

June 27

BLESSED THOMAS OF ORVIETO

Thomas was born in the city of Orvieto. He was prompted to enter the Order of Servants of Mary both by his desire for heaven and his devotion to our Lady. As a member of the Order, his wish to be the servant of all led him to take his place among the brothers. Each day as he went about seeking alms, he gave an outstanding example of charity, humility and powerful intercession with God. He died in 1343. In 1768, Pope Clement XIII confirmed the devotion to him.

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 Zeno, bishop

(Lib. I, Tract. XXXVI, 12-13. 29-32: CCL 22, 94-95, 99-100)

Whoever lacks charity lacks everything

Charity loves no one because of social position, for it is incapable of flattery; or because of rank, for it is not ambitious; or because of male and female, for in its eyes man and woman are simply human beings; or at a particular time only, for it is changeless. It *is not jealous*, for it does not know the meaning of envy; it *puts on no airs*, for it practices humility; it *thinks no evil*, for it is simple and straightforward; it *does not grow angry*, for it embraces even insults gladly. It does not deceive, for it keeps faith; and it lacks for nothing, for it needs nothing but its own self.

Charity keeps countryside, cities, and peoples in peace and harmony. It keeps kings' guardians loyal. It prevents war from erupting, puts an end to strife, makes void contracts, obviates the courts, wipes out hatred, and allays anger. It penetrates the depths of the sea, circles the earth, and brings nations what they need in trade. Friends, I can state charity's power very briefly: What nature denies, charity bestows. O charity! How good, how rich, how powerful you are! Whoever lacks you lacks everything! You were mighty enough to change God into a human being. You made him set aside for a while his boundless majesty and become a pilgrim on earth. You imprisoned him for nine months in the Virgin's womb. You restored Eve in Nary and renewed Adam in Christ. You provided the holy cross for the salvation of a world already lost. You emptied death of its power by teaching God to die. It was due to you that when men slew God, the Son of the almighty God, neither Father nor Son was angered.

You sustain the spirit of a people destined for heaven by making peace a thing of beauty, keeping faith, embracing innocence, fostering truth, loving patience, and keeping hope alive. You form people who are of the same race, but differ in customs, age, and power, into a single spirit and a single body. You allow no torment, no new manner of inflicting death, no reward, no friendship, no heart's affection (and is not this more keenly felt than any torture?) to turn the glorious martyrs aside from their confession of Christianity.

You are content to go naked in order to clothe the naked. Hunger satisfies you so long as your bread feeds the hungry in their need. You become rich by holding all you have in readiness for works of mercy. You alone never need to be asked.

Those oppressed, whatever their straits, you immediately rescue at any cost to yourself. You are eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, a faithful defence to the widow. You take better care of the orphan than both father and mother. Pity and joy alike keep your eyes ever wet with tears. You so love your enemies that no one can tell them apart from your friends. You link the secrets of heaven and earth and protect all that is divine. In the Father you command, in the Son you obey, in the Spirit you rejoice. Being but one in the three, you cannot be divided, nor can any perverse curiosity disturb you. From the fountain which is the Father you flow out wholly into the Son, and yet you never depart from your source. Rightly you are identified with God, for you alone have the power of

the Trinity at your disposal.

RESPONSORY See 1 Corinthians 13:4,7,13

V. Love is patient, love is kind.

R. There is no limit to love's forbearance, to its trust, to its hope, to its power to endure.

V There are in the end three things that last: faith, hope and love; and the greatest of these is love.

R. There is no limit ...

Alternative.

Humble in begging, happy in giving

Blessed Thomas was born in Orvieto in Umbria toward the end of the thirteenth or the beginning of the fourteenth century. All his desires and thoughts were concentrated on the journey to heaven and for this reason he decided to dedicate himself completely to God in a religious community. Because of his special devotion to Mary, he chose to enter the Order of Servants of Mary. The virtues most typical of the Servants were resplendent in him: humility, brotherly love, and a spirit of compassion and service. Indeed, we read in the Annals of the Order that to serve both the Virgin and her Servants more constantly, he requested to be received among the lay brothers. For many years he went from door to door seeking alms, showing in his work much gentleness, patience and love.

He loved the poor so much that he joyously gave them not only the extra food which had been offered to the friars' table but also his own portion. Some early writers testify that God rewarded his humble simplicity by working miracles through his intercession. Artistic representations of Blessed Thomas, some of which are truly noteworthy because of their antiquity and artistic value, picture him carrying a knapsack with a fig branch in his hand, offering, in the middle of winter, a bunch of figs to a pregnant woman who had desired them. It seems that the artists wanted to depict both the solicitude of this man of God toward those who had recourse to him as well as the power of his intercession with God which was expressed in miracles.

This humble servant of the Virgin died in Orvieto in 1343 as we read in the work of Fra Michele Poccianti. His body is honoured in the church of the Servants in Orvieto. Because of the many miracles attributed to him, the citizens of that city soon began to venerate him with great devotion. This devotion was confirmed by Pope Clement XIII in 1768.

RESPONSORY See 1 Peter 5:5; Colossians 3:12

V. In your relations with one another, clothe yourselves with humility.

R. Because God is stern with the arrogant but to the humble he shows kindness.

V Because you are God's chosen ones clothe yourselves with heartfelt mercy, with kindness, humility, meekness and patience.

R. Because God ...

PRAYER

God, our Father, graciously you listen to the person who is humble. Grant that with the help of Thomas we may obtain happiness now and always. 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.