

**February 3**

**BLESSED JOACHIM OF SIENA**

*Memorial*

*Joachim was born about 1258 in Siena, Italy. At the age of thirteen he was received into the Servite Order by Saint Philip Benizi. He lived in the communities of Siena and Arezzo and there he gave an admirable example of devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, humility and charity. He loved others so much that when he was unable to console an epileptic with words he asked for and obtained from God that he might take the sickness upon himself. He died in 1305. In 1609 Pope Paul V permitted the Servite Order to celebrate Mass and Divine Office in his honour.*

*From the common of saints and blessed of our Order, or from the common of holy men.*

**Office of Readings**

**SECOND READING**

*Choose one of the following readings.*

From a treatise by Saint Cyprian, bishop and martyr  
(De bono patientiae, nn. 6-7. 13.15: CSEL 3, pp. 401-402, 406, 407-408)

*Let us patiently maintain the bonds of unity*

Beloved friends, Jesus Christ, our Lord and God, did not simply preach the value of patience; he lived it out daily. He came to the world to do the Father's will. In addition to revealing the Father's majesty by manifestations of his power, Christ also represented the Father's patience through his own long-suffering. Patience marked every action of Christ from the very moment of his coming. To begin with, the Son of God did not refuse to descend to earth from the heights of heaven. In addition, though he was not himself a sinner, he did not refuse to bear the sins of others. He set his immortal state aside for a while and allowed himself to be mortal so that, innocent though he was, he might give his life for the salvation of the guilty.

For the forgiveness of sins, the Lord accepted baptism from his servant and did not disdain to wash his own body in the water of rebirth. For forty days he fasted, that others might be fed; he went without food and remained hungry so that those who hunger for his grace-filled word might feast on heavenly bread. He struggled with the devil who tempted him, and, content with simply subduing his foe, he used no weapon stronger than words.

He did not rule his disciples as a master does his servants, but showed them a brother's love, full of kindness and gentleness. By being that kind of lord to those who were in fact his servants, he showed how one ought to be a servant among friends and equals. We should not be surprised at his thus treating those who heeded him. After all, did he not bear patiently with Judas to the very end? Sit at table with his foe, and know the enemy to be in his own household and yet not give him away or even refuse the traitor's kiss? When his passion and death were imminent, what insults he patiently listened to and what scorn he patiently endured before shedding his blood and dying a cruel death! Christ persevered to the end he endured all things without exception, so that in him the fullness of patience might be perfected. Our Lord and teacher's salutary instruction is that *whoever perseveres to the end will be saved*, or, as he puts it in another passage: *If you persevere in my word, you are truly my disciples; you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free*. We must persevere and never yield. We have been given the hope of truth and freedom; if we persevere, we shall attain them. Our very being as Christians is constituted by faith and hope, is it not? But if faith and hope are to reach their fruition, we need patience. The glory we

seek is not present but future, as Paul the Apostle reminds us when he says: *We are saved in hope. To see, however, is not to hope. For, if someone sees the reality, what is there to hope for? If, on the other hand, we hope for what we do not see, we must endure through the waiting*. Waiting and patience are needed if we are to finish what we have begun, and attain the object of faith and

hope which God sets before us.

Love is the bond of fraternity and the foundation of peace. It gives cohesion and strength to unity. It is more important than hope and faith, more valuable than good works and martyrdom. It will abide with us eternally in the kingdom of heaven.

Strip love of patience, and it will not survive such deprivation. Strip it of its sustaining and forbearing nourishment and love's strength will fail. When the Apostle speaks of love, he links it to patient endurance. He writes: *Love is patient, love is kind, love is not jealous or snobbish. It is not prone to anger nor does it think evil. It is always loving, always trusting, always hopeful, and never gives up.* He shows love's power is able to persevere without yielding, for, as he says, love never gives up. Elsewhere he says: *Support one another in love and endeavour to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace.* According to Paul, then, neither unity nor peace is possible unless support one another with mutual forbearance and patiently maintain the bonds of unity.

**RESPONSORY** See Colossians 3:12-14 Galatians 6:2

V. As God's chosen ones, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility and patience and bear with one another.

R. Above all these virtues, put on love, which binds them together and makes them perfect.

V. Bear one another's burdens; this way you will fulfil the law of Christ. R. Above all these ...

***Alternative.***

From the Life of Blessed Joachim of Siena

(Nn. 1-6, 17-19 passim; Monumenta OSM, V, pp. 7-9, 11-12)

*I bear the springs of Christ in my body*

Joachim was born in the city of Siena; both of his parents were of noble blood. While still a child at school, he cultivated a special devotion to the holy Mother of God. His devotion was so great that whatever he could secretly take from home he distributed in her name to those who asked him for her sake. From the very beginning this stripling of God revealed goodness, a youth of perfect character that gave clear signs of his love for the honour of the glorious Virgin above all things; he appeared to all already a saint, and looking into the future they said, "If this child lives, he will be a great saint!" When the devout boy reached the age of fourteen, he saw the Blessed Virgin in a dream, surrounded by choirs of angels and clothed in a splendid robe. She said to him, "Sweetest son, come to me; I know how much you love me, therefore I choose you for my service forever." When the holy youth awoke, he was inspired by this vision of Our Lady and made up his mind to enter the Order of Servants of Saint Mary the Virgin.

At that time the illustrious confessor Philip, who was general of the Order, was in the priory at Siena. He was a brilliant light and a father of truly great holiness. Philip received him into the Order and asked by what name he wished to be called. The boy, burning with devotion to the Virgin, asked to be called Joachim. By bearing her father's name, he might always be close to her in mind and body. In the world he had been called Chiaramonte.

Once in the Order, Joachim, the servant of God, gave himself completely to a life of great humility. In spite of his noble origins and youth, he preferred the humblest and most distasteful tasks. He comforted the suffering, served the sick, and with his own hands carried out with devotion those vile services which were repugnant to others.

He loved obedience especially and called it the food of the soul, in the words of the Saviour: *My food is to do the will of my Father who is in heaven.* Blessed Philip later sent him to the priory in Arezzo. When

he had been there about a year, he and Fra Acquisto of Arezzo, a man of great fame, were passing through the countryside. It was night and rain was falling hard, so they took refuge in an inn. They found there a sick man who had been suffering for a long time. Blessed Joachim heard his lament with compassion and said to him, "Brother, have patience; this illness will be your salvation."

But the sick man replied, "Good friar, it is easier to praise infirmity than to bear it." Joachim then said, "I beseech almighty God to free you from this illness and give it to me, his servant. May death alone release me from this infirmity. So shall I bear continually the suffering of Christ in my body." The sick man got up from his bed forthwith; he was completely healed. The friar remained in his place, a victim of epilepsy. This sickness afflicted him for the rest of his life and through it he won a crown of martyrdom. It pleased the Most High to adorn him with yet another crown. Another illness struck him: the flesh was eaten away to the bone in some parts of his body and worms appeared. He hid it from the friars as long as he could, but when they learned of it they were very saddened. They entreated him to pray for himself, that he be freed from this affliction. He replied, "Beloved brothers, it is not fitting for me to do so, because this ailment is to purge my sins and strengthen my soul; as the Apostle said, *When I am Weak, then am I strong.*"

The Lord revealed to him that his death was near, and he begged God to call him on the same day the Saviour left the world. On the eve of his departure from earth, the day of the Lord's Supper, he spoke to the assembled friars: "Beloved brothers, I have lived with you thirty-three years, the length of Our Lord's life on earth. I have received many services from you, and you have assisted me in my every need. I am not capable of thanking you sufficiently for all you have done. May the Lord Jesus Christ thank you and repay you for what you have done for me. Tomorrow I shall leave you, and I pray you to entreat the Lord to receive me, a sinner, into his dwelling. I desire to renew our fraternal love before departing." He then drank a little wine with them.

But on Good Friday, just before the Passion was sung, he sent for the prior and said to him, "Reverend Father, in a little while the Lord will call me from this earth. Call the friars to my bedside and give me the sacraments of the Church, even though I received the Sacred Body with all of you yesterday. I don't want to leave you while all alone." The prior was not entirely convinced, but he couldn't ignore his words either, so he left four friars with him. Joachim continued praying while the Passion of the Lord was being sung. At the words, "inclinato capite, emisit spiritum" (he bowed his head and yielded up his spirit), he raised his eyes and, while the four friars stood around, gave his spirit back to the Creator.

**RESPONSORY** See Isaiah 53:4; 1 John 3: 18

V. As a follower of Christ, who bore our weakness and shouldered our grief,

R. Blessed Joachim took upon himself the bodily weakness of the sick.

V. My children, we must not merely talk about love. We must love in deed and in truth.

R. Blessed Joachim took ...

*prayer, as in Morning Prayer.*

### **Morning Prayer**

#### **CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH**

Ant. Willingly I boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

#### **PRAYER**

God our Father, you taught Joachim, disciple of Jesus and Mary, to serve his brothers and sisters even by accepting their sickness. May we learn from his example to acknowledge our own weakness and so be compassionate and understanding of the weakness of others. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

## **Evening Prayer**

### **CANTICLE OF MARY**

Ant. For the sake of Christ I am content with my weakness and frustrations; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

*Prayer, as in Morning Prayer.*

**Note: All Bible texts are taken from: The New American Bible**  
**<http://www.vatican.va/archives/>**