

August 19

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Guerric d'Igny (1070/1080-1157) monk

In 1157 Guerric, abbot of Igny, died in his abbey.

Born between 1070 and 1080 in Tournai, Belgium, Guerric became a canon and a theology instructor in his city. A seeker of solitude and prayer, he paid a visit to St. Bernard and, at over the age of forty, decided to become a monk at Clairvaux. In 1138 he was named abbot of Igny, and carried out this ministry with fatherly love and care for the rest of his life.

In his sermons, which are the fruit of his constant pondering of biblical and liturgical texts during community prayer, Guerric invites his listeners to let the Word take form in their souls as in the body of the Lord's mother, by meditating Scripture and living an ascetic life oriented towards love for others.

Guerric's life was essentially about waiting for the Lord's return, and his witness still reminds monks and the entire Church of the priority of seeking God's kingdom and his justice.

BIBLICAL READINGS

1 Cor 2:1-10a; Mt 23:8-12

Bernard Tolomei (1272-1348) monk

Today the Catholic Church also remembers Bernard Tolomei, a monk who founded the Benedictine congregation of the Mount of Olives.

Born in Siena in 1272, Giovanni Tolomei became a professor of legal studies in that city, which was one of Italy's most important medieval urban centers.

As he neared the age of forty, his sight began to fail. Leaving the city, he and two companions of the Sienese nobility retired to the quiet of Accona, where they founded what would become the monastery of Monte Oliveto Maggiore. Their intention was to lead a semi-eremitic life of work and prayer, and to share their possessions as the first Christian communities had done. In those years Giovanni changed his name to Bernard, in honor of the abbot of Clairvaux who had inspired the new monastic adventure he had begun in the Sienese countryside.

The community's growth and the birth of new foundations in different parts of Italy forced Bernard and his brothers to seek canonical recognition. In 1319 they adopted the Rule of St. Benedict, and pontifical approval followed in 1344.

The community, recognizing Bernard as a man of God and a father full of mercy and discernment, named him abbot, a ministry he had refused in the monastery's early years. He served as abbot until 1348. In that year, during a visit to Siena with several of his brothers to help victims the plague, he himself lost his life to the illness.

BIBLICAL READINGS

Gen 12:1-4a; Phil 2:12-18; Lk 12:32-34

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

WESTERN CATHOLICS:

John Eudes (d. 1680), priest (Roman and Ambrosian calendar)

Bernard Tolomei, abbot (Monastic calendar)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (13 misra/nahasse):

Transfiguration of Christ on Mount Tabor

LUTHERANS:

Blaise Pascal (d. 1662), Christian thinker in France

MARONITES:

Andrew the Stratilite and his companions, martyrs (d. ca. 305)

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:

Andrew the Stratilite, megalomartyr, and his 2593 companions