

May 23

Jerome Savonarola (1452-1498) priest

On May 23, 1498 in Florence, the Dominican preacher Jerome Savonarola was sent to the gallows, and his remains were burned and cast into the Arno. Such was the epilogue of a life consumed by the fire of love for God and his kingdom.

Jerome was born in Ferrara in 1452, and from a young age he felt called to make a prophetic denunciation of the sins of the Church. He entered the Dominican convent of Bologna, became a renowned preacher, and went on to become prior of St. Mark's convent in Florence. A man who sought an unceasing inner dialogue with God, Jerome believed he could transform the city of Florence with the force of his apocalyptic preaching.

Using non-violent methods that were based on persuasion but were not always entirely faithful to the Gospel, Jerome called for the conversion of a society that called itself Christian, but that was corrupt and far from the logic of God's kingdom.

He became directly involved in the foreign policy of the city of Florence, and his opinions clashed with those of the Holy See. This led to his excommunication in 1497. After falling out of the Pope's favor, Jerome also lost the support of his city, which began to doubt his prophecies.

He was imprisoned and fell victim to his own weaknesses, denying many of his convictions under torture. He was sentenced to death as a heretic and a schismatic, although he had never preached anything against Church tradition at the doctrinal level. As the date of his execution drew near, he wrote extraordinary prayers in prison in which he acknowledged his own poverty, entrusted himself to God's mercy and the mercy of his brothers and sisters, and asked forgiveness for his weaknesses.

Savonarola died together with the two companions who had remained faithful to him. At the moment of his death, he blessed the crowd that had rushed to see the spectacle of his humiliation.

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

ANGLICANS:

Petroc (6th cent.), abbot of Padstow

WESTERN CATHOLICS:

The Venerable Bede (d. 735/736), priest and doctor of the church

Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi (d. 1607), virgin (Ambrosian calendar)

Desiderius (8th cent.), bishop and martyr (Spanish-Mozarabic calendar)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (15 basans/genbot):

Simon the Zealot, apostle (Coptic Church; see on October 28)

LUTHERANS:

Jerome Savonarola, preacher of penitence at Florence

Ludwig Nommensen (d. 1918), apostle at Sumatra

MARONITES:

Michael of Synnada the Confessor (d. 826), bishop

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:

Michael the Confessor, metropolitan of Synnada