April 21st: Memorial of Saint Anselm of Canterbury, bishop and doctor of the Church

Gospel text (*Mt* 11:25-30): At that time Jesus said in reply, “I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.

“Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”

”Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart”

Fr. Antoni CAROL i Hostench
(Sant Cugat del Vallès, Barcelona, Spain)

Today we celebrate Saint Anselm of Aosta (Italy), also known as Anselm of Bec (France) and Anselm of Canterbury (England). He was born in Aosta (1033), committed himself to the Lord as a Benedictine in Bec (at the age of 27), and from Canterbury—where he served as bishop—he was called to the House of the Father (1109).

Anselm received from God an admirable capacity for intellectual speculation and for the government. As a theologian, he pioneered scholasticism (a rigorous method of theological research); as a bishop, he endured many bitter and difficult moments in defending the freedom of the Church. But above all, Anselm stood out for his piety and simplicity, aware that the Father has hidden these [high] things from the wise and the learned and revealed them to the childlike (cf. Mt 11:25).

This is how Saint Anselm prayed: "I pray, O God, to know you, to love you, that I may rejoice in you. And if I cannot attain to full joy in this life may I at least advance from day to day, until that joy shall come to the full." The human spirit rises toward truth on the “wings” of faith and reason. Theology (“the science of faith”) begins with the Word we receive from God, and we delve into it with the help of reason (faith is not “irrational,” but “supernatural”). Therefore, “theological study, if done in a spirit of prayer and humility, can lead to a deeper knowledge of the mystery of God. Without prayer, study becomes sterile” (Saint John Paul II).

The soul of a theologian and the soul of government; of strong and prudent government: an unusual combination! As prior and abbot of Bec, he displayed the qualities of a good teacher in preparing his brothers. Later, elected to govern the Church of Canterbury, he suffered exile from his own diocese. But he did not lose heart: the yoke of the Lord "is easy" and the "burden is light" (cf. Mt 11:30). So, with perseverance, courage and kindness, he succeeded in getting King Henry I to withdraw his abusive claims on the Church... And, thus, St. Anselm was able to return to his see.