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Saint Thomas, the glory of the Spanish Church in the sixteenth century, was born in the diocese of Toledo in 1488. His mother was a Christian of extraordinary tenderness for the poor. God worked a miracle for her one day, when her servants had given away absolutely all the flour in their storeroom. When another beggar came to the door, she told them to go back once more and look again, and they found the storeroom filled with flour. Her little son followed his mother's example, and one day gave away, to six poor persons in succession, the six young chicks which had been following the hen around in the yard. When his mother asked where they were, he said, You didn't leave any bread in the house, Mama, so I gave them the chicks! I would have given the hen if another beggar had come.

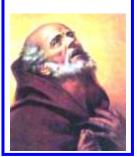
At the age of fifteen years he began his studies and succeeded so well he was judged fit to teach philosophy and theology in a college of Alcala, and then at Salamanca. When his father died he returned to Villanova to dispose of his patrimony. He made his house into a hospital, keeping only what was needed for his mother, and gave the rest to the poor. At the age of twenty-eight he entered the Order of the Hermits of Saint Augustine at Salamanca, becoming professed in 1517. When ordained a priest three years later, he continued his teaching of theology, but also began to preach so remarkably well that he was compared with Saint Paul and the prophet Elias. The city was reformed, and after the Emperor Charles V heard him once, he returned and often mingled with the crowd to listen, finally making Saint Thomas his official preacher. He became Prior of his Order in three cities, then three times a Provincial Superior. His sanctity continued to increase, and he was nominated archbishop of Valencia in 1544; he had refused a similar offer sixteen years earlier, but this time was obliged to accept. After a long drought, rain fell on the day he assumed his new office. He arrived as a pilgrim accompanied by one fellow monk, and was not recognized in the convent of his Order when the two travelers came asking for shelter during the rain. He was obliged to reveal his identity when the Prior, who wondered where the awaited archbishop might be, asked him if perchance it was he.

The new Archbishop was so poor that he was given money for furnishings, but he took it to the hospital for the indigent. On being led to his throne in church, he pushed the silken cushions aside, and with tears kissed the ground. His first visit was to the prison. Two-thirds of his episcopal revenues were annually spent in alms. He daily fed five hundred needy persons, made himself responsible for the bringing up of the city's orphans, and sheltered neglected foundlings with a mother's care. During his eleven years' episcopate, not one poor maiden was married without an alms from the archbishop. Spurred by his example, the rich and the selfish became liberal and generous. And when, on the Nativity of Our Lady, 1555, after one week of illness, Saint Thomas was about to breathe his last, he gave his bed to a poor man and asked to be placed on the floor. It has been said that at his death he was probably the only poor man in his see.

Reflection: When a refractory priest had not heeded his bishop's remonstrances, Saint Thomas took him into a room apart, uncovered his shoulders and knelt before his crucifix, saying: My brother, my sins are the reason you have not changed your life and listened to my warnings. It is just for me to bear the penalty of my fault. And he scourged himself cruelly. This frequent practice brought many to tears and reform of their lives. In this way a perfect Pastor inspired his entire flock with truly Christian sentiments.

#### St. Ignatius of Santhia St. Ignatius of Santhia

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Ordained in 1710 in the diocese of Vercelli, Italy. Parish priest for six years. He was offered a position of authority in the diocese, but declined, and on 24 May 1716 he became a novice in the Capuchins of Turin, Italy, taking the name Ignatius, and beginning 54 years of service in the Order. He was under the direction of a novice half his age, which Father Ignatius accepted with humility. In 1717 he was assigned to the convent at Saluzzo, Italy, and served as sacristan. Novice master at Chieri, Italy. Sacristan at Capuchin Hill, Turin in 1723, a convent with 87 priests. Novice master at Mondovi from 1731 to 1744. An eye illness forced him to give up the position for nearly two years.

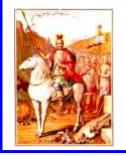
When he recovered he became head chaplain of the armies of the King of Piedmont who were fighting invading Franco-Hispanic forces. He was noted for his work in the field as minister, and with the injured. After the war he returned to life at Capuchin Hill where he served as confessor and religious instructor to lay brothers. In his later years he spent his days visiting the sick and the poor of Turin, and ministering to the thousands that came daily to Capuchin Hill for his blessing.

Born: 5 June 1686 in Santhià, Vercelli, Italy as Maurice Belvisotti

Died: 22 September 1770 of natural causes in Turin, Italy

Canonized: 19 May 2002 by Pope John Paul II at Rome, Italy

### St. Maurice and the Theban Legion



# St. Maurice and the Theban Legion

The Roman legion of Christians, called the Theban Legion, under the presidency of their General, Maurice, numbered more than six thousand men. They marched from the East into Gaul, which was in revolt. They were camped near the Lake of Geneva, when they received orders to join with the others in a solemn sacrifice to the gods. They retired a little farther away, to a site today called Saint Maurice d'Augaune, in order to abstain, but were told to return and join in the festival with the others. They found themselves in the sad necessity of disobeying the command. It was not an act of felony for these brave soldiers, who had already fought many battles, but of heroic loyalty. Nonetheless, the barbaric prince gave the order to decimate the Legion. It would seem the emperor's messengers might have feared a forced resistance, but the disciples of Jesus Christ hoped for nothing but a peaceful victory over the world and the demon, with all his false gods.

The names of the soldiers were written on papers and placed in the caps of the centurions, for 600 were destined to perish as examples. These embraced their comrades, who encouraged them and even envied their fate. The plain soon flowed with the blood of the martyrs. The survivors persisted in declaring themselves Christians, and the butchery began again; the blood of another 600 reddened the waters of the Rhone. The others all persevered in their faith, and Saint Maurice sent to the tyrant an admirable letter, saying: Emperor, we are your soldiers; we are ready to combat the enemies of the empire, but we are also Christians, and we owe fidelity to the true God. We are not rebels, but we prefer to die, innocent, rather than to live, guilty. The Emperor, seeing himself defeated, ordered them all to be massacred. As the massacre began, these generous soldiers deposed their weapons, offered their necks to the sword, and suffered themselves to be butchered in silence.

Reflection: Thank God for every slight or insult you have to bear. An injury borne in meekness and silence is a true victory. It is the proof that we are good soldiers of Jesus Christ, disciples of that heavenly wisdom which is both pure and peaceable.

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