

BLESSED JAMES OF ULM

Blessed James of Ulm was born in the city of Ulm, Germany, A. D. 1407. In his youth he devoted himself to the study of mechanics, for which he had a peculiar aptness. He also applied himself to glass-painting, in which the Germans had attained great celebrity. Being of a religious turn of mind, he left his home at the age of twenty-five to go on a pilgrimage to Rome, where he visited the holy places with great devotion. His money becoming exhausted he set out for Naples, where he took service under the banner of Alphonso, King of Naples, and for four years carried the sword with integrity and valor.

At length, tiring of the military career and horrified at the loose lives of his fellow soldiers, he entered the service of a private citizen of Capua. He served his master with such fidelity that he was intrusted with the care of the household. But after a while love of Fatherland induced him to set out to embrace his aged father.

Having reached Bologna on his way to Germany, he visited the shrine of Saint Dominic, and whilst praying there felt himself inspired to renounce his earthly home and go in pursuit "of the true land." Thus it is we find him at the gate of the convent of St. Domenico begging and obtaining the lay-brother's habit. His education had fitted him for the higher calling, but in his humility he chose to be the least of his brethren.

The illustrious Benedict XIV, speaking of a Dominican religious, said: "Give me a religious who observes his rule perfectly and I will be willing to canonize him even during his lifetime." That this is true is evidenced in the life of Blessed James. From the day of his entrance to that of his death he never deviated from the rule of his convent. He became the model of every Christian virtue, grounding himself in a special manner in the virtue of humility, upon which he built the edifice of his perfection. He sincerely held himself as the worst of men, and before being admitted to profession cast himself at the feet of each of his brethren, begging them not to send him away because of his unworthiness.

But the virtue in which he obtained greatest eminence was obedience, as the many remarkable and heroic acts in his life attest. As a soldier in the army of Christ he was never remiss in

this most essential virtue of the religious life. To him the command of his superior was the command of God. He manifested the most scrupulous care in performing the labor to which his office bound him.

Assiduous in prayer, this saint, like all the other great saints of his Order, made the sufferings of Christ the principal subject of his meditation. The tender heart of this gentle religious was deeply touched by the suffering of others, and it was his greatest delight to sit at the bedside of his sick brethren to cheer them and administer to their wants.

From the day of its foundation it has ever been the aim of the Dominican Order to foster and develop the individual talents of its children and to turn them to the end for which she was instituted, and this regardless of whatever office they held in the community. Thus is clearly manifested the deep democratic spirit of its Founder. Scarcely had Brother James put on the Dominican habit when, at the bidding of his superior, he again resumed the practice of glass-painting which had been interrupted by nine years' absence from his native land.

"To contemplate, and then to give to others the fruit of contemplation" is the definition given by St. Thomas of Dominican work. This Blessed James was able to do in an eminent degree by means of his glass-painting. His mind ever engaged in the contemplation of the celestial world which he had chosen for his true home, Brother James for fifty years, whenever duties permitted, painted on glass the holy and sublime sentiments transfused from heaven into his intellect. And many the convent and church that benefited by the genius of this saint. Thus did this holy friar preach a sermon to the rude and intellectual alike, and to the illiterate the grand truths of religion and morality were made almost palpable.

Though his brethren do not at present possess any of his works, all writers of his life extol the exquisite beauty of his paintings. Among his favorite themes were the Crucifixion, our Blessed Mother—for whom he bore a deep and tender devotion—and St. Dominic.

A miracle showing his remarkable obedience and its reward is related by writers of his life. On one occasion when our holy lay-brother had just completed a beautiful picture of our Blessed Lady and had placed it in the furnace to fix the colors, he was ordered to go out and beg bread for the community. Without a

moment's hesitation he went on his commission, leaving the glass as it was. On returning, several hours later, expecting to find the fruit of his labor reduced to ashes by the heat of the furnace, he was surprised to find the picture in a state of perfect preservation and beautified by the Divine Hand as a reward for his prompt obedience.

At last, after fifty years' faithful service in the army of Dominic, our humble religious, fortified by the sacraments of the Church, passed into the Land of the Living. His death was deeply mourned by his brethren and the people of Bologna, a great concourse of whom followed the remains to their last resting-place.

Holy Mother Church, who never overlooks the signal sanctity of her children, listening to the petitions of his brethren and the people of Bologna, held him up for veneration by enrolling him among the Blessed. This was done through her visible head, Pope Leo XII, in 1825.

—Philip Thamm, O. P.

BLESSED GARCIA, O. P.

Bl. Garcia of Aure, a Dominican lay-brother, was of that little band of heroic souls who suffered martyrdom in the year 1242. Companion of Bl. William of Arnould, whose zeal and eloquence drew upon himself and his brethren the special hatred of the Albigenses, he accompanied the latter into Avignonet, a town in the southern part of France. On the invitation of Raymond of Alfaro, who ruled the town, the little company repaired to his castle. There, in one of the halls, the party, eleven in all, were set upon by assassins, who ceased not to torture them until death opened for them the way of eternal life.

—Paul Curran, O. P.