two men were led by the Holy Spirit, consented to their founding a new religious order and declared St John the first general superior. The bishop of Paris and the abbot of St Victor were ordered to draw up the rule, which the pope approved by a bull in 1198. He directed the religious to wear a white habit with a red and blue cross on the breast and to take the name of the Order of the Most Holy Trinity. The two founders returned to France and presented themselves to King Philip Augustus, who authorized the establishment of their order in his kingdom, whilst Gaucher III, lord of Chatillon, gave them Cerfroid, which became the headquarters of the order.

In the years which followed the two saints founded other convents in France and sent several of their religious to accompany the counts of Flanders and Blois and other lords to the Crusades. St John in 1201 sent to Morocco two members of the order who redeemed 186 Christian slaves. The next year John himself went to Tunis, where he purchased the liberty of 110 more. He returned to Provence and received gifts which he took with him to Spain, and there ransomed a number of prisoners whom the invaders held in captivity. On a second voyage to Tunis he suffered much from the infidels, who were enraged at his zeal and at his success in exhorting the poor slaves to be constant to their faith. As he was returning with the Christians whom he had ransomed, the Moslems, by damaging the rudder of his ship and tearing the sails, made certain that the vessel and its living freight would perish at sea. But the saint, full of confidence in God, begged Him to be the pilot, and after setting his companions’ cloaks in place of the useless sails, he prayed his psalter, kneeling on the deck with a crucifix in his hands. They had a prosperous voyage and landed safely at Ostia. By this time Felix had greatly propagated the order in Italy and had obtained for it a foundation in Paris on the site of a chapel of St Mathurin, from the name of which convent these religious are called Mathurins in France. St John lived two more years in Rome, and died there; his cultus was recognized in 1666.

#### **April 10. Michael**

*Martyrology:* At Valladolid in Spain, St Michael of the Saints, confessor, of the Order of Discalced Trinitarians for the Redemption of Captives, a man known for his upright life, his penitential spirit, and his great love of God. He was placed on the roll of the saints by Pope Pius IX

*Bulter’s Lives* (vol II, p 66): St Michael de Sanctis (A.D. 1625). This Michael was born at Vich in Catalonia in 1589 or 1591, and when six years old announced that he had decided to be a monk when he grew up; his mother having told him about St Francis of Assisi he set himself to imitate that saint in ways unsuitable to his years. Doubtless his prudent parents restrained his ardour, but he retained his enthusiasm for St Francis. When his father and mother died, leaving him to the guardianship of an uncle, he was put in the service of a merchant. Young Michael had no fads about being above “mere trade” and did his work well; but whenever he was not at it he was doing works of devotion: assisting at the Divine Office when he could, and saying the Little Office of our Lady every day. His master was thoroughly edified, held up Michael as a pattern to

his family, and raised no objection to the boy joining the Trinitarian friars at Barcelona; he took his vows at the monastery of St Lambert as Saragossa in 1607.

About this time Bd John-Baptist-of-the-Conception had rallied many of the Trinitarians of Spain to his congregation of reformed Trinitarians, whose greater austerity was indicated by the wearing of sandals instead of shoes. One of these discalced brothers coming to St Lambert's to be ordained, Michael was moved to offer himself for their harder life. His superiors gave the necessary permission, he was received into the novitiate at Madrid, and some time later he renewed his vows with them at Alcala. He studied at Seville and Salamanca, was ordained priest, and his virtues and ability caused him to be twice named superior of the convent at Valladolid. His religious not only loved him as a father but revered him as a saint, and he set them a special example of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. Several times to was rapt in ecstasy during Mass, and he was God's instrument in the working of a number of miracles during life and after his death, which took place on April 10, 1625, when he was only thirty-six years old. St Michael de Sanctis was canonized in 1862, and he is described in the Roman Martyrology to-day as "remarkable for innocence of life, wonderful penitence, and love for God."

#### **April 27. Peter**

*Martyrology:* At Tarragona in Spain, the blessed Peter Armengaudius, of the Order of Blessed Mary of Mercy for the Redemption of Captives. He endured many tribulations in Africa in ransoming the faithful, and finally closed his career peacefully in the convent of Mary of the Meadows

*Bulter's Lives* (vol II, p 174): Bd Peter Armengol (A.D. 1304). It is very difficult to credit the story of Bd Peter Armengol as it is recounted in Mercedarian sources. He is alleged to have been botrn about the year 1238 of the family of the counts of Urgel at Guardia in Catalonia, and while yet in his teens to have joined a band of brigands. When King James of Aragon in 1258 sought to pass through that district, an armed guard was sent on ahead under the command of Peter's father. They encountered the brigands, and father and son were on the point of engaging in combat when Peter recognized his opponent. Stricken with remorse, he implored pardon, was converted and spent the rest of his life in doing penance, joining, for that purpose, the Order of Mercedarians (for the redemption of captives). Twice he was sent to Africa to ransom prisoners in captivity among the Moors. On the second occasion, the money he had taken with him was insufficient to secure the release of eighteen young boys; whereupon he volunteered to remain as a hostage himself until his companion returned with the ransom demanded. But the religious who brought it only arrived in time to learn that Peter had been hanged as a defaulter some days before. He went to secure the remains of the martyrs, but discovered on cutting the body down that Peter was still living. He was allowed to return to his fellow religious at Guardia, and there living on for ten years, with twisted neck and contorted limbs, he gave a wonderful example of virtue. His cultus was formally approved in 1686, and his name has since been inserted in the Roman Martyrology.

#### **August 10. Our Lady of Ransom**

*Martyrology:* In Spain, the apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary under the title of our Lady of Ransom, foundress of the Order for the Redemption of Captives. Her feast is celebrated on the 24<sup>th</sup> of September

### **August 26. Raymond**

*Martyrology:* At Cardona in Spain, the birthday of St Raymond Nonnatus, cardinal and confessor, of the Order of our Lady of Ransom for the Redemption of Captives, renowned for holiness of life and for miracles, whose feast is observed on the 31<sup>st</sup> of August

### **August 31. Raymond**

*Martyrology:* St Raymond Nonnatus, cardinal and confessor, of the Order of our Lady of Ransom for the Redemption of Captives. His birthday is commemorated on the 26<sup>th</sup> of August

*Collect:* O God, by thy grace blessed Raymund thy Confessor wrought wonders in redeeming thy faithful people from the hands of wicked men. Grant, we beseech thee, that loosened from the bonds of our sins, with free minds we may always do what is well pleasing to thee. Through our Lord.

*Breviary (II Nocturn):* Lesson iv. Raymund surnamed Nonnatus was called “not-born” because he was brought into the world contrary to the common law of nature, in that he was cut from the side of his dead mother. He was the son of noble and pious parents who lived in Portel in Catalonia. Even in his infancy he gave promise of future holiness. He was a grave child, early rejecting childish amusements and the attractions of the world. In their stead he applied himself to works of piety until all about him admired the mature virtue of the boy. As he grew older Raymund devoted himself to academic studies until, at his father’s command, he ended these activities to devote himself to farming. During this period he used to go often to the chapel of St Nicholas near Portel there to visit a much revered statue of the Mother of God, which even to this day is venerated with the deepest devotion. There Raymund poured out his prayer. He earnestly entreated that same Mother of God to adopt him as her son and to teach him – if she deemed him worthy – the joy of salvation and the science of the Saints.

Lesson v. Nor did the kind Virgin fail to hear his prayers. She gave Raymund to understand that it would be most pleasing to her if he were to enter a religious order recently founded at her suggestion, which bore the name of the Order of Ransom, or of Mercy, for the buying back of captives. As soon as he understood what was wanted of him, he set out immediately for Barcelona to join that Order so nobly dedicated to love of neighbor. Once enrolled as a soldier in this regular army of charity, he guarded the more vigilantly the virginity he had already consecrated to the blessed Virgin. He was outstanding in the practice of all virtues. He was a shining example of charity, especially toward those Christians who were spending a wretched life in captivity under the yoke of the pagans. Raymund was sent to Africa to ransom them. There he delivered many captives until his funds ran out. Then, lest he fail to help others who were in danger of denying their faith, he gave himself into slavery as a pledge for them. But since he was inflamed with a most ardent desire for the salvation of souls, he converted many Mohammedans to Christ by his preaching. For this he was placed in close confinement by the barbarians and tortured in various ways. Finally holes were bored in his lips, then they were fastened by a iron bolt, a torment which he endured for a long time.

Lesson vi. Because of these and other brave deeds the fame of Raymund’s holiness traveled far and wide. Gregory IX was deeply moved by such heroism. He raised Raymund to the august College of Cardinals of the holy Roman Church. The man of God, aghast at that dignity, shrank from all pomp and clung most tenaciously ever afterwards to the humility of a

religious. He was at Cardona on his way to Rome, where he was stricken with his last illness. With earnest prayers he begged for the last rites of the Church. As he grew worse and the priest was long delayed, Raymund was refreshed with the saving Viaticum from the hands of an angel, who appeared to him in the likeness of a member of his own order. Having received the holy Viaticum, Raymund gave thanks to God and passed to the Lord on the last Sunday in August in the year 1240. After his death a contention arose as to where his body should be buried. The dispute was settled in this manner. It was laid in a coffin and placed on the back of a blind mule. By the will of God it was borne toward the chapel of Saint Nicholas, to be buried where Raymund had laid the foundation for a holier life. A convent of his order was build there, where, famous for signs and miracles, he is still honored by throngs of faithful of Catalonia who journey thither to fulfill their vows.

*Butler's Lives* (vol III, p 449): St Raymund Nonnatus, Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church (A.D. 1240). The true story of the career of this saint is wrapped in impenetrable mystery for lack of reliable materials, and no confidence can be put in the accuracy of the details furnished by Alban Butler's account, summarized below.

St Raymund was brought into the world at Portello in Catalonia in the year 1204, and was called non natus, "not born", because he was taken out of the body of his mother after her death in labour. When he grew up he got his father's leave to enter the newly founded Mercedarian Order, and was admitted to profession therein at Barcelona by St Peter Nolasco.

So swift was the progress that he made that within two or three years after his profession he was judged qualified to discharge the office of ransom, in which he succeeded St Pater. Being sent into Barbary with a considerable sum of money he purchased at Algiers the liberty of a number of slaves. When all other resources were exhausted, he voluntarily gave himself up as a hostage for the ransom of others, whose situation was desperate and whose faith was exposed to imminent danger. The sacrifice which the saint made of his liberty served only to exasperate the Algerians, who treated him with barbarity till, fearing lest if he died in their hands they would lose the ransom stipulated for the slaves for whom he remained a hostage, the magistrate gave orders that he should be treated with more humanity. He was permitted to go about the streets and he made use of this liberty to comfort and encourage the Christians, and he converted and baptized some Mohammedans. When the governor heard of this he condemned him to be impaled. However, the persons who were interested in the ransom of the captives prevailed that his life should be spared lest they should be losers; and, by a commutation of his punishment, he was made to run the gauntlet. This did not daunt his courage. So long as he saw souls in danger, he thought he had yet done nothing; nor could he let slip any opportunity of ministering to them.

St Raymund had, on one side, no more money to employ in releasing poor slaves; on the other, to speak to a Mohammedan upon the subject of religion was by the Islamic law to court death. He could, however, still exert his endeavours with hope of some success or of dying a martyr of charity. He therefore resumed his former method of instructing and exhorting both Christians and infidels. The governor was enraged, and commanded the servant of Christ to be whipped at the corners of all the streets in the city, his lips to be bored with a red-hot iron, and his mouth shut up with a padlock, the key of which he held himself and only gave to the gaoler when the prisoner was to eat. In this condition he was kept in a dungeon, where he lay full eight months, till his ransom was brought by some of his order, who were sent with it by Nolasco. Raymund was unwilling to leave the country of the infidels, where he wanted to remain to assist

the slaves; but he acquiesced in obedience, begging God to accept his tears, seeing he was not worthy to shed his blood for the souls of his neighbours.

Upon his return to Spain in 1239 he was nominated cardinal by Pope Gregory IX. But so little was he affected by the unlooked-for honour that he neither changed his dress, nor his poor cell in the convent at Barcelona, nor his manner of living. The pope called him to Rome. St Raymund obeyed, but could not be persuaded to travel otherwise than as a poor religious. He got no farther than Cardona (Cerdagne), which is only six miles from Barcelona; he was seized with a violent fever and died there, being only about thirty-six years old. He was buried in the chapel of St Nicholas at Portello, and his name was inscribed in the Roman Martyrology in 1657. St Raymund Nonnatus is the patron-saint of midwives, from the circumstances of his birth.

### **September 19. Mary**

*Martyrology:* At Barcelona in Spain, blessed Mary de Cervellione, virgin, of the Order of Our Lady of Ransom. She is commonly called Mary of Help on account of the prompt assistance she renders to those who invoke her

*Butler's Lives* (vol III, p 601): St Mary of Cerevellon, Virgin (A.D. 1290). This Mary is venerated as the first nun of the Order of our Lady of Ransom (Mercedarians). She was the daughter of a Spanish nobleman of Barcelona, and is said to have been born to her childless parents at the prayer of St Peter Nolasco, who is credited with founding that order. A sermon by the Mercedarian Bernard Corbaria on the hardships and outrages suffered by Christian slaves at the hands of the Moors and Saracens inspired her to devote her life to their cause. In 1265 she joined a community of women who lived under the direction of Bernard and reinforced the work of the Mercedarians by their prayers. These were formed into a third order regular of our Lady of Ransom, and Mary of Cerevellon was their first prioress. The assiduity of her prayers and her generosity in temporal good works caused her to be called Maria de Socas, Mary of Help, the name by which she is still commonly known in Spain, where she is venerated also as a patroness of seamen, especially those in danger of shipwreck. St Mary died at Barcelona in 1290. The Roman Martyrology says that she is called Mary of Help "Because of her present aid to them that call upon her."

### **September 24. Our Lady of Ransom**

*Martyrology:* The feast of our Lady of Ransom, Foundress of the Order for the Redemption of Captives. The apparition of the same Blessed Virgin occurred on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August

*Collect:* O God who wast pleased, through thy son's most glorious Mother to give new children to thy Church to deliver Christ's faithful from the power of the heathen: grant, we beseech thee, that we who love and honor her as the foundress of this great work, may by her merits and intercession be ourselves delivered from all sin and from the bondage of hell. Through the same.

[another translation] O God, who by means of the most glorious Mother of Thy Son wast pleased to give new children to Thy Church for the deliverance of Christ's faithful from the power of the heathen; grant, we beseech Thee, that we who love and honor her as the foundress of so great a work may, by her merits and intercession, be ourselves delivered from all sin and from the bondage of the evil one. Through the same Lord.

*Breviary* (II Nocturn): Lesson iv. It was the time when the larger and more fertile part of Spain was oppressed under the yoke of the terrible Saracen. Great numbers of the faithful languished in cruel servitude in great danger of losing their eternal salvation by denying their Christian faith. The most blessed Queen of heaven hastened to remedy these great evils and to show her wondrous charity by ransoming the captives. It was then she showed herself with a radiant countenance to holy Peter Nolasco. He was a man widely known for his great wealth and piety. Having time for holy meditation, he had been turning over in his mind plans for helping the vast numbers of Christians living in hardship as captives of the Moors. The Blessed Virgin told him that it would be most pleasing to her and to her only Son were a religious order founded in her honor, whose members would dedicate themselves to ransoming captives from the tyranny of the Turks. The man of God inspired by the heavenly vision began to burn with flaming love. He had but one desire at heart, to found an order in which he and many others might devote themselves to that highest exercise of charity, the laying down of life for one's friends and neighbors.

Lesson v. that same night the most holy Virgin appeared also to Blessed Raymund of Pennafort, and to James, king of Aragon, charging them to found an order, urging them to aid in inaugurating this great undertaking. Immediately Peter hastened to the feet of Raymund who was his confessor and revealed the whole matter to him. Finding that it had been revealed to Raymund, Peter submitted himself humbly to his guidance. King James then arrived, fully determined to carry out the revelation he also had received from the most blessed Virgin. Having therefore taken counsel together, and all being of one mind, they set about founding this order in honor of the Virgin Mother, under the invocation of our Lady of Mercy for the Ransom of Captives.

Lesson vi. On the tenth of August, therefore, in the year of the Lord 1218, king James determined to inaugurate that foundation which the holy men had planned. The members of the Order were to bind themselves by a fourth vow, namely to remain themselves as hostages in the power of the infidels, if that should be necessary to liberate Christians. The king granted them the right to bear his royal coat of arms upon their breasts, and obtained from Gregory IX the approval of this institution so surpassing in love of one's neighbor, God himself gave the increase through his Virgin Mother, causing the Order to spread very rapidly and prosperously over the whole world, making it blossom with holy men remarkable for their charity and piety – with men who collected alms for Christ's faithful to be spent as the price of their neighbor's ransom – with men who often gave themselves up as ransom for others. To give due thanks to God and his Virgin Mother for the benefit of such an institution the Apostolic See ordered that a special feast be celebrated and their office be recited. Privileges almost too numerous to mention were granted to this order.

*Bulter's Lives* (vol III, p 627): Our Lady of Ransom. The first entry in the Roman Marthology today is "The feast of blessed Mary the Virgin, called of Ransom, institutress of the Order for the Redemption of Captives under that title. Her Appearing is mentioned on August 10", and accordingly under that date we find, "The Appearing in Spain of blessed Mary ...", etc. In the account of St Peter Nolasco on January 28 we have referred to the difficulties surrounding the history of the foundation of this order (vulgo Mercedarians), particularly the unsatisfactory nature of the evidence for the apparitions of our Lady to St Peter and others. The date of the order's first foundation in Spain was August 10 (in 1218 or 1223), but the feast commemorating

this event, under the name of the Solemnity of the Coming-down of Our Lady of Ransom, was kept by the Mercedarians on the Sunday nearest to August 1. The feast was granted to Spain at large in 1680, and extended to the whole Western church, for its present date, in 1696. [ . . . ]

*Schuster, The Sacramentary* (vol 5, p 138): This festival commemorates the favours granted by the Blessed Virgin Mary to St Peter Nolasco and to St Raymund of Pennafort when they founded the Order of Our Lady of Mercy. The feast was instituted by Pope Innocent XII.

Under the patronage of the Mother of Mercy the religious of this Order distinguished themselves by a devotion which the Christian religion alone can inspire, and even carried it so far as to give themselves up as hostages in order to deliver unhappy Christian prisoners from the hands of the Turks. The power of the Crescent no longer threatens us, but we should ask Mary to help us to deliver many souls from the chains to sin.

*Parsch, Year of Grace* (vol 5, p 227-229): Our Lady of Ransom. This feast commemorates the founding of the Order of Our Lady of Ransom (Mercedarians) which had as its primary purpose the ransoming of captive Christian slaves from the Saracens. For the Church want us to remember the very special protection Mary bestowed upon a work that was all-important at the time. The two founders of the Order, Peter Nolasco (Jan 28) and Raymond of Pennafort (Jan 23), are also venerated by the universal Church. The Order sprang into existence on August 10, 1218. The Office tells how Mary herself requested St Peter Nolasco to make the foundation; during the same night St Raymond and King James I received like visions, whereupon the Order was called into existence.

The Oration proper to today's mystery pleads that God may free us from the captivity of Satan through Mary's intercession.

#### **November 4. Felix**

*Martyrology*: In the monastery of Cerfroid, in the territory of Meaux, St Felix of Valois, founder of the Order of the Most Holy Trinity for the Redemption of Captives, whose feast is celebrated on the 20<sup>th</sup> of November by order of Pope Innocent XI

#### **November 20. Felix**

*Martyrology*: St Felix of Valois, priest and confessor, who founded the Order of the Most Holy Trinity for the Redemption of Captives, and who fell asleep in the Lord on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November

*Collect*: O God, who didst vouchsafe by a token from heaven to call blessed Felix thy Confessor out of the desert to the work of ransoming captives: grant we beseech thee, that we, being by his intercession delivered through thy grace from the captivity of our sins, may be brought to our heavenly country. Through our Lord.

*Breviary* (II Nocturn): Lesson iv. Felix, once called Hugh, was born in France of the royal family of the Valois. From his earliest years he gave many indications of his future sanctity, especially that he would be charitable to the poor. While still a small child, he would distribute with his own hand, money to the needy just as though he were grown up and had reached years of mature judgment. A little older, he sent them food from his own table, and delighted poor young children with those dishes they liked best. More than once, after he had reached manhood, he stripped himself of his own garments to clothe the destitute. From his uncle

Theobald, count of Champagne and Blois, he begged the life of a criminal condemned to death, predicting that this man, hitherto a notorious criminal would, if set free, reform and become a holy man. The result showed the truth of his prophecy.

Lesson v. After a youth spent in a most praiseworthy fashion, his zeal for heavenly contemplation led Felix to think of retiring into solitude. He decided to take Holy Orders first, however, and so to cut himself off from all possibility of succeeding to the crown, for according to Salic Law Felix was not far removed from the succession. Ordained a priest, he said his first Mass with great devotion. Shortly afterward he retired into a desert where he lived a life of strictest abstinence, fed mostly by an abundance of heavenly graces. In company with the saintly doctor John of Matha, a Parisian who had been directed by divine inspiration to seek and find Felix, he lived a most holy life for some years. Then counseled by an angel of God, both set out for Rome to receive a special rule of life from the sovereign pontiff. After this time, Pope Innocent III, during a solemn Mass received a revelation about a religious order and society for the ransoming of captives. The Pope personally clothed Felix and his company in a white habit, marked with a cross of two colors, similar to the one the Angels of the revelation had worn. The Pope specified, moreover, that because of the three colors of the habit, the new order should bear the name of the most Holy Trinity.

Lesson vi. After receiving the apparel of their particular rule from the supreme pontiff Innocent, Felix enlarged the first monastery of the Order. This he and his companion had build shortly before in a place called Cerfroi, in the diocese of Meaux. There Felix cultivated in a truly marvelous way religious observance and the ransoming of captives. From this monastery he zealously directed the propagation of his order by sending disciples into other provinces. It was here, too, he received an extraordinary favor from the Blessed Virgin Mary. During the night watch on the feast of the Nativity of the Mother of God, while the brethren slept, who in the providence of God, did not wake for midnight office, Felix who had been watching, as was his habit, in anticipation of reciting the office, entered the choir. There he found the Blessed Virgin in the middle of the choir, robed in the habit and cross of the Order. Around her was a company of heavenly beings, clothed in similar attire. Felix took his place among them, and as the Mother of God intoned the office, sang with them and duly rendered praises to God. Then, as if already he was being summoned from an earthly choir to a heavenly one, an Angel informed him that death was at hand. Felix exhorted his children to have care for the poor, especially the captives, then full of years and merits, he gave his soul back to God. This was in the year 1212 after the birth of Christ, and in the pontificate of the same Innocent III.

*Bulter's Lives* (vol IV, p 392): St Felix of Valois, Co-Founder of the Order of the Most Holy Trinity (A. D. 1212). The surname of Valois was given to this saint according to later writers of his order because he was of the royal family of Valois in France, but it was originally because he lived in the province of Valois. He lived, we are told, as a hermit in the wood of Gandelu in the diocese of Soissons, at a spot called Cerfroid; and he had no thoughts but of dying in the obscurity of this retreat when God called him thence. This was by means of his disciple, St John of Matha, who made the suggestion of establishing a religious order for the redemption of captives. Felix, though said to be then seventy years of age, readily offered himself to do and suffer whatever it should please God in the carrying-out of so charitable a work, and together they set out in the winter of 1197 to obtain the approval of the Holy See.

From henceforward, indeed from the beginning, the life of St Felix of Valois shared the

legends and uncertainties of that of St John of Matha and of the early history of the Trinitarian Order. These have already been set out herein in the account of St John of Matha under the date of his feast, February 9. According to the traditional account, while St John was working for the Christian slaves in Spain and Barbary, St Felix propagated the new order in Italy and France, founding the convent of St Maturinus (Mathurin) in Paris. When John finally returned to Rome, St Felix, in spite of his great age, administered the French province and the mother-house of the order at Cerfoid, where he died in his eighty-sixth year on November 4, 1212. [ . . . ]

### **December 6. Peter**

*Martyrology*: At Granada in Spain, the passion of blessed Peter Paschasius, bishop of Jaen and martyr, a member of the Order of our Lady of Ransom for the Redemption of Captives

*Butler's Lives* (vol IV, p 508): Bd Peter Pascual, Bishop of Jaen, Martyr (A.D. 1300). The Valencian family of Pascual or Pascualez (latinized as Paschasius) is said to have given the Church six martyrs under the Moors, of whom Bd Peter was the last. The child received his schooling from a tutor at home, which tutor was a priest of Narbonne, a doctor of divinity of Paris, whom Peter's parents had ransomed from the Moors. Peter went with him to Paris, and having finished his studies there, took the degree of doctor. He then returned to Valencia, and received holy orders at the age of twenty-four. He was a professor of theology at Barcelona until James I of Aragon chose him as tutor to his son, Sancho, who was soon after made archbishop of Toledo. This prince being too young to receive holy orders Bd Peter was appointed administrator of the diocese; later he was named titular bishop of Granada, which was at that time in the hands of the Moors, but he did not receive episcopal consecration until he was appointed bishop of Jaen in 1296, when it was still under Moorish domination. In spite of all dangers he not only ransomed captives and instructed and comforted the Christians, but also preached to the infidels and reconciled to the Church several apostates, renegades and others. On this account he was seized while on a visitation, carried to Granada, and shut up in a dungeon, with orders that no one should be allowed to speak to him. He received money for his ransom, but with it bought the freedom of some who, he heard, were in danger of apostasy. In spite of solitary confinement he found means to write a treatise against Islam and its prophet, which was circulated among the people and stirred up the authorities to order his death. The night before he suffered he was afflicted with great fear, and was comforted by a vision of our Lord. The next morning whilst he was at prayer he was murdered, receiving stabs in his body, after which his head was struck off. He was seventy-three years old. This is the common tradition, but it appears that he died from the hardships of his captivity.

In 1673 Pope Clement X confirmed the cultus of Bd Peter Pacual, and his name was also inserted in the Roman Martyrology, where he is referred to as Beatus, though commonly called Saint.

### **December 17. John**

*Martyrology*: At Rome, the birthday of St John of Matha, priest and confessor, founder of the Order of the Most Holy Trinity for the Redemption of Captives, whose feast, by decree of Pope Innocent XI, is observed on the 8<sup>th</sup> of February

### **December 25. Peter**

*Martyrology:* At Barcelona in Spain, the birthday of St Peter Nolasco, confessor and founder of the Order of our Lady of Ransom for the Redemption of Captives, renowned for virtue and miracles. His feast is celebrated on the 28<sup>th</sup> of January.

## MILITARY VICTORIES

### September 12. Most Holy Name of Mary

*Martyrology:* The feast of the most holy Name of the Blessed Virgin Mary, celebrated by order of the Sovereign Pontiff, Innocent XI, on account of the signal victory gained over the Turks at Vienna in Austria through her protection

*Collect:* To Thy faithful people, rejoicing in the name and protection of the most holy Virgin Mary, vouchsafe, almighty God, we beseech Thee, through her loving intercession, to be delivered from all evils here on earth, and to be accounted worthy to enter into everlasting joys in heaven. Through our Lord.

*Breviary* (II Nocturn): Lesson vi. [. . .] The Roman Pontiff, Innocent XI, ordered the feast of this most venerable name, which previous to his time had already been honored with special devotion in certain parts of Christendom, be celebrated annually by the universal Church. This feast was to be a perpetual memorial to that great deliverance of the Christian people, won through the intercession of Mary help of Christians, from the inhuman tyranny of the Turks who trampled upon their necks – that remarkable victory won at Vienna in Austria.

*Butler's Lives* (vol III, p 544): The Holy Name of Mary. The object of this feast is our blessed Lady bearing the name of Mary, and it was instituted that on it the faithful might in a special manner recommend to God, through the intercession of His all-holy Mother, the needs of the Church, and thank Him for His almighty protection and numberless mercies, especially those we receive on account of the graces and mediation of the Blessed Virgin. The feast was allowed at Cuenca in Spain in 1513; it spread in that country, and in 1683 Pope Innocent XI extended it to the whole Western church, as an act of thanksgiving for the raising of the siege of Vienna and the defeat of the Turks by John Sobieski, King of Poland; it was at that time assigned to the Sunday within the octave of our Lady's birthday, but it now kept on the date of Sobieski's triumph.

*Schuster, The Sacramentary*, vol 5, p 105. In the last great reform of the roman Breviary under Pius X, the fast of the Holy Name of Mary, originally instituted by Innocent XI, in memory of the great victory won over the Turks before the walls of Vienna (September 13, 1683), was fixed for this day. Previous to this Innocent XII had ordained that it should be kept on the Sunday within the Octave of the Nativity of Our Lady.

*Parsch, Year of Grace*, vol 5, p 185. Today's feast is a thanksgiving celebration. It is the anniversary of Vienna's wonderful, almost miraculous, deliverance from the Turks on September 12, 1683. Pope Innocent XI designated this day as one of gratitude for the victory of the Cross over the crescent, due to Mary's intercession.

### October 7. Most Holy Rosary

*Martyrology:* The Feast of the Most Holy rosary of the blessed Virgin Mary, and the

commemoration of St Mary of Victory, which Pope Pius V instituted to be kept yearly in memory of the great victory granted on this day in a naval battle to the Christians over the Turks, by the help of the Mother of God

*Collect:* O God, whose only-begotten Son, by His life, His death and His resurrection hath purchased for us the reward of eternal salvation; grant, we beseech Thee, that meditating on these mysteries in the most holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we may both imitate what they contain and obtain what they promise. Through the same Lord.

*Breviary (II Nocturn):* Lesson iv. It was the time when the impious heresy of the Albigensians was spreading throughout the district of Toulouse, striking its roots more deeply day by day. Saint Dominic, who had but recently laid the foundations of the Order of Preachers, threw all his strength into the task of extirpating the wicked error. To make his victory the more certain, he sought constantly and in earnest prayer, the aid of the most blessed Virgin Mary, whose dignity had been most shamefully attacked by the heretics. It is given to her to destroy all heresies throughout the world. Dominic was admonished by her – as everyone will recall – to preach devotion to the Rosary as a special weapon against heresy and vice. It is astounding with what great fervor of soul, and with what happy results he carried out this assignment. The recitation of the Rosary has a fixed pattern, in which fifteen decades of the Angelic Salutation are separated by the Lord's Prayer, which is inserted between each decade. During each decade we meditate upon a particular mystery of our redemption. From the time of the Albigensian heresy onwards, this holy method of prayer began to be marvelously promulgated and promoted by Saint Dominic. The sovereign pontiffs, themselves, in encyclical letters, have from time to time confirmed the fact that Dominic was the founder and author of the Rosary.

Lesson v. From this holy devotion countless benefits have been showered the length and breadth of Christendom. Among these most certainly can be reckoned that famous victory which the Christian princes, aroused by the plea of Pope Pius V, won over the vastly superior power of the Turks at Lepanto. As this victory was won on the very day on which the confraternities of the most holy Rosary through the world, were offering up their rosaries, as they had been asked to do, there can be no doubt that this victory was in answer to their prayers. So convinced of this was Gregory XIII that he proclaimed that for so singular a blessing there should be offered everywhere on earth perpetual thanks to the blessed Virgin, under the title of the Rosary. He decreed also that in every church where an altar of the Rosary had been erected, its office should be celebrated in perpetuity under the rite of a double major. Other pontiffs, also have granted almost innumerable indulgences to the recitation of the Rosary and to Rosary Confraternities.

Lesson vi. Clement XI firmly held to the opinion that other famous victories must be attributed to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin. In 1716, Charles VI, Emperor Elect of the Romans won a tremendous triumph in the kingdom of Hungary over an overwhelming army of Turks, on the very day on which the feast of the dedication of the basilica of Our Lady of the Snows was being celebrated. Indeed almost at the very moment of battle the confraternity of the most holy Rosary was offering up public and solemn prayer in the Eternal City. An immense number of people took part in this demonstration. They poured forth with great devotion fervent prayers to God for the overthrow of the Turks. They implored the powerful intercession of the Virgin Mother of God for the help of Christians. In view of this victory, as well of the raising of the siege of the island of Corcyra which followed almost immediately, Clement made this decree. That the memory of these extraordinary favors might be perpetuated forever, that the

faithful might be thankful forever, Clement extended the observance of the feast of the most holy Rosary to the universal Church. He ordered that it be continued to be celebrated under the rite of a double major. Benedict XIII decreed that all these things be written into the Roman Breviary. [. . .]

*Butler's Lives* (vol IV, p 48): Our Lady's Rosary. [introduction] As the Roman Martyrology today reminds us, Pope St Pius V in 1572 ordered an annual commemoration of our Lady of Victory to be made to implore God's mercy on His Church and all the faithful, and to thank Him for His protection and numberless benefits, particularly for His having delivered Christendom from the arms of the infidel Turks by the sea victory of Lepanto in the previous year, a victory which seemed a direct answer to the prayers and processions of the rosary confraternities at Rome made while the battle was actually being fought. A year later Gregory XIII changed the name of the observance to that of the Rosary, fixing it for the first Sunday in October (the day of Lepanto). On August 5, the feast of the dedication of St Mary Major, in the year 1716, again while Marian processions were taking place, the Turks were again signally defeated, by Prince Eugene at Peterwardein in Hungary. In thanksgiving therefore, Pope Clement XI decreed that the feast of the Holy Rosary should be observed throughout the Western church. The feast is now kept on the date of the battle of Lepanto, October 7 (except by the Dominicans, who observe the original first Sunday of the month). [. . .]

*Schuster, The Sacramentary*, vol 5, p 165 October 7 is the anniversary of the glorious victory won in 1571 by the Christian forces over the Turkish fleet at Lepanto. This triumph of the Cross over the Crescent was universally attributed to the powerful intercession of the Mother of God, whom Pope Pius V fervently invoked with her rosary in his hand, and to whom the prayers of all Christendom were addressed.

*Gueranger, Liturgical Year*, vol 5, pp 191-192 Two glorious triumphs, two victories won under the protection of our Lady, have rendered this present day illustrious in the annals of the Church and of history.

Manicheism, revived under a variety of names, had established itself in the south of France, whence it hoped to spread its reign of shameless excess. But Dominic appeared with Mary's rosary for the defense of the people. On September 12, 1213, Simon de Montfort and the crusaders of the faith, one against forty, crushed the Albigensian army at Muret. This was in the pontificate of Innocent III.

Nearly five centuries later, the Turks, who had more than once caused the west to tremble, again poured down upon Christendom. Vienna, worn out and dismantled, abandoned by its emperor, was surrounded by 200,000 infidels. But another great Pope, Innocent XI, again confided to Mary the defense of the baptized nations. Sobieski, mounting his charger on the feast of our Lady's Assumption, hastened from Poland by forced marches. On the Sunday within the octave of the Nativity, September 12, 1683, Vienna was delivered; and then began for the Osmanlis that series of defeats which ended in the treaties of Carlowitz and Passarowitz, and the dismemberment of the Ottoman empire. The feast of the most holy name of Mary inscribed on the calendar of the universal Church, was the homage of the world's gratitude to Mary, our Lady and Queen.

*Parsch, Year of Grace*. Vol 5, pp 266-267. This feast was instituted to honor the Blessed Virgin in gratitude for the protection she tenders the Church in answer to the recitation of the Rosary. It was introduced to commemorate the miraculous victory of the Christian forces at

Lepanto on October 7, 1571, and other triumphs over the Turks.

### **October 23. John**

*Martyrology*: At Vilak in Hungary, the birthday of St John Capistran, priest and confessor of the Order of Friars Minor, illustrious for the sanctity of his life and his zeal for the propagation of the Catholic faith. By his prayers and miracles he routed a powerful army of Turks, and forced them to quit the siege of Tornau

Collect for March 28: O God, who through blessed John didst cause Thy faithful to triumph over the enemies of the cross in the power of the most holy name of Jesus: grant, we beseech Thee, that by his intercession we may overcome the snares of our spiritual enemies, and deserve to receive from Thee the crown of righteousness. Through the same Lord.

Breviary for March 28 (II Nocturn): Lesson vi. It was mainly at the entreaty of John that Callistus III proclaimed a crusade, and John hastened through Pannonia and other provinces, where by his words and letters he so roused the minds of princes to the holy war, that in a short time seventy thousand Christians soldiers were enrolled. It was mainly through his advice and courage that a victory was gained at Belgrade, where one hundred and twenty thousand Turks were either slain or put to flight. The news of this victory reached Rome on the eighth of the Ides of August (August 6), and Pope Callistus consecrated this day forever to the solemn commemoration of the Transfiguration of Christ, the Lord. When John was seized with a deadly illness, and taken to Illak, many princes came to see him, and he exhorted them to protect religion. He piously yielded up his soul to God in the year of salvation 1456. [ . . . ]

*Butler's Lives* (for March 28, vol I, p 693): St John of Capistrano (A.D. 1456). Capistrano is a little town in the Abruzzi, which of old formed part of the kingdom of Naples. Here in the fourteenth century a certain free-lance – whether he was of French or of German origin is disputed – had settled down after military service under Louis I and had married an Italian wife. A son, named John, was born to him in 1386, who was destined to become famous as one of the great lights of the Franciscan Order. [ . . . ]

It was the capture of Constantinople by the Turks which brought his spiritual campaign to an end. Capistran was called upon to rally the defenders of the West and to preach a crusade against the infidel. His earlier efforts in Bavaria, and even in Austria, met with little response, and early in 1456 the situation became desperate. The Turks were advancing to lay siege to Belgrade, and the saint, who by this time had made his way into Hungary, taking counsel with the great general Hunyady, saw clearly that they would have to depend in the main upon local effort. St John wore himself out in preaching and exhorting the Hungarian people in order to raise an army which could meet the threatened danger, and himself led to Belgrade the troops he had been able to recruit. Very soon the Turks were in position and the siege began. Animated by the prayers and the heroic examples in the field of Capistran, and wisely guided by the military experience of Hunyady, the garrison in the end gained an overwhelming victory. The siege was abandoned, and western Europe for the time was saved. But the infection spread by thousands of corpses which lay unburied round the city cost the life first of all of Hunyady, and then a month or two later of Capistran himself, worn out by years of toil and of austerities and by the strain of the siege. He died most peacefully at Villach on October 23, 1456, and was canonized in 1724. His feast was in 1890 made general for all the Western church, and was then transferred to March 28.

## OTHERS

### **March 11, Aurea**

*Butler's Lives* (vol I, p 563). St Aurea, Virgin (c. A.D. 1100). When Spain lay under the Moorish yoke it became the custom for those Christians who desired to live the religious life to build their monasteries in desolate mountain fastnesses where their conquerors seldom troubled to molest them. One of these was San Millan de la Cogolla above the Upper Ebro in the diocese of Calahorra. It was primarily a Benedictine abbey for men but, as was not unusual at the time, there was a settlement for women a short distance away, and these women were under the direction of the abbot of La Cogolla. Down below, in the village of Villavelayo, lived a couple, Carcia Nunno, or Nunnio, and Amunia his wife, with their daughter Aurea. Constant study of the Holy Scriptures and meditation on the lives of St Agatha, St Eulalia and St Cecilia determined her to devote herself to God in the religious life, and she sought admittance to the convent of San Millan. Receiving the habit she lived a life of complete abnegation as a solitary. Aurea was rewarded by a vision of her three patron saints who assured her of God's approval and promised her a crown of glory; the fame of her penances and miracles spread, and her assistance and intercession were eagerly sought. She became the victim of a painful disease, dying in her mother's arms, in the presence of the monk who wrote her life. Her mother, who did not long survive her, was buried by her side.

### **September 25, Albert**

*Butler's Lives* (vol III, p 638). St Albert, Patriarch of Jerusalem (A.D. 1214). When the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem was set up in 1099 by the crusaders under Godfrey de Bouillon, the Greek hierarchs were driven from their principal sees and churches and replaced by bishops from the West, whose only subjects were in the ranks of the crusaders themselves. Thus there came to be a Latin patriarch in Jerusalem, and it must be regretfully recorded that most of the prelates who held this office in crusading times were as equivocal in character as they were in position. When therefore the Patriarch Michael died in the year 1203 the canons regular of the Holy Sepulchre, supported by King Amaury II de Lusignan, petitioned Pope Innocent III to send to succeed him a prelate whose holiness and abilities were well known even in Palestine. This was Albert, Bishop of Vercelli. [ . . ]

Already in 1187 the Saracens had retaken Jerusalem, and the see of the Latin patriarch had been moved to Akka (Ptolemais), where the Frankish king had set up his court. At Akka accordingly St Albert established himself, and set out to gain the respect and trust not only of Christians but of the Mohammedans as well, which his predecessors had conspicuously failed to do. [ . . ]

Innocent III summoned St Albert to the forthcoming council of the Lateran; but he did not live to be present at that great assembly, which opened in November 1215. For twelve months he faithfully supported the pope's hopeless efforts to get back Jerusalem, and thus his life was suddenly and violently cut short. He had found it necessary to depose from his office the master of the Hospital of the Holy Ghost at Akka, and the man was nursing his resentment. On the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross in 1214 St Albert officiated at a procession in the church

of the Holy Cross at Akka, and in the course of it he was attacked and stabbed to death by the deposed hospitaller. His feast was first introduced among the Carmelites in 1411.