

June 25

Maximus of Turin (4th-5th cent.) pastor

Tradition dates the birth of Maximus, a pastor of the church of Turin, Italy, on this day in an unknown year of the fourth century.

He was one of the most celebrated preachers of the Gospel in the patristic era. All that we know about him comes from the corpus of his homilies, which has been critically reconstructed in the modern era.

One of the few certain facts about his life is that he was not a native of Turin, but represented the city as its bishop at a council held in the early fifth century.

His skill as an orator, which was the fruit of his familiarity with Scripture and the works of the Church fathers, was complemented by a strong liturgical awareness, which allowed him to offer incisive and original interpretations of the sacraments and of Christian worship in general.

One of the priorities of Maximus' pastoral activity was the elimination of every form of syncretism and every residual pagan influence from Christian practice. Another of his concerns was spreading the Gospel message throughout the countryside, as in his day it had reached only the major urban centers. Maximus died between 408 and 423, as is commemorated as the first bishop of the church of Turin.

BIBLICAL READINGS

Gen 12:1-9; Mt 7:1-1

Jews martyred by the knight Rindfleisch (d. 1298)

In 1298, the Jewish community of Rothenburg was massacred during the persecution led by Rindfleisch, a German knight who became notorious for having promoted the systematic elimination of forty-six Jewish communities in central and southern Germany.

On the same day, the Jewish residents of Nuremberg were slaughtered after attempting to seek refuge in the city's castle. Among the victims was Mordecai ben Hillel, the author of a famous rabbinical commentary, who was killed with his wife and their five children.

The Augsburg Confession (1530)

On this day in 1530, a confession of faith was presented to the emperor Charles V during the imperial diet of Augsburg. It bore the signatures of representatives of the different cities that had supported the Protestant Reformation. In the years immediately following Martin Luther's excommunication, this was the most serious attempt that had been made to reach an understanding between Reformers and Catholics.

The Reformers had been accused of heresy by many, and several, led by Phillip Melanctone, had agreed to respond to the judgments of the principal Catholic controversialists. They sought to highlight both their fundamental consensus with Catholics in matters of faith, and the reasons why their divergence with regard to certain religious practices and abuses was serious enough to have led to the Reformation.

The Augsburg Confession, which is still a fundamental document for the churches belonging to the Lutheran tradition, was written in two parts. The first part is doctrinal in nature, and the second part deals with practices that were widespread in the Church at that time. Luther acknowledged the document as a faithful expression of the Gospel, but the Confession was not sufficient to halt the growing division among Christians, which by that time had reached the dimensions of a full-fledged rupture.

In a deeply significant way, it was in Augsburg that Catholics and Lutherans chose to sign their joint agreement on Justification in 1999, thus resolving the issue that had done more than any other to divide the two Christian minds of the West.

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (18 ba'unah/sane):

Damian (d. ca. 605), 35th patriarch of Alexandria (Coptic Orthodox Church)

Irenaeus (d. ca. 202), bishop of Lyon (Coptic Catholic Church)

LUTHERANS:

Memorial of the presentation of the Augsburg Confession

Prosperus of Aquitania (d. ca. 463), theologian at Rome

MARONITES:

Febronia of Nisibis (d. ca. 304), martyr

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:

Febronia of Nisibis, martyr