Rev. Derek Fairman

32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time A

The next saints are Pope St. Pontian and St. Hippolytus. St. Hippolytus was born in Rome around 165. He may have been a priest under Pope Zephyrinus. He was very learned, but he was also very rigorous in his application of the Church's disciplines. He did not approve of the reconciling policies of Pope Callixtus towards those who committed grave sins.

At some point, he was an anti-pope, which does not mean that he was wicked, or against the pope, but that he gained some support for the papacy, but was not elected outright. He was a leader for the Greek-speaking Christians in Rome. He respected the papacy but also felt close enough to the popes to argue with them about the matters of the day.

St. Hippolytus wrote about several subjects, from theology to law. He wrote the *Commentary on the Prophet Daniel*, the earliest recorded reference to Christmas being celebrated on December 25 in the Western Church. He also wrote *the Apostolic Tradition*, containing a ritual for ordination, the basis of which is still used today for ordinations of bishops. The *Apostolic Tradition* contains an early Apostles' Creed. The *Apostolic Tradition* contains the anaphora which would provide the basis for Eucharistic Prayer II.

Since the 7th century, the Roman Canon, or Eucharistic Prayer I, was the only Eucharistic Prayer that could be used in the Roman liturgy. At the Second Vatican Council, the bishops wanted a variety of Eucharistic Prayers that could be used. The Second Eucharistic Prayer is based upon the anaphora which St. Hippolytus wrote in the *Apostolic Tradition* and is very old. Theologians at the council wrote the Third Eucharistic Prayer to be like the Roman Canon, but with the ability to insert the name of a different saint each day rather than a fixed set of saints. Theologians at the council wrote the Fourth Eucharistic Prayer based upon Eastern liturgies.

Eventually, St. Hippolytus was exiled to the salt mines of Sardinia. He was exiled with Pope St. Pontian, and the two reconciled whatever differences they may have had. Pope St. Pontian was the son of Calpurnius and a Roman citizen. Initially the emperor Severus Alexander was tolerant towards Christians, and when his reign began on July 21, 230, there was peace in the Church. However, the next emperor Maximinus, began persecutions again. Pope Pontian was exiled to the mines of Sardinia. Pope St. Pontian resigned from the papacy to ensure a smooth transition in the papacy, and he was the first to do so on September 28, 235. He died in October of 235 from a beating. Pope St. Pontian and St. Hippolytus share the feast day of August 13.

The next saint whose feast day is in August is St. Joseph Calasanz. He was born on September 11, 1557, in Aragon in modern-day Spain. His father Pedro was a town mayor and his mother was Maria. He was sent for studies to friars of the Trinitarian Order, where he decided to join the priesthood, to the chagrin of his parents. He later studied philosophy and theology and got high marks. He fell ill in 1582 but was still ordained a priest on December 17, 1582, and held various positions afterward.

In 1592, he moved to Rome where he would live for the rest of his life. He dedicated himself to ministering to those in need, particularly orphaned children. He had a particular calling to this having lost both parents before moving to Rome. He also helped many in need after the Tiber overflowed its banks. Eventually he opened the first free public school in Europe. Under the direction of Pope Paul V, St. Joseph Calasanz organized the first religious institute dedicated to teaching called the Piarists. When plague broke out in Italy, he helped the victims, and yet he had enough energy to expand the Pious Schools throughout Europe.

In doing this, he is recognized as revolutionary, since many schools throughout Europe until then restricted education to the wealthy. St. Joseph Calasanz instead opened the Pious Schools to those of any class. He also admitted Jewish students, and Protestant students to his schools in Germany. He systematized the idea of teaching primary level students in cycles. He also emphasized physical fitness and health for the students, and rather than restricting the textbooks to Latin, as many others did, he had the textbooks translated into vernacular languages. He emphasized math and science and believed in anticipating misbehavior rather than severe punishment.

He knew and maintained a friendship with Galileo Galilei. St. Joseph Calasanz sent some of his students to study under Galileo. St. Joseph Calasanz defended Galileo's heliocentric view. After Galileo's trial, he tended to his needs and continued to send students to him to study. He also maintained a friendship with Tomasso Campanella, a philosopher at the time. St. Joseph Calasanz died at the age of 90 on August 25, 1648. His heart and tongue are incorruptible and kept at a Piarist motherhouse in Rome. His feast day is August 25.

As we approach the altar, we thank the Lord for these saints. The readings speak about wisdom, and St. Joseph Calasanz possessed that wisdom and passed it on to others. St. Pontian and St. Hippolytus possessed the wisdom to bring reconciliation and peace to the Church. We pray that the Lord will continue to bring peace and reconciliation to the Church in our time.