

CRUSADERS OF MARY

Newsletter

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Saint Walburga

Feast Day - February 25

by Susan Vennari



about an hour and a half north of Munich, in the Bavarian town of Eichstätt, is the Benedictine Abbey of Saint Walburga. Enshrined there are the relics of this holy woman who came to Germany in the early 700's, and whose relics have been venerated for over a thousand years. The cures and miracles by which she was

known even in her lifetime always attracted visitors; but since the mid-800's, she has been particularly identified as the most famous of the *elaephori*, or "oil-dripping" saints.

Born in 710, in Devonshire, England, Saint Walburga was a niece of Saint Boniface. But her father, the Saxon king Saint Richard, must have been a pious man, too. When she was still a child, he embarked with her two older brothers, Saint Willibald and Saint Wunibald, on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. She requested to be entrusted to the care of the abbess at Wimbourne, and even after news of her father's death a year later, she remained there for the next 26 years, to be trained in learning, holiness and self-discipline, under the Benedictine Rule, and to be espoused to Our Lord in that tradition. When, in 748, Saint Boniface requested the convent sisters to aid him in his mission to Germany, Saint Walburga joined Saint Lioba, Saint Tecla and another 30 or so nuns, and set out to meet her uncle,

Saint Boniface, and her brother, Saint Willibald, at Mainz. Saint Walburga spent some time under Saint Lioba's rule at Bischofsheim, until she herself was appointed women's abbess at Heindenheim. Her brother, Saint Winibald, governed the men's abbey there and upon his death, she succeeded him as abbess, thus caring for all the spiritual children of the double abbey.

She was esteemed by all, who regarded her virtue, sweetness and prudence, her courage and her charity, as supernaturally informed. She was a skillful administrator, and she herself taught in the Heindenheim



Saint Walburga

school for children, including classical languages, science and medicine, and the literary and musical arts.

In 776, she assisted her brother, Saint Willibald, Bishop of Eichstätt, at the translation of the incorrupt remains of their brother, Saint Wunibald, to a new shrine. Not long after, Saint Walburga herself fell ill and died on February 25, 779. She was entombed beside her dear brother, and their tombs became the

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site of many cures and miracles. It was a hundred years later, however, when the Bishop of Eichstätt opened Saint Walburga's tomb, that it was found that her body was immersed in the delicate "oil," which has continued to flow from her to this day. Her relics were transferred to Eichstätt and miraculous healings were reported all along the journey route. The Benedictine abbey was established to care for the shrine, and it has accrued an illustrious history of its own. It was this Abbey of Saint Walburga which sent one of the first Benedictine missions of nuns to North America in 1851.

In the 10th and 11th Centuries, the cures wrought at Saint Walburga's graveside, or obtained by the use of her oil, made her tomb one of the most pilgrimaged sites in Europe. One can still observe the miracle and obtain the holy oil, as I did one sunny day some years ago. Votive offerings of thanksgiving for Saint Walburga's intercession continue to arrive at the Abbey. Could 21st Century consideration of Saint Walburga's graces be of as great benefit to a modern Catholic as it was to the medieval sick?

No doubt Saint Walburga benefitted from the prayers of her family members, and they, by her prayers. United by the Faith, they came as part of Saint Boniface's army into the pagan lands of Germany. Saint Walburga was educated in the convent school, as appropriate to her station as princess. And her education was essential to the role she would play as abbess: mother, teacher, spiritual guide, and even historian for her spiritual children. But studies undertaken within the walls of the abbey were always to support a detachment from world and union with the kingdom of God. With humility and reserve was an abbess to govern, the better to enable the monks and sisters to pursue the search for God. She forsook personal privilege, but she did not shirk in false humility from the leadership role requested of her by Saint Boniface. These were her duties of state. Thus, as Our Lady asked of us at Fatima, that we fulfill our own duties of state, we find in Saint Walburga a prophetic example even now.

Saint Walburga's prayer life, trained and formed in Benedictine methods, likewise is instructive. The Benedictine Rule is a model of order, with its regularity, devotion to prayer and liturgy, and its moderate, yet austere life. Saint Walburga was reputed never to neglect prayer life, and dwelt deeply with meditative study of Scripture and literature, the better to wit-

ness to the Eternal Truth. Thus, she drew her children to know and to love the discipline of *ora et labora*. Not peregrination, but the claustral life of the monastery — prayer, study, and the work offered to God, became the strong spine by which Europe emerged upright from the disorder of paganism. Modern Catholics who heed the requests of Our Lady at Fatima can be inspired by the confidence and obedience of Saint Walburga — and of all the holy sisters, who planted themselves at the stump of the pantheist tree, so to speak, to erect the Cross throughout Europe. Our Lady's instruction at Fatima could well imply the return of a barbaric and disordered time, such as Saint Boniface might have known. Our obedient response, especially in the meditation of the daily Rosary and the consecration and performance of our daily duties again become an offering by which Our Lady shall rescue us.

As a mother, I find Saint Walburga an instructive helper. Because she is obscure to Americans, one feels a special intimacy with a secret friend. In art, she is usually depicted as cheerful, which I want to be. The family from which she came — brothers, parents, uncles, aunts and cousins, was united in the Faith. Individually, each abandoned personal privilege to serve Almighty God. I should like to guide my own children to be so united in the Faith as to bring each other to heroic sanctity. I must make decisions about home-life, to ensure justice, order and tranquility. I must teach my children, and assist my spouse to know the intimacy of tradition, that they may prepare for the future and cleave to the Divine Will. The graces accorded to Saint Walburga in all her actions, as well as the miraculous oil-dripping tomb, and her brother's incorrupt body, attest to the confidence with which each submitted every action to God. Here, then, is a counselling mother and, more broadly, a holy family to help me imitate the Holy Family.

Saint Walburga (also Walpurga) is invoked by sailors and against storms, especially because of a miracle which calmed the sea when the sisters first crossed to Germany. She is also invoked against hydrophobia. The litany in her honor makes it clear, however, that she is a "powerful advocate" of all who venerate her. In Germany, her feast day is celebrated on May 1. On the Benedictine calendar, and in the Roman Martyrology she is honored on February 25.

Saint Walburga, glorious example of perseverance in the service of God, pray for us. †

Pope Stresses Need to Pray Rosary for Peace

On February 21, 2003, John Paul II asked all Catholics worldwide to pray the Rosary, a "privileged instrument for building peace."

The Pope continued, "War and injustice have their origins in the 'divided' heart. Anyone who assimilates the mystery of Christ — and this is clearly the goal of the Rosary — learns the secret of peace and makes it his life's project. If the Rosary keeps pace with the speed of our lives, it can become a privileged instrument for building peace in the hearts of persons, in families, and among peoples."

Pope Saint Pius V on the Rosary

The Roman Pontiffs, and the other Holy Fathers, our predecessors, when they were pressed in upon by temporal or spiritual wars, or troubled by other trials, in order that they might more easily escape from these, and having achieved tranquillity, might quietly and fervently be free to devote themselves to God, were wont to implore the divine assistance, through supplications or Litanies to call forth the support of the saints, and with David to lift up their eyes unto the mountains, trusting with firm hope that thence would they receive aid.

Prompted by their example, and, as is piously believed, by the Holy Ghost, the inspired Blessed founder of the Order of Friars Preachers, (whose institutes and rule we ourselves expressly professed when we were in minor orders), in circumstances similar to those in which we now find ourselves, when parts of France and of Italy were unhappily troubled by the heresy of the Albigenses, which blinded so many of the worldly that they were raging most savagely against the priests of the Lord and the clergy, raised his eyes up unto heaven, unto that mountain of the Glorious Virgin Mary, loving Mother of God.

For She by Her seed has crushed the head of the twisted serpent, and has alone destroyed all heresies, and by the blessed fruit of Her womb has saved a world condemned by the fall of our first parents. From Her, without human hand, was that stone cut, which, struck by wood, poured forth the abundantly flowing waters of graces.

And so Dominic looked to that simple way of praying and beseeching God, accessible to all and wholly pious, which is called the Rosary, or Psalter of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in which the same most Blessed Virgin is venerated by the angelic greeting repeated one hundred and fifty times, that is, according to the number of the Davidic Psalter, and by the

News from the Apostolate

Saint Nicholas of Bari Plaque

The plaque for the Saint Nicholas of Bari fund is complete and displayed in Our Lady's Chapel at the Fatima Center.

Green Scapular Distribution

Throughout 2002, with your help, we were able to distribute almost 180,000 Green Scapulars worldwide. During the same time, our volunteers helped make over 125,000 Green Scapulars for Our Lady's Apostolate, which we distributed.

Plans are currently underway to set up a Green Scapular Workshop in India where residents of villages near Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Orphanage will make the Scapulars which will be shipped to us for distribution in North America.

Saint Padre Pio Plaque

The Saint Padre Pio Plaque of Recognition which lists the names of those who helped support the Padre Pio House is complete and displayed in the Padre Pio House.

Consecration of Russia

During 2002, we distributed over 229,000 Petitions for the Pope to Consecrate Russia as Our Lady asked at Fatima. With your monthly gifts, we plan to continue spreading these petitions worldwide. If you would like additional copies of this petition, please contact us at 1-800-263-8160.

Many priests have written in to us acknowledging their support of the need for the Pope, together with all the bishops, to consecrate Russia. Throughout 2002, they have said over 3,480 Masses for this request of Our Lady's to be fulfilled. †

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Lord's Prayer with each decade. Interposed with these prayers are certain meditations showing forth the entire life of Our Lord Jesus Christ, thus completing the method of prayer devised by the Fathers of the Holy Roman Church.

This same method St. Dominic propagated, and it was spread by the Friars of Blessed Dominic, namely, of the aforementioned Order, and accepted by not a few of the people. Christ's faithful, inflamed by these prayers, began immediately to be changed into new men. The darkness of heresy began to be dispelled, and the light of the Catholic Faith to be revealed. Sodalties for this form of prayer began to be instituted in many places by the Friars of the same Order, legitimately deputed to this work by their Superiors, and confreres began to be enrolled together.

Following the example of our predecessors, seeing that the Church militant, which God has placed in our hands, in these our times is tossed this way and that by so many heresies, and is grievously troubled and afflicted by so many wars, and by the depraved morals of men, we also raise our eyes, weeping but full of hope, unto that same mountain, whence every aid comes forth, and we encourage and admonish each member of Christ's faithful to do likewise in the Lord. †

CRUSADERS OF MARY



Reader Mail

Dear Father Gruner,

No matter what those who seek to destroy you do, I know that you will continue in the Lord's will. Your suffering is doing more good than I can imagine.

Your life, by its example, is a source of inspiration for me and I'm sure for many others. Satan's tricks will, in the end, avail him nothing.

Thank you for your efforts to spread the truths of Fatima and the true Church. My life and the lives of my wife and children have been made much more Catholic due to your crusade. Saint Mary's love for you must be beyond our understanding.

Sincerely,

Paul B., PA

Dear Father Gruner,

I was delighted to receive your letter and Fatima booklet.

I have always been a devotee of Our Lady of Fatima. In 1971 my sister Joan, who had married in a Registry Office, was dying of cancer and we could not get a priest in to her. However, on the 13th of May, a new nurse came to look after her. Lying on the bedside table was a book "A Guide to the Vatican". The only sign. Her husband had put it there in case she would like to look through it in her lucid moments. The nurse told the priest of the parish where Joan lived about the book. He called the following day, only to be told by her mother-in-law that they didn't want any Catholic Priest. We felt very encouraged and prayed the Rosary. On the 17th of May, we were able to get a priest in and my sister was able to receive all the Last Rites. She had looked so sad and Dad said he thought the sadness was worse than the cancer.

She was totally transformed afterwards, and had a

Prayer to Comfort Our Blessed Mother

To help comfort Our Blessed Mother for the pain caused by those who blaspheme and ridicule Her, we ask that you pray an extra Hail Mary every day.

Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with Thee. Blessed art Thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of Thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.

Amen

very big smile on her face. She went into a Nursing Home and actually died with a rosary in her hand.

On May 13th, a Statue of Our Lady of Fatima was brought to Walsingham, our National Shrine to be crowned by the local bishop and I just felt that Our Lady had arranged everything.

I might add that I was very pleased to find that there was someone who was fighting for Our Lady's Message and am very sorry that you are so persecuted by those who should know better.

My other sister and I say 15 decades of the Rosary every day. I look forward to hearing from you in the future and can assure you of prayers.

Bye for now, God Bless,

Mary B., England

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Chronology of a Cover-Up

During 2002, we distributed over 50,000 copies of the updated English version of Chronology of a Cover-Up. In October, our Fatima office staff, with the help of a few volunteers, did a mailing of the Chronology of a Cover-Up booklet, which was translated into Portuguese. It was mailed to over 5,000 Catholics in Portugal and positive response is starting to come in.

We'd Like to Hear From **YOU!**

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