

PORTUGUESE PROFILE

Venerable Bartholomew of the Martyrs

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IN OUR TUMULTUOUS WORLD, Portugal is something of an eye-catcher. It is not one of the great powers, not a rich land; but the onlooker sees there a peace and contentment rare indeed in this era of armament races and propaganda duels. Modern Portugal has the carriage of an honest laboring man living within his means—a carriage of modest dignity and quiet joy. It is a land, in a way, to envy.

Things were not always thus. Three or four decades ago Portugal was sick indeed. A tottering monarchy had given way to vindictive Republicanism, the national economy was upside down, the Faith which moulded the nation was spurned by its leaders. The common weal of Portugal was at a very low ebb. "In 1926 the people were perhaps the most despondent and bewildered in Europe with a feeble, bankrupt, and discredited Government."¹

Yet since April 27, 1928, the date of Dr. Antonio de Oliveira Salazar's appointment to the Ministry of Finance, Portugal has experienced one of the greatest religious and national revivals in her history. At the political and economic level, the vigorous reestablishment of national order must be attributed to the energetic policies of Dr. Salazar. The religious revival is due mainly to the impact of Fatima. "The hidden miracle of Fatima has changed the face of the Portuguese nation, not by spectacular cures or hidden recoveries as in the case of some of the maimed and the diseased, but the subtle infiltration of a new spirit in the

hearts of both the humble classes and the leadership of the nation."² One of the repercussions of Fatima has been the re-entry into Portugal of the religious orders, including the Dominicans.

The Portuguese Dominicans, although at the present time forming a vicariate under the tutelage of the Canadian Province, are increasing in number and strength. Within a short time, it is expected, their restoration will be complete and a Portuguese Province will enter once again into the Dominican family. An important factor in this revival has been a renewed interest in the canonization cause of one of Dominican Portugal's most illustrious sons, Venerable Bartholomew of the Martyrs. As yet, however, this cause is little known in our own country. And as for the man himself, few American Dominicans are familiar with this reforming Friar-Primate whose memory is inspiring his order's rejuvenation in Portugal and who may soon be canonized.

EARLY LIFE

Bartholomew of the Martyrs was born on May 3, 1514, in the city of Lisbon, the capital of Portugal. At his baptism he received along with the name Bartholomew the title "de martyribus"—of the Martyrs—in remembrance of the church of his baptism, the church of Our Lady of the Martyrs.³ Receiving his Dominican vocation from the inspiring example of Louis of Granada, Bartholomew made his profession on November 20, 1529, at the Convent of St. Dominic in Lisbon. He quickly proved to be not only an apt student but an exemplary religious. Here he solidly grounded himself in virtue, so that when he passed from his friar's cell to the archiepiscopal palace in Braga, he retained that religious disinterestedness which characterized his public life as primate of Portugal.

When he completed his studies, he distinguished himself for twenty years as a teacher and a religious superior.⁴

In 1558, the archiepiscopal see of Braga, the most ancient seat of religious tradition in Portugal, became vacant. Catherine, the queen regent, selected her confessor, the famous Dominican preacher, Louis of Granada, to fill it. When Bartholomew heard of Louis' appointment, instead of the customary letter of congratulations, he sent him a message of sincere condolence. Louis however firmly refused the office and in turn strongly recommended Bartholomew as a likely candidate. Persuaded by Louis' arguments, Catherine selected Bartholomew. Although he per-

tinaciously resisted, Bartholomew finally submitted to his superior's command. He was later to write that from that time on "the chains of Braga were fastened upon me."⁵

ARCHBISHOP OF BRAGA

Braga, which lies in the northern part of Portugal, in the province of Minho, was even at that time an ancient seat of religious tradition. It was raised to the dignity of a metropolitan see in the time of Pope St. Leo I (440-467). It is a custom, even among the Portuguese of today, whenever they wish to express the antiquity of anything to say that "it is as old as the See of Braga."⁶ Bartholomew arrived in Braga on the fourth of October, 1559. His first concern was to regulate his own establishment, the archiepiscopal palace. He stripped it of all its ornate furnishings and placed it on a scale little above that of decent poverty. When Bartholomew went to Braga, the austerities he had practiced in the monastery went with him. Being well read in the Fathers of the Church, he might well have recalled St. John Chrysostom's remark that the acid test of a monk's virtues was to raise him to the bishopric and then see whether he would continue to practice the virtues he had fostered in his monastery.⁷

Despite much opposition, our Archbishop next made a rigorous visitation of all his diocese, including the most remote churches which had not been visited for generations. He corrected the glaring abuses, especially among the clergy. He set about to instruct his flock. For those ignorant of the faith, he wrote a simple catechism. For more advanced souls, he compiled a compendium of mystical theology, a book drawn from the Fathers. This latter book has gone through many editions and is still a useful spiritual guide.

His love for the poor and the needy was attested by the fact that he fed over a thousand people a week, often depriving himself. Friends and fellow religious—among them Louis of Granada—even accused him of fanaticism in his extreme poverty and self-discipline. Bartholomew defended himself by saying that all his revenues belonged to the Church and that to subtract for himself anything above his simple needs was "robbery."⁸ He received graciously all who wished to speak with him, always giving preference to the poor. "Their time," he used to tell the nobility, "is taken from their hours of labor on which their subsistence depends; yours is taken from your amusements. Justice

requires that they should be detained from their labors as little as possible."⁹ It was a common saying in Braga that the Archbishop was avaricious toward himself, liberal to his friends, and prodigal to the poor.

THE COUNCIL OF TRENT

"The zeal of Thy House hath eaten me up." Ps. 68:10

The Council of Trent was convened to counteract the rising tide of Protestantism by promulgating a clear profession of faith and enacting disciplinary measures calculated to suppress abuses and to reform morals. The First (December 13, 1545 to March 11, 1547) and the Second (May 1, 1551 to April 23, 1552) Periods of the Council were primarily concerned with dogma. Thus points respecting the Canon of Sacred Scripture, Original Sin, Free Will, Justification, the Sacraments in general, and Baptism and Confirmation in particular were decided upon. The Third (January 18, 1561 to December 4, 1562) Period treated internal and disciplinary aspects of the Church, such as the power, jurisdiction, obligation, and residence of bishops, the visitation of the clergy, Christian instruction, establishment of seminaries, frequentation of the sacraments, and the age for religious profession.

It was during the reign of Pope Pius IV that this Third Period of the Council was opened. In consequence of the bull of Pius IV, Bartholomew set out at once for Trent leaving his diocese to the care of his vicar, John of Leyra. His arrival at Trent on May 18, 1560 was joyfully acclaimed and gave new strength and encouragement to the Pope and the bishops who were laboring to reopen the Council. The Archbishop's holiness and his reputation as a zealous reformer of morals and discipline listed him as a man eager for reform without care for human respect and human considerations. His piety and religious fervor animated the prelates and caused one of the Tridentine bishops to call him as "a most religious man."¹⁰

When it came to the question of what should be considered first, our Archbishop rose and addressed the assembly with great animation. Bartholomew urged that the Council should first seriously consider the reformation of the clergy, especially of the prelates of the Church. He well knew that lasting reform could only come from the shepherds of Christ's fold. Objections were quickly raised. Some insisted that the pomp and splendor

of their office were necessary in order to secure that authority and obedience which they now enjoyed. Others argued that the sumptuous life of prelates was a long standing custom. To both of these objections, our Archbishop retorted with burning words: "How blind can you be! The ministers of Christ wish to be wiser than Christ! . . . Christ conquered the world by His spirit of humility and poverty . . . you need a worldly spirit, the pomp and splendor of power, in order to cast out the worldly spirit in men. Since when can Satan cast out Satan?" Then, replying to those arguing from custom, "Our Lord called Himself Truth, not custom!"¹¹ Some of his biographers say that at one stage he blandly remarked: "the most illustrious and most reverend Cardinals are in need of a most illustrious and most reverent reform!"¹² It is certain that he pleaded with them: "Your lordships are the fountains from which all other prelates must draw, and therefore it is imperative for you to be pure and exceedingly clear." The cardinal legates were so impressed with his earnestness that instead of being angered, they held him in the highest esteem and veneration. They finally agreed on a reform.

Regarding the episcopacy, its powers and duties, he sided with the Spanish bishops and demanded the definition of the divine origin of episcopal jurisdiction and the obligation of bishops to reside in their dioceses. He favored a strict examination of candidates proposed for the episcopacy, demanding that the appointments be made on a basis of suitability and merit. He played a major role in formulating decrees for the establishment of seminaries, and the renewal of many ancient canons touching the life and morals of the clergy. The Dominican Archbishop also discussed with acumen and insight the dogmatic questions relating to the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist. In regard to the decrees concerning the reform of the higher and lower clergy, he considered them too weak and too general. Perhaps here Bartholomew viewed the problem more from the standpoint of a holy ascetic than of a practical bishop who would know that he must often be satisfied with something less than the best. The actual canons were undoubtedly more within the realm of possible fulfillment than the stricter regulations that he would have preferred. He wrote at this time to his vicar, John of Leyra: "I should have wished that we could have done more in the matter; but what we have decreed will be enough for any bishop with a conscience."¹³

During an adjournment of the Council, Bartholomew, in

September, 1563, accompanied the Cardinal of Lorraine and three other French bishops to Rome. In the Eternal City, he became an intimate friend of the cardinal secretary of state, St. Charles Borromeo. From the first moment of their meeting, St. Charles held Bartholomew in the highest veneration and as a living model to imitate.¹⁴ Borromeo, realizing the dangers of the Roman court, confided his desire to become a Camaldolese. Bartholomew dissuaded him and urged him to return to his see at Milan and carry out the decrees of the Council. Yet when Borromeo discovered that the Archbishop himself was in Rome because he wanted to resign his see, he required an explanation of the advice that had been given him. Bartholomew found need to call upon all his tact.¹⁵ Notwithstanding, Pius IV refused to permit the Archbishop to resign his see. Bartholomew decided therefore to return first to Trent and then on to Braga. St. Charles entreated him for instruction on the qualities and virtues most essential for a bishop. The Archbishop passed on to Borromeo a little book he had written for his own private use, *Stimulus Pastorum*. The cardinal was so impressed with the work that in 1564 he had the first edition printed in Rome. The work consists of two parts. The first part is more a compendium of the statements and sentiments of the Fathers on the episcopate, drawn for the most part from St. Gregory's *Pastoral Care* as a rule for all prelates. The second part treats of the duties of the pastoral charge and the virtues required of those to whom they were entrusted.

RETURN TO BRAGA

When the Archbishop returned to Trent, his favorable report on the conditions of the papal court helped to soften the attitude of many prelates who viewed the intentions of Pius IV with some distrust.¹⁶ Finally, after two and a half years of work in Trent, Bartholomew returned to his see in February, 1564. He immediately put the decrees of the Council into effect. Although he encountered considerable opposition from his cathedral chapter, with much patience and sacrifice he won them over. One of his first acts was to build a seminary, the first in all Spain and Portugal. He held a provincial synod in which decrees were passed for the restoration of ecclesiastical discipline and the elevation of morality of both clergy and laity. These decrees of the synod as well as those of Trent, the Archbishop promulgated and practiced with scrupulous exactitude.

Permission to be relieved of his see came at last on February 20, 1582: the "chains of Braga" were loosed from him. After leaving his bishopric and returning to the Dominican convent at Viano, he continually thanked God for relieving him from the heavy yoke of Braga. He would often say with the Psalmist: "Thou hast broken my bonds; I will offer Thee a sacrifice of praise" (Ps. 115:16). Bartholomew spent the rest of his years of retirement in strict observance of his religious duties. The fame of his sanctity and of his love for the poor spread abroad. His fellow religious were amazed at how quickly he re-orientated himself after being away from the religious life for over twenty-three years. Bartholomew in his profound humility wished to be *Frei Ninguem*—Brother Nobody. Yet poor and rich alike flocked to the Convent of the Holy Cross at Viano to see and hear "o santo."

DEATH AND VENERATION

On July 16, 1590, after a long illness and heroic sufferings, the holy Dominican died. His body was buried in very damp ground. Nineteen years after his death, the petition of the people, especially the poor, for a more befitting burial ground was finally realized. The body, much to the utter delight of all, was found entirely incorrupt although the coffin was already molded. A sweet odor arose from the body. The translation of his body was attended by a host of dignitaries. His tomb at Viana do Castelo has become an ever increasing place of veneration.

The first steps to obtain his beatification were taken in the diocese of Braga in 1631. The Roman process began in 1754 and has gone as far as the recognition, in 1845, that Bartholomew of the Martyrs practiced heroic virtue during his lifetime, thus gaining for him the title of Venerable. Because of the political misfortunes in Portugal which resulted in the expulsion of religious orders from that country, his cause came to a halt. In recent years, however, renewed interest has issued forth in the publication of several periodicals, pamphlets, and books on the life and works of the Venerable.¹⁷

Venerable Bartholomew of the Martyrs stands with St. Charles Borromeo as one of the great bishops of the sixteenth century. As Archbishop of Braga, his coat of arms bore the words "Nolite conformari huic seculo"—Be not conformed to this world. This he practiced in word and deed. It is hoped that within the near future, this most illustrious Dominican will be proclaimed a Saint of the Catholic Church.

NOVENA PRAYER
TO
VENERABLE BARTHOLOMEW OF THE MARTYRS

“O Sacred Heart of Jesus, whose love for souls led you to tirelessly traverse the roads of Palestine in search of the lost sheep of Israel, and to give your life and blood for them; You who communicated this same zeal to your servant Bartholomew of the Martyrs and animated his apostolic journeys throughout the vast diocese of Braga, grant us the miracles which we ask for his Beatification.”

Our Father ; Hail Mary ; Glory Be.

Ver. Heart of Jesus, inflamed with love for us.

Resp. In flame our hearts for love of You.

Let Us Pray

“O Jesus the Good Shepherd, who deigned to inflame your servant Venerable Bartholomew of the Martyrs in the zeal for the sanctification of the clergy, the salvation of souls, and the love of the poor, grant us, we beg of you, the grace to imitate his virtues and soon to honor him on our altars. Who lives and reigns world without end. Amen.”¹⁸

FOOTNOTES

¹ Kelly, Marie N., *This Delicious Land, Portugal*, London, 1956, p. 173.

² Pattee, Richard, *Portugal and the Portuguese World*, Milwaukee, 1957, p. 328.

³ Butler, Charles, *Lives of the Saints* (Appendix), London, 1823, p. xix.

⁴ de Castro, Jose, *Veneravel Bartolomeu dos Martires*, Porto, Portugal, 1946, pp. 25-27.

⁵ Herbert, Lady, *Life of Bartholomew of the Martyrs*, London, 1880, p. 492.

⁶ A Campanha, (Orgao da Campanha Nacional de Educacao de Adultos), Lisboa, No. 29, Janeiro de 1956, p. 2.

⁷ Chrysostom, St. John, *On the Priesthood*, Bk. VI, Chp. 6.

⁸ Butler, *op. cit.*, p. xxiii.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. xxi.

¹⁰ Concilium Tridentinum, Diariorum, actorum, etc. . . ., nova collectio, ed. Soc. Goerresiana (Freiburg I. B., 1901 seq.) Vol. II, p. 786 (Nicholas Psaume, Bishop of Verdun).

¹¹ d'Inguibert, Vita di non Bartholomeo dei Martiri; in *Opera Bartolomaei* (Rome, 1727). Latin version reprinted by J. T. Ghilardi (Monteregali, 1869). p. 77.

¹² Some of the early lives give this quotation. It is also in the records of the Roman process and investigation of his virtues (Prospero Lambertini—De

servorum Dei beatificatione et canonizatione, libe III, cap. 33 no. 15 in finem) also (Lambruschini, Card.—Romana seu Bracaren. beat. et cano. ven. P. Bartholomaei de Martyribus, Rome, 1844, p. 75). They all give the quotation but not the original source. The author, therefore, cannot accept this quote as authentic, although it does typify his stand. A quote similar to this, however, is authentic, namely: "Ecclesia deformata valde est, quae rigorosa, et dolorosa reformatione indiget"—"The Church is truly deformed, needing a rigorous and dolorous reform" cf. C.T., IX, 502.

¹³ Herbert, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

¹⁴ de Castro, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-71.

¹⁵ Butler, Alban, *Lives of the Saints* (Revised Ed.), London, 1956, Vol. IV, p. 256.

¹⁶ Herbert, *op. cit.*, p. 221-222.

¹⁷ Cf. Exposicao Biblio-Iconografica de D. Frei Bartolomeu dos Martires, (Na Sala de Exposicoes do Secretariad Nacional da Informacao), Lisboa, Dezembro de 1955.

¹⁸ Cf. Novena do Veneraval D. Frei Bartolomeu dos Martires, Porto, Portugal, 1945, pp. 4-5.



"More effective than anything else for promoting that reunion of all our separated sons with the one Church of Christ for which all good men are striving, will be a sincere and practical good will, with the help and inspiration of God. The fruit of such good will is mutual understanding, an understanding which Our Predecessors have sought so earnestly to foster and increase various means, in particular by founding in Rome the Pontifical Institute of Higher Oriental Studies.

"This good will implies also a proper respect for those traditions which are the special heritage of the peoples of the East, whether these be concerned with the sacred liturgy and the hierarchical orders or with other observances of the Christian life, so long as they are in keeping with the true faith and with the moral law. Each and every nation of Oriental rite must have its rightful freedom in all that is bound up with its own history and its own genius and character, saving always the truth and integrity of the doctrine of Jesus Christ . . . (They) should have full assurance that they will never be forced to abandon their own venerable and traditional customs for Latin rites and customs. All these are to be held in equal esteem and equal honor.

"It is especially in these times of ours, when the strife and discord of war have estranged men's hearts from one another nearly all the world over, that all must be impelled by the stimulus of Christian charity to promote union in Christ and through Christ by every means in their power." (Pope Pius XII, *Orientalis Ecclesiae*).