

St. Engratia & 18 Companions, Martyrs



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The church celebrates on this day the triumph of Saint Engratia, a virgin martyr who was a native of Portugal. Her father had promised her in marriage to a man of quality in Rousillon, Gaul, and to accompany her there, he sent as her escort for the marriage her uncle Lupercius and a brilliant suite of sixteen other noblemen, as well as a servant named Julie.

When they arrived at Saragossa, she learned of the horrible massacre of Christians being carried on at that time, and of the torments they were enduring at the hand of Dacian, who governed that region in the name of the emperors Diocletian and Maximian. Inspired with a divine heroism, she resolved to attempt to change his dispositions, or if she could not do so, to take part herself in the glory of these generous soldiers of Christ, and mingle her blood with theirs.

She obtained an audience with the persecutor. Saying she was moved with compassion for her brethren who, despite their innocence, were being slain without mercy, she asked him, How can you shed the blood of so many persons who have done nothing but adore the true God and despise vain idols? Dacian, hearing her gentle reproaches, immediately had her imprisoned and sought out her companions, whom he also cast into prison. They affirmed at his tribunal that they too were Christians, and all were cruelly scourged. Saint Engratia was subjected to the most cruel and barbarous torments;



abandoned in prison, she died of her wounds which festered there. Her death occurred in April of the year 303.

Saint Lupercius, with the seventeen nobles and Julie, had already been decapitated. Dacian, still not satiated with blood, massacred great numbers of other Christians of Saragossa who are honored on November 3rd under the title of the Countless Martyrs of Saragossa. Their bodies were burned with those of several malefactors, imprisoned at the same time, but it is said that the ashes of the martyrs separated and formed a lot apart, called the masse blanche.

The relics of Saint Engratia, who was buried by the Christians of Saragossa, have always been held in high honor in Spain, at Saragossa in particular.

Reflection. Men do not pursue in a haphazard manner temporal goods, or by fits and starts. Let us be just as punctual and orderly in the service of God, not searching for new paths but perfecting our ordinary devotions. If we persevere in these, Paradise is ours.

St. Fructuosus of Braga

F h si m

Son of a Gothic general, and member of a noble military family. Studied at the seminary in Palencia. From an early age, Fructuosus felt a call to the religious life. Orphaned when young. When he came of age, Fructuosus gave away his family fortune to the poor, bought the freedom of slaves, and founded several monasteries. By 647 he had founded houses in Lusitania, Asturia, Spanish Galicia, and the island of Gades.

Feeling that he lacked contact with God, Fructuosus left the houses and friends, and became a hermit in the desert of Galacia. His reputation for holiness and wisdom attracted students, sometimes entire families. He built monasteries for them, placed them under the Benedictine Rule, and served as abbot. He attracted so many disciples that the king limited the number of men who could join; he feared there would not be enough young men to man the army.

Again feeling that the outside world was taking too much of this time, Fructuosus planned to flee further into the wilderness, this time to the deserts in Egypt. However, the king got word of the plan, decided too many people depended on his leadership, and ordered him not to leave the country. Bishop of Dumium in 654. Archbishop of Braga, Portugal in 656. Wrote two monastic rules, one of which was designed to allow families to remain together, yet live monastic lives.

Born: early 7th century Spain

St. Fructuosus of Braga

Died: • 16 April 665• his deathbed was a pile of ashes he had placed before the altar• relics translated to Santiago de Compostela, Spain in 1102• his tomb became a place for pilgrimages, and a scene of miracles

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