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INTRODUCTION TO THE ROMAN MARTYROLOGY

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THE ROMAN MARTYROLOGY is an official and accredited record, on the pages of which are set forth in simple and brief, but impressive words, the glorious deeds of the Soldiers of Christ in all ages of the Church; of the illustrious Heroes and Heroines of the Cross, whom her solemn verdict has beatified or canonized. In making up this long roll of honor, the Church has been actuated by that instinctive wisdom with which the Spirit of God, who abides in her and teaches her all truth, has endowed her, and which permeates through and guides all her actions. She is the Spouse of Christ, without spot or wrinkle or blemish, wholly glorious and undefiled, whom He loved, for whom He died, and to whom He promised the Spirit of Truth, to comfort her in her dreary pilgrimage through this valley of tears, and to abide with her

forever. She is one with Him in Spirit and in love, she is subject to Him in all things; she loves what He loves, she teaches and practices what He commands.

If the world has its “Legions of Honor”, why should not also the Church of the Living God, the pillar and the ground of the truth? If men who have been stained with blood, and women who have been tainted with vice, have had their memory consecrated in prose and in verse, and monuments erected to their memory, because they exhibited extraordinary talents, achieved great success, or were, to a greater or less extent, benefactors of their race in the temporal order, which passeth away, why should not the true Heroes and Heroines of Jesus, who, imitating His example, have overcome themselves, risen superior to and trampled upon the world, have aspired, in all their thoughts, words, and actions, to a heavenly crown, and have moreover labored with disinterested zeal and self-forgetting love for the good of their fellow-men, have their memories likewise consecrated and embalmed in the minds and hearts of the people of God? If time have its heroes, why should not eternity; if man, why should not God? “Thy friends, O Lord, are exceedingly honored; their principality is exceedingly exalted.” Whom His Father so dearly loved, the world crucified; whom the world neglects, despises, and crucifies, God, through His Church, exceedingly honors and exalts. Their praises are sung forth, with jubilation of heart, in the Church of God for ages on ages.

The wisdom of the Church of God in honoring her Saints is equaled only by the great utility of the practice thus consecrated. The Saints are not merely heroes; they are models. Christ lived in them, and Christ yet speaks through them. They were the living temples of the Holy Ghost, in whose mortal bodies dwelt all the riches of His wisdom and grace. They were in life consecrated human exemplars of divine excellence and perfection. Their example still appeals to our minds and to our hearts, more eloquently even than did their words to the men of their own generation, while they were in the tabernacle of the flesh. Though dead, they still speak. Their relics are instinct with sanctity, and through them they continue to breathe forth the sweet odor of Christ. The immortality into which they have entered still lingers in their bones, and seems to breathe in their mortal remains. As many an ardent, spirit has been induced to rush to the cannon's mouth by reading the exploits of earthly heroes, so many a generous Christian soul has been fired with heavenly ardor, and been impelled to rush to the crown of martyrdom, by reading the lives and heroic achievements of the Saints and Martyrs of Christ. Example, in its silent appeal, is more potent in its influence on the human heart and conduct than are words in their most eloquent utterances.

The Church knows and feels all this, in the Spirit of God with whom she is replenished ; and hence she sets forth, with holy joy and exultant hope, her bright and ever-increasing Calendar of Sanctity of just men and women made perfect and

rendered glorious, under her unearthly and sublime teachings. In reading this roll of consecrated holiness, our instinctive conclusion is, precisely that which the great soul of St. Augustine reached at the very crisis of his life, the moment of his conversion “If other men like me have attained to such sanctity, why not I? Shall the poor, the afflicted, the despised of the World, bear away the palm of victory, the crown of immortality, while I lie buried in my sloth and dead in my sins, and thus lose the brilliant and glorious mansion already prepared for me in heaven? Shall all the gifts, which God has lavished upon me, be ingloriously spent and foolishly wasted, in the petty contest for this world's evanescent honors and riches, while the poor and contemned lay up treasures in heaven, and secure the prize of immortal glory? Shall others be the friends of God, whom He delights to honor, while I alone remain His enemy, and an alien from His blessed Kingdom?”

It is a consoling evidence of progress in the spiritual life in this country to find the Martyrology here published, for the first time, in English, and thereby made accessible, in its rich treasures of Sanctity, to all classes of our population. It will prove highly edifying and useful, not only to the members of our numerous religious Communities of both sexes, but also to the laity generally. Every day has here its record of Sanctity; and there is scarcely a Christian, no matter how lowly or how much occupied, who may not be able to daily peruse, with faith and with great profit, the brief page of each day's models of Holiness. These belong to all classes and callings of life; from the throne to the hovel, from the Pontiff to the lowest cleric, from the philosopher to the peasant, from the busy walks of life to the dreary wastes of the desert.

Let all, then, procure and read daily the appropriate portions of this Martyrology. Its daily and pious perusal will console us in affliction, will animate us in despondency, will make our souls glow with the love of God in coldness, and will lift up our minds and hearts from this dull and ever-changing earth to the bright and everlasting mansions prepared for us in Heaven!

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