

October 19

Paul of the Cross (1694-1775) priest

In January 1694 Paolo Danei, better known as Paul of the Cross, was born in Ovada, near Alessandria in northwest Italy. He was a priest and the founder of the Passionist congregation.

Paul's extreme sensitivity made him prone both to intense fervor and to severe depression. His faith and attachment to Scripture helped him reach stability, despite the many trials he faced during his lifetime. Nine of his fifteen brothers and sisters died young, and Paul himself had to struggle for many years to respond to his vocation, which he had begun to perceive clearly at the age of twenty-three.

It was in 1717 that Paul first understood his calling to live in solitude, penance and extreme poverty. He gradually became convinced that he should seek God in community with several companions, and with this aim in mind, he wrote a rule.

Encouraged by his bishop, but not always understood in his true intentions, Paul had to wait until 1741 for official approval of his congregation, the Passionists. Its members lived in houses called "retreats," and were known for their assiduous meditation of the mystery of the Lord's Passion. According to Paul, it is only by contemplating Christ's paschal mystery that one can overcome the fear of divine judgment through trust in God's mercy.

Always insisting on the primacy of the "word of the Cross" in the inner life, Paul of the Cross followed in the footsteps of Paul of Tarsus and announced the Gospel as a "word of reconciliation." He and his brothers dedicated themselves to the apostolic ministries of preaching and spiritual counsel, because they had not received recognition either as a monastic order or as a congregation with solemn vows.

Paul of the Cross died on October 18, 1775.

BIBLICAL READINGS

1 Cor 1:18-25; Mic 16:24-27

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

ANGLICANS:

Henry Martin (d. 1812), translator of the Scriptures, missionary in India and Persia

Fridesvida (7th-8th cent.), abbess of Oxford

WESTERN CATHOLICS:

John de Brébeuf and Isaac Jogues, priests, and companions (d. 1642-1646), martyrs

Paul of the Cross, priest (Roman and Ambrosian calendars)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (9 bàbah/teqemt):

Liberius I (d. 366), pope of Rome (Coptic Church)

Thomas, apostle (Ethiopian Church);

LUTHERANS:

Ludwig Schneller (d. 1896), evangelist in Palestine

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:

Joel (5th-4th cent. BCE), prophet

Varus of Egypt (d. ca. 307), martyr