

Saint Louis Bertrand

1526 - 1581

PURGATORY

Saint Louis Bertrand was born in Valencia (Spain) on the 1st of January 1526. At nineteen years of age he entered the Dominicans in Valencia and in 1547 he was ordained a priest. At 23 years of age he was nominated Master of the Novices. He kept that assignment for ten years, then, given that he ardently desired to announce the Gospel, he departed as a missionary for the new world. In 1562 he reached America and he stopped in Colombia. He did not back out of the hard apostolic work and he walked through the immense regions of the Equator, New Granada, the Caribbean islands, converting and baptizing many indigenous people. From the pulpit he denounced even the abuses of power of the Spanish Conquistadors: one of them wanted to make an attempt on the life of the Saint, but as the shot was fired the shotgun transformed into a Crucifix. During his evangelizing life he used an infallible method: in front of the refusals, the difficulties, the misunderstandings, he began to pray and flagellate himself with discipline, and everything would smoothly work itself out. The devil sought to thwart the work of Saint Louis, intimidating him with visions, with beatings and terrible noises, without achieving anything. He generated against him persecutions on the part of the Indians and of the Spaniards and tried to weaken his moral integrity with temptations and calumnies.

Having returned to Spain, in 1549, he took up again his duty as Master of Novices, and then was elected Prior in Valencia. In 1574 the Dominican Capital of the province of Aragon nominated Saint Louis to be the General Orator (Preacher). He was also the spiritual advisor of Saint Teresa of Avila, whom he encouraged to pursue her role in the Reformation. Having become gravely ill, in the midst of his sufferings, he continually repeated: "Lord, burn here, cut here, do not forgive here, so that you will forgive me forevermore in eternity!" Despite the feverish fire which devoured him, he wanted to die enrobed in the woolen habit of the Dominican Order. He died on the 9th of October 1581. Pope Clement X on the 12th of April 1671 proclaimed him a Saint. Alexander VIII declared him Patron of Colombia.

Saint Louis had a great devotion for the Souls in Purgatory. After his priestly ordination, his father, who had died eight years earlier, appeared to him and asked him for his help. One day, after many Masses offered to God on his behalf, the Saint saw him resplendent and liberated from the pains of Purgatory.

Saint Louis is also the first priest known by name, who was served by the concession of Pope Julius III for Valencia to celebrate three Masses on the day of the Commemoration of the Faithful Departed. It is said that Saint Louis felt a true suffering when he could not



celebrate the Mass, to which he had a very great devotion, whereas he was particularly content at Christmas because he could celebrate three times.

It is reported that one night, after the prayer of Matins in chorus, he saw a deceased fellow brother of his order, all surrounded by flames, who threw himself at his feet to beg his pardon for an offensive expression aimed at him years ago. The deceased asked him to celebrate one Mass for him, so that he would be immediately liberated from the pains of Purgatory. The Saint celebrated the Mass on his behalf the following morning and during the night, he saw the deceased, surrounded by glory, enter into Paradise.

