

October 25

BLESSED JOHN ANGELO PORRO

Memorial

John Angelo Porro was born in the Duchy of Milan in the year 1451. After he had received the habit in the Order of Servants of Mary, he lived for a time in the priory of St. Mary, Milan, and later was sent to the priory in Florence. Later still, he withdrew to Monte Senario so that he might give his whole life to penance and contemplation. After living at Monte Senario for almost twenty years he returned to Milan where he engaged in the careful preparation of young children in Christian doctrine. He died in 1505. Pope Clement XII entered the name of John Angelo in the catalog of the blessed in 1737.

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

Office of Readings

SECOND READING

Choose one of the following readings.

From the Spiritual Letter of the venerable Angelo Maria Montorsoli, priest of our Order
(Capp. III, X. Florence, 1597, pp. 13-15, 47-50)

The Lord is the norm for our life

To this do I testify to you: there is nothing more proper, worthy or agreeable in this world than to give one's self entirely to God and to serve him alone: *Happy the man who meditates on his law day night.*

The reading of Sacred Scripture is the foundation of all Christian joy and of every good. It is well said of the Scriptures: *If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.* For this reason Saint Jerome and other Fathers call the Scriptures "the Word of God which contains abundant delights."

Some Fathers call the Scriptures the promised land overflowing with milk and honey, which, as an abundant and powerful spring, refreshes the soul, casts out sin, drives away worldly love and makes the soul fertile, *like a tree planted near running water that yields its fruit in due season.*

They also describe the Scriptures as the true manna which had the special taste which each one eating it desired. One might even compare Scriptures to a pharmacist or a personal servant. A pharmacist because Scriptures provide prescriptions for all kinds of illnesses. A personal servant because a servant responds to the needs and desires of the individual employing him.

The Scriptures manifest the will of God and allow us to know him. Therefore, nothing is more useful or necessary because the person who does not know the will of the Lord cannot follow it and the one who does not know God cannot love him: "We can love things we have not seen, but not things which we do not know." But those who know God, love him: and if they persevere in this loving knowledge they will not offend God with sin because they cannot bear to displease so great a Lord. As Saint John testified: *Whoever says 'I know him' and does not observe his commandments is a liar.*

Our Lord Jesus must be the absolute norm for every reform and the unchanging law of our life. His high standards move us to act, his excellent aids guide us. He leads us to perfection for his glory's sake. He himself promised us this when he said: *I am the way, the truth and the life, and, Come to me all you who are weary and oppressed and I will refresh you,* Our perfection and happiness consist in being with him so that the closer we approach him, the more we are united to him, the more perfect and blessed will we be.

In this life, union is attained primarily through thinking of, desiring and loving him. It is a happiness of hope and merit. But in the next life it will be a reality and a reward of clear vision and perfect and eternal enjoyment, greater than any we can ever desire.

The blessedness of heaven is achieved by means of love which is the blessedness of this

world. Hence, they are called blessed in this life if they strive to serve God alone: *Happy are they who observe his decrees, who seek him with all their heart.*

If we observe well, we note that we are indeed disposed toward this perfection and blessedness. The desire which each one has to constantly increase his wealth, to climb ever higher, to seek always for enjoyment, this desire cannot be in vain for it is common to all and universal. If we follow it, as we must, it will lead us inevitably to the true and everlasting kingdom of the perfect service of God. Moreover, we see clearly that every other thing is insufficient and that God alone can satisfy us: "Our heart is restless until it finds its rest in you. "

For this reason Saint Gregory counsels us to acquire true riches and honours and to leave aside those of this world which last but a short time: "If you desire to be rich, love true riches; if you are searching for the highest honours, hasten toward the heavenly homeland." This is our goal: to enjoy the eternal rewards. But before attaining them, we are already directed to them. This is the end for which the Lord has created us; that by walking through this valley of tears as exiles, we may acquire all the virtues and greater merit and thus arrive at last at the glory of our true home in paradise.

RESPONSORY See Ephesians 3:14,16,19; 4:1,3

V. I kneel before the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he will strengthen you inwardly through the working of his Spirit.

R. That you may experience this love which surpasses all knowledge.

V. I plead with you then, to live worthy of the calling which you have received, making every effort to preserve the unity which has the spirit as its origin and peace as its binding force.

R. That you may experience this love which surpasses all knowledge.

Alternative

The model of a life rooted in the contemplation and knowledge of God

John Angelo was born in 1451 in the Duchy of Milan of Protasio Porro and Franceschina de Guanzate, good Christians from Barlassina near Seveso.

In 1468 he received the habit of the Servants and lived for five years in the Priory of Saint Mary in Milan. According to some of the Order's writers, he then retired to the solitude of Cavacurta on the right bank of the River Adda to lead a life of contemplation and penance.

In 1474 John Angelo was sent to the Annunziata in Florence where he was noted for his regular observance. During this period he completed his studies, and was ordained to the priesthood. He continued to consider the possibility of a hermit's life and eventually went to Monte Senario which had been restored at the beginning of the fifteenth century by a group of friars who had desired the solitary life.

Blessed John Angelo's stay on Monte Senario was of such particular importance in his life and spiritual development, he even came to be known as "John of the Mountain." Whenever he had to leave Senario for reasons of health or obedience he would always return to its solitude with great personal joy.

In 1484 Antonio Alabanti, the prior of the Annunziata, called John Angelo to Florence to instruct the novices for whom he seems to have written some "useful instructions." Three years later, Alabanti, who was now prior general, named John Angelo rector of the hermitage of Monte Senario, a position which he filled with responsibility, competence and holy wisdom. The prior general greatly esteemed his prudence and religious spirit and often sought his help in directing the hermitage in Chianti as well.

After Alabanti's death, John Angelo returned to Milan about 1495 and it seems that he was elected prior. Even in the centre of that famous city he managed to preserve something of the solitary life which he so loved. His biographer Fra Filippo Ferrari tells us that "he lived in a room a little removed from the others." It was during this period that another important aspect of John

Angelo's apostolate developed: the education of children in Christian doctrine. Ippolito Porro writes that "even though he was prior, every feast day he would stand at the church doors or wander through the streets attracting the children to himself that he might teach them Christian doctrine. Corroboration for this comes from the marble bas-relief of the mid-sixteenth century which shows the Blessed in church teaching children.

John Angelo died on 23 October 1505, in the priory of Milan and was mourned by both friars and laity. In Blessed John Angelo we see the image and model of a life centered on contemplation and the knowledge of God which has found a way to express itself throughout the Order's history. John Angelo had a special love for prayer and silence. He sought an ever deepening intimacy with God in prayer and was, therefore, drawn to solitude and away from associations which merely wasted time. Not infrequently, though, his fraternal charity won out over his love for solitude. He loved the Order and was always concerned for its individual members. Though somewhat frail physically, he gained control over his body through constant renunciation. Poverty and simplicity of life were especially important for him. He had great reverence for Our Lady and composed a prayer in her honour which he recited daily.

In 1737 Clement XII proclaimed John Angelo blessed. His almost incorrupt body is venerated in Milan in the Church of San Carlo, formerly known as the Church of Saint Mary of the Servants. Following a very old custom, sick children are still brought to his tomb to ask his intercession for their cure.

RESPONSORY See 1 Chronicles 16: 11; 1 Kings 19: 11; Lamentations 3:26

V. Look to the Lord in his strength, seek his face untiringly.

R. Go outside and stand on the mountain before the Lord.

V. It is good to wait in silence for the saving help of God.

R. Go outside and stand on the mountain before the Lord.

Prayer, as in Morning Prayer.

Morning Prayer

CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH

Ant. I will lead him to my holy mountain and make him joyful in my house of prayer.

PRAYER

O Lord, John Angelo was faithful in his religious life and zealous in teaching Christian doctrine. May he pray for us, that we may always be close to you, observe the counsels of the gospel, and be fervent in apostolic work. 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. Let the children come to me; it is to just such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.