August 16

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Brother Roger, of Taizé (1915-2005) monk

On 16 August 2005, during evening prayer, at which gather the Community of Taizé and thousands of young people, brother Roger was killed in the church of Reconciliation. The preceding 12 May, surrounded by his brothers, he had celebrated his ninetieth birthday in simplicity and joy.
In 1940, after finishing his theological studies in Lausanne and Strasbourg, Roger Schutz, the son of a Swiss Reformed pastor, settled in Taizé, a small village of the Bourgogne, where he wished to start a monastic community dedicated to the reconciliation of Christians and seeking to alleviate human suffering of those times. In 1949 the first seven brothers bound themselves to live a common life. Convinced of the need to make this community a visible sign of unity, brother Roger at first received into it brothers belonging to various Protestant denominations, and later, from 1969, also Catholics. From that time on Taizé has become a spiritual and ecumenical point of reference of the first order not only for the Churches, but also for the tens of thousand of young people that the community welcomes year after year.
Close to pope John XXIII and to patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople, brother Roger participated in Vatican II as an observer. His profound desire for unity led him to seek actions and symbols capable of evoking, beyond the difficulties, the coming of a spring of the Church, which is called to be, at the heart of the human family, a “land of reconciliation, of simplicity”.

A READING

Do we sufficiently grasp that already two thousand years ago Christ came on earth not to create a new religion, but to proffer a communion in God to all men? After his resurrection Christ’s presence becomes concrete through a communion of love that is the Church. Will Christians have a wide enough heart, an open enough imagination, an ardent enough love to discern this way of the Gospel: without delay, to live reconciled?
If the ecumenical call has given rise to notable dialogues and exchanges, how is it possible to forget these words of Christ: “Go first and be reconciled”? By putting off the reconciliation of Christians till later, ecumenism, without being aware of it, could nourish an illusory expectation.
When Christians live in great simplicity and infinite goodness of heart, when they are attentive in discerning the profound beauty of the human soul, they are drawn to be in communion with each other in Christ.
Credibility can be regained among young people when the communion that is the Church becomes limpid in seeking with all its soul to love and to forgive; when, even with few means, it becomes welcoming, close to human pains. Never distant, never on the defensive, freed from all severity, it can irradiate the humble confidence of faith even to our human hearts.
Yes, Christ is calling us, the poor of the Gospel, to achieve the hope of communion. Even the simplest of the simple can do it.
(from: Brother Roger, *God Can Only Love*)

PRAYER

Jesus Christ,
when the way of the gift of our life
opens in us,
appears as silence and love.
And the question arises:
where is the fount of our joy,
the joy of the Gospel?

Leo Max Frank (1884-1915) Jewish martyr

In 1915 Leo Max Frank, a Jew of German ancestry, was lynched in Atlanta, Georgia.
Born in Texas in 1884, Frank moved to Georgia in 1907, where he was hired to supervise his uncle's factories. As president of the local branch of the association Sons of the Covenant, Frank was known and respected throughout Georgia. Yet when a homicide was committed in his factory, he was accused on the basis of one person's witness. Although his accuser was probably the actual perpetrator of the crime, Frank was sentenced without any further evidence. His case gave rise to a strident public outcry, and after months of growing antisemitism in American public opinion, the Supreme Court was forced to intervene and Frank was sentenced to death. The governor of Georgia, who was convinced of Frank's innocence and of the injustice of the verdict, decided to convert his sentence to life imprisonment, risking his career in the process. The result was a public backlash that reached its climax when a mob broke into the prison where Frank was held and carried out a barbaric lynching.
Leo Max Frank was posthumously declared innocent in 1986.

A READING

Until my people has found
grace in your eyes, O peoples of the earth,
how will you find grace
in the eyes of the Eternal?

Until you say,
"Certainly, Israel has sinned,
but has been purified of its suffering."

Until you say,
"Let us comfort Israel in its trials,
let us bind up its wounds, let us heal its ills,
because it is for our sake that Israel endures such suffering."

Until you say,
"It is not mercy that Israel needs,
but justice."

Until a people has not gone out
to speak thus to the other peoples,
neither peace, nor law, nor justice
will reign in your midst,
O peoples of the earth

(Emmanuel Eydoux, *The Song of the Exile*).

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

WESTERN CATHOLICS:
Stephen of Hungary (d. 1038), king (Roman and Ambrosian calendars)
Roch (14th cent.; Ambrosian calendar)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (10 misra/nahasse):
The Assembly of the first-born children, martyrs
John of Asmun Tanah (?), martyr (Coptic Orthodox Church)

LUTHERANS:
Leonhard Kaiser (d. 1527), witness to the point of bloodshed at Passavia
John the Constant (d. 1532), supporter of the Reformation in Saxony

MARONITES:
Roch, pilgrim

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:
Translation of the Mandylion to Constantinople (944)
Diomedes the Physician (d. 298), martyr
Anthony of Novgorod (d. 1147), thaumaturge (Russian Church)
Constantine Brancoveanu and companions (d. 1714), martyrs (Romanian Church)
Razhden the Martyr (d. ca. 457; Georgian Church)

WEST SYRIAN ORTHODOX:
Saba (*Pigursnap*; 4th cent.), martyr in Persia

EAST SYRIAN ORTHODOX:
Joachim and Anne, parents of the blessed virgin Mary (Malabar Church)

OLD CATHOLICS:
Theodulus (4th-5th cent.), bishop