English Martyrs

MARCH

Hymn in honour of S. Gregory the Great,

Apostle of the English.

Lord, receive our thankful homage,
  Who, from toils of error freed,
Bless Thee for the hand that saved us,
  And the heart that felt our need—
For S. Gregory our father,
  Vigilant in name and deed.

For our own, our dear apostle,
  Gregory the Great, the blest,
Who, while England lay in darkness,
  Spared no labour, knew no rest;
For the gracious love he bore us,
  Be Thy holy name confessed!

Love that grew, since first those children
  Fettered in a Roman mart,
With their bright young beauty won him
  Help and comfort to impart—
From that day he bore our England
  Graven ever on his heart.

Lovingly he looks upon them,
Sighing, as he sets them free,
"If these little ones are Angles,
Surely Angels shall they be,
Singing joyous Alleluias,
Saved from wrath, dear Lord, to Thee!"

When, on Peter's throne up-lifted,
All the churches claim his care,
Yet his heart is most in England
With his sons who battle there;
And he aids them in the conflict
By the arm of ceaseless prayer.

Thus our own we joy to name him,
Though our shores he never trod;
Though our sins have marred his life-work,
And we bow beneath Thy rod,
Jesu, may our father's pleading
Gain the land once more for God!

D. B. C.

March 1.

Gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. For which cause I please myself in my infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ. *II. Corinthians xii. 9, 10.*

It may stand for a very certain token that a penitent beginneth to profit and grow in grace and favour of God, when he feeleth a pleasure and quickness in his labour and pain taken in prayer, alms-deed, pilgrimage, fasting, discipline, tribulation, affliction, and such other spiritual exercise, by which the soul willingly Yorketh with the body by their own punishment, to purge and rub out the rusty, cankered spots that sin hath defiled them with in the sight of God, and to leave the fewer to be burnt out in the fire of purgatory.

Blessed Thomas More.

March 2.

Blessed is the man that findeth Wisdom. Her ways are all full of pleasure, and her paths are peaceable.

Proverbs iii. 13, 17.

If it be true, as it is indeed, that sin is painful and virtue pleasant, how much is it then a more madness to take sinful pain in this world, that shall win us eternal pain in hell, rather than pleasant virtue in this world, that shall win us eternal pleasure in heaven.

Blessed Thomas More.

If virtue be thy guide,
  True comfort is thy path,
And thou secure from erring steps
  That lead to vengeance wrath.

Her ways are pleasant ways
  Upon the right-hand side;
And heavenly happy is that soul
  Takes Virtue for her guide.

Ven. KR. Southwell, S.J.

March 3.

And Jesus stood and cried, saying: If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink.

S. John vii. 37.

Amen, Amen, I say to you : If any man keep My word, he shall not see death for ever.

S. John viii. 51.

If God be the Way, the Truth, and the Life, he that goeth without Him, strayeth, he that liveth without Him, dieth, and he that is not taught by Him, erreth.

Ven. Robert Southwell, S.J.

Well saith S. Augustine, that God is our true and chief life, from whom to revolt is to fall, and to return is to rise. *Id.*

March 4.

Ven. Christopher Bales, priest ; martyred in Fleet Street, 1590. Ven. Alexander Blake, layman; martyred in Gray's Inn Lane, 1590. Ven. Nicholas Horner, tailor ; martyred at Smithfield, 1590.

In prisons more frequent, in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils from my own nation, in perils from false brethren. In labour and painfulness, in much watchings, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

II. Corinthians xi. 23, 26, 27.

I could reckon unto you the miseries that our priests suffer in night journeys in the worst weather that can be picked: perils of thieves, of waters, of watches, of false brethren; their close abode in chambers as in prison or dungeon, without fire and candle, lest they give token to the enemy where they be . . . all which they willingly suffer, which is great penance for their feathers, and all to win the souls of their dearest countrymen.

Allen, letter to Dom Maurice Chauncy.

March 5.

He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive the reward of a prophet.

S. Matthew x. 41.

A poor man (the Venerable Alexander Blake) that was an hostler in Gray's Inn Lane, was arraigned, and after hanged in the same lane, with a title over his head, because he had lodged a priest in his house.

March 6.

I was naked, and you covered Me. S. Matthew xxv. 36.
In your patience you shall possess your souls. S. Luke xxi. 19.

Nicholas Horner, a tailor, was arraigned and condemned to be hanged for that he had made a jerkin for a priest. While his diseased leg was being cut off in his prison, he being made to sit on a form neither bound nor holden by any violence, neither offered to stir nor used any impatient screech or cries, but wringing his hands in very good order, often said "Jesus, increase my pains, and increase my patience."

March 7.

BB. John Larke, priest, and German Gardiner, layman ; martyred at Tyburn, 1545.

The eye cannot say to the hand: I need not thy help; nor again the head to the feet : I have no need of you. *I. Corinthians xii. 21.*

I beseech you, be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ. *I. Corinthians iv. 16.*

Blessed Thomas More's death so wrought on the mind of Doctor Larke, his own parish priest, that he, following the example of his own sheep, afterwards suffered a most famous martyrdom for the same cause of the Supremacy. Blessed Thomas More was the martyr who especially won the admiration of the Blessed German Gardiner, who desired to follow his steps, as being, like himself, a layman.

March 8.

We are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh, for if you live according to the flesh, you shall die. But if by the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live.

Romans viii, 12, 13.

If virtue were all painful and vice all pleasant, yet sith death shall shortly finish both the pain of the one and the pleasure of the other, great madness were it if we would not rather take a short pain for the winning of everlasting pleasure, than a short pleasure for the winning of everlasting pain.

Blessed Thomas More.

O happy retribution!
Short toil, eternal rest;
For mortals and for sinners
A mansion with the blest!

S. Bernard de Morlaix.

March 9.

As dying, and behold we live: as chastised, and not killed: as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing: as needy, yet enriching many: as having nothing, and possessing all things.

II. Corinthians vi. 9, 10.

In the wealth, honours, pleasures, pomps of the world there is nothing but thorns and dirt. Tbe poverty of Christ has less pinching parsimony, less of weariness, than an emperor's palace. . .

I know what liberty there is in obedience, what pleasure in labour, what sweetness in prayer, what dignity in humility, what peace in conflict, what nobleness in patience, what perfection in infirmity.

Blessed Edmund Campion, S.J.

March 10.

Jesus Christ.. . whom you crucified. Acts iii. 10,
But now in Christ Jesus, you, who some time were afar off, are made nigh by the Blood of Christ.

Ephesians ii. 13.

Look if you can upon a Crucifix without blushing; do but count the Five Wounds of Christ once over without a bleeding conscience. Read your sins in those characters, and examine your thoughts whether the sight do please them.

Ven, Robert Southwell, S.J.

Can you behold it with unweeping eyes,
Can you behold and not dissolve in sighs,
The life-like image of the death He dies ?

Dom Wilfrid Wallace, O.S.B.

March 11.

Ven. Thomas Atkinson, priest ; martyred at York, 1616.

If thou have much, give abundantly : if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little.
Tobias iv. 9.

When the good man came to poor folk's houses, he would not let them be at any charge, but both found himself meat and them; and gave them money too: so what he received from those that were able he bestowed on the poor. Be pitiful to poor folk, and help them to thy power, for there you shall greatly please God.

Blessed Adrian Fortescue.

March 12.

S. Gregory the Great, O.S.B., Pope,
Apostle of England.

I will set up One Shepherd over them, and he shall feed them. *Ezechiel xxxiv, 23.*
There shall be One Fold, and One Shepherd. *S. John x. 16.*
Jesus saith unto Peter : Feed My lambs . . . Feed My sheep. *S. John xxi. 15, 17.*

Jesu, by their sacred toil
Who first won this land for Thee,
By the harvest that her soil
Yielded to Saint Gregory;
Hear her first Apostle's plaints,
Pity, Lord, the Isle of Saints.
Jesus, convert England !

March 13.

If thy hand or thy foot scandalize thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee. It is better for thee to go into life maimed or lame, than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire.
S, Matthew xviii. 8.

I had rather put my life of body to suffer pain for a little season, than my silly soul to perish for ever.
Blessed Thomas Mare.

Be more fearful of hell than of persecution, and more eager of heaven than of worldly repose.
Ven. Robert Southwell, S.J.

March 14.

There is a way which seemeth just to a man: but the ends thereof lead to death.

Proverbs xiv. 12.

'Tis Virtue offers most ;
'Tis she that most refuse ;
'Tis she prevents the broad way plagues,
Which most do wilful choose,

Do choose the wide, the broad,
The left-hand way and gate ;
These Vice applauds, these Virtue loathes,
And teaches her to hate.

Ven. Robert Southwell, S.J.

We all ought to follow the narrow way, though there be many difficulties in it. It is an easy thing to run the blind way of liberty, but God deliver us from all broad sweet ways.

Ven, John Wall, O.F.M.

March 15.

Blessed William Hart, priest; martyred at York, 1583.

The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away: as it hath pleaged the Lord go is it done : blessed be the Name of the Lord.

Job i. 21.

Blessed William Hart's ejaculation on hearing his sentence.

Whereas he could not help discovering both by his countenance and words, the great joy of his soul in suffering for such a cause, they loaded him with double irons to tame his courage; but all in vain; for, in proportion to what he suffered for Christ, he found still greater consolations from Christ.

March 16.

VV. John Amias and Robert Dalby, priests ; martyred at York, 1589.

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: to them that dwelt in the region of the shadow of death, light is risen.

Isaias ix. 2.

One Bramley, in York prison for felonies, when Dr. Amias and Dalby were arraigned, saw hanging over their heads a great round light, which every time they spake, would as it were move itself, and at the end of their speeches vanished away. This man, ever before an heretic, was so moved therewith, as also with their speeches to the judges, as, repenting his former life, he desired to be made a Catholic, and soon after for his fact executed . . . commending himself to the prayers of Catholics, he patiently died with those blessed martyrs.

March 17.

What do you mean weeping and afflicting my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but to die also, for the Name of the Lord Jesus.

Acts xxi. 13,

I die (and it is the favourablest, honourablest, and happiest death that ever could have chanced unto me) not for knavery, but for verity; I die not for treason, but for religion; I die not for any ill demeanour or offence committed, but only for my faith, for my conscience, for my priesthood, for my blessed Saviour Jesus Christ; and to tell you truth, if I had ten thousand lives, I am bound to lose them all, rather than to break my faith, to lose my soul, to offend my God.

Letter of Blessed William Hart, to his mother, from prison.

March 18.

VV. John Thulis, priest, and Roger Wrenno, weaver ; martyred at Lancaster, 1616.

But I fear none of these things. Acts xx. 24. i
I have finished my course, I have kept the Faith. II. Timothy iv. 7.

No hurdle hard, nor hempen rope
Can make me once afraid.
No tyrant's knife against my life
Shall make me dismayed.
Though flesh and bones be broken and torn
My soul I trust will sing
Amongst the glorious companie
With Christ our Heavenly King.
Thus I, your friend John Thewlis,
Have made my latest end,
Desiring God when His will is
Us all to Heaven send
Where neither strange nor damned crewe
Can grief unto us bring.
And now I bid my last adieu :
Christ send us happy rising!

From the " Song which Mr. Thulis writ for himself."

March 19.

Behold I see the Heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God.

Acts vii. 55.

When the Venerable Roger Wrenno was first hanged, the rope broke, and he was thrown to the ground. He knelt absorbed in prayer, and then started to run up the ladder again. When the Sheriff remarked at his great haste to die, be replied: "If you had seen that which I have just now seen, you would be as much in haste to die as I now am." And so the executioner, putting a stronger rope about his neck, turned the ladder, and quickly sent him to see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living, of which before he had had a glimpse.

March 20.

Man born of a woman, living for a short time, fleeth as a shadow, and never continueth in the same state.

Job xiv. 1, 2.

Wake we, sleep we, eat we, drink we, mourn we, sing we, in what wise soever live we, all the same while, die we. So that we never ought to look towards death as a thing far off, considering that although he made no haste towards us, yet we never cease ourselves to make haste towards him.

Blessed Thomas More.

March 21.

S. Benedict, Patriarch of Monks.
Ven. Thomas Pilchard, priest ; martyred at Dorchester, 1587.
Ven. Matthew Flathers, priest ; martyred at York, 1608.

Beloved of God and men, whose memory is in benediction. *Ecclesiasticus xlv. 1.*
My bonds are made manifest in Christ. *Philippians i. 13.*

When the Venerable Thomas Pilchard was being led on horseback to execution, with his hands tied behind him, the officers would have covered him with a cloak, but he shook it off, saving "I am not ashamed of these fetters, I wish all men to know that I am held in bonds for the Catholic Religion."

March 22.

VV. James Harrison, priest, and Anthony Bates, layman ; martyred at York, 1602.

Unto you is Paradise opened, the tree of life is planted, the time to come is prepared, plenteousness is made ready, a city is builded and rest is allowed, yea, perfect goodness and wisdom.

IV Esdras viii. 52. (2 Ezra 8:52)

Death is not death, but only a change from an earthly life to a heavenly one, the end of this world's labours and miseries, and the way to blessedness and imperishable life. And hence, tortures are not to be feared, since they open the gate to the enjoyment of so much good; as has heen proved by the thousands of martyrs who, by means of various torments, have offered the best and most precious sacrifice to God.

Father Walter Colman, O.F.M., who died in Newgate, 1645.

March 23.

Ven. Edmund Sykes, priest; martyred at York, 1587.

Be sober and watch: because your adversary the devil as a roaring lion, goeth about, secking whom he may devour: whom resist ye, strong in faith.

I. S. Peter v. 8.

He was thrust into a most strait and very troublesome prison; where he endured most grievous conflicts . . from the prince of Darkness himself. For the other Catholics, who were kept prisoners in the same gaol, heard in his room a noise as it were of one who twas disputing and contending with him, whom he rebuked and rejected with contempt: and when afterwards they asked him what was the matter, he told them that the devil had been there to trouble and molest him, and to tempt and urge him to renounce his religion.

March 24.

Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

Exodus iii. 5,

After the priests had first suffered martyrdom at Knavesmire (the York Tyburn), and by their holy blood and death had sanctified their reproachful gallows, she (Margaret Clitheroe) greatly desired often to visit that place, for she called it her pilgrimage, and thither she would go at night, accompanied by two or three virtuous women. She went barefoot to the place, and kneeling on her bare knees under the gallows, meditated and prayed so long as her company would suffer her. Among the earliest recollections of Mother Margaret Hallahan was that of her secret pilgrimages with her parents to Tyburn, to venerate as far as possible the scene of the martyrs' triumph.

March 25.

Annunciation B.V.M.

Ven. Margaret Clitheroe, "the Pearl of York"; pressed to death at York, 1586,
Ven. James Bird, layman, convert ; martyred at Winchester, 1593.

The kingdom of heaven is like to a merchant seeking goodly pearls, who when he had found one pearl of great price, went his way, and sold all that he had, and bought it.

S. Matthew xiii. 45, 46,

When the earth was full of darkness,
When the hope of man burnt low,
In time's fulness came the Merchant
Seeking goodly pearls below;
Seeking them through toil and peril
Seeking them through want and woe.

One He found beyond all others,
Pearl of great and countless price ;
Thee that He might make His own one,
He devised a new device ;
Gem of mothers, Pearl of maidens,
Witness of His Sacrifice.

But to-day He found another,
Margaret, both in deed and name ;
Whom because He dearly loved her
For our advocate we claim,
Finding in her pain our glory,
And our triumph in her shame.

J. M. Neale,

March 26.

Many daughters have gathered together riches ; thou hast surpassed them all.

Proverbs xxxi. 29.

From Margaret Clitherae's example everyone might have learned true wisdom, unfeigned humility, patient fortitude, perfect charity, fervent mildness, or any other virtue, for she had drawn plenty of them out of many fountains. She was more willing to acknowledge a fault although She were innocent, than to defend or excuse herself when she was any way reprehended.

March 27.

She hath opened her hand to the needy, and stretched out her hands to the poor. Fine linen and purple is her covering.

Proverbs xxxi. 20, 22.

How carefully she cast her charitable eye into every corner, where Thy secret servants lay desolate and afflicted, to get them fed with Thy heavenly Food, in due season, lest, for want of Thy Banquet, they might happen to fall from Thee. How also she hath looked to their bodily needs, and procured to everyone relief with discretion.

Carrying on her arm the new habit of linen which she had prepared, . . . she went cheerfully to her death, her marriage, as she called it; dealing her alms in the street, which was so full of people she could scarce pass by them.

March 28.

Ven. Christopher Wharton, priest ; martyred at York, 1600.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away,

Apocalypse xxi. 4.

Thy saints are crowned with glorie great,
They see God face to face ;
They triumph still, they still rejoyce
Most happie is their case.
Wee that are heere in banishment
Continuallie doe moane ;
We sigh and sobbe, we weepe and waile,
Perpetuallie we groane.
Our sweete is mixed with bitter gaule,
Our pleasure is but paine ;
Our wyes scarce last the lookeing on
Our sorrowes still remaine.
But there they live in such delight,
Such pleasure and such play,
As that to them a thousand yeares
Doth seeme as yesterday.

March 29.

The disciple is not above the master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord.

S. Matthew x. 24, 25,

What great thing is it for me to leave friends for Him, who left Heaven for me? What great thing for me to be a servant to my brethren, when He washed the feet of the traitor Judas? What wonder if I obey my fathers, when He honoured Pilate? What mighty thing for me to bear labours for Him, who bore His Cross for me? What disgrace if I, a sinner, bear to be rebuked, when He, in His innocency, was curst, spit upon, scourged, wounded, and put to death? Whenever we look into this glass, we see clearly that the temptation of no pleasure, the fear of no pain, should pluck us from the arms of such a Master.

Blessed Edmund Campion, S.J.

March 30.

But yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord shall so come, as a thief in the night: But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

I. Thessalonians v. 2, 4.

Who would trust eternal affairs upon the gliding slipperiness and shifting current of an uncertain life?

Ven. Robert Southwell, S.J.

If to-day you find yourself faint, fainter you are like to be to-morrow, if you suffer the corrosive of sin to consume you without opposing its violence.

Id.

March 31.

Ven. Stephen Rowsham, priest, convert; martyred at Gloucester, 1587. VV. Thurstan Hunt, priest, and Robert Middleton, S.J.; martyred at Lancaster, 1601.

If they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them.

S, Mark xvi. 18.

Thou indeed destroyest us out of this present life; but the King of the world will raise us up, who die for his laws, in the resurrection of eternal life.

II. Machabees vii. 9.

Once, as the Venerable Stephen Rowsham twas saying Mass in the Church of S. Stephen at Rheims, not long after his ordination, a large spider, crawling on the roof, fell into the chalice, as he uncovered it to adore the Precious Blood. He was sorely disturbed and quite at a loss what to do. At last his simplicity, swayed by his great piety and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, won the day. Having silently invoked the Divine assistance, and commended himself in spirit to the mercy of Christ, be bravely swallowed the spider together with the Precious Blood, and suffered no hurt thereby.

He was so laid on the hurdle that one of his legs draggled on the ground as he was drawn, and being admonished to draw it up to him, he said, "No, no, all is too little for Christ's sake."