



St. John Berchmans

Born: 1st October 1549 at Almendral, Spain as Anne Garcia

Died: 7th June 1626 at Antwerp, Belgium of natural causes

Beatified: 6th May 1917 by Pope Benedict XV

As a thirteen-year-old orphan, Anne Garcia Manzananas, of Almendral, Spain, tended her brothers' sheep. Devoted to the Passion of Christ, she wanted to consecrate her virginity to God, but feared she would be unable to overcome her brothers' opposition to her vocation. As she later related, "I decided one day that if I were to find a man very rich, very handsome, very agreeable, very holy, and who would have helped me in the service of God, that I would have been glad with such companionship." As she was musing thus, Christ appeared to her and said, "I am the man whom you are seeking." From that day onward, Anne resolved never to marry. One night, having fallen asleep with her rosary in her hands (which she recited daily), Anne experienced a vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary showing her the Discalced Carmelites' convent in Ávila, and pressing her to become a nun there. Then Christ appeared, seconding his Mother's words and pulling Anne by her rosary beads. After waking, Anne resolved to become a Carmelite, and took her vows at Ávila in 1572. She served as secretary to the Discalced Carmelites' foundress, Saint Teresa of Ávila.