

April 23rd: St. George, martyr

Gospel text (Jn 15,1-8): Jesus said: «I am the true vine and my Father is the vine-grower. If any of my branches doesn't bear fruit, he breaks it off; and he prunes every branch that does bear fruit, that it may bear even more fruit. You are already made clean by the word I have spoken to you; live in me as I live in you. The branch cannot bear fruit by itself but has to remain part of the vine; so neither can you if you don't remain in me. I am the vine and you are the branches. As long as you remain in me and I in you, you bear much fruit; but apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not remain in me is thrown away as they do with branches and they wither. Then they are gathered and thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words in you, you may ask whatever you want and it will be given to you. My Father is glorified when you bear much fruit: it is then that you become my disciples».

«As long as you remain in me and I in you, you bear much fruit»

Fr. Josep M^a 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 than all, profound Christian values.

Because, where could saint George get the courage from 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 and you are the branches» (Jn 15:5). Where did he get the strength from to remain faithful and be able to stand his martyrdom? From the Lord who said: «Apart from 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 one another, the mutually irrigate 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.