April 23rd: Memorial of Saint George, martyr

Gospel text (*Jn* 15:1-8): Jesus said to his disciples: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and everyone that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit. You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you. Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither; people will gather them and throw them into a fire and they will be burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you. By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples."

"Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit"

Fr. Josep Mª MASSANA i Mola OFM
(Barcelona, Spain)

Today, we celebrate the feast of Saint George, Catalonia's second patron. He was a bold knight, who probably suffered martyrdom at Lydda, in Israel. If History is not very explicit regarding George's biography, the legend has certainly more than "completed" his figure.

Venerated since the 4th century, he has been chosen as patron by different countries and places: Greece, England, Portugal, Latvia, Georgia, Genoa... In the 13th century, his devotion was introduced in Catalonia and Aragon, where he was also elected as their patron.

The name of George brings very dear and fond feelings to the people of Catalonia: a book and a rose, culture and poetry. And also heritage, sanctity, protection, intercession. Saint George embodies not only patriotic, cultural, literary and chivalrous values, but also and most of all, profound Christian values.

Because, where could Saint George get the courage to fight the dragon and rescue the princess? From his union and communion with Jesus that nourished him with the sap of his own life: "I am the vine, you are the branches" (Jn 15:5). Where did he get the strength to remain faithful and be able to stand his martyrdom? From the Lord who said: "without me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5).

Another consideration: Catalonians —and any other people— may live united and vigorous at a Christian level, provided those who belong to that culture live as branches that remain part of the Vine and are

united among themselves. Each one is not independent from the others. All branches help each other, they communicate with one another, they mutually provide among themselves, in short, they have communion of life.

We Christians are called to graft into Jesus and live in communion of life with him and with all the others. Thus, through us, all the other branches, even those which have a short life or are apart from the true Vine, will have a certain link to Christ.

Saint George's festivity invites us to remain well united to Jesus to receive his life, and to the others, to make them participate.