



EXTREMELY RARE DOCUMENTED BAROQUE RELIQUARY
SOUTHERN ITALY – 1728



Shown is an extremely rare southern Italian Baroque reliquary from the suppressed diocese of Lavello, sealed and documented by Nicolaus Cerbinus [Nicolo Cervini], Bishop of the Diocese of Lavello, Metropolitanate of Bari, on April 21, 1728, the year of Cerbinus' death. Housed within a silvered and partially gilt sealed reliquary over a wooden guard are relics as follows:

- i. Ex Capillis B.V. Mariae [from the Hair of the Blessed Virgin Mary] – an exceptionally large sample of the only first class relic of the Virgin Mary, her hair. Then as now, it was custom among Orthodox Jews for women to cut their hair upon puberty and to preserve this hair until their death. The Hair



of Our Lady is the rarest of all relics and the only First Class Relic we have of the Mother of God. Brought from the Holy Land by the Crusaders, it is venerated in Rome in the Churches of S. Maria sopra Minerva, St. John in Lateran and S. Maria in Campitelli; in Venice, in the Basilica S. Marco, in S. Domenico in Bologna and other major Churches. A major hair relic is venerated in the Church of Sant'Agostino in Licata, Sicily.

Since the Blessed Virgin Mary was taken into heaven with body and soul, no physical relics of Her exist. The sole exception to this is Her hair, which had been preserved and venerated since antiquity in the Holy House of Nazareth. As archeological excavations have demonstrated, it was a known Judaeo-Christian sanctuary as early as the 1st century A.D. According to Church tradition, a small box of hair preserved in Nazareth houses this hair. The miniscule ex Capillis relics are considered the rarest of Christian relics, and to have a small bundle of this hair, and documented, is unprecedented.

2. Ex Vestis S. Josephi Sponsis B.V. Mariae [from the Clothing of Saint Joseph, spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary] – there are no first class relics of Saint Joseph. Saint Joseph is a figure in the Gospels, the husband of the Virgin Mary and the earthly father of Jesus Christ (in distinction to God the Father, his “Heavenly Father”). The earliest Christian records, the Pauline Epistles, make no reference to Jesus’ father, nor does the Gospel of Mark, the first of the Gospels. The first appearance of Joseph is therefore in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, both of which trace Joseph’s lineage back to King David. The two lists give differing genealogies: Matthew says that Joseph's father was called Jacob,[Mt. 1:16] but Luke says he was the son of Heli.

Matthew and Luke are also the only Gospels to include the infancy narratives, and again they differ. In Luke, Joseph lives in Nazareth and travels to Bethlehem in compliance with the requirements of a Roman census. Subsequently, Jesus was born there. In Matthew, Joseph was in Bethlehem, the city of David, where Jesus is born, and then moves to Nazareth with his family after the death of Herod. Matthew is the only Gospel to include the narrative of the Massacre of the Innocents and the Flight into Egypt: following the nativity, Joseph stays in Bethlehem for an unspecified period (perhaps two years) until forced by Herod to take refuge



in Egypt; on the death of Herod he brings his family back to Israel, and settles in Nazareth. After this point there is no further mention of Joseph by name, although the story of Jesus in the Temple, in Jesus' 12th year, includes a reference to "both his parents". Christian tradition represents Mary as a widow during the adult ministry of her son.[Jn. 19:26-27] The Gospels describe Joseph as a "tekton"; traditionally the word has been taken to mean "carpenter", though the Greek term evokes an artisan with wood in general, or an artisan in iron or stone. Very little other information on Joseph is given in the Gospels, in which he never speaks.

Joseph is venerated as a saint in the Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Anglican, and Lutheran faiths. In Catholic and other traditions, Joseph is the patron saint of workers and has several feast days. He was also declared to be the patron saint and protector of the Catholic Church by Pope Pius IX in 1870, and is the patron of several countries and regions. With the growth of Mariology, the theological field of Josephology has also grown and since the 1950s centers for studying it have been formed.

The Epistles of Paul, from roughly 51-58 AD, are the oldest Christian writings. These mention Jesus' mother (without naming her), but never refer to his father. The oldest Gospel, that of Mark, also does not name Joseph. He first appears in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, both from the decade or so following 70 CE. Luke names Joseph's father as Eli, but Matthew names him as Jacob, in keeping with that gospel's depiction of Jesus as a second Moses. This theme is developed further in the infancy narratives, which, like the genealogies, have the function of establishing Jesus as the promised Messiah, the descendant of David, born in Bethlehem. Like the genealogies the infancy narratives appear only in Matthew and Luke, and take different approaches to reconciling the requirement that the Messiah be born in Bethlehem with the tradition that Jesus came from Nazareth. In Matthew, Joseph, already living in Bethlehem, obeys the direction of an angel to marry Mary and then to flee to Egypt to escape the massacre of the innocents of Bethlehem planned by Herod the Great, the tyrant who rules Judea. Once Herod has died, the angel tells him to return to the land of Israel, but to Galilee instead of to Bethlehem, and so Joseph takes his wife and the child to Nazareth and settles there. Thus in Matthew, the infant Jesus, like Moses, is in peril from a cruel king, like Moses he has a



(fore)father named Joseph who goes down to Egypt, like the Old Testament Joseph this Joseph has a father named Jacob, and both Josephs receive important dreams foretelling their future. In Luke, Joseph already lives in Nazareth, and Jesus is born in Bethlehem because Joseph and Mary have to travel there to be counted in a census. Luke's account makes no mention of angels and dreams, the Massacre of the Innocents, or of a visit to Egypt.

The last time Joseph appears in person in any Gospel is the story of the Passover visit to the Temple in Jerusalem when Jesus is 12 years old, found only in Luke. Like the infancy narratives the story is didactic, emphasizing Jesus' awareness of his coming mission: here Jesus speaks to his parents (both of them) of "my Father," meaning God, but they fail to understand.

None of the Gospels mentions Joseph as present at any event during Jesus' adult ministry. The synoptic Gospels, however, share a scene in which the people of Nazareth, Jesus' hometown, doubt Jesus' status as a prophet because they know his family. In Mark, the first Gospel to be written (about 70 AD), they call Jesus "Mary's son" instead of naming his father. In the next Gospel, Matthew, the townspeople call Jesus "the carpenter's son," again without naming his father, and again he has a brother named Joseph; only in Luke does he is named "the son of Joseph," and Luke makes no mention of any brothers. In Luke the tone is positive, whereas in Mark and Matthew it is disparaging. This incident does not appear at all in John, but in a parallel story the disbelieving Jews refer to "Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know".

Joseph is not mentioned as being present at the Wedding at Cana at the beginning of Jesus' mission, nor at the Passion at the end. If he had been present at the Crucifixion, he would under Jewish custom have been expected to take charge of Jesus' body, but this role is instead performed by Joseph of Arimathea. Nor would Jesus have entrusted his mother to John's care had her husband been alive.

Joseph's clothing is the scarce but traditionally consistent material associated with relics of the saint.

3. Ex Dentis S. Viti. M. [From the Teeth of Saint Vitus, Martyr] – Saint



Vitus was a Christian saint from Sicily. He died as a martyr during the persecution of Christians by co-ruling Roman Emperors Diocletian and Maximian in 303. Vitus is counted as the most important of the cult of the Fourteen Holy Helpers of the Roman Catholic Church, and is one of the most popular saints in both the Roman Catholic and in the Orthodox Churches. Saint Vitus' Day is celebrated on 15 June. In places where the Julian Calendar is used, this date coincides, in the 20th and 21st centuries, with 28 June on the Gregorian Calendar. In the late Middle Ages, people in Germany and countries such as Latvia celebrated the feast of Vitus by dancing before his statue. This dancing became popular and the name "Saint Vitus Dance" was given to the neurological disorder chorea. It also led to Vitus being considered the patron saint of dancers and of entertainers in general.

Vitus is considered the patron saint of actors, comedians, dancers, and epileptics. He is also said to protect against lightning strikes, animal attacks and oversleeping, and is the patron saint of Bohemia. Vitus is the patron saint of the city of Rijeka in Croatia, the towns of Ciminna in Sicily, Forio on the Island of Ischia, in Campania, Italy, the contrada of San Vito, in Torella dei Lombardi, in Avellino, Italy, the town of Winschoten in the Netherlands, and the town of St. Vith located in Belgium.

Various places in Austria and Bavaria are named Sankt Veit in his honour.

The Martyrdom of Vitus, Modestus, and Crescentia. [From a 14th century manuscript. According to legend, Vitus, Modestus and Crescentia were martyrs under Diocletian. The earliest testimony for their veneration is offered by the "Martyrologium Hieronymianum" (ed. G. B. de Rossi-Louis Duchesne, 78: "In Sicilia, Viti, Modesti et Crescentiae"). The fact that this note is in the three most important manuscript copies indicates that it was also in the common exemplar of these, which appeared in the 5th century. The same Martyrologium has under the same day another mention of a Vitus at the head of a list of nine martyrs, with the statement of the place, "In Lucania", that is, in the Roman province of that name in Southern Italy between the Tuscan Sea and the Gulf of Taranto. It is easily possible that it is the same martyr Vitus in both cases.



According to J.P. Kirsch, the author of the source article in the Catholic Encyclopedia, the testimony to the public veneration of the three saints in the 5th century proves positively that they are historical martyrs. There are, nevertheless, no historical accounts of them, nor of the time or the details of their martyrdom.

During the 6th and 7th centuries a purely legendary narrative of their martyrdom appeared which appears to be based upon other legends, especially on the legend of Poitus, and ornamented with accounts of fantastic miracles. According to this legend, which has no apparent historical value, Vitus was a 7-year-old son of a senator of Lucania (some versions make him 12 years old). He resisted his father's attempts, which included various forms of torture, to make him apostatize. He fled with his tutor Modestus and Modestus's wife Crescentia, who was Vitus's nanny, to Lucania. He was taken from there to Rome to drive out a demon which had taken possession of a son of the Emperor Diocletian. This he did, and yet, because he remained steadfast in the Christian Faith, he was tortured together with his tutors. By a miracle an angel brought back the three to Lucania, where they died from the tortures they had endured. Three days later Vitus appeared to a distinguished matron named Florentia, who then found the bodies and buried them in the spot where they were. The author of the legend doubtless connected in his invention three saints who apparently suffered death in Lucania, and were first venerated there.

Veneration – Saint Vitus Cathedral is the main church of the former imperial capital, Prague. The veneration of the martyrs spread rapidly in Southern Italy and Sicily, as is shown by the note in the "Martyrologium Hieronymianum". Pope Gregory the Great mentions a monastery dedicated to Vitus in Sicily ("Epist.", I, xlviii, P.L., LXXXVII, 511).

The veneration of Saint Vitus, the chief saint of the group, also appeared very early at Rome. Pope Gelasius I (492-496) mentions a shrine dedicated to him (Jaffé, "Reg. Rom. Pont.", 2nd ed., I, 679), and at Rome in the seventh century the chapel of a deaconry was dedicated to him ("Liber Pont.", ed. Duchesne, I, 470 sq.).

In 756 AD it is said that the relics of Saint Vitus were brought to the



monastery of St-Denis by Abbot Fulrad. They were later presented to Abbot Warin of Corvey in Germany, who solemnly transferred some of them to this abbey in 836. From Corvey the veneration of Saint Vitus spread throughout Westphalia and in the districts of eastern and northern Germany. His cult grew in Prague, Bohemia when, in 925 A.D., King Henry I of Germany presented as a gift the bones of one hand of Saint Vitus to Wenceslaus, Duke of Bohemia. This relic is since then a sacred treasure in the Saint Vitus Cathedral in Prague.

The cult of Saint Vitus became very popular in Slavic lands, where his name (Sveti Vid = Saint Vitus) replaced the old cult of the god of light Svantovit. In Croatia alone, 123 churches are dedicated to Saint Vitus. Vidovdan is Vitus' Day in Serbia among the Serbian Orthodox Church.

He is represented as a young man with a palm-leaf, in a cauldron, sometimes with a raven and a lion, his iconographic attribute because according to the legend he was thrown into a cauldron of boiling tar and molten lead, but miraculously escaped unscathed.

The names of Saints Modestus and Crescentia were added in the 11th century to the Roman Calendar, so that from then on all three names were celebrated together until 1969, when their feast was removed from the calendar of feasts proposed for celebration throughout the Roman Rite. Saint Vitus is still recognized as a saint of the Roman Catholic Church, being inscribed in the Roman Martyrology under June 15, and Mass may be celebrated in his honor on that day wherever the Roman Rite is celebrated, while the Saints Modestus and Crescentia who are associated with Saint Vitus in legend have been omitted, because they appear to be merely fictitious personages. However, some traditionalist Catholics continue to observe pre-1970 versions of the General Roman Calendar.

4. Ex Ossibus S. Francisco Borgiae Francis Borgia, 4th Duke of Gandía, was born Francesco Borgia de Candia d'Aragon in the Duchy of Gandía, Valencia on 28 October 1510. His father was Juan Borgia, 3rd Duke of Gandía, the son of Giovanni Borgia, the grandson of Pope Alexander VI (Rodrigo Borgia). His mother was Juana, daughter of Alonso de Aragón, Archbishop of Zaragoza, who, in turn, was the illegitimate son of King



Ferdinand II of Aragon. His brother, Tomás de Borja y Castro, also became a clergyman, becoming the Bishop of Málaga, and later the Archbishop of Zaragoza.

Although as a child he was very pious and wished to become a monk, his family sent him instead to the court of Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor (who was also King Charles I of Spain). He distinguished himself there, accompanying the Emperor on several campaigns.

In September 1526 at age 16, he married a Portuguese noblewoman in Madrid, Eleanor de Castro Melo e Menezes. They had eight children: Carlos in 1530, Isabel in 1532, Juan in 1533, Álvaro circa 1535, Juana also circa 1535, Fernando in 1537, Dorotea in 1538, and Alfonso in 1539.

In 1539, he convoyed the corpse of Isabella of Portugal, Philip II of Spain's mother, to her burial place in Granada. It is said that, when he saw the effect of death on the beautiful empress, he decided to "never again serve a mortal master."

Nonetheless, in that same year (1539), he became Viceroy of Catalonia, replacing Fadrique de Portugal y Noroña, though he was only 29.

In 1543 upon the death of his father, the 3rd Duke, Francis became the 4th Duke of Gandía. By then 33 years old he had retired to his native place and devoted himself to religious activities.

In 1546 his wife Eleanor died, and Francis then decided to enter the newly formed Society of Jesus, after making adequate provisions for his children. He put his affairs in order circa 1550, renounced his titles in favor of his eldest son Luis de Borja-Aragon y de Castro-Melo, and became a Jesuit priest. Because of his high birth, great abilities and Europe-wide fame, he was immediately offered a cardinal's hat. This, however, he refused, preferring the life of an itinerant preacher. In time, however, his friends persuaded him to accept the leadership role that nature and circumstances had destined him for: in 1554, he became the Jesuit commissary-general in Spain; and, in 1565, the third "Father General" or Superior General of the Society of Jesus, because of the death in January 1565 of Diego Laynez,



(Almazán, Spain, 1512 - January 1565).

His successes during the period 1565-1572 have caused historians to describe Francis as the greatest General after Saint Ignatius. He founded the Collegium Romanum, which was to become the Gregorian University, dispatched missionaries to distant corners of the globe, advised kings and popes, and closely supervised all the affairs of the rapidly expanding order. Yet, despite the great power of his office, Francis led a humble life, and was widely regarded in his own lifetime as a saint.

Francis Borgia died on 30 September 1572, in Rome. He was beatified in Madrid on 23 November 1624, by Pope Gregory XV. He was canonized nearly 35 years later on 20 June 1670, by Pope Clement X. His liturgical feast was inserted into the Roman Catholic calendar of saints in 1688 for celebration on 10 October, the date then free from other celebrations that was closest to that of his death. Owing to the limited importance of his feast worldwide, his commemoration was removed in 1969 from the General Roman Calendar, but kept in the Roman Martyrology for celebration on his dies natalis (his birth into Heaven), 30 September. Some traditionalist Catholics continue to observe pre-1970 calendars.

5. Ex Ossibus S. Cataldi, Epi [from the bones of Saint Cathaldus, Bishop of Tarentum [Taranto] Also known as Cataldus, Cathaluds, Cattaldo, Cathal]. Born in Munster, Ireland, 7th century. Saint Cataldus was a pupil, then the headmaster of the monastic school of Lismore in Waterford after the death of its founder, Saint Carthage. Upon his return from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, he was shipwrecked at Taranto in southern Italy and chosen by the people as their bishop. He is the titular of Taranto's cathedral and the principal patron of the diocese. This epitaph is given under an image of Saint Catald in Rome:

Me tulit Hiberne, Solyme traxere, Tarentum
Nunc tenet: huic ritus, dogmata, jura dedi.

This has been loosely translated as:

Hibernia gave me birth: thence wafted



over, I sought the sacred Solymean shore.
To thee Tarentum, holy rites I gave, Precepts divine;
and thou to me a grave.

It is odd that an Irishman, should be so honored throughout Italy, Malta, and France, but have almost no recognition in his homeland. His Irish origins were discovered only two or three centuries after his death, when his relics were recovered during the renovation of the cathedral of Taranto. A small golden cross, of 7th - or 8th - century Irish workmanship, was with the relics. Further investigations identified him with Cathal, the teacher of Lismore.

Veneration to Catald spread, especially in southern Italy, after the May 10, 1017, translation of his relics when the cathedral was being rebuilt following its destruction at the hands of Saracens in 927. Four remarkable cures occurred as the relics were moved to the new cathedral. When his coffin was open at that time, a pastoral staff of Irish workmanship was found with the inscription Cathaldus Rachau. There is a town of San Cataldo in Sicily and another on the southeast coast of Italy (Benedictines, D'Arcy, Farmer, Husenbeth, Kenney, Montague, Neeson, Tommasini).

Saint Catald is depicted in art as an early Christian bishop with a mitre and pallium in a 12th century mosaic at Palermo (Roeder). He is the subject of a painting on the 8th pillar of the nave on the left in the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem (D'Arcy, Montague). There are also 12th-century mosaics in Palermo and Monreale depicting the saint (Farmer). Catald is invoked against plagues, drought, and storms (Farmer).

6. Ex Ossibus S. Montani. M. [from the bones of Saint Montanus, Martyr]. Little is known about this African martyr. A disciple of Saint Cyprian of Carthage, he was tortured and beheaded in 259 AD together with Flavian, Julian, Lucius, the priest Victorinus, and five others at Carthage.
7. Ex Ossibus S. Francisci de Paula [from the bones of Saint Francis de Paula]. Saint Francis di Paola was born in Paola in Calabria, Italy, which at that time was part of the Kingdom of Naples. In his youth he was educated by the Franciscans in Paola. His parents were remarkable for the holiness of their lives: having remained childless for some years after their



marriage, they had recourse to prayer and especially commended themselves to the intercession of Saint Francis of Assisi. Three children were eventually born to them, the eldest of whom was Francis.

When still in the cradle, he suffered from a swelling which endangered the sight of one of his eyes. His parents again had recourse to Francis of Assisi and made a vow that their son should pass an entire year in the "little habit" of Saint Francis in one of the convents of his order, a not uncommon practice in the Middle Ages. The child was immediately cured.

From his early years Francis showed signs of extraordinary sanctity, and at the age of thirteen, being admonished by a vision of a Franciscan friar, he entered a convent of the Franciscan Order in order to fulfil the vow made by his parents. Here he gave great edification by his love of prayer and mortification, his profound humility, and his prompt obedience. At the completion of the year he went with his parents on a pilgrimage to Assisi, Rome, and other places of devotion. Returning to Paola, he selected a secluded cave on his father's estate and there lived in solitude; but later on he found an even more secluded cave on the sea coast. Here he remained alone for about six years giving himself to prayer and mortification.

According to a famous story, in the year 1464, he was refused passage by a boatman while trying to cross the Straits of Messina to Sicily. He reportedly laid his cloak on the water, tied one end to his staff as a sail, and sailed across the strait with his companions following in the boat.

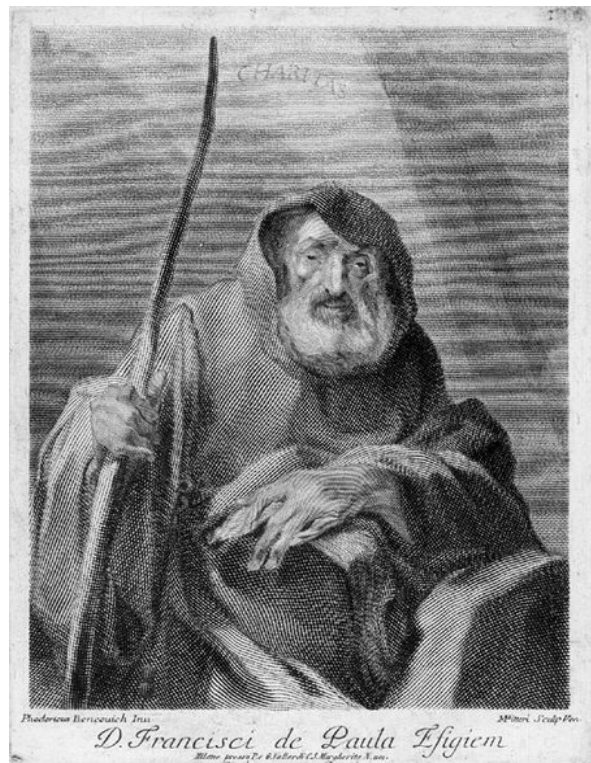
By 1436, he and two followers began a movement that would become the foundation of the Hermits of Saint Francis of Assisi, which would later be renamed as Minim Friars. Their name refers to their role as the "least of all the faithful".

In 1435 two companions joined him in his retreat, and to accommodate them Francis caused three cells and a chapel to be built: in this way the new order was begun. The number of his disciples gradually increased, and about 1454, with the permission of Pyrrhus, Archbishop of Cosenza, Francis built a large monastery and church. The building of this monastery was the occasion of a great outburst of enthusiasm and devotion on the part of the people



towards Francis: even the nobles carried stones and joined in the work. Their devotion was increased by the many miracles which the saint wrought in answer to their prayers. The rule of life adopted by Francis and his religious was one of extraordinary severity. They observed perpetual abstinence and lived in great poverty, but the distinguishing mark of the order was humility. They were to seek to live unknown and hidden from the world. To express this character which he would have his disciples cultivate, Francis eventually obtained from the Holy See that they should be styled Minims, the least of all religious. In 1474 Sixtus IV gave him permission to write a rule for his community, and to assume the title of Hermits of Saint Francis: this rule was formally approved by Alexander VI, who, however, changed their title into that of Minims. After the approbation of the order, Francis founded several new monasteries in Calabria and Sicily. He also established convents of nuns, and a third order for people living in the world, after the example of Saint Francis of Assisi.

Francis was also renowned as prophet: he foretold the capture of Otranto by the Osman Turks in 1480, and its subsequent recovery by the King of Naples. He was no respecter of persons, whatever their rank or position. He rebuked the King of Naples for his ill-doing and in consequence suffered persecution. When Louis XI of France was in his last illness, he sent an embassy to Calabria to beg the saint to visit him. Francis refused to come until the pope ordered him to go. He then went to the king at Plessis-les-Tours and was with him at his death. Charles VIII, Louis's successor, was an admirer of the saint and during his reign kept him near the court and frequently consulted him. This king built a monastery for Minims at Plessis and another at Rome on the Pincian Hill. Francis also forcefully influenced many in the French church, particularly Jan Standonck, who founded the





Collège de Montaigu along what he thought were Minimist lines. The regard in which Charles VIII held the saint was shared by Louis XII, who succeeded to the French throne in 1498. Francis was now eager to return to Italy, but the king would not permit him, not wishing to lose his counsels and direction. The last three months of his life he spent in entire solitude, preparing for death. On Holy Thursday he gathered his community around him and exhorted them especially to have mutual charity amongst themselves and to maintain the rigor of their life and in particular perpetual abstinence. The next day, Good Friday, he again called them together and gave them his last instructions and appointed a vicar-general. He then received the last sacraments and asked to have the Passion according to Saint John read out to him, and whilst this was being read, he died on April 2, 1507, almost a week after his 91st birthday, in Plessis, France.

He followed a vegetarian diet, not only free from animal flesh, but also from all animal derived foods, such as eggs and dairy products. One of the vows of the order he founded was the abstinence from meat, fish, eggs, butter, cheese and milk. There are several stories about his compassion for animals, and how he gave back life to animals that were killed to be eaten.

The Order of Minims does not seem at any time to have been very extensive, but they had houses in many countries. The definitive rule was approved in 1506 by Julius II, who also approved a rule for the nuns of the order.

In 1562, a group of Huguenots in France broke open his tomb and found his body incorrupt. They dragged it forth, burned it and scattered the bones, which were recovered by Catholic faithful and distributed as relics to various churches of his order.

Pope Leo X canonized him in 1519. He is considered to be a patron saint of boatmen, mariners and naval officers. His liturgical feast day is celebrated by the universal Church on April 2, the day on which he died.

In 1963, Pope John XXIII designated him as the patron saint of Calabria.

8. Ex ossibus S. Paschalis Baylon [from the bones of Saint Paschal Baylon].



Saint Paschal Baylon (or Pascal Baylon) (24 May 1540–17 May 1592) was a Spanish friar and is a saint in the Roman Catholic Church. He was born at Torrehermosa, in the Kingdom of Aragon, on 24 May 1540, on the Feast of Pentecost, called in Spain “the Pascha of the Holy Ghost”, whence the name Paschal. His parents, Martin Baylon and Elizabeth Jubera, were poor peasants. He spent his youth as a shepherd. He would carry a book with him and beg any passerby to teach him the alphabet. He thereby learned to read, and as he toiled in the fields he would read religious books. In around 1564, he joined the Reformed Franciscan Order (Alcantarine Reform) as a lay brother. He chose to live in poor monasteries because, he said, “I was born poor and am resolved to die in poverty and penance.” He lived a life of poverty and prayer, even praying while working, for the rest of his life. He was a mystic and contemplative, and he had frequent ecstatic visions. He would spend the night before the altar in prayer many nights. At the same time, he sought to downplay any glory that might come from this piety. He died on May 17, which is his current feast day, in 1592. His tomb in the Royal Chapel in Villareal in the old province of Valencia, where he died, immediately became an object of pilgrimage.

Beatified by Paul V in 1618, he was canonized by Alexander VIII on October 16, 1690. The saint is usually depicted in adoration before a vision of the Host. Forty years before he was canonized, an indigenous Guatemalan claimed to have had a vision of a sainted Paschal Baylon, appearing as a robed skeleton. This event became the basis of the heterodox tradition of San Pascualito. Paschal Baylon was enlisted in the Church’s struggle against Modernism, part of which was through increasing devotion towards the Sacrament of the Eucharist; Pope Leo XIII proclaimed Saint Paschal Baylon, the “seraph of the Eucharist”, Patron of eucharistic congresses and all contemporary and future eucharistic associations. During the Red Terror at the time of the Spanish Civil War his grave was desecrated and his relics burned by anticlerical leftists.

9. Ex Ossibus S. Zaccarie Epi., et m. [from the bones of Saint Zacharias, Bishop and Martyr]. Very little is known of this martyr, who was published in the Roman Martyrology published by order of Pope Gregory XIII. An early bishop to Gaul, he was martyred under Trajan in Vienne, ca 117 AD. It is traditionally believed that Zacharias accompanied Crescentius, the



disciple of Saint Paul, from Galatia to Gaul, and there succeeded him as Bishop of Vienne. [Crescens – 2 Tim. iv. 10].

10. Ex Ossibus S. Philippi Nery [from the bones of Saint Philip Neri]. Philip Romolo Neri (Italian: Filippo Neri), CO, (21 July 1515 – 25 May 1595), known as Apostle of Rome, was an Italian priest noted for founding a society of Secular clergy called the “Congregation of the Oratory”.

He was born in Florence, On July 22, 1515 and he was born the youngest child of Francesco, a lawyer, and his wife Lucrezia da Mosciano, whose family were nobility in the service of the state. Neri was carefully brought up, and received his early teaching from the friars at San Marco, the famous Dominican monastery in Florence. He was accustomed in later life to ascribe most of his progress to the teaching of two amongst them, Zenobio de’Medici and Servanzio Mini. At the age of 18, Philip was sent to his uncle, Romolo, a wealthy merchant at San Germano, a Neapolitan town near the base of Monte Cassino, to assist him in his business, and with the hope that he might inherit his uncle’s fortune. He did gain Romolo’s confidence and affection, but soon after coming to San Germano Philip had a conversion. He no longer cared for things of the world, and chose to relocate to Rome in 1533.

After arriving in Rome, he became a tutor in the house of a Florentine aristocrat named Galeotto Caccia. After two years he began to pursue his own studies (for a period of three years) under the guidance of the Augustinians. Following this, he began those labors amongst the sick and poor which gained him in later life the title of “Apostle of Rome”, and also ministering to the prostitutes of the city. In 1538 he entered on the home mission work for which he became famous; like Socrates he traveled throughout the city, seeking opportunities of entering into conversation with people, and of leading them on to consider the topics he desired to set before them.

In 1548 he founded (with his confessor, Father Persiano Rossa) the confraternity of the Santissima Trinita de’ Pellegrini e de’ Convalescenti, whose primary object was to minister to the needs of the thousands of poor pilgrims who flock to Rome, especially in years of jubilee, and also to relieve



the patients discharged from hospitals but who were still too weak for labor. In 1551 he passed through all the minor orders, and was ordained deacon, and finally priest (on 23 May). He thought of going to India as a missionary, but was dissuaded by his friends who saw that there was abundant work to be done in Rome. Accordingly he settled down, with some companions, at the hospital of San Girolamo della Carità, and while there tentatively began, in 1556, the institute with which his name is more especially connected, that of the Oratory. The scheme at first was no more than a series of evening meetings in a hall (the Oratory), at which there were prayers, hymns, readings from Scripture, from the church fathers, and from the Martyrology, followed by a lecture, or by discussion of some religious question proposed for consideration. The musical selections (settings of scenes from sacred history) were called oratorios. The scheme was developed, and the members of the society undertook various kinds of mission work throughout Rome, notably the preaching of sermons in different churches every evening, a completely new idea at that time. He also spent much of his time hearing confessions, and effected many conversions in this way.

In 1564 the Florentines requested that he leave San Girolamo, and to oversee their church in Rome, San Giovanni dei Fiorentini, then newly built. He was at first reluctant, but by consent of Pope Pius IV he accepted, while retaining the charge of San Girolamo, where the exercises of the Oratory were kept up. At this time the new society included amongst its members Caesar Baronius, the ecclesiastical historian, Francesco Maria Tarugi, afterwards Archbishop of Avignon, and Ottavio Paravicini, all three subsequently cardinals, and also Gallonius (Antonio Gallonio), author of a well-known work on the Sufferings of the Martyrs, Ancina, Bordoni, and other men of ability and distinction. In 1574, the Florentines built a large oratory or mission-room for the society, next to San Giovanni, in order to save them the fatigue of the daily journey to and from San Girolamo, and to provide a more convenient place of assembly, and the headquarters were transferred there. As the community grew, and its mission work extended, the need for a church entirely its own, and not subject to other claims, as were San Girolamo and San Giovanni, made itself felt, and the offer of the small parish church of Santa Maria in Vallicella, conveniently situated in the middle of Rome, was made and accepted. The building, however, was not large enough for their purpose, was pulled down, and a splendid church



erected on the site. It was immediately after taking possession of their new quarters that Neri formally organized, under permission of a papal bull dated 15 July 1575, a community of secular priests, called the Congregation of the Oratory. The new church was consecrated early in 1577, and the clergy of the new society at once resigned the charge of San Giovanni dei Fiorentini; but Neri himself did not leave San Girolamo until 1583, and then only by virtue of an injunction of the pope that he, as the superior, should reside at the chief house of his congregation. He was at first elected for a term of three years (as is usual in modern societies), but in 1587 was nominated superior for life. He was, however, entirely free from personal ambition, and had no desire to be general over a number of dependent houses, so that he desired that all congregations formed on his model outside Rome should be autonomous, governing themselves, and without endeavoring to retain control over any new colonies they might themselves send out—a regulation afterwards formally confirmed by a brief of Gregory XV in 1622.

Philip died around the end of the day on 25 May 1595, Corpus Christi that year, after having spent the day hearing confessions and receiving visitors. About midnight he began hemorrhaging, and Baronius read the commendatory prayers over him. Baronius asked that he would bless his spiritual sons before dying, and though he could no longer speak, he blessed them with the sign of the cross and died.

Saint Philip Neri was beatified by Paul V in 1615, and canonized by Gregory XV in 1622. His memorial is celebrated on 26 May in the calendars of both the ordinary and extraordinary forms of the Roman Rite. His body is in the Chiesa Nuova.

Much as he mingled with society, and with persons of importance in church and state, his single action in regard to political matters was in 1593, when his persuasions induced Pope Clement VIII to withdraw the excommunication and anathema of Henry IV of France, and the refusal to receive his ambassador, even though the king had formally abjured Calvinism. Neri saw that the pope's attitude was more than likely to drive Henry to a relapse, and probably to rekindle the civil war in France, and directed Baronius, then the pope's confessor, to refuse him absolution, and to resign his office of confessor, unless he would withdraw the anathema.



Clement yielded at once, though the whole college of cardinals had supported his policy; and Henry, who did not learn the facts until several years afterwards, testified lively gratitude for the timely and politic intervention. Neri continued in the government of the Oratory until his death. He was succeeded by Baronius.

Saint Philip possessed a playful humor, combined with a shrewd wit. He considered a cheerful temper to be more Christian than a melancholy one, and carried this spirit into his whole life:

“A joyful heart is more easily made perfect than a downcast one.”

This was the secret of his popularity and of his place in the folklore of the Roman poor. Many miracles were attributed to him, and it is said that when his body was dissected it was found that two of his ribs had been broken, an event attributed to the expansion of his heart while fervently praying in the catacombs about the year 1545. This phenomenon is in the same category as the stigmata of Saint Francis of Assisi.

“Practical commonplaceness,” says Frederick William Faber in his panegyric of Neri, “was the special mark which distinguishes his form of ascetic piety from the types accredited before his day. He looked like other men ... he was emphatically a modern gentleman, of scrupulous courtesy, sportive gaiety, acquainted with what was going on in the world, taking a real interest in it, giving and getting information, very neatly dressed, with a shrewd common sense always alive about him, in a modern room with modern furniture, plain, it is true, but with no marks of poverty about it – In a word, with all the ease, the gracefulness, the polish of a modern gentleman of good birth, considerable accomplishments, and a very various information.” Accordingly, he was ready to meet the needs of his day to an extent and in a manner which even the versatile Jesuits, who much desired to enlist him in their company, did not rival; and, though an Italian priest and head of a new religious order, his genius was entirely unmonastic and unmedieval, frequent and popular preaching, unconventional prayer, and unsystematized, albeit fervent, private devotion.

Neri was not a reformer, except in the sense that in the active discharge of



pastoral work he labored to reform individuals. He had no difficulties in respect of the teaching and practice of his church, being in truth an ardent Ultramontane in doctrine, as was all but inevitable in his time and circumstances, and his great merit was the instinctive tact which showed him that the system of monasticism could never be the leaven of secular life, but that something more homely, simple, and everyday in character was needed for the new time.

Accordingly, the congregation he founded is of the least conventional nature, rather resembling a residential clerical club than a monastery of the older type, and its rules (never written by Neri, but approved by Paul V in 1612) would have appeared incredibly lax, nay, its religious character almost doubtful, to Bruno, Stephen Harding, Saint Francis or Saint Dominic. It admits only priests aged at least thirty-six, or ecclesiastics who have completed their studies and are ready for ordination. The members live in community, and each pays his own expenses, having the usufruct of his private means – a startling innovation on the monastic vow of poverty. They have indeed a common table, but it is kept up precisely as a regimental mess, by monthly payments from each member. Nothing is provided by the society except the bare lodging, and the fees of a visiting physician. Everything else – clothing, books, furniture, medicines – must be defrayed at the private charges of each member. There are no vows, and every member of the society is at liberty to withdraw when he pleases, and to take his property with him. The government, strikingly unlike the Jesuit autocracy, is of a republican form; and the superior, though first in honor, has to take his turn in discharging all the duties which come to each priest of the society in the order of his seniority, including that of waiting at table, which is not entrusted in the Oratory to lay brothers, according to the practice in most other communities. Four deputies assist the superior in the government, and all public acts are decided by a majority of votes of the whole congregation, in which the superior has no casting voice. To be chosen superior, fifteen years of membership are requisite as a qualification, and the office is tenable, as all the others, for but three years at a time. No one can vote until he has been three years in the society; the deliberative voice is not obtained before the eleventh year.

There are thus three classes of members – novices, triennials and decennials.



Each house can call its superior to account, can depose, and can restore him, without appeal to any external authority, although the bishop of the diocese in which any house of the Oratory is established is its ordinary and immediate superior, though without power to interfere with the rule. Their churches are non-parochial, and they can perform such rites as baptisms, marriages, etc., only by permission of the parish priest, who is entitled to receive all fees due in respect of these ministrations.

The Oratory chiefly spread in Italy and in France, where in 1760 there were 58 houses all under the government of a superior-general. Nicolas Malebranche, Louis Thomassin, Jules Mascaron and Jean Baptiste Massillon were members of the famous branch established in Paris in 1611 by Bérulle (later cardinal), which had a great success and a distinguished history. It fell in the crash of the Revolution, but was revived by Père Pététot, curé of St Roch, in 1852, as the "Oratory of Jesus and the Immaculate Mary"; the Church of the Oratory near the Louvre belongs to the Reformed Church. An English house, founded in 1847 at Birmingham, is celebrated as the place at which Cardinal Newman fixed his abode after his submission to the Roman Catholic Church. In 1849 a second congregation was founded in King William Street, Strand, London, with F.W. Faber as superior; in 1854 it was transferred to Brompton, where it is still based. Its church, the Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, was consecrated on 16 April 1884 and is the second largest Roman Catholic church in London. The society has never thrived in Germany, though a few houses have been founded there, in Munich and also in Vienna, Austria.

Neri encouraged the singing of the *lauda spirituale* (laude) in his oratory services. The prominent composers Tomás Luis de Victoria and Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina probably participated in this music. His unique and varied aesthetic experience has been brilliantly highlighted in a study of the young Italian historian Francesco Danieli.

- II. Ex Ossibus S. Nicasy m. [from the bones of Saint Nicasius, Martyr]. Saint Nicasius of Rheims (French: Saint-Nicaise) (died 407) was a bishop of Rheims from 400 until his death. He founded the first cathedral of Rheims. He prophesied the invasion of France by the Vandals. He notified his people of this vision, telling them to prepare. When asked if the people



should fight or not, Nicasius responded, "Let us abide the mercy of God and pray for our enemies. I am ready to give myself for my people." Later, when the barbarians were at the gates of the city, he decided to attempt to slow them down so that more of his people could escape. He was killed by the Vandals either at the altar of his church or in its doorway. He was killed with Jucundus, his lector, Florentius, his deacon, and Eutropia, his virgin sister.

After the killing of Nicasius and his colleagues, the Vandals are said to have been frightened away from the area, according to some sources even leaving the treasure they had already gathered.

One detail from the account of his martyrdom states that at the moment of his execution, Nicasius was reading Psalm 119 (Psalm 118 in the Vulgate). When he reached the verse "Adhaesit pavimento anima mea," (my soul is attached onto dust) he was decapitated. However, the story goes that after his head had fallen to the ground, Nicasius continued the psalm, adding, "Vivifica me, Domine, secundum verbum tuum." (revive me, Lord, with your words) Nicasius is thus part of the tradition of the cephalophores ("head-carriers"), who, like Saint Denis, carried their heads and sometimes spoke through them. A Benedictine abbey at Rheims was later named in his honor.

Sometimes his date of death is given as 451, and that he was killed by the Huns rather than the Vandals. The tradition that he was killed by the Vandals in 407 is believed to be closer to the truth by some scholars.

12. Ex Ossibus S. Sisti, Pp. [from the bones of Saint Sixtus, Pope]. Although there are several Popes named Sixtus who were canonized, Pope Sixtus II is the saint and martyr commemorated in the Roman Mass. Pope Sixtus II or Pope Saint Sixtus II (a corruption of Greek Xystos, "polished") was pope from 30 August 257 to 6 August 258. He died as a martyr during the persecution by Emperor Valerian.

According to the Liber Pontificalis, he was Greek by birth; however this is uncertain, and is disputed by modern western historians arguing that the authors of Liber Pontificalis confused him with that of the contemporary



author Xystus, who was a Greek student of Pythagoreanism. He restored the relations with the African and Eastern Orthodox churches which had been broken off by his predecessor on the question of heretical baptism raised by the heresy of Novatianism.

In the persecutions under Valerian in 258, numerous bishops, priests, and deacons were put to death. Pope Sixtus II was one of the first victims of this persecution, being beheaded on 6 August. He was martyred along with six deacons – Januarius, Vincentius, Magnus, Stephanus, Felicissimus and Agapitus. Lawrence of Rome, his best-known deacon, suffered martyrdom on 10 August, 3 days after his bishop, as Sixtus had prophesied.

He is thought to be the author of the pseudo-Cyprianic writing *Ad Novatianum*, though this view has not found general acceptance. Another composition written at Rome, between 253 and 258, is generally agreed to be his.

It is this Sixtus who is referred to by name in the Roman Canon of the Mass. He and his companion-martyrs are commemorated with an optional memorial on 7 August in the ordinary form, and with a commemoration on 6 August in the extraordinary form.

The following inscription honoring Sixtus was placed on his tomb in the catacomb of Callixtus by Pope Damasus I:

At the time when the sword pierced the bowels of the Mother, I, buried here, taught as Pastor the Word of God; when suddenly the soldiers rushed in and dragged me from the chair. The faithful offered their necks to the sword, but as soon as the Pastor saw the ones who wished to rob him of the palm (of martyrdom) he was the first to offer himself and his own head, not tolerating that the (pagan) frenzy should harm the others. Christ, who gives recompense, made manifest the Pastor's merit, preserving unharmed the flock.

13. Ex Sacci S. Francisci Assisy [from the sakkos [habit] of Saint Francis of



Assisi. Saint Francis of Assisi (born Giovanni Francesco di Bernardone; 1181 – October 3, 1226) was an Italian Catholic friar and preacher. He founded the men's Franciscan Order, the women's Order of Saint Clare, and the Third Order of Saint Francis for men and women not living monastic lives. Though he was never ordained to the Catholic priesthood, Francis is one of the most venerated religious figures in history.

Francis was the son of a wealthy cloth merchant in Assisi, and he lived the high-spirited life typical of a wealthy young man, even fighting as a soldier for Assisi. While going off to war in 1204, Francis had a vision that directed him back to Assisi, where he lost his taste for his worldly life. On a pilgrimage to Rome, he joined the poor in begging at Saint 'Basilica. The experience moved him to live in poverty. Francis returned home, began preaching on the streets, and soon amassed a following. His Order was authorized by Pope Innocent III in 1210. He then founded the Order of Poor Clares, which became an enclosed religious order for women, as well as the Order of Brothers and Sisters of Penance (commonly called the Third Order).

In 1219, he went to Egypt in an attempt to convert the Sultan to put an end to the conflict of the Crusades. By this point, the Franciscan Order had grown to such an extent that its primitive organizational structure was no longer sufficient. He returned to Italy to organize the Order. Once his community was authorized by the Pope, he withdrew increasingly from external affairs. In 1223, Francis arranged for the first Christmas manger scene. In 1224, he received the stigmata, making him the first recorded person to bear the wounds of Christ's Passion. He died during the evening hours of October 3, 1226, while listening to a reading he had requested of Psalm 141.

On July 16, 1228, he was pronounced a saint by Pope Gregory IX. He is known as the patron saint of animals, the environment, and is one of the two patron saints of Italy (with Catherine of Siena). It is customary for Catholic and Anglican churches to hold ceremonies blessing animals on his feast day of October 4. He is also known for his love of the Eucharist, his sorrow during the Stations of the Cross, and for the creation of the Christmas creche or Nativity Scene.



Francis of Assisi was one of seven children born to Pietro di Bernardone, a rich cloth merchant, and his wife Pica, about whom little is known except that she was originally from Provence, France.[10] Pietro was in France on business when Francis was born, and Pica had him baptized as Giovanni di Bernardone. When his father returned to Assisi, he took to calling him Francesco ("the Frenchman"), possibly in honor of his commercial success and enthusiasm for all things French. According to another account, it was due to the boy being able to speak and sing in French fluently and effortlessly because of his French mother teaching him. Either way, the name Francesco soon replaced his baptismal name.

As a youth, Francesco – or Francis in English – became a devotee of troubadours and was fascinated with all things French. Although many hagiographers remark about his bright clothing, rich friends, and love of pleasures, his displays of disillusionment toward the world that surrounded him came fairly early in his life, as is shown in the "story of the beggar." In this account, he was selling cloth and velvet in the marketplace on behalf of his father when a beggar came to him and asked for alms. At the conclusion of his business deal, Francis abandoned his wares and ran after the beggar. When he found him, Francis gave the man everything he had in his pockets. His friends quickly chided and mocked him for his act of charity. When he got home, his father scolded him in rage.

In 1201, he joined a military expedition against Perugia and was taken as a prisoner at Collestrada, spending a year as a captive. It is possible that his spiritual conversion was a gradual process rooted in this experience. Upon his return to Assisi in 1203, Francis returned to his carefree life and in 1204, a serious illness led to a spiritual crisis. In 1205, Francis left for Puglia to enlist in the army of the Count of Brienne. A strange vision made him return to Assisi, deepening his ecclesiastical awakening.

According to the hagiographic legend, thereafter he began to avoid the sports and the feasts of his former companions. In response, they asked him laughingly whether he was thinking of marrying, to which he answered, "yes, a fairer bride than any of you have ever seen," meaning his "Lady Poverty". He spent much time in lonely places, asking God for enlightenment. By degrees he took to nursing lepers, the most repulsive victims in the lazar



houses near Assisi. After a pilgrimage to Rome, where he joined the poor in begging at the doors of the churches, he said he had a mystical vision of Jesus Christ in the country chapel of San Damiano, just outside of Assisi, in which the Icon of Christ Crucified said to him, "Francis, Francis, go and repair My house which, as you can see, is falling into ruins." He took this to mean the ruined church in which he was presently praying, and so he sold some cloth from his father's store to assist the priest there for this purpose.

His father, Pietro, highly indignant, attempted to change his mind, first with threats and then with beatings. In the midst of legal proceedings before the bishop, Francis renounced his father and his patrimony, laying aside even the garments he had received from him. For the next couple of months he lived as a beggar in the region of Assisi. Returning to the countryside around the town for two years, he embraced the life of a penitent, during which he restored several ruined chapels in the countryside around Assisi, among them the Porziuncola, the little chapel of Saint Mary of the Angels just outside the town, which later became his favorite abode.

At the end of this period (on February 24, 1209, according to Jordan of Giano), Francis heard a sermon that changed his life forever. The sermon was about Matthew 10:9, in which Christ tells his followers they should go forth and proclaim that the Kingdom of Heaven was upon them, that they should take no money with them, nor even a walking stick or shoes for the road. Francis was inspired to devote himself to a life of poverty.

Clad in a rough garment, barefoot, and, after the Gospel precept, without staff or scrip, he began to preach repentance. He was soon joined by his first follower, a prominent fellow townsman, the jurist Bernardo di Quintavalle, who contributed all that he had to the work. Within a year Francis had eleven followers. Francis chose never to be ordained a priest and the community lived as "lesser brothers," *fratres minores* in Latin. The brothers lived a simple life in the deserted lazar house of Rivo Torto near Assisi; but they spent much of their time wandering through the mountainous districts of Umbria, always cheerful and full of songs, yet making a deep impression upon their hearers by their earnest exhortations.

Francis' preaching to ordinary people was unusual since he had no license to



do so. In 1209 he composed a simple rule for his followers ("friars"), (the *Regula primitiva* or "Primitive Rule") which came from verses in the Bible. The rule was "To follow the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ and to walk in his footsteps." In 1209, Francis led his first eleven followers to Rome to seek permission from Pope Innocent III to found a new religious Order. Upon entry to Rome, the brothers encountered Bishop Guido of Assisi, who had in his company Giovanni di San Paolo, the Cardinal Bishop of Sabina. The Cardinal, who was the confessor of Pope Innocent III, was immediately sympathetic to Francis and agreed to represent Francis to the pope. Reluctantly, Pope Innocent agreed to meet with Francis and the brothers the next day. After several days, the pope agreed to admit the group informally, adding that when God increased the group in grace and number, they could return for an official admittance. The group was tonsured. This was important in part because it recognized Church authority and prevented his following from possible accusations of heresy, as had happened to the Waldensians decades earlier. Though Pope Innocent initially had his doubts, following a dream in which he saw Francis holding up the Basilica of Saint John Lateran (the cathedral of Rome, thus the 'home church' of all Christendom), he decided to endorse Francis' Order. This occurred, according to tradition, on April 16, 1210 and constituted the official founding of the Franciscan Order. The group, then the "Lesser Brothers" (Friars Minor or Franciscan Order), preached on the streets and had no possessions. They were centered in Porziuncola, and preached first in Umbria, before expanding throughout Italy.

From then on, his new Order grew quickly with new vocations. When hearing Francis preaching in the church of San Rufino in Assisi in 1209, Clare of Assisi became deeply touched by his message and she realized her calling. Her cousin Rufino, the only male member of the family in their generation, also joined the new Order.

On the night of Palm Sunday, March 28, 1211, Clare sneaked out of her family's palace. Francis received Clare at the Porziuncola and hereby established the Order of Poor Ladies, later called Poor Clares. This was an Order for women, and he gave a religious habit, or dress, similar to his own to the noblewoman later known as Saint Clare of Assisi, before he then lodged her and a few companions in a nearby monastery of Benedictine nuns.



Later he transferred them to San Damiano. There they were joined by many other women of Assisi. For those who could not leave their homes, he later formed the Third Order of Brothers and Sisters of Penance. This was a fraternity composed of either laity or clergy whose members neither withdrew from the world nor took religious vows. Instead, they carried out the principles of Franciscan life in their daily lives. Before long this Order grew beyond Italy.

Determined to bring the Gospel to all God's creatures, Francis sought on several occasions to take his message out of Italy. In the late spring of 1212, he set out for Jerusalem, but he was shipwrecked by a storm on the Dalmatian coast, forcing him to return to Italy. On May 8, 1213, he was given the use of the mountain of La Verna (Alverna) as a gift from Count Orlando di Chiusi, who described it as "eminently suitable for whoever wishes to do penance in a place remote from mankind." The mountain would become one of his favorite retreats for prayer. In the same year, Francis sailed for Morocco, but this time an illness forced him to break off his journey in Spain. Back in Assisi, several noblemen (among them Tommaso da Celano, who would later write the biography of Saint Francis) and some well-educated men joined his Order. In 1215, Francis went again to Rome for the Fourth Lateran Council. During this time, he probably met a canon, Dominic de Guzman (later to be Saint Dominic, the founder of the Friars Preachers, another Catholic religious order). In 1217 he offered to go to France. Cardinal Ugolino of Segni (the future Pope Gregory IX), an early and important supporter of Francis, advised him against this and said that he was still needed in Italy.

In 1219, accompanied by another friar and hoping to convert the Sultan of Egypt or win martyrdom in the attempt, Francis went to Egypt where a Crusader army had been encamped for over a year besieging the walled city of Damietta two miles (3.2 kilometers) upstream from the mouth of one of the main channels of the Nile. The Sultan, al-Kamil, a nephew of Saladin, had succeeded his father as Sultan of Egypt in 1218 and was encamped upstream of Damietta, unable to relieve it. A bloody and futile attack on the city was launched by the Christians on August 29, 1219, following which both sides agreed to a cease fire which lasted four weeks. It was most probably during this interlude that Francis and his companion crossed the



Saracen lines and were brought before the Sultan, remaining in his camp for a few days. The visit is reported in contemporary Crusader sources and in the earliest biographies of Francis, but they give no information about what transpired during the encounter beyond noting that the Sultan received Francis graciously and that Francis preached to the Saracens without effect, returning unharmed to the Crusader camp. No contemporary Arab source mentions the visit. One detail, added by Bonaventure in the official life of Francis (written forty years after the event), concerns an alleged challenge by Francis offering trial-by-fire in order to prove the veracity of the Christian Gospel. Although Bonaventure does not suggest as much, subsequent biographies went further, claiming that a fire was kindled which Francis unhesitatingly entered without suffering burns. Such an incident is depicted in the late 13th c. fresco cycle, attributed to Giotto, in the upper basilica at Assisi (see accompanying illustration). According to some late sources, the Sultan gave Francis permission to visit the sacred places in the Holy Land and even to preach there. All that can safely be asserted is that Francis and his companion left the Crusader camp for Acre, from where they embarked for Italy in the latter half of 1220. Drawing on a 1267 sermon by Bonaventure, later sources report that the Sultan secretly converted or accepted a death-bed baptism as a result of the encounter with Francis. The Franciscan Order has been present in the Holy Land almost uninterruptedly since 1217 when Brother Elias arrived at Acre. It received concessions from the Mameluk Sultan in 1333 with regard to certain Holy Places in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and (so far as concerns the Catholic Church) jurisdictional privileges from Pope Clement VI in 1342.

At Greccio near Assisi, around 1220, Francis celebrated Christmas by setting up the first known presepio or crèche (Nativity scene). His nativity imagery reflected the scene in traditional paintings. He used real animals to create a living scene so that the worshipers could contemplate the birth of the child Jesus in a direct way, making use of the senses, especially sight. Thomas of Celano, a biographer of Francis and Saint Bonaventure both, tell how he only used a straw-filled manger (feeding trough) set between a real ox and donkey. According to Thomas, it was beautiful in its simplicity with the manger acting as the altar for the Christmas Mass.

By this time, the growing Order of friars was divided into provinces and



groups were sent to France, Germany, Hungary, Spain and to the East. When receiving a report of the martyrdom of five brothers in Morocco, Francis returned to Italy via Venice. Cardinal Ugolino di Conti was then nominated by the Pope as the protector of the Order. The friars in Italy at this time were causing problems, and as such, Francis had to return in order to correct these problems. The Franciscan Order had grown at an unprecedented rate, when compared to prior religious orders. Unfortunately, however, its organizational sophistication had not kept up with this growth and had little more to govern it than Francis' example and simple rule. To address this problem, Francis prepared a new and more detailed Rule, the "First Rule" or "Rule Without a Papal Bull" (*Regula prima Regula non bullata*) which again asserted devotion to poverty and the apostolic life. However, it introduced greater institutional structure, although this was never officially endorsed by the pope.

On September 29, 1220, Francis handed over the governance of the Order to Brother Peter Catani at the Porziuncola. However, Brother Peter died only five months later, on March 10, 1221, and was buried in the Porziuncola. When numerous miracles were attributed to the deceased brother, people started to flock to the Porziuncola, disturbing the daily life of the Franciscans. Francis then prayed, asking Peter to stop the miracles and to obey in death as he had obeyed during his life. The reports of miracles ceased. Brother Peter was succeeded by Brother Elias as Vicar of Francis. Two years later, Francis modified the "First Rule" (creating the "Second Rule" or "Rule With a Bull"), and Pope Honorius III approved it on November 29, 1223. As the official Rule of the order, it called on the friars "to observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, living in obedience without anything of our own and in chastity." In addition, it set regulations for discipline, preaching, and entry into the order. Once the Rule was endorsed by the Pope, Francis withdrew increasingly from external affairs. During 1221 and 1222 Francis crossed Italy, first as far south as Catania in Sicily and afterwards as far north as Bologna.

While he was praying on the mountain of Verna, during a forty-day fast in preparation for Michaelmas (September 29), Francis is said to have had a vision on or about September 14, 1224, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, as a result of which he received the stigmata. Brother Leo, who had



been with Francis at the time, left a clear and simple account of the event, the first definite account of the phenomenon of stigmata. "Suddenly he saw a vision of a seraph, a six-winged angel on a cross. This angel gave him the gift of the five wounds of Christ." Suffering from these stigmata and from an eye disease, Francis received care in several cities (Siena, Cortona, Nocera) to no avail. In the end, he was brought back to a hut next to the Porziuncola. Here, in the place where it all began, feeling the end approaching, he spent the last days of his life dictating his spiritual testament. He died on the evening of October 3, 1226, singing Psalm 142(141) – "Voce mea ad Dominum".

On July 16, 1228, he was pronounced a saint by Pope Gregory IX (the former cardinal Ugolino di Conti, friend of Saint Francis and Cardinal Protector of the Order). The next day, the Pope laid the foundation stone for the Basilica of Saint Francis in Assisi. He was buried on May 25, 1230, under the Lower Basilica, but his tomb was soon hidden on orders of Brother Elias to protect it from Saracen invaders. His burial place remained unknown until it was discovered in 1818. Pasquale Belli then constructed for his remains a crypt in neo-classical style in the Lower Basilica. It was refashioned between 1927 and 1930 into its present form by Ugo Tarchi, stripping the wall of its marble decorations. In 1978 the remains of Saint Francis were examined and confirmed by a commission of scholars appointed by Pope Paul VI, and put in a glass urn in the ancient stone tomb. Saint Francis is considered the first Italian poet by literary critics. He believed commoners should be able to pray to God in their own language, and he wrote often in the dialect of Umbria instead of Latin. His writings are considered to have great literary and religious value.

It has been argued that no one in history was as dedicated as Francis to imitate the life, and carry out the work, of Christ in Christ's own way. This is important in understanding Francis' character and his affinity for the Eucharist and respect for the priests who carried out the sacrament. He and his followers celebrated and even venerated poverty. Poverty was so central to his character that in his last written work, the Testament, he said that absolute personal and corporate poverty was the essential lifestyle for the members of his order. He believed that nature itself was the mirror of God. He called all creatures his "brothers" and "sisters," and even preached to the



birds and supposedly persuaded a wolf to stop attacking some locals if they agreed to feed the wolf. In his "Canticle of the Creatures" ("Praises of Creatures" or "Canticle of the Sun"), he mentioned the "Brother Sun" and "Sister Moon," the wind and water, and "Sister Death." He referred to his chronic illnesses as his "sisters." His deep sense of brotherhood under God embraced others, and declared that "he considered himself no friend of Christ if he did not cherish those for whom Christ died." Francis's visit to Egypt and attempted rapprochement with the Muslim world had far-reaching consequences, long past his own death, since after the fall of the Crusader Kingdom it would be the Franciscans, of all Catholics, who would be allowed to stay on in the Holy Land and be recognized as "Custodians of the Holy Land" on behalf of the Catholic Church.

Many of the stories that surround the life of Saint Francis deal with his love for animals. Perhaps the most famous incident that illustrates the Saint's humility towards nature is recounted in the "Fioretti" ("Little Flowers"), a collection of legends and folklore that sprang up after the Saint's death. It is said that, one day, while Francis was traveling with some companions, they happened upon a place in the road where birds filled the trees on either side. Francis told his companions to "wait for me while I go to preach to my sisters the birds." The birds surrounded him, intrigued by the power of his voice, and not one of them flew away. He is often portrayed with a bird, typically in his hand.

Another legend from the Fioretti tells that in the city of Gubbio, where Francis lived for some time, was a wolf "terrifying and ferocious, who devoured men as well as animals." Francis had compassion upon the townsfolk, and so he went up into the hills to find the wolf. Soon, fear of the animal had caused all his companions to flee, though the saint pressed on. When he found the wolf, he made the sign of the cross and commanded the wolf to come to him and hurt no one. Miraculously the wolf closed his jaws and lay down at the feet of Saint Francis. "Brother Wolf, you do much harm in these parts and you have done great evil," said Francis. "All these people accuse you and curse you...But brother Wolf, I would like to make peace between you and the people." Then Francis led the wolf into the town, and surrounded by startled citizens made a pact between them and the wolf. Because the wolf had "done evil out of hunger, the townsfolk were to feed the



wolf regularly. In return, the wolf would no longer prey upon them or their flocks. In this manner Gubbio was freed from the menace of the predator. Francis even made a pact on behalf of the town dogs, that they would not bother the wolf again. Finally, to show the townspeople that they would not be harmed, Francis blessed the wolf.

Francis preached the teaching of the Catholic Church, that the world was created good and beautiful by God but suffers a need for redemption because of the primordial sin of man. He preached to man and beast the universal ability and duty of all creatures to praise God (a common theme in the Psalms) and the duty of men to protect and enjoy nature as both the stewards of God's creation and as creatures ourselves.

On November 29, 1979, Pope John Paul II declared Saint Francis to be the Patron of Ecology.

Then during the World Environment Day 1982, he said that Saint Francis' love and care for creation was a challenge for contemporary Catholics and a reminder "not to behave like dissident predators where nature is concerned, but to assume responsibility for it, taking all care so that everything stays healthy and integrated, so as to offer a welcoming and friendly environment even to those who succeed us." The same Pope wrote on the occasion of the World Day of Peace, January 1, 1990, the saint of Assisi "offers Christians an example of genuine and deep respect for the integrity of creation..." He went on to make the point that Saint Francis: "As a friend of the poor who was loved by God's creatures, Saint Francis invited all of creation – animals, plants, natural forces, even Brother Sun and Sister Moon – to give honor and praise to the Lord. The poor man of Assisi gives us striking witness that when we are at peace with God we are better able to devote ourselves to building up that peace with all creation which is inseparable from peace among all peoples."

Pope John Paul II concluded that section of the document with these words, "It is my hope that the inspiration of Saint Francis will help us to keep ever alive a sense of 'fraternity' with all those good and beautiful things which Almighty God has created."



Saint Francis's feast day is observed on October 4. A secondary feast in honor of the stigmata received by Saint Francis, celebrated on September 17, was inserted in the General Roman Calendar in 1585 (later than the Tridentine Calendar) and suppressed in 1604, but was restored in 1615. In the New Roman Missal of 1969, it was removed, as something of a duplication of the main feast on October 4, from the General Calendar and left to the calendars of certain localities and of the Franciscan Order. Wherever the traditional Roman Missal is used, however, the feast of the Stigmata remains in the General Calendar.

On June 18, 1939, Pope Pius XII named Francis a joint Patron Saint of Italy along with Saint Catherine of Siena with the apostolic letter "Licet Commissa", AAS XXXI (1939), 256–257. Pope Pius mentioned the two saints in the laudative discourse he pronounced on May 5, 1949, in the Church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva.

Saint Francis is honored in the Church of England, the Anglican Church of Canada, the Episcopal Church USA, the Old Catholic Churches, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and other churches and religious communities on October 4. The Evangelical Church in Germany, however, commemorates Saint Francis' feast day on his death day, October 3.

14. Ex Ossibus S. Fortunate Virg. et m. [from the bones of Saint Fortunata, Virgin and Martyr. Very little is known about this 4th century martyred virgin. Martyred on 14 October 303 AD in Caesarea, in Israel, reportedly with her brothers, Saints Carphonius, Evaristus, and Priscian, her relics have been venerated in Naples, Italy, since the 8th century.



31

Nicolaus Cerbinus V. I. D. ac Sac. Theologie Mag. Dei &
Sande Sedis Apostolicę Gr. Episcopus Lauellensis.

Venerabilis & singulis, pntes nostras literas, literas inspecturis, fidem facimus indubiam atque testamur, qualiter Nobis ex tribus plurimis Sacris Reliquiis, eas ex authenticis locis fideliter extractas, ac documentis authenticis sigilloque munitas Illmo. et Rmo. Epoy Nunciy Bachary Epi Boianen. Sanctissimi Dni Nostri Benedicti XIII. Pape Vicegerentis, et Ioannis M. Cape- celano Epi Hysclani, bene et acriter recognouimus, sequentes sacras Reliquias et curauimus V. paricul. ex Capillis B.V. Marie, Vestis S. Ioseph. Sponsis B.V. Marie, Dentis S. Viti m. Oss. S. Francisci Borge, S. Cataldi Epi, S. Moniani m. s. Francisci de Paula, S. Paschalis Baylon, S. Zaccarie Epi, and. S. Philippi Nery, S. Nicasy m. S. Sisti Pp. Sacri S. Francisci Assisy, et oss. S. Fortunatę Virg. et m. Quas reuerent. reposuimus, et collocauimus, in theca auri calcha forme ouate, cum Cristallo a parte antea, et ex alia funiculo serico rubri coloris colligatas, et nostro paruo sigillo, in cera rubra Hispanica impresso, obsignauimus, et muniuimus, atque sic repositas ad maiory Dei Gloriam, et dictory Sanctoy uenerationem. Dono dedimus Largimur, et concessimus, in Dno D. Nicolao Ant. Leuino de Bonis, Sacre Theologie V. I. Doct. et Promoto. Apotic. de Parity Capuani, ad effectum, et cum facilitate dictas sacras Reliquias apud se retinendi, alijs dono concedendi, et in quas umq. Insigniori Ecclesia, Oratorio, aut Cappella publice Christi fidelium uenerationi expo- nendi, et collocandi, in quoy fidem has pntes literas fieri fecimus nostra manu subscriptas, nostroq. fixatas, sigillo per infrascriptum Secretarium nostrum, ad id a Nobis specialit. deputatum, expediri man- dauimus. Datum Lauelli hac die XXI mensis Aprilis Anno. Millesimo, Septingentesimo, vigesimo Octauo. M DCCXXVIII.

Nicolaus Episcopus Lauellensis



