

# Church Honors Bishops Through Canonization

By Father Robert McNamara

Many bishops over the centuries have been canonized saints. It is interesting to note, in looking at some of their lives, how each one had a different style and responsibilities when they were bishops. Here are listed a few bishops that the Church honors as saints.

### St. John Fisher Bishop of Rochester, England, Martyr

John Fisher was a person of deep learning, and is usually ranked with Erasmus and Thomas More as one of the great Renaissance humanists. He was always involved in the academic world and was appointed Chancellor of Cambridge University for life, a unique honor.

When Fisher became bishop of the poor diocese of Rochester at age 35, he made the standard of preaching in England his key concern. He was an accomplished preacher himself and his sermons on the penitential psalms were reprinted seven times before his death.

John Fisher was caught in the great turmoil provoked by the Lutheran reform. In 1527, he was asked to study the problem of Henry VIII's marriage, and provoked the King's anger when he defended the validity of Henry's marriage to Catherine. He later rejected the King's claim to be supreme head of the Church of England. When he refused to take an oath of loyalty to the King, he, along with Thomas More, was sent to the Tower of London, where he remained 14 months without a trial.

Finally when we was tricked into stating before witnesses that the King was not supreme head of the Church of England, he was accused of high treason. He was condemned and beheaded on June 22, 1535.

### SAINT CHARLES BORROMEO Cardinal Archbishop of Milan

St. Charles Borromeo is known for many things, but perhaps closest to our hearts in this diocese is his concern for the poor and hungry. When the plague struck Milan in 1576 and the officials and wealthy of the city fled, this powerful Cardinal personally tended the sick together with his clergy, and took upon himself the task of supplying food for 60 to 70,000 persons daily. He ordered the colorful feast day hangings used in the episcopal palace and the cathedral to be cut up into clothing for the poor.

### SAINT MARTIN OF TOURS

St. Martin of Tours was born around 316 AD of pagan parents in a Roman province west of the Danube. His father was an officer and Martin was drafted into the army against his will, because he had become acquainted with the teachings of Christ and was opposed to violence. Even in the army, he continued to live as a Christian and the most famous story of St. Martin took place then.

That night at the gates of the camp, he took his sword and cut his beautiful officer's cape in half and gave the better half away. That night in a dream, he saw Christ wearing the cape and heard him say, "Look! Martin has given me his cape and he is not yet even baptized!"

He became a Christian, refused to go to war, was condemned to go unarmed into battle, prayed all night and by morning an armistice was declared.

But the most timely story about Martin for us is the way the people chose him to be their bishop. He had become a hermit in the vicinity of Tours where he went about preaching and doing good, and when the Bishop of Tours died, the people demanded that Martin be their bishop. Some of the more worldly clergy protested, but were told, "We do not want a stylish bishop but a holy one, and Martin is a holy man." Legend says that Martin hid but his pet goose followed and betrayed him, and they made him bishop, rags and all.

He was a raggedy bishop as he had been a raggedy priest, and spent his life visiting and teaching his people. Some say St. Martin of Tours was St. Patrick's uncle.

### SAINT JOSAPHAT Archbishop of Polotsk (The Ukraine), Martyr

St. Josaphat was born John Kusevich, a Catholic who grew up in a part of Europe where the Latin and Orthodox Catholics were in schism. He went to a Byzantine monastery (St. Basil the Great), became a priest, remained a Catholic and spent his life trying to bring about union between his separated brethren. His efforts went unappreciated by both the Orthodox, who accused him of trying to force their submission to Rome, and his fellow Catholics, angered by his insistence of equal treatment for the Orthodox. Made Bishop of Polotsk, he struggled to restore order and piety, but dissidents on both sides attacked him so viciously that it became apparent his life was in danger. A particularly obnoxious schismatic priest named Elias was put up to entering the Bishop's courtyard every morning as he prayed his office and insulting him to his servants. Finally, the Bishop gave his servants permission to lock the man in the house until prayers in the church were over - whereupon the man's cohorts rang the town bells, summoning a mob, and when the Bishop returned from prayers his skull was bashed with a halberd, a bullet was fired into his body and it was dragged to the river Vilna.

Legend says that a light shone over the spot where the holy Bishop's body was thrown into the river until it was rescued and buried properly.

In our time, Pope Paul VI has worked long and hard for the reunion of all Christians, and in our Diocese there is an ongoing effort toward this goal. Let us pray that soon the scandal of division will be ended, that we will all be one in our service of a Lord whose

heal the world. Let us pray especially that under the guidance of our new bishop, ecumenical efforts in the Rochester Diocese will flourish and blossom. St. Josaphat's motto was, "That all may be One."

### SAINT ALBERT THE GREAT Bishop of Regensburg, Doctor of the Church

St. Albert was born in a castle on the banks of the Danube, the son of a count, in 1206. As a student at the University of Padua, he met Bl. Jordan of Saxony, the successor to St. Dominic, and decided to become a Dominican friar, which so enraged his father that he threatened to kidnap the young man (as St. Thomas Aquinas' family actually did to him later).

St. Albert was a genius as well as a saint: a philosopher, an authority on physics, geography, astronomy, mineralogy, alchemy (chemistry), and biology, but his greatest fame derives from his appreciation of Aristotle, the great pagan philosopher, whose works he rewrote to make them acceptable to Christian critics and, in time, the foundation for the great medieval scholastic system which would be brought to perfection in the works of St. Thomas Aquinas, Albert's student.

Albert accepted Aristotle's theory about the roundness of the earth, deducing from the presence of gravity that it was spherical, and refused to believe the antipodes uninhabitable and submerged in water, or that communication between the inhabitants of the North and South regions of the earth was impossible. This teaching, traditional in Dominican schools, found its way into Dante's *Paradiso*, was familiar to Amerigo Vespucci, was in the air at the time Christopher Columbus was seeking support from Spain for his voyage to the Indies. Vespucci, Columbus and Copernicus possessed copies of Albert's works and they still exist, well-worn and personally annotated with each man's original notes.

He lived to be 74, survived his most famous pupil, Thomas Aquinas, and was on his way to Rome to defend Thomas against charges of heresy when he died. He is the patron of students and the natural sciences.

There are many more bishop-saints, and some of our parishes in the Diocese of Rochester are named after them - Ambrose, Boniface, Patrick, Januarius, Gregory, Alphonsus, Augustine and Stanislaus to name just a few. Then there are those parishes named after the Apostles, the first bishops.

### Vatican Approves Official Meetings

Episcopal conferences are the official bodies in and through which the bishops of a given country or territory act together as pastors of the Church. They are organized and operate under general norms and particular statutes



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**and**

**All Our Prayers**

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**of**

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HOLY APOSTLES PARISH**

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