Hymn to Saint Thomas of Canterbury.

Hail, Saint Thomas, blissful Martyr,
Faithful shepherd of Christ's sheep,
And, like Him, when wolves assailed them
Scorning flight or selfish sleep:
Hail, fair vase of precious ointment
Broken on the sacred sod,
Ever, to our times, distilling
Perfumes through the Church of God!

Virgin, Martyr, Prince of prelates,
Glory of Augustine's throne,
Who, like thee, the fragile favours
Of this world's esteem has known?
Who, like thee, has spurned its glory,
Who, like thee, despised its rage?
Who, like thee, endured its insults—
Of God's love the constant gage?

Tell us now what joys requite thee
For the frequent midnight blows,
Fast and vigil, cruel hair-shirt,*
All the pains that Jesus knows.
By thy penance, blessed Father,
Help us in these evil days
To chastise the flesh, and merit
At the last our Saviour's praise.

By the lone and weary exile,
By the hurried secret flight,
By the few who stood beside thee
In the hard unequal fight—
Teach us that we too are pilgrims,
Strangers, exiled far from home;
Help us in life's daily battle
Deadlier foes to overcome.

By the blood poured out at Vespers
In the Minster's dark'ning shade,
By the signs that midnight vigil
Of thine hidden life displayed,
By the miracles at sunrise
And their fame spread far and wide,
By the penance of the guilty,
Draw us to the Crucified.

Guardian of the Church's freedom,
Champion of the Roman See,
In dark times the first to suffer
From the rage of heresy;
Help us, in the midst of error,
Still to cling to Peter's throne,
And through good report or evil
Reap the fruit thy blood has sown!

D.B.C.

*A notable portion of a hair-shirt of S. Thomas is now preserved at Erdington Abbey, having been brought from Lucca in July, 1908.

December 1.

Blessed John Beche, O.S.B., last Abbot of Colchester ; martyred at Colchester, 1539. BB. Edmund Campion, convert, priest, S.J., Alexander Briant, priest, S.J., Ralph Sherwin, convert, secular priest; martyred at Tyburn, 1581. Ven. Richard Langley, layman; martyred at York, 1586.

Men that have given their lives for the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Acts xv. 26.

It is not to be doubted but his Holiness the Pope will look upon their pains as upon Thomas Becket's, seeing it is for like matter. "*The Libeller.*"

December 2.

O how precious is the death of the saints, who continually stand before God: and are not separated from one another. *Antiphon from the Office of SS. John and Paul.*

I, bar none of prayer, but I only desire them of the household of faith to pray with me, and in mine agony to say one Creed. Blessed Edmund Campion.

The Blessed Ralph Sherwin on being seized by the hangman, kissed his hands still streaming with Father Campion's blood, whereat the people were very much moved.

The Blessed Alexander Briant made shift to shave his crown, to signify that he was not ashamed of his Holy Orders, nor yet that he would blush at his religion.

December 3.

Ven. Edward Mico, priest, S.J.; died in Newgate, 1678. Ven. Edward Coleman, convert, layman ; martyred at Tyburn, 1678.

The Lord looseth them that are fettered. Psalm cxlv. 8.

On the Feast of that great Saint of his Society, S. Francis Xavier, Father Mico was found dead in his cell, prostrate, literally crushed by the weight of the chains with which he had been loaded.

December 4.

Thou shalt not speak evil of the prince of thy people. Acts xxiii. 5.

I renounce that doctrine (which some, wrongfully, say the Romish Church doth usher in to promote their interest) that kings may be murdered, and the like; I say, I abominate it. *Ven. Edward Coleman.*

December 5.

Ven. John Almond, priest; martyred at Tyburn, 1612.

The Almond-tree shall flourish. *Ecclesiastes xii. 5.*

He wished that he had there S. Lawrence his gridiron to be broiled on, S. Peter's cross to be hanged on, S. Stephen's stones to be stoned with, to be ript, ript, ript and ript again, desiring to have a thousand lives to suffer so many deaths for Jesus Christ His sake, through whose Death and Passion and this of his, he made no doubt but to enjoy the kingdom of Heaven.

December 6.

When Jezabel killed the prophets of the Lord, Abdias took a hundred prophets, and hid them in cave.
III. Kings xviii. 4. (ed. 2 Kings 18: 4 RSVCE)

Richard Langley spent all his estate in succouring priests. He built a very well-hidden house underground, which was a great place of refuge for priests during the persecution.

December 7.

Ven. William Lampley, layman; martyred at Gloucester, 1588.

Hath not God chosen the poor in this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom? S. James ii, 5.

A poor man, who suffered for the Catholic Religion.

December 8.

Immaculate Conception B.V.M.

As the lily among thorns, so is My love among the daughters, Canticles ii. 2.

Hail Mary, Pearl of grace,
Pure Flower of Adam's race,
And Vessel rare of God's election ;
Unstained as virgin snow,
Serene as sunset glow—
We sinners crabe thy sure protection.

Thou Queen of high estate,
Conceived Immaculate
To form Incarnate Love's pure dwelling ;
The Spirit found His rest
Within thy sinless breast,
And thence flow joys beyond all telling.

A fairer, purer Eve,
Didst thou her fall retrieve,
For man's debt giving God in payment;
Thy spotless feet are pressed
Upon the serpent's crest—
God's stars thy crown, His sun thy raiment.

Through His dear Blood who died,
By sinners crucified,
Art thou preserved, and we forgiven ;
Help us to conquer sin,
That we may enter in through thee, the Golden Gate, to Heaven. *D.B.C.*

December 9.

The Name of the Lord is a strong tower : the just runneth to it, and shall be exalted, Proverbs xviii, 10.

Jesu, Jesu, Jesu, esto mihi Jesus.

Last words of Blessed Ralph Sherwin,

December 10.

VV. Edmund Geninges, convert, priest, and Swithin Wells, layman; martyred in Gray's Inn Fields, 1591. VV. Eustace White, convert, and Polydore Plasden, priests; Sydney Hodson, Brian Lacy, and John Mason, laymen; all martyred at Tyburn for hearing Father Geninges' Mass, 1591. VV. John Roberts, O.S.B., and Thomas Somers, priests, martyred at Tyburn, 1610.

Thou hast prepared a Table before me against them that afflict me. Psalm xxii. 5.

As the lingering day was breaking,
Stood our captain forth and said
(All eternity before us,—)
"I beseech you, take some Bread."

O that Bread, that Bread of Angels!
O that Corn of mighty men !
Never, never had we tasted
Of its mightiness as then !

J. M. Neale.

December 11.

Ven. Arthur Bell, priest, O.F.M. ; martyred at Tyburn, 1643.

One Fold and One Shepherd, S. John x. 16.

One of the soldiers asked him what religion he was of. He readily answered, "I am a Catholic." "What!" said the other, " a Roman Catholic?" "How do you mean a Roman?" said Father Bell, "I am an Englishman. There is but one Catholic Church, and of that I am a member,"

December 12.

Ven. Thomas Holland, priest, S.J. ; martyred at Tyburn, 1642.

One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism. Ephesians iv. 5.

As there is only one God, so there is only one Faith and one Church, and out of that Church there is no salvation. The question is, which is that Church ? I answer that the true Church is that which teaches her children the end for which they were created and placed in this world, and also the means to arrive at this end, and it is only the Catholic and Apostolic and Roman Church which teaches us these things.

Wen. Thomas Holland.

December 13.

Looking for the blessed hope and the coming of the Lord. Titus ii. 13,

The Venerable Edmund Geninges' longing for martyrdom was so intense, that when a student at Rheims, he would constantly exclaim: O Vivamus in spe! Vivamus in spe!"

Farewell hunting and hawking ; I go a better way.

Ven. Swithin Wells, on his way to martyrdom,

December 14.

Onesiphorus was not ashamed of my chain. IJ. Timothy i. 16.

Then Topcliffe bade Mr. Wells look upon the priest Mr. Geninges, who lay upon a hurdle at the foot of the gibbet, "I see him well," quoth he, "and I thank God that ever I did know him. Good Father, give me your blessing," which the priest did. "Nay," quoth Topcliffe, "rather reprehend him for having brought you to this shameful end." "I count it honourable," quoth the other.

December 15.

Thou hast patience, and hast endured for My Name, and hast not fainted. Apocalypse ii. 3.

Under the greatest of his pains, the Venerable Eustace White cried out : " Lord, more pain, if Thou pleasest, and more patience."

December 16.

Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he imagine himself to be wise. Proverbs xxvi. 5.

The Ven. Brian Lacy having the rope about his neck, was willed by Topcliffe to confess his treason. "For," saith he, "there are none but traitors who are of thy religion." " Then," said Tracy, "answer me. You yourself in Queen Mary's days were a Papist, at least in show. Tell me, were you also a traitor?" At which all the people laughed aloud.

December 17.

If we let Him alone, all will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away our place and nation. S. John xi. 48.

You strive to do an impossible thing, when you wish to make it appear that to be a priest is to be a traitor. That would make Christ himself a traitor. I acknowledge that I am a priest and a monk of the holy Order of S. Benedict, as were also S. Augustine and his companions ; and as these monks converted our country from unbelief, so I have done what little I, could to liberate it from heresy.

Ven. John Roberts, O.S.B.

December 18.

The saints shall rejoice in glory : they shall be joyful in their beds. Psalm exlix. 5.

At the gallows Dom John Roberts moved to meet Mr. Somers with a face and demeanour radiant with joy, and gave him his hand to help him up into the cart, saying : "Come, sir, come and welcome, brother and companion in the same glorious triumph ;" and then approaching each other, they embraced and blessed one another with great and tender affection.

December 19.

Ven. Lawrence Humphrey, layman, convert ; martyred at Winchester, 1591 or 1593.

Ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. IJ. Corinthians iv. 5.

He took upon himself all the base offices of the prison, so far entreating the felon to whom he was fettered that he would stand still some two hours in a day whilst he said his prayers. The prisoners tried to persuade him to go to church; otherwise they said he would be hanged. He answered he would never alter his religion ; and as for hanging, he prayed God to make him worthy of it.

December 20.

Ven. Thomas Bedingfield, priest, S.J. ; died in the Gatehouse prison, Westminster, 1678.

Religion clean and undefiled before God and the Father, is this: To visit the fatherless and the widows in their tribulation, and to keep one's self unspotted from this world.

S. James i. 27.

He had served as Almoner to the Duke of York. Entirely absorbed in his sacred ministry, he led at Court the poor and mortified life of a true Religious. He loved above all, we are told, to confess the poor, and made long journeys on foot in the roughest weather, to assist his humble penitents.

December 21.

S. Thomas, Apostle.

Birth and baptism of S. Thomas of Canterbury, 1118.

This child shall be great before the Lord, S. Luke i. 15.

Thomas, Light of London city,
And by Jesu's loving pity
Guardian of our souls, all hail!
Born upon a Tuesday, blessing
Waits the day that saw thee pressing
First to don thy chrisom-mail.

December 22.

Ven. William Pikes, joiner, convert ; martyred at Dorchester, 1591.

Walk so as you have our model. Philippians iii. 17.

When they asked him, as is their wont, whether to save his life and his family he would recant, he boldly replied that it did not become a son of Mr. Pilchard (Ven. Thomas Pilchard) to do so.

December 23.

In that day there shall be an altar of the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt. And the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day, and shall worship Him with sacrifices and offerings ; and they shall make vows to the Lord and perform them. Isaias xix. 19, 21.

In 1585, Father Gregory Gunne, himself a Confessor for the Faith, predicted before the Council that some day a religious house would be built for an offering, on the Spot where Blessed Edmund Campion had suffered. "Tyburn Convent" was established partly by means of an offering in honour of the Sacred Heart and the English Martyrs.

December 24.

Christmas Eve.

On earth peace to men of goodwill. S. Luke ii, 14.

On the Vigil of Christmas, 1645, died at Douay George Muscot, Priest and Confessor, on which day he having heretofore been thrust down into a most filthy dungeon amongst felons, and kept therein for three days, had produced most sweet fruits; for out of ten malefactors who were condemned to die, nine were reconciled to the Catholic Faith.

December 25.

Christmas Day.

Behold threescore valiant ones of the most valiant of Israel, surround the bed of Solomon.
Canticles iii. 7.

The Body-guard of the Christ-Child.

Three warrior-bands surround the crib
Wherein the Baby Jesus lies ;
Me thinks it would be hard to tell
Which is most precious in His eyes.

Martyrs, lay there your laurel wreaths
In joyful homage at the stall,
Where lies the God who gave you grace
To spend for Him your blood, your all.

December 26.

S. Stephen, Proto-Martyr.

There kneels the crowned Deacon first,
The Captain of a wondrous troop,
And England's Primate, Cross in hand,
Headeth with him the martyr group.

And ‘neath their banners, crowd on crowd
Of generous athletes closely press,
Who shrank not under fiercest pain
This Infant's God-head to confess.

Here timid virgins, tender boys,
And aged prelates have their place;
And we, among their ranks may count
Full many a soldier of our race.

December 27.

S. John, Apostle and Evangelist.

And yet another band is seen,
Headed by one whose eagle eye
Hath pierced the humble veils of flesh
That hide the Lord of Majesty.

Hail ! Doctors of th' Incarnate Word,
Hail! Saints who strove for Mary's fame ;
Hail! Martyrs of desire, whose souls
Burned with this sweet consuming flame.

A bloodless victory ye snatched
From Satan and the powers of hell;
But the Child-God with generous love
Grants you the Martyrs' coronal.

December 28.

Holy Innocents.

Ye Innocents, who gaily toy
With crown and palm at Mary's feet,
Sweet Flowers of Bethlehem—she smiles
Her Babe's first champions to greet.

Tell us, if in the deathly pang
Ye saw and chose your glorious lot?
Or if, spoilt children of the Cross,
Ye won it, though ye sought it not?

Brothers of Jesus! Rachel mourns
Your loss with cries of shrill despair ;
But ye are playing with your God,
And safe, like Him, in Mary's care.

December 29.

S. Thomas, of Canterbury ; martyred in his Cathedral, 1170.
Ven. William Howard, Viscount Stafford; martyred on Tower Hill, 1680.

For the Name of Jesus, and for the defence of His Church, I am ready to die.
S. Thomas's last words.

O Jesu, if for love of Thee
Martyr in deed I may not die,
Grant me at least the crown of those
Who for this guerdon daily sigh.

Grant me to die, for Thy sweet sake,
To self and sin and all the world;
To reach at last the blissful post
Where John his banner hath unfurled.

O Love, I dare not ask for more,—
Thou knowest that my heart is fain
To give Thee all Thou gavest me,
And follow Thee in Stephen's train.

DBC.

December 30.

God sanctified him in his faith and meekness. Ecclesiasticus xlv. 4.

This man (Viscount Stafford), gentle and timid in ordinary life, became heroic in trial, and showed a firmness worthy of his kingly ancestors, and a meekness worthy of a descendant of S. Louis.

December 31.

O Merciful God, remember our holy Martyrs who shed their blood for Christ. Do Thou who didst so often spare Thy sinful people for the sake of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, now also, moved by the prayers of our fathers reigning with Thee, have mercy upon us, save Thy people, and bless Thine inheritance; and suffer not those souls to perish, which Thy Son hath redeemed with His most Precious Blood, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee, world without end. Amen.

Tyburn's wrongs are long forgiven, unforgotten is the pain ;
Time can never dim the traces of the cruel blood-red stain ;
And the Martyr's cry for vengeance rises up before Thy throne :
"Save the land we love so well, Lord; claim its children for Thine own."

Look — this land, deep watered with the blood of Martyrs slain ;
Surely these who were our kinsmen have not bled for us in vain;
We, like them, are stoutly fighting for the souls of men to-day,
And we claim them for our brothers, who have fallen in the fray.

So for ever through the ages as they stand before Thy throne,
May the glory of their triumph for our sinful past atone ;
May the wounds they bore for Thee, Lord, ever flashing ruby-bright,
Guide us through the darksome future till we rest within thy sight.

J. W. Recks.