

DOMINICAN SAINTS OF DECEMBER

Brief biographical notes

DECEMBER 1

Blessed John of Vercelli

FRIAR, PRIEST AND MASTER OF THE ORDER

1259 Blessed John was born near Vercelli, Italy, at the beginning of the thirteenth century. While a professor of law at the University of Paris he was attracted to the Order by Blessed Jordan of Saxony. He was, in turn, a prior, a provincial, and the sixth Master of the Order (1264-1283). He often consulted Saint Thomas Aquinas on theological matters and defended his doctrine. He was present at the Council of Lyons, where he accepted for the Dominican Order the commission to promote reverence for the Holy Name of Jesus. He was responsible for commissioning Nicolai Pisani to sculpt a marble tomb for the remains of Saint Dominic. In his visitations he zealously promoted the life of study, poverty and evangelical preaching. He died at Montpellier on November 30, 1283. He is considered the patron of the Holy Name Society established in 1432.

From the Common of Pastors or the Common of Holy Men: for Religious, except for what is proper.

Prayer

God of power and mercy, you made Blessed John an outstanding promoter of the Order of Preachers. By his remarkable zeal, his wonderful prudence and his courage, and with the help of his prayers may your family always and everywhere be governed by beneficial rule. 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.

DECEMBER 16

Blessed Sebastian Maggi

FRIAR AND PRIEST

Blessed Sebastian, the son of a noble family, was born at Brescia, Italy, in 1414 and entered the Order in 1429. Twice he was Vicar General of the reformed Province of Lombard and served as prior in several convents. He was severe in his personal life, but kind and patient in his dealings with others. He was one of the notable reformers of Dominican life in the fifteenth century. He died at Genoa at the monastery of Santa Maria di Castello in 1496.

DECEMBER 16
Anniversary of the Approval of the Order

This anniversary of the Order's approval by Pope Honorius III in 1216 should be marked by an intercession in Prayers of the Faithful at Mass and Intercessions at the major hours of the Office.

DECEMBER 24
Vigil of the Nativity of the Lord

Today, according to a venerable custom of the Order, a special celebration may be held in our communities, and indeed is encouraged, to solemnly proclaim to all the members of the conventual chapter, summoned together in a spirit of faith and love for this purpose, the joyous news of the birth of our Lord, the Saviour of the World.

This celebration may be arranged either according to the particular form of a Solemn Chapter, according to our traditions (suitably adapted), or may be joined to an hour of the Divine Office, with due regard to the nature of that celebration itself.

In this rite, together with a reading from the Gospel of John (1: 1-14), the following, inter alia, may be used: the recitation of appropriate psalms; the responsories Descendit de caelis Deus verus and Confirmatum est cor Virginis, the antiphons Quando advenit, Haec est dies or O Rex, following the theme "Christ, the Sacrament of our Reconciliation".

It is fitting that the whole celebration should begin with a brief introduction, and that a suitable homily be preached, either after the solemn proclamation of the Lord's Incarnation, or after the reading of the Gospel, according to circumstances.

At the end of the celebration, as is the custom in the liturgical tradition of our Order, the chant of the Genealogy according to St Matthew (1: 1-16) may be sung. If the Office of Readings is not celebrated before the Midnight Mass, the Genealogy may be sung - by way of exception, because of the solemnity which it gives to the celebration - in place of the short reading at Evening Prayer I, or at another more opportune moment.

