Saint Josaphat

Feastday: November 12

The Church celebrates the memorial of St. Josaphat, a Catholic of the Ruthenian rite. Born in the then Polish region of Lithuania of Orthodox parents, he became a Catholic and a Ukrainian Basilian monk. Chosen bishop, he worked faithfully for the unity of the Church until he suffered martyrdom at the hands of an angry mob in Russia. His Feast day in the Extraordinary Rite is celebrated on November 14.
According to the 1962 Missal of St. John XXIII the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite, today is the feast of St. Martin I who was pope from 649 to 654. He was a courageous defender of the faith against heresy. He held a council at Rome which condemned the Monothelite heresy which taught that Christ had no human but only a divine will. The heretical emperor, Constans II, had him treacherously arrested and taken to Constantinople. After many sufferings and humiliations, he was exiled to Cherson in the Crimea where he died of exhaustion in 654.

St. Josaphat



Josaphat Kuncewitcz was born about the year 1580 at Vladimir, Volhynia, [part of the Polish province of Lithuania at the time] and given the name John at baptism. While being instructed as a child on the sufferings of our Saviour, his heart is said to have been wounded by an arrow from the sacred side of the Crucified. In 1604 he joined the Ukrainian Order of Saint Basil (Basilians), lived as a monk in a very mortified life, went barefoot even in winter, refrained from the use of wine and flesh-meat, and always wore a penitential garb. In 1614 he was appointed archimandrite of Vilna, Russia and four years later archbishop of Polotzk; in this position he worked untiringly for Church reunion. He was a great friend of the poor, once even pledged his archepiscopal omophorion (pallium) to support a poor widow. The foes of union decided to assassinate him. In a sermon, he himself spoke of his death as imminent. When he visited Vitebsk (now in Russia), his enemies attacked his lodging and murdered a number of his companions. Meekly the man of God hastened toward the mob and, full of love, cried, "My children, what are you doing? If you have something against me, see, here I am." With furious cries of "Kill the papist!", they rushed upon him with gun and sword. Josaphat's body was thrown into the river but emerged, surrounded by rays of light, and was recovered. His murderers, when sentenced to death, repented their crime and became Catholics.