

## Saint John Ogilvie's Class Photograph

The fourth centenary of the martyrdom of St John Ogilvie S.J., was fittingly commemorated in St Aloysius' Church with superb choral accompaniment by combined Jesuit school choirs of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland for Vespers, on Saturday evening, 7 March 2015, and at Mass the following morning.

Exactly four hundred years to the day, 10 March, several dozen Catholics, including a group of masters and pupils representing the College, converged at midday on the Market Cross at the ancient heart of Glasgow, to venerate that valiant Jesuit, at the precise spot where the scaffold had been erected. Over the centuries from the moment of death his name had remained on countless lips and his memory never grew dim.

Such ageless devotion culminated in his Canonization by Pope Paul VI, on 17 October 1976, with all the grandeur and solemnity that only the Vatican can provide. Personal memories of that happy occasion are still fresh with me and abundant. Among them one in which you can share.

Traditionally *L'Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican's own daily newspaper, came out in a special edition to mark the occasion of a Canonization with feature articles concerning the life and miracles of the new saint.

The Canonization of Blessed John Ogilvie was not to be an exception and during the summer months the editor was collecting articles. He extended an invitation to myself to contribute something significant for the forthcoming commemorative number.

He added, if my recollection does not fail me, that "it must not be an account of the life of Saint Ogilvie, Father Paolo Molinari, the General Postulator of the Jesuits, is doing that; nor an explanation of the process of his Canonization, Father Peter Gumpel, Molinari's assistant is responsible for that; nor about devotion to the Jesuit martyr in Scotland, Archbishop Thomas Winning of Glasgow has promised to write about that; nor the miraculous cure of John Fagan, since his parish priest, Monsignor Thomas Reilly, wanted to do that. But please feel free to write about anything you think would shed light on this saint and be of interest to our readers!"

The telephone conversation left me feeling deeply flummoxed. What was there left to be said? What salvo might yet be fired? Gradually reflection suggested a possible solution to the challenge.

The readership of *L'Osservatore Romano* was ninety-nine-point-nine-recurring Italian, none of whom had ever had occasion to hear of John Ogilvie, and most of whom anyway confused *Scozia*, *Svezia* and *Svizzera* (Scotland, Sweden, Switzerland), and appeared to be none the wiser when the differences were spelled out. If his Canonization was to be of any real significance to them, it was essential to insert John Ogilvie into that more general context of the sanctity of the Church, which we all profess to be One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic. The late Monsignor David McRoberts emended this for the West of Scotland, adding: "...and of Pugin design!"

One had to begin at the beginning with an *identikit* of the protagonist himself. John Ogilvie was born in 1579, on the family estate of Drumnakeith near the town of Keith in Banffshire, Scotland, the first-born son of Sir Walter Ogilvie of Drum, and his wife, Lady Anne Elphinstone. Nothing is recorded of his childhood, except that in all probability he was baptized in the Calvinist ritual, and his mother died very prematurely, before 1582, when his father married for a second time. The boy was reared by this step-mother, Lady Mary Douglas, daughter of Sir William Douglas of Lochleven.

In that same year, on 9 December 1579, at Lima in Perù in far-off Latin America, an illegitimate son was born to Juan de Porres, a Spanish grandee, and Anna Vasquez, a Panamanian negress of African origin. At first the nobleman refused to admit paternity on account of the infant's dark skin, but later relented. The child was baptized Martino in the same font in which seven years later St. Rose of Lima would receive baptism. His mother reared him. The jeers of bastard and mulatto weighed heavily during boyhood.

To me it seemed remarkable that Martino de Porres and John Ogilvie, born in the same year, but into diametrically different geographic and social environments, should both be Canonized within the short space of fourteen years of each other, the one by Pope John XXIII on 6 May 1962, the other by Pope Paul VI on 17 October 1976.

It was within this dimension of sanctity of the universal Church that one ought to collocate our Scottish saint appropriately.

Linking **Saint John Ogilvie S.J.** to **Saint Martino de Porres O.P.** got me off to a good start, but it was not sufficient. A better *point-de-départ* was required and one after which the general readership could easily follow the trail. It struck me that **Saint Roberto Bellarmino** (1542-1621) might be fitted ideally for this singularly appropriate role of frontrunner.

Cardinal Roberto Bellarmino was an Italian Jesuit theologian, famed for being an able controversialist. King James I & VI of Great Britain engaged personally in polemics with him over the nature of kingship and the Oath of Allegiance. The cardinal was lampooned in England. Today a *Bellarmino Jug* (similar to a *Toby*) would be a rare find in an antiques shop.

The last thing that the sovereign wished to do was create martyrs, but the execution of a Scottish Jesuit may have given vent to the chagrin of a thwarted monarch and the ideal response to his opponent. Though Ogilvie himself insisted on the scaffold that he was sent to his death for religion alone. Quite probably he was aware of the wrangling between the king and the cardinal.

Before being appointed rector of the Roman College (1592), St. Roberto Bellarmino was entrusted with the intellectual and spiritual formation of the aspirant scholastics, among them **Saint Aloysius Gonzaga** (1568-1591). In early adolescence, Luigi had received his first Communion from the hands of **Saint Carlo Borromeo** (1538-1584), on 22 July 1580. Aged seventeen, he entered the Jesuit Order as a novice. Having assisted a victim of the plague, he contracted the contagion and died prematurely soon after, on 21 June, only 23 years of age. He was beatified in 1605 (Ogilvie himself probably celebrated this event with the community of Gratz in the Austrian province of the *Society of Jesus*), and canonized (together with another Jesuit scholastic, **Saint Stanislaus Kostka**, whose preferred motto *ad maiora natus sum* will be familiar to all readers), in 1726.

Created cardinal, in 1599, for over two decades Bellarmino occupied a pivotal position in the Roman Curia of his day and this brought him into contact with countless members of the clergy and secular society of the Eternal City, including **Saint Filippo Neri** (1515-1605), the 'Apostle of Rome', founder of the *Oratory*, and the latter's spiritual child, **Saint Camillo de Lellis**, founder of the *Ministers of the Sick*.

In that same year of Bellarmino's cardinalate, on 13 March 1599, **Saint Jan Berchmans** was born, at Diest in Brabant. In 1616 he entered the Jesuit novitiate at Mechelen, near Bruxelles. Surely, there in Flanders, he must have learned of Ogilvie's heroic death the previous year. He was profoundly influenced in his vocation by reading a *Life* of the young Jesuit novice, Luigi Gonzaga. His superiors destined him to Rome. After journeying three hundred leagues on foot, he entered the Roman College, on 31

December 1618, and continued with the usual course of formation. At some stage he inevitably encountered the prestigious Jesuit cardinal.

Both died in the same year, 1621, in the same novitiate house of *Sant'Andrea al Quirinale*, the already much venerated Prince of the Church, on 17 September, in his eightieth year, the young Belgian a month earlier, on 13 August, at the age of twenty-two years and five months. Did the already ailing cardinal offer Mass for the repose of the novice's soul? Not unlikely. Certainly, he prayed a sincere *requiescat in pace*.

Jan Berchmans was declared Blessed in 1865, and was canonized in 1888. Due to political factors extrinsic to the cause, Roberto Bellarmino only in the last century, beatified by Pope Benedict XV, in 1920, and canonized less than three years later, by his successor Pope Pius XI, on 29 June 1930. The following year he was declared a Doctor of the Church.

The three Jesuit saints, St. Roberto, St. Aloysius, and St. Jan, are venerated today in the sumptuous baroque church of *Sant'Ignazio*, still the university church of the Pontifical Gregorian University (worthy successor to the Roman College of yore).

There is more: **Saint François de Sales** (1567-1622), bishop of Geneva, but normally at Annecy because impeded from residing in his legitimate see by the Calvinist government in power, was one of the leaders of the Counter-Reformation. The cardinal and the bishop were good friends. They conferred on his occasional visits to Rome. To encourage the divulgation of sound doctrine, especially among the youth of his diocese, he made use of Bellarmino's *Catechism*.

In 1610, with **Saint Jeanne Frances Frémyot de Chantal** he founded the *Congregation of the Visitation*, a community of women dedicated to contemplative prayer, sharing the common life, but having a special care for the poor, the sick and the needy in their homes. The archbishop of Lyon approved their enclosure, but opposed their external apostolate, and the bishop had to acquiesce in the decision of his metropolitan. Later, in 1616, with Bellarmino's influential support, François de Sales obtained the approval of the Holy See for his foundation.

The first house of the Visitandines was opened in Paris in 1619. For spiritual director of St. Jeanne and her companions, St. François chose personally **Saint Vincent de Paul** (1581-1660). He had been greatly influenced by his friend, whose writings he had read many times, attracted by the devout humanism of the bishop's spirituality and moral stature. Their outlook was that a sad saint would be a sorry saint.

However, St. Vincent was aware that his dedicated friends François and Jeanne had not fully realised their vision of helping the truly poor directly, so with the cooperation of **Saint Louise de Marillac** (d. 1660), he founded the *Daughters of Charity*, in 1633, an inspired innovation of organised extra-cloistral assistance for those in need.

The silent interplay of sanctity is all too evident in the contacts and influence of all these holy men and women.

And one can continue from here. Fellow Jesuits, contemporaries of John Ogilvie and alive at the time of his death, who also have been canonized, are the following: St. **Stephanus Pongrącz**, St. **Melchior Grodziecki**, and St. **Marcus Krisevcanin**, all martyrs in Slovacchia (+1619). St. **Andrew Bobola**, martyr for the cause of Christian unity in Poland (+1657). St. **Bernardino Realino**, renowned for his deep concern for convicts and incurable invalids at Lecce in the south of Italy (+1616). St. **Jean François Régis**, famous preacher and tireless confessor in the central regions of France (+1640), canonized with St. Vincent de Paul, 5 April 1737. St. **Pedro Claver**, Spanish missionary in Colombia, transported into

slavery from West Africa, who devoted all his energy to their temporal and spiritual welfare, and declared himself their 'slave' for ever (+1654). St. **Jean de Brébeuf** and **VII Companions**, missionaries martyred by the Iroquois Indians in Canada (+1642-1649). St. **Alfonso Rodriguez**, the unassuming doorkeeper at Palma de Mallorca, Spain, who inspired St. Pedro Claver with a longing to convert the heathen in the New World (+1617). St. **Rocco Gònzalez**, architect, carpenter, bricklayer, all in one, of numerous mission stations, the popular *reducciones*, along with (another) St. **Alfonso Rodriguez**, and St. **Juan del Castillo**, all martyrs in Paraguay (+1628), narrated dramatically in a poignant film some years ago. And St. **Jan Berchmans**, the young novice mentioned above (+1621).

This adds a fuller dimension and enriches St. John Ogilvie's class photograph.

Envoi: that special celebrative number of *L'Osservatore Romano* never appeared. Some days before the Canonization, the editor phoned and told me to suspend whatever was being prepared, because the manuscripts of all the other articles had been mislaid and he could not proceed – just forget about it. Well, not completely!

Charles Burns OBE OA.