

The Saints of The Canon

By Monsignor John T. McMahon, M.A., Ph.D
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Within the Canon the Church mentions by name two lists of saints who were martyred during the first four centuries after the Death of Christ.

St. Paul assures us that we are "fellow-citizens of the saints," (Eph. 2. 19) and that we can draw upon their immense spiritual credit balance. The saints of the Canon make up for our deficiencies. We, as members of the Communion of Saints, are never alone in offering the Holy Sacrifice. The Canon saints are active in our cause praying the Mass with us and for us.

In human society the presence of distinguished persons adds dignity to an occasion and makes us more attentive and respectful. Judge then the Mass by those who are present and what they expect from us. On the altar and around it are the angels and the saints with Christ their Head. Let us think over this often and thus enrich our offering of the Mass.

Some day we hope to meet the Canon saints in heaven. In preparation for that happy meeting let us get to know something about them now and so widen our friendship.

The rubrics instruct the celebrant to bow his head to the Missal on mentioning the name of the saint on his feast-day. Let us join in that delightful little courtesy and so win the saint's affection and help. To remind us to do this we should put an asterisk in red ink on the feast day Masses of the Canon saints in our daily missals.

The aim of this little book is to introduce the saints of the Canon by short sketches of their lives and death so that when we name them in the Canon we know something about them.

FEASTDAYS OF THE SAINTS OF THE CANON

[* Refers to Feast days which have been changed since the reform of the Calendar following Vatican II. The former date is given in brackets.] JANUARY: 21st: St. Agnes. 25th: St. Paul. (Conversion)

FEBRUARY: 5th: St. Agatha. 22nd: St. Peter, Apostle. (His See)

MARCH: 7th: St. Felicitas (Felicity). * [6th.] 7th: St. Perpetua. * [6th.] 19th: St Joseph.

APRIL: 26th: St. Cletus.

MAY: 1st: St Joseph (the Worker). 3rd: St. James the Less. * [1st.] 3rd: St. Philip. * [1st.] 4th: St. Alexander I. * [3rd.] 14th St. Matthias. * [24th February.]

JUNE: 2nd: St. Marcellinus. 2nd: St. Peter, Martyr. 11th: St. Barnabas. 24th: St. John the Baptist. (Birthday) 26th: SS. John and Paul. 29th: SS. Peter and Paul.

JULY: 3rd: St. Thomas. * [21st December.] 25th: St. James the Greater.

AUGUST: 7th: St. Xystus (Sixtus). * [6th.] 10th: St. Laurence (or Lawrence). 24th: St. Bartholomew. 29th: St. John the Baptist. (Beheading)

SEPTEMBER: 16th: St. Cornelius. 16th: St. Cyprian. 21st: St. Matthew. 24th: St. Linus. * [23rd.] 26th: SS. Cosmas and Damian. * [27th.]

OCTOBER: 17th: St. Ignatius * [1st February.] 28th: SS. Simon and Jude.

NOVEMBER: 22nd: St. Cecilia. 23rd: St. Clement. 25th: St. Chrysogonus. * [24th.] 30th: St. Andrew.

DECEMBER: 13th: St. Lucy. 26th: St. Stephen. 27th: St. John the Evangelist. 29th: St. Anastasia. * [25th.]

CHAPTER I.

THE "COMMUNICANTES" LIST OF MARTYRS

The third prayer of remembrance before the consecration commemorates by name, Mary, the Queen of Martyrs, the twelve Apostles, and twelve Roman Martyrs. There is proportion and symmetry in the arrangement of names, which might be graphically expressed thus: 1 + 12 + 12. The martyrs mentioned are Roman martyrs, with the exception of St. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, whose cult was warmly received by the people of Rome ever since his martyrdom at Carthage.

The "Communicantes" honours the Church Triumphant for it adds to the list of names the words - "and of all Your saints." In this remembrance in the Canon of the Mass we ask "through the merits and prayers" of this mighty host of God's saints in Heaven that "we may be defended in all things by the help of Your protection."

THE "COMMUNICANTES" PRAYER.

"In communion with, and venerating the memory Mary heads the List "in the first place of the glorious ever Virgin Mary, Mother of our God and Lord Jesus Christ; also of Your blessed Apostles and Martyrs, Twelve Apostles "Peter and Paul, Andrew, James, John, Thomas, James, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Simon and Thaddeus, Five Popes "Linus, Cletus, Clement, Xystus, Cornelius, An African Bishop "Cyprian, Archdeacon of Rome "Lawrence, Five Laymen "Chrysogonus, John and Paul, Cosmas and Damian, Saints in general "and of all Your Saints; by whose merits and prayers grant that we may be defended in all things by the help of Your protection. Through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen."

[Vatican II added St Joseph to this list. Hence, its new proportion and symmetry is 1 + 1 + 12 + 12. The ICEL translation of the above Latin reads:

"In union with the whole Church we honour Mary, the ever-virgin mother of Jesus Christ our Lord and God. We honour Joseph, her husband, the apostles and martyrs Peter and Paul, Andrew, (James, John, Thomas, James, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Simon and Jude; we honour Linus, Cletus, Clement, Sixtus, Cornelius, Cyprian, Lawrence, Chrysogonus, John and Paul, Cosmas and Damian,) and all the saints. May their merits and prayers gain us your constant help and protection. (Through Christ our Lord. Amen.)"]

COMMENTARY:

The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God.

The Blessed Virgin, Queen of Martyrs, heads the list with the title "Mother of God" which was formally bestowed upon her at the general council convoked by Pope St. Celestine at Ephesus, the city of the Blessed Virgin, in 431, and held in the Cathedral dedicated to her honour. The heresy of Nestorius, who said there were two persons in Christ, divine and human, and that Mary was the mother only of the human, was condemned and the title "Mother of God" was approved. This Pope Celestine sent St. Patrick to Ireland in 432, the year following Ephesus.

Mary's name is not mentioned simply as the other names are, but with great dignity: she is the "glorious," the "ever virgin." Mary's name is inseparable from the Sacrifice of Christ. He came first in emptying Himself. Mary comes next for she gave more than Apostles and martyrs, and thus understands the sacrifice of giving. She "stood by the Cross of Jesus," and great as the sea was then her sorrow. She is justly called the Queen of Martyrs.

Whenever a soul comes to God in Holy Mass he does so in communion with Mary. Let us bring Mary with us whenever we come to Mass. She knows that the more a soul gives itself into His hands, the more perfectly does He work for its sanctity. No one has abandoned herself to Him as Mary has. No one has placed fewer obstacles in the way of His Will than Mary. She knows me far better than I know myself. She knows why I am unwilling to be subject to Him, why I hesitate to surrender myself to Him, and she will help me to beat down the resistance I put in His way. When He sends suffering and crosses to open our hearts to the height and depth and width and length of His Love for us, and we are reluctant to receive them as gifts from Him, Mary will strengthen us with a Mother's love to accept them.

Never come to Mass without calling upon her in words such as the priest says in the prayers preparing for Mass:

"O Mother of piety! O Mother of Mercy, most blessed Virgin Mary, I, a wretched and unworthy sinner, cling to you with all the affection of my heart, and I appeal to your piety, that as you stood by the Cross of your Son, so you will assist me, poor sinner that I am, and all the priests who here, and throughout the world, offer the holy sacrifice today so that it may be a worthy and acceptable offering in the sight of the Blessed Trinity,"

THE TWELVE APOSTLES

St. Peter: June 29th.

First on the list of the twelve apostles is the name of St. Peter, the first Pope. His name was originally Simon, but was changed to "Peter" when Christ designated him as the "Rock" on which the Church was to be built:

"And I say to you: That you are Peter; and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (St. Matt. 16; 18).

St. Peter was a fisherman, born at Bethsaida, on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. From there, while he was casting a net into the water, Our Lord called him to become a fisher of men. St. Peter is mentioned frequently in the Gospels, and much of his subsequent history is found in the Acts of the Apostles.

We admire his rugged faith when he spoke for his brethren on the occasion of the promise of the Blessed Eucharist:

"Then Jesus said to the twelve: Will all you also go away? And Simon Peter answered him: Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have known that you are the Christ the Son of God." (St. John 6; 68-70).

A delightful picture of his impetuous love for Christ is painted by St. John. They were fishing on the Sea of Galilee, when St. John joyfully exclaimed: "It is the Lord!" Peter hesitated not a moment, but jumped from the boat and swam to the shore, to be the first to greet his Master. There, that day on the sands, St. Peter made his threefold profession of love: "You know all things; You know that I love You." (St. John 21; 4-17). Yes, even though he had denied Him, he does not fear to make that open declaration of love for his Master.

For twenty-five years St. Peter lived in Rome as the first Pope. Under the persecution of Nero he was cast into the Mamertine Prison, whence after eight months he was led out to be martyred. On hearing that he was to be crucified, he asked that he might be crucified with his head downwards, for he was not worthy to suffer in the same way as his Divine Master.

His martyrdom is believed to have taken place on the 29th June, in the year 67.

St. Paul: June 29th.

St. Matthias is omitted because this list was made at Rome, and the preference for St. Paul is easily understood. St. Paul, formerly called Saul, was born in the commercial city of Tarsus, and enjoyed the rights of a Roman citizen. He first appears in the Scriptures as the young man who held the garments of those stoning St. Stephen to death (Acts 8; 1-9). In the Acts St. Luke tells us of St. Paul's missionary journeys, his sufferings and imprisonments, shipwreck and dangers, of his tireless zeal and ceaseless efforts to prove himself an Apostle. It is in his own fourteen Epistles that we glimpse the soul of this ardent lover of Christ.

It is believed that St. Paul was martyred in Rome on the same day as St. Peter, and so these two are inseparably united in the liturgy, sharing the same feastday. St. Paul, being a Roman citizen, did not suffer the ignominious death of the cross. He was beheaded.

"The Tiber on entering Rome," writes an ancient poet, "salutes the basilica of St. Peter and, on leaving it, that of St. Paul. Rome is between the two." The Liturgy recalls the Dedication of these two Basilicas on 18th November.

The liturgy links St. Peter, the new Moses, the leader of the new Israel, with St. Paul, the new Aaron, more eloquent than the first, a vessel of election to bring the grace of Christ to the Gentiles. Their joint feast is on 29th June.

St. Andrew: November 30th.

St. John tells us that Andrew was the first of the disciples to meet Our Lord. Having spent the day with Him Andrew sought his brother, Peter, and brought him to Jesus:

"He finds first his brother Simon, and says to him: We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ, and he brought him to Jesus." (St. John 1; 41-42.)

Both Peter and Andrew received the call to the Apostolate on the same occasion:

"And Jesus walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea (for they were fishers). And he says to them: Come

you both after me, and I will make you to be fishers of men. And they, immediately leaving their nets, followed him:" (St. Matt. 4; 18-20).

St. Andrew is mentioned several times in the Gospels. We find his name among the wedding guests at Cana.

On the day when Christ multiplied the loaves and fishes, it is Andrew who pointed out the boy:

"One of his disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, says to him: There is a boy here that has five barley loaves, and two fishes; but what are these among so many?" (St. John 6; 8-9).

For this act of consideration he shares with St. Peter and St. Paul the honour of being mentioned twice within the Canon. In the prayer "Deliver us" ("Liberate nos") which follows immediately after the Pater Noster we say: [in the 1962 Missal,] "together with Your blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and Andrew,"

St. Andrew preached the Gospel in Asia Minor, and in Greece, where he suffered martyrdom, being cruelly tortured, and then crucified on a cross of distinctive shape, resembling the letter "X", which is called St. Andrew's cross.

St. Andrew is patron saint of Scotland, Constantinople and Greece. About the year 369 important relics of the saint were brought from Constantinople to Scotland, and there enshrined in a church built on a site where stands the present city of St. Andrews.

His head was placed by Pope Pius II in the 15th century in the basilica of St. Peter, his brother.

St. James the Greater: July 25th.

St. James was the elder brother of St. John. The two brothers are referred to by St. Luke as "the sons of Zebedee." (St. Luke 5; 10).

Their mother, Salome, who was present at the Crucifixion (St. Mark 15; 40), was a near relative of the Blessed Virgin, possibly a sister. Consequently, these two Apostles were cousins of Our Lord, and together with St. Peter were privileged to witness the raising of the daughter of Jairus to life, also the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor, and the three were with Our Lord in the garden at His agony.

Soon after the Ascension, according to ancient tradition, St. James preached the Gospel in Spain. St. James was the first to fulfil his pledge to Our Lord: "Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink?" (St. Matt. 20; 22). He was put to death by the sword in Jerusalem by Herod Agrippa some ten years after the death of Christ.

His bones, at an early date, were carried to Spain where they rest today at Santiago de Compostella. To his shrine Spain goes annually in great national pilgrimages.

St. John the Evangelist: December 27th.

St. John is the disciple "whom Jesus loved." (St. John 13; 23). He it was who leant on the bosom of Our Lord at the Last Supper, who stood, next day, beside the Cross on Calvary, and to whose care the dying Saviour confided His Mother: "After that, he says to the disciple: 'Behold your mother.' And from that hour the disciple took her to his own." (St. John 19; 27). We see him out-distancing Peter in a race to the tomb: "And they both ran together, and that other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre." (St. John 20; 4).

But St. Peter had his victory later: "And when he stooped down, he saw the linen cloths lying; but yet he went not in. Then comes Simon Peter, following him, and went into the sepulchre." (St. John 20; 5 & 6).

No knocking at the door, no sensitiveness or shyness about that grand old man of the sea, wherever his Master was concerned!

In the year 95 A.D., during the reign of the Emperor Domitian, St. John was thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil, but emerged from it unhurt, and lived to an advanced old age at Ephesus. This is celebrated by the Church on May 6th by a special feast: "St. John before the Latin Gate." On that holy spot there is a church in his honour in Rome today. The Feast of the Dedication of the Basilica of St. John's on the Lateran Hill is on 9th November.

Besides his fourth Gospel and three Epistles he wrote the Apocalypse.

St. John was unmarried and remained so till his death. To him, a virgin, Christ entrusted His Virgin Mother. As he stood beneath the Cross on Calvary, his sufferings were equal to martyrdom. There also he drank as from a fountain a heavenly knowledge of the Holy Mass. Let us go in imagination to the Mass said by St. John in the presence of the Blessed Virgin. What an acceptable offering that must have been! What better companions can we have to walk to Mass with us than Mary and St. John who walked the way to Calvary! What better guides can we have to kneel beside us during Mass than Mary and St. John who stood by the Cross!

St. Thomas: 3rd July. [December 21st is the feast day for St. Peter Canisius.]

We hear much about "doubting Thomas" but look at the valiant and loyal follower of Christ in the following incident as narrated by St. John. On hearing of the death of His friend Lazarus, Jesus made known His wish to go to Jerusalem. The disciples remonstrated with Him on the risk he was taking, reminding Him of the recent threats of the Jews. But when Christ said: "Let us go to him." It was Thomas who then spoke up bravely to the others: "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." (St. John 11; 16).

Fitting words for a future martyr!

Research during the past 100 years shows that St. Thomas preached to the Parthians in the East, where tradition says he baptized the three Magi. Today in Malabar, India, there exist some 400,000 Christians who claim to be descended from converts made by St. Thomas. They call themselves "Thomas Christians," and are organized into a province with four dioceses.

It is now accepted that St. Thomas suffered martyrdom on a hill known today as St. Thomas' Mount, some miles south of the city of Madras. A suburb of Madras is called San Thome and a fine Cathedral dedicated to St. Thomas stands there.

St. Thomas faced the dangers and uncertainties of exile, far from his homeland; so that his doubting words will be forgiven.

It is wonderful to think of Mass being said in India by one of the Apostles.

In the Mass of St. Thomas on July 3rd, the Gospel narrates the famous scene which occurred in the upper room after the Lord's Resurrection. St. Thomas doubted, and it is only when Jesus made him put his finger into the wounds, that passing suddenly from incredulity to ardent faith, he exclaimed: "My Lord and my God." (St. John 20; 24-29).

The elevation of the Sacred Host began as an answer to the heresy of Berengarius, who denied the Real Presence. Look up at the Host and say those words of St. Thomas: "My Lord and my God," for that practice is enriched by Pope St. Pius X with an indulgence of seven years and seven quarantines and a plenary indulgence once a week on the usual conditions.

[St. Thomas Aquinas has his feast day on January 28th.]

St. James the Less: May 3rd.

St. James the Less, also called the "Just" by the Jews and Christians alike in Jerusalem, was a cousin of Our Lord, for his mother, Mary of Cleophas, was a sister of the Blessed Virgin, and stood with Our Lady beneath the Cross:

"Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, his Mother, and his Mother's sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen:" (St. John 19; 25.)

St. James was appointed by St. Peter as the first bishop of Jerusalem, where he lived for thirty years a life of extraordinary piety and mortification. His energy in preaching Christ crucified awoke the anger of the chief priests, who stood him on the battlements of the Temple and commanded him to denounce Christ. St. James proclaimed his belief in Christ, and was immediately hurled from the walls of the Temple. As he was still able to rise to his knees, the rabble fell upon him with stones and sticks and a fuller gave him the death blow by hitting him on the head with his mallet (such as was used in dressing cloth.) The fuller's mallet is his distinctive sign.

St. James wrote one epistle. Chapter 3 speaks to us all on the evils of the tongue, a chapter we should read and think about often, for as St. James says: "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man."

In this epistle also is found the Scriptural authority for Extreme Unction, the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick: "Is there any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord." (Ch. 4; 14). [His former feast day is now that of St. Joseph the Worker, May 1st.]

St. Philip: May 3rd.

St. Philip was the fourth of the fishermen of Bethsaida, in Galilee, to follow Our Lord:

"On the following day he would go forth into Galilee, and he finds Philip. And Jesus said to him: Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter." (St. John 1; 33-34). He and St. Andrew were special friends.

It was to him that Christ spoke about feeding the multitude: "When Jesus therefore had lifted up his eyes, and seen that a very great multitude is coming to him, he said to Philip: Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?" (St. John 6; 5).

And it was his friend, Andrew, who saw the boy with the loaves and fishes and brought him forward.

He was at Cana, a wedding guest.

During the Last Supper we hear Philip's supplication: "Lord show us the Father and it is enough for us." To which Jesus, answering him by name, replied: "So long a time I have been with you all, and have you all not known me? Philip, he that sees me, sees the Father also:" (St. John 14; 9).

He preached in Phrygia, and died in Hierapolis, on a cross, stoned to death.

Tradition has it that the daughters of St. Philip were the first of the holy women to dedicate their lives to God. They were probably joined by the daughters of St. Philip the Deacon. (Acts 21;8 & 9)

St. Bartholomew: August 24th.

St. Bartholomew is probably the Nathaniel mentioned in the Gospel, who was led to the Lord by Philip:

"Philip finds Nathaniel, and says to him: 'We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus, the Son of Joseph of Nazareth.' And Nathaniel said to him: 'Can anything of good come from Nazareth?' Philip says to him: 'Come and see.' Jesus saw Nathaniel coming to him, and he said of him: 'Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.' Nathaniel said to him: 'Whence know you me?' and Jesus answered and said to him: 'Before that Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.' Nathaniel answered him, and said: 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God, you are the King of Israel.' " (St. John 1; 45-49).

A direct, blunt personality, with no folds or pretences. He asks his questions frankly and then satisfied, he accepts.

Tradition tells us that he evangelized parts of the Indies, afterwards going to Armenia, where he was martyred, being first thrown into a fire and then crucified, like St. Peter, with his head downwards.

St. Matthew: September 21st.

St. Matthew, both Apostle and Evangelist, was a publican or tax-gatherer, whose calling was despised by the Jews, for the publicans were unjust, and worse still, unpatriotic. Matthew must have been an honest man. His immediate response to Our Lord's call shows him as a generous and determined character:

"He saw a publican named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom, and he said to him: 'Follow me.' And leaving all, things, he rose up and followed him." (St. Luke 5; 27-28).

After his conversion he was called Matthew, meaning "the gift of God."

Tradition holds that he preached in Arabia and Ethiopia.

It is believed that he was attacked and killed while saying Mass. We cherish that belief and like to picture St. Matthew going on calmly with his Mass as the rabble, with much shouting, storm the altar.

Today his relics are honoured in the metropolitan church at Salerno, whose patron saint he is.

St. Matthew is represented by an animal with a human face because he commences his Gospel by tracing the human descent of Christ. His object in writing his Gospel is to prove that the prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus Christ, Who is therefore the Messiah.

St. Simon, the Zealot: October 28th.

St. Luke writes of "Simon who is called Zelotes." (the Zealot). (St. Luke 6; 15).

He is said to have preached in Egypt, and also in Persia, where he was cut in two with a sword.

St. Jude, or Thaddeus: October 28th.

He wrote an epistle, which is addressed to Jewish converts, among whom he had been an Apostle.

He followed the Jews in Syria and Mesopotamia. Later he preached in Armenia where he suffered death by being shot with arrows while tied to a cross. The bones of these two apostles, St. Simon and St. Jude, linked together in the liturgy, are honoured in St. Peter's, Rome.

This is the record of the Apostles, who not only scattered the seed of the divine word, but laboured to bring it to maturity, and fructified it with their blood.

THE FIVE SUCCESSORS TO ST. PETER

Following the Apostles are the five successors to St. Peter. Then comes Cyprian, the martyr-bishop of Carthage in Africa, the only foreigner in this List of Romans, but a name venerated in Rome. Rome's holy deacon, Lawrence, marks the transition to the five laymen.

Let us take them in these groups:

1. St. Linus: September 24th.

St. Linus, the immediate successor of St. Peter, was Pope for twelve years. He was an Italian convert of St. Peter, born in Volterra, an ancient city of Tuscany, and was consecrated an auxiliary bishop to St. Peter. Under the Emperor Claudius all Jews were banished from Rome in 49 A.D. St. Linus, who was an Italian and therefore not included in the banishment, ruled the See of Rome until St. Peter returned. St. Paul mentions him in 2 Timothy 4; 21.

After St. Peter's martyrdom in 67, St. Linus was beheaded by Saturninus the Consul about the year 78. He was buried on the Vatican hill close to the grave of St. Peter. [September 23rd is now the Feast day of Saint Padre Pio of Pietrelcina.]

2. St. Cletus: April 26th.

St. Cletus, (sometimes called Anacletus) succeeded St. Linus and became the third Pope. He was martyred about 90 A.D.

If the interesting tradition that Cletus was a slave is true, it indicates that the Church's teaching on the spiritual equality of all men, be they bond or free, was put into practice within the first century of her history.

3. St. Clement: November 23rd.

St. Clement was the fourth Pope, reigning from 90 to 100 A.D. He is the Clement mentioned by St. Paul:

"And I entreat you also, my sincere companion, (Syzygus) help those women who have laboured with me in the Gospel, with Clement, and the rest of my fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life." (Philippians 4; 3).

St. Clement's Epistle to the Church of Corinth is an important historical document. St. Irenaeus writes of St. Clement: "This man, as he had seen the Apostles and conferred with them, might be said to have the preaching of the Apostles still in his ears and their traditions before his eyes."

He was banished by the Emperor Trajan to the Crimea, where his apostolate among the Christian slaves working in the marble quarries merited for him a martyr's crown. An anchor was fastened to his neck and he was cast into the sea. His bones were brought to Rome where they lie today in the basilica of San Clemente, one of Rome's most interesting churches. There are three distinct

buildings one over the other, of which the lowest is believed to be the house in which St. Clement lived. San Clemente is in charge of the Irish Dominicans.

The first five successors to St. Peter were: 1. St. Linus (67-78) 2. St. Cletus (78-90) 3. St. Clement (90-100) 4. St. Evaristus (100-109) and 5. St. Alexander (109-119) whose name will be mentioned in the Canon after the Consecration. The sixth successor to St. Peter is St. Sixtus the First (119-125), who is to be distinguished from the famous martyr whose name follows -

4. St. Xystus: August 7th.

St. Xystus (the Greek form of Sixtus and hence he is known as St. Sixtus II) was a Greek, who became Pope in 257, during the severe persecution of Valerian. St. Xystus was arrested while preaching in the catacombs and was dragged through the streets of Rome. On the way he met Lawrence, one of his deacons, who claimed the right to join his master, but the Pope refused, promising him something much nobler but also much worse, and that promise was fulfilled three days later, when Lawrence suffered atrocious torture before death brought relief. St. Xystus was beheaded in the catacomb of Praetextatus near the Appian Way, where there stands today a very ancient church in his honour. [He was martyred on 6th August, which is, of course, the Feast of Our Lord's Transfiguration, so the Church has transferred his liturgical memory to the 7th.]

His reign as Pope was a brief one, just a year, for his death occurred in 258 A.D.

5. St. Cornelius: September 16th.

St. Cornelius was a Roman, who became Pope for one year. He was banished from Rome by the Emperor Gallus, and suffered martyrdom under the Emperor Volusian.

His pontificate was remarkable for the Roman Council of sixty bishops, which he assembled to examine and condemn the notorious rigorous anti-pope, Novatian. According to Novatian, those who were weak enough to sacrifice to idols, or to purchase certificates which stated they had done so, during the terror of the persecution, could never be absolved by the Church.

Pope St. Cornelius condemned this harsh doctrine. He was martyred in 252. [Interestingly, the very first anti-pope (about 220) was later recognized as a martyr and saint, St. Hippolytus.]

AN AFRICAN BISHOP

St. Cyprian: September 16th.

After the five martyred Popes comes an African Bishop, St. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage. He was of distinguished rank, rich and talented, a man of letters, winning fame in Carthage as a barrister. Converted to Christianity about the year 246, Cyprian distributed his great wealth among the poor, made a vow of perpetual chastity, and devoted his life to prayer and study. Ordained a priest, he was promoted to the See of Carthage, over which he ruled for ten years, from 248 to 258, a period of terrible persecutions. In the public square of Carthage he was put to death by the sword on the same day as his friend, Pope St. Cornelius, had been six years before. Their joint feast is on September 16th.

St. Cyprian is one of the noblest characters of Christian antiquity. He was one of the earliest of the great Christian writers to use Latin in his many epistles and treatises. He had a long controversy with Pope St. Stephen on the question of heretical baptism, whose validity he attacked with arguments which built too confidently on the images he employed. Pope Stephen held by the

traditional practice of the Church at Rome. The dispute threatened to lead to a schism when the death of Pope Stephen ended it. It is pleasant to see that St. Cyprian, in spite of his mistake about heretical baptism, and his long controversy with the Pope, has always been so honoured by the Apostolic See, that he is the one foreigner here among her local saints.

His friendship with Pope St. Cornelius is apparent in a letter congratulating the Pope on his banishment and foretelling the approaching martyrdom of both of them.

"Let us agree," he writes, "in remembering each other at this time of peril, and whichever of us shall first be favoured by Our Lord with a removal hence, let our affection still persevere before the Lord for our brethren in never-ceasing prayers for them."

At his execution the valiant Bishop begged twenty-five gold pieces from his friends for his executioner. Walking to the place of execution in Carthage wearing a linen tunic, he bandaged his own eyes, and thanked God for his approaching death.

ROME'S ARCHDEACON

St. Lawrence: August 10th.

St. Lawrence, believed to be a Spaniard, was ordained deacon by Pope Xystus and made the first of the seven deacons, and therefore the Archdeacon of Rome. His office was the important one of administration of the moneys of the Church.

As Pope Xystus was being dragged through the streets of Rome, Lawrence meeting him, said reproachfully: "Whither go you, O Father, without your son? Whither, O priest of God, without your deacon?"

And the saintly Pope replied: "I am not forsaking you, my son, a nobler conflict awaits you. In three days you shall follow me."

During those three days the Archdeacon hastened through the poorest parts of Rome distributing the goods of the Church to the needy. Arrested by the prefect of the city he was commanded to deliver up the treasures of the Church. Lawrence assembled the poor of Rome, and presented them to the prefect as the treasures of the Church. The prefect was enraged at this and determined to pay him back. All through the night Lawrence was tormented. He was scourged, struck with leaden balls, stretched on the rack, burned with hot metal plates. But nothing could break his indomitable spirit. To his tormentors he exclaimed: "For me this night has no darkness, but breaks forth into the bright of day."

Exasperated, his executioners placed him on a gridiron to roast him slowly over a fire. The saint bore this terrible torture, even jested, telling his tormentors that one side was sufficiently roasted, and that they should turn him over.

As his flesh sizzled over the fire the martyr prayed: "On the gridiron I have not denied You, my God. Over the fire I have confessed You, my Saviour. You have tried and examined my heart in the night. You have proved me by fire and found no falsehood in me. My soul adhered to You, whilst my flesh burned for You."

St. Lawrence is Rome's proud boast; there his feast-day, on August 10th, has been celebrated since the 4th century. The Basilica of St. Lawrence Outside the Walls was built by Constantine over his

grave. It ranks fifth of the churches of Rome- one of the five basilicas where the Pope alone says Mass on the high-altar, to show his jurisdiction over all.

This ends the list of ecclesiastical martyrs, and now come five laymen.

FIVE MARTYRED LAYMEN

St. Chrysogonus: November 25th

St. Chrysogonus was a Greek, but spent his life in Rome. There is some evidence that he was the instructor of St. Anastasia, and befriended her when persecution struck her. During the reign of Diocletian he was imprisoned for two years, and then beheaded. His body was cast into the sea, but was afterwards recovered and buried at Zara in Dalmatia, where his relics are still venerated.

A portion of his head is preserved in the church of Chrysogonus in Rome. He is held in great veneration by the Romans and by the Greeks, who call him "the great martyr." [November 24th is now assigned to St. Andrew Dung Lac and his 116 martyr companions (priests, religious, and lay men and women) of Vietnam.]

Saints John and Paul; June 26th.

John and Paul were brothers. They were distinguished officers in the Roman army during the reign of Julian the Apostate, and were well liked in Rome where they were known as "men of mercy" for their charity. Julian, discovering that they were Christians gave them ten days to retract and offer sacrifice to Jove. The brothers spent the ten days distributing all their goods to the poor, but refused to offer sacrifice. Terentianus, the Roman prefect, had them beheaded in their own home and secretly buried, because he feared the people. He then spread the report that they had been sent into exile. They were martyred on June 26th, in the year 362.

The Roman church of Saints John and Paul, in which their relics lie under the high altar, is said to have been built on the site of their home. The Church of Saints John and Paul is served by the Passionists.

Saints Cosmas and Damian: September 26th.

Cosmas and Damian, brothers from a distinguished family in Arabia, were physicians who never accepted fees, and were known in Rome as "the holy moneyless workers," "the silverless physicians." Their learning, their skill in healing, and their devout life gained for the Christian religion many converts. They were arrested during the earliest persecutions of Diocletian, tortured by fire, water and the cross, and finally beheaded, probably in the year 287. The great Dominican artist, Blessed Fra Angelico, has painted scenes from the lives of these two martyred physicians, which may be seen in Florence.

In their Basilica the mosaics are the richest in Rome. The most ancient monument in their honour is an oratory adjacent to St. Mary Major, which was dedicated to them in the fifth century by Pope St. Symmachus. [September 27th is now the Feast day for St. Vincent de Paul.]

CHAPTER II

THE "NOBIS QUOQUE PECCATORIBUS" LIST OF MARTYRS

The second prayer of remembrance after the Consecration commemorates by name fifteen martyrs with the petition that we shall be granted "some part and fellowship with Your holy Apostles and

martyrs." At the head of the list is St. John the Baptist, then come seven men and seven women martyrs, whose memory Rome has honoured from the early centuries of the Church. Graphically the arrangement of the names might be shown thus 1 + 7 + 7.

The "Nobis Quoque Peccatoribus" Prayer.

"And to us sinners also, Your servants, hoping in the multitude of Your mercies, vouchsafe to grant some part and fellowship with Your holy apostles and martyrs: St. John the Baptist is first. "with John, Seven Men Martyrs. "Stephen, Matthias, Barnabas, Ignatius, Alexander, Marcellinus, Peter, Seven Women Martyrs. "Felicitas, Perpetua, Agatha, Lucy, Agnes, Cecilia, Anastasia, and with all Your saints, into whose company admit us, we beseech You not considering our merits but pardoning our offences. Through Christ our Lord."

[The ICEL translation of the above Latin reads :

"For ourselves, too, we ask some share in the fellowship of your apostles and martyrs, with John the Baptist, Stephen, Matthias, Barnabas, (Ignatius, Alexander, Marcellinus, Peter, Felicity, Perpetua, Agatha, Lucy, Agnes, Cecilia, Anastasia) and all the saints. Though we are sinners, we trust in your mercy and love. Do not consider what we truly deserve, but grant us your forgiveness. Through Christ our Lord."]

COMMENTARY:

St. John the Baptist: 24th June and 29th August.

St. John the Baptist was the son of Zachary, a High Priest of the Temple, and of St. Elizabeth, who was a cousin of Our Lady (Cf. Luke 1; 5-25). At an early age he retired to the desert to prepare himself for his mission as Precursor, that is, forerunner of Christ. He ate no bread, drank no wine, and spent the days in prayer and penance.

In the Advent Masses we see him silhouetted against the Arabian sky, a gaunt ascetic figure in a camel's skin and leather girdle with staff in hand as he comes from the desert into all Judea, and the country about the Jordan, preaching the baptism of penance:

"Prepare, all of you, the way of the Lord, make straight his paths." (Luke 3; 4).

One of the first incidents of Our Lord's public life was His baptism by St. John in the Jordan, when a voice from Heaven proclaimed the divinity of Christ:

"This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased:" (St. Matt. 3; 17). His mission is now accomplished and the "voice of one crying in the wilderness" is silent. In his own words he explains his life:

"He that has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom stands by and listens to him speak, and rejoices to hear his voice. The joy is mine in its fullness. He must increase, I must decrease." (St. John 3; 29-30),

What an inspiring ideal for us all! That He should increase within us, and we ourselves, with all our selfishness and pride, should decrease more and more each year so that there would be more room for Him within our hearts.

Nothing remains for the Baptist except to crown his life with the laurels of martyrdom.

St. Matthew narrates as follows:

"For Herod had apprehended John and bound him, and put him into prison, because of Herodias, his brother's wife. For John said to him: 'It is not lawful for you to have her.' And having a mind to put him to death, he feared the people; because they esteemed him a great prophet. But on Herod's birthday, the daughter of Herodias danced before them; and pleased Herod. Whereupon he promised with an oath, to give her whatsoever she would ask of him. But she being instructed before by her mother, said: 'Give me here in a dish the head of John the Baptist.' And the king was struck sad: yet because of his oath, and for them that sat with him at table, he commanded it to be given. And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison. And his head was brought in a dish: and it was given to the damsel, and she brought it to her mother." (St. Matt. 14; 3-11).

June 24th is the feast of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist.

August 29th commemorates his beheading.

SEVEN MEN MARTYRS

St. Stephen: December 26th.

St. Stephen leads the splendid host of Christian martyrs. He was one of the first seven deacons ordained by the Apostles to administer the funds of the Infant Church among the poor. St. Luke describes Stephen as "a man full of faith . . . full of grace and fortitude, he did great wonders and signs among the people." (Acts 6; 8). But there were some jealous of his influence who bribed witnesses to swear falsely against him. Stephen did not temporize even though he felt that the Council was hardening against him. He reviewed the history of the Jewish people and incensed his hearers by accusing the Jews as murderers of the Just One. They rushed at him and in their anger they ran him outside the city, where picking up stones they beat him to death. Stephen continued to pray for those who were stoning him.

"And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man whose name was Saul." (Acts 7; 57).

The grace of Christ for which Stephen prayed with his dying voice made that young man St. Paul.

St. Matthias: May 14th.

St. Matthias was chosen to fill the place of Judas.

St. Matthias preached the faith in Cappadocia and around the Caspian Sea. He was beheaded with an axe in Colchis. His head is preserved in the Church of St. Mary Major in Rome.

The Lord Himself showed that St. Matthias was the one to be chosen to join the eleven Apostles. (Cf. Epistle of his Mass: Acts 1; 15-26).

St. Barnabas: June 11th.

St. Barnabas had the honour of being a member of that band of seventy-two disciples sent out to seek souls. A native of the island of Cyprus, he sold all his land and brought the money and laid it at the feet of the Apostles. (Acts 4; 37). He was elected an Apostle and surnamed Barnabas, which means, "the son of consolation," as a compliment to his gift of speaking. It was this Joseph Barnabas who led Paul to the Apostles and convinced them of his sincerity. Barnabas accompanied St. Paul in his missionary journeys, and his name is frequently mentioned in the Acts. (Cf. chapters 9, 12, 13, 14). He was present at the Council of Jerusalem in 49. (Acts 15; 4).

In his native Cyprus his apostolate was crowned with martyrdom during the reign of Nero. He was buried with a copy of the Gospel of St. Matthew, which he had copied with his own hand.

St. Ignatius of Antioch: October 17th.

St. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch for nearly forty years, was a pupil of the Apostles. Taken captive during the Trajan persecution, orders were given that he be sent immediately to Rome so that he would arrive there in time for the wild beast shows. On that journey to Rome he wrote seven letters which are highly prized. The Christians flocked around this grand old man, turning his journey into a triumphal progress.

At Rome the Christians knew of his coming and plans were made to rescue him before he reached the city. Ignatius heard of this and wrote to them pleading to let things be. Here are some of the glorious words he wrote to the Christians in Rome (he wrote them at night while his jailers slept, wrote them while he knew that every day he was drawing nearer to the arena where the wild beasts awaited him) :

"If you keep silence about me, I shall become a word of God, but if you love my flesh too much I shall again be a mere sound. Only allow me to be offered as a libation to God while the altar is still prepared. I am God's wheat and am to be ground by the beasts' teeth to become the spotless bread of Christ." (These words form the Communion in the proper of the Mass for St. Ignatius on October 17th {February 1st}).

"Agree with me. I know what is good for me. Now I begin to be a disciple. My birthday is at hand. Suffer me to come to the pure light. When I reach it I shall be man indeed. Permit me to imitate the passion of my God. If any man hears Him in himself he surely will understand my desire and sympathize with me. "Fleshly love had been crucified in me and there is no longer fire of love for material things, but only a living water that speaks to me within my soul."

Speaking of the Blessed Eucharist which he calls "the medicine of immortality," he says:

"I desire the bread of God, which is the Flesh of Jesus Christ, and for drink, His Blood, which is incorruptible charity."

On December 20th in the year 107, the last day of the wild beast shows, Ignatius was thrown to the hungry lions in the Flavian amphitheatre. The animals tore and ate his body so that only the large bones remained. Those bones now await the last day in the Church of San Clemente, Rome.

What a heroic soul! Everything human in Ignatius of Antioch must have shuddered and shivered at the image of that arena upon which he will stand defenceless as the gates are raised to release the growling, savage, hungry animals upon him. The Christians everywhere along the route from Antioch to Rome were strengthened by the faith of Ignatius. And what was the source of that heroism? He tells us that it was the Blessed Eucharist.

Whenever we are asked to accept a cross, a sickness, a humiliation, or perhaps, some failure which hurts our pride, let us come to Mass with this martyred bishop, and seek courage where he found it.

St. Alexander: May 4th.

St. Alexander became Pope in the year 109. He made many converts in Rome. In 119, St. Alexander, with two priest companions, St. Eventius and St. Theodulus, was beheaded on the Via Nomentana under the Emperor Hadrian. There is a tradition that he was a son of St. Felicitas, the

heroic mother who was martyred with her seven sons in Rome later in the middle of the second century. (This is a different St. Felicitas from the one noted below, from Carthage.)

His relics and those of his companions now rest in the Church of St. Sabina in Rome.

St. Alexander prescribed water to be mixed with wine at Mass on account of the blood and water that flowed from the side of Jesus. Whenever we say the prayer on the mingling of water with wine let us ask St. Alexander to teach us what it means. [May 3rd is the Feast of Saints Philip and James the Less, as noted earlier.]

Saints Marcellinus and Peter: June 2nd.

St. Marcellinus was a priest. St. Peter was an "exorcist," that means that he had received the second of the minor Orders, or steps to the priesthood. They were both arrested. Peter exorcised an evil spirit out of the daughter of the jailer, Artemius, and in gratitude the whole family were converted and baptized by Marcellinus. Hearing this, the judge, Serenus, sent for the saints and commanded them to renounce Christ. On their refusal they were put into separate cells, without light, without food, and the floor was strewn with broken glass. But this did not break them so they were led secretly into woods called the Black Forest in order that their burial place might be hidden from the Christians. They were ordered to dig their own graves, which they cheerfully did, and then they were beheaded. Their relics were discovered by the Christians who gathered up the bones and brought them to the Catacombs. The wood was afterwards called the White Forest.

Their bones were moved about from place to place until the Secretary of Charlemagne about 800 enshrined them in silver at Seligenstadt in Germany. There today they rest within a magnificent church built in their honour.

They suffered martyrdom under the emperor Diocletian, during the tenth persecution, about the year 303. Pope St. Damasus (366) wrote a brief account of their martyrdom which he obtained from their executioner.

SEVEN WOMEN MARTYRS

Saints Felicitas and Perpetua: March 7th.

These two young women suffered death for the faith in the Amphitheatre at Carthage during the fifth persecution of Christians. Septimus Severus was emperor.

Perpetua was of noble birth. Felicitas or Felicity was a slave, and not yet baptized. Both were married. Perpetua had an infant eight months old. Felicitas gave birth to a child while in prison. The father of Perpetua, a wealthy pagan, frequently visited his daughter in prison, promising her everything his wealth could buy, if she would only be sensible, and sacrifice to the gods. Her reply was to cheer up her prison companions. In the Acts of St. Perpetua, part of which is autobiographical, and part written by an eye-witness, we have detailed accounts of the prison life, and of the martyrdom.

Perpetua and Felicitas, with three companions, were first scourged, then a boar, a bear, and a leopard were set at the men, and a fierce cow at the women. Gored by the wild animals, they gave each other the kiss of peace and were put to the sword. The year was 203.

When the judge told them that they were to be thrown to the wild beasts, Perpetua, Felicitas, and their three companions began to sing with joy, that at such a price were they to purchase heaven. To

accept crosses cheerfully, and to impose penances on oneself joyfully are never easy, but that is the spirit we must seek in our Masses, so that we may attain to that "perpetual felicity," which the names of these two saints suggest.

St. Agatha: February 5th.

Two cities of Sicily, Palermo and Catania, contest the honour of her birthplace. She was of noble parentage. Endowed with remarkable beauty, she had to resist the solicitations of the Consul Quintianus, who, unable to attain his end by persuasion, threw her into prison. Her breast was torn by his order, but was healed the following night by the apostle St. Peter, who appeared to her in prison. In the proper of her Mass, the Communion commemorates that miracle:

"I invoke Him the living God, who vouchsafed to cure me of every wound, and to restore my breast to my body."

The obvious miracle did not impress Quintianus, who could not understand why she continued to remain a Christian, for proud Rome considered the Christians as little better than slaves.

"I am the servant of Christ," she replied to her disappointed suitor. "The sovereign nobleness is to be the slave of Christ,"

He had her body rolled on pieces of broken pottery and on burning coals, and on being brought back to her cell she expired. This happened at Catania, in 251, during the seventh persecution. Decius was the Roman Emperor.

One year after her death the neighbouring volcano, Mt. Etna, erupted, and a river of burning lava moved towards Catania. Rushing to her tomb, the people of Catania seized her virginal veil, which was not burned, only crimsoned by the fire which had caused her death, and holding it up before the oncoming stream, changed its course to the ocean and the city was saved. This happened on February 5th, her feast day.

Let us invoke St. Agatha to preserve our homes from fire, and to extinguish within our bodies the impure flames of sensuality.

St. Lucy: December 13th.

St. Lucy was born at Syracuse, in Sicily, of wealthy parents. Her mother became ill and St. Lucy made a pilgrimage to the tomb of St. Agatha, who had lived in Sicily fifty-two years before her. Her mother was cured. In gratitude St Lucy sold her ornaments, her personal property, and distributed the proceeds among the poor.

During the tenth persecution she was imprisoned as a Christian. Commanded to offer sacrifice to the gods, she refused, saying to her judge, Paschasius: "Pure hearts are the temples of the Holy Ghost." Her accusers tried to drag her to a house of ill-fame, but she was rooted to the ground like a pillar, and to move her they failed.

In the Gradual of her Mass we pray: "Your God has anointed you with the oil of gladness."

The "oil" gave St. Lucy suppleness and strength of soul which enabled her to face death rather than yield the treasure of her virginity.

Tradition says that her eyes were put out by her torturers before her death. The name, Lucy, means light, and it is probably on this account that her intercession is invoked by those with eye trouble.

She was martyred at Syracuse, in Sicily, about the year 304 during the reign of Diocletian as Roman Emperor.

St. Agnes: January 21st.

St. Agnes, a singularly beautiful character, was a daughter of one of Rome's noblest families. Her hand in marriage was sought by the son of the prefect of Rome. She was imprisoned, and her virginity assailed by every means that might shake her resolution. A youth who attempted to do her violence was struck dead, but through her prayers was restored to life. To her many suitors she spoke:

"Already has another Lover taken possession of my heart, who far surpasses you in nobility; with unrivalled treasures He has enriched me. His appearance the most, beautiful, His love the sweetest. The angels serve Him. Sun and moon admire His beauty. By the perfume of virtue that exhales from His person the dead are awakened, by His touch the sick are healed. He has prepared for me His bridal-chamber, where music and song resound: For Him I preserve fidelity, to Him I give myself entirely and without reserve."

St. Agnes is a special patroness of holy purity. To the present day, so great is the reverence of her name in Rome, that maidens cherish her example as if she were still dwelling among them. The name Agnes means "chaste" in Greek, and "lamb" in Latin. "She went to her place of execution," writes St. Ambrose of her, "more gladly than others to their wedding feast."

At the age of thirteen, about the year 304, this youthful martyr suffered torture and was beheaded. The executioner hesitated to bring his axe down on so young and so beautiful a head. Agnes encouraged him, saying: "Strike without fear for the bride does her spouse an injury if she makes him wait:"

Over her tomb, in the Via Nomentana, is one of the best known of Roman basilicas: St. Agnes Outside the Walls. There on January 21st each year during the singing of the Agnus Dei at High Mass, two white lambs are placed upon the altar to be blessed by the Abbot General of the Canons Regular of Lateran. They are then brought to the Vatican where the Pope blesses them again. They are handed over to the Benedictine nuns attached to the basilica of St. Agnes who rear them till Good Friday, and weave from their wool the pallium, the insignia of an Archbishop. Archbishops, on more solemn occasions, wear around their necks this narrow band of white wool in remembrance of the youthful saint who was deemed worthy to imitate the innocent Lamb of God.

St. Cecilia: November 22nd.

Cecilia was born at Rome of the illustrious family of the Coecilii. As a child she consecrated her virginity to God. Forced by her parents to marry Valerian, a pagan youth, she said to him on their wedding day: "Valerian, I am placed under the guardianship of an angel who protects my virginity." She pleaded with him so successfully that Valerian promised to become a Christian, were he allowed to see this angel. Cecilia assured him that this was impossible unless he was first baptized, and sent him to a holy confessor, Saint Urban, (not to be confused with the holy Pope Saint Urban I, who ruled the church from 222 to 230), who lived hidden in the Catacombs on account of the persecutions. Urban baptized him. On his return he saw an angel brilliant with a bright light standing beside Cecilia. Doubtful whether he saw aright, he sent for his brother, Tiburtius, who also saw the heavenly visitor. He also was baptized. Shortly after this Valerian and Tiburtius were denounced as Christians and put to death.

Almachius, the prefect of Rome, arrested Cecilia, and hoping to make an example of this daughter of a senatorial family, ordered her to be suffocated in the Roman bath in her own home. Although the baths were specially heated she came through the terrible ordeal unharmed, singing right, through the night and day, the praises of the Lord. The prefect sent for the executioner who struck her three times and failed to sever the head from her body. Cecilia lived three days, during which the Christians came out of their hiding-holes to visit her, while she sang and prayed with them in sheer delight, giving them great consolation and new courage. She ordered that her magnificent mansion should serve as a Church. On the third day she died in her own home. The probable date of her death was about the year 171. during the persecution under Marcus Aurelius. She died in a reclining posture, and thus was laid in a cypress coffin which the faithful buried in the catacombs of St. Callistus.

In 1599 her body was discovered just as it was at her death, in a state of perfect preservation. The people of Rome were permitted to come in crowds to venerate the body. Stefano Maderno sculptured a reproduction of the reclining body, which is one of the glories of Rome, and may be seen under the High Altar of her Church.

The inscription of the artist reads: "Behold the body of the most holy virgin Cecilia, which I myself saw lying incorrupt in her tomb. I have in this marble expressed for you the very same saint in the very same posture of body."

St. Cecilia is the patroness of Church music. In her office the Church says: "To the sound of musical instruments the virgin Cecilia sang to God in her heart." In her "Acts" we read that she sang continuously the praises of God.

What a song of joy the three must have sung as Valerian and Tiburtius, the fruits of her pledging, greeted her soul in Heaven. When we sing during Mass let us remember that St. Cecilia and her companions are singing with us.

St. Anastasia: December 25th or 29th.

On Christmas day, in the year 304, Anastasia, a widow, was visiting the faithful on an errand of mercy, on the island of Palmaria, when she was captured and put to death during the persecution under Diocletian. While her pagan husband, Publius, had lived, she suffered many cruelties. At his death she had given herself to works of mercy. Tradition holds that her tutor in the faith was St. Chrysogonus, who is mentioned in the first list of martyrs, the "Communicantes" list.

The Mass at dawn on Christmas day was said by the Popes in the very old Church of St. Anastasia, situated in the centre of Rome in the patrician quarters, and consequently, the Church of the great court functions.

It is a gracious tribute to her that her name, which means "resurrection," should be commemorated in the second Mass on Christmas day, which is said at dawn in Rome.

In Churches dedicated to her honour, Christmas week sees a series of Solemnities starting with Christmas on December 25th. Then comes St. Stephen on December 26th, followed by St. John the Apostle on December 27th. Next is the Feast of the Holy Innocents on December 28th, and then St. Anastasia's own festal Mass on December 29th. Then there is the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph on December 30th, and the Solemn Octave concludes with the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God, on January 1st. Some day may we meet all the saints named in this little booklet in the eternal joy of heaven!

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