

## St Berard and Companions

### January 16

When our holy Father St Francis learned by divine revelation that God had called him and the members of his order not only to personal perfection but also for the salvation of the souls of others, he entertained an ardent desire to convert the Mohammedans, whose inroads at that time frequently endangered Christian countries and the Christian Faith.

While he himself and a companion traveled to the Orient in order to approach the Sultan, he sent 6 of the brethren to the Mohammedans in the West; Vitalis, Berard, Peter, Accursius, Adjutus, and Otho.

On the journey, Vitalis, the superior, fell sick in Spain, and when his illness refused to mend, he submitted to the will of God and remained behind, while he permitted his brethren under the guidance of Berard to proceed.

At Seville, in southern Spain, which the Mohammedans occupied at the time, St Berard and Companions preached fearlessly in the mosque that the teaching of Mohammed was falsehood and deceit, and that salvation could be found only in the Faith of Christ.

Burning with rage, the Mohammedan ruler, who had been listening to them, ordered that their heads be cut off at once. But his son, who was with him, appeased the anger of his father, and at his suggestion the friars were permitted to sail across the sea to Morocco.

This was quite in accordance with their wishes, since there among the Saracens they were right in the midst of the Mohammedan people. Coming upon a group of Saracens, Berard, who had a good command of the Arabic language, began at once to preach the Faith of Christ to them.

On another day when King Miramolin and his suite appeared on the scene, he again fearlessly preached the doctrine of Christ and called Mohammed an imposter. The king gave orders that Berard and his companions should be expelled from the country; but they escaped from their guards and returned a second and then a third time.

Then it happened that on their way through the desert St Berard and Companions came upon the royal army, which was nearly perishing because of thirst and could find no water anywhere. Berard prayed, struck his staff upon the ground, and at once a spring bubbled forth, which refreshed and saved the entire army.

More gently disposed because of this miracle, the king ordered the brethren to appear in his presence, and promised them wealth, positions of high honor, and all the conveniences of life if they would remain with him and become Mohammedans. But the champions of the Faith answered:

"We despise all those things for the sake of Christ."



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They proceeded to urge upon the king the necessity of his conversion to their Faith. Stung by disappointment as well as by their audacity, Miramolin then seized his sword and split the head of everyone in turn.

Thus St Berard and Companions obtained the martyr's palm on January 16, 1220. Pope Sixtus IV canonized them in 1481 after many miracles had occurred through their intercession.

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