

of our branch of the Holy Catholic Church that the Black Letter Days should be publicly kept, she in no way forbids (if by their publication in the Calendar she does not indeed sanction) the private celebration or memorial of them in our daily devotions. And from many of the holymen and women named we can learn very valuable lessons in the Christian life, while they at the same time teach us to bear in mind that our beloved Church is not a new sect which originated some four hundred years ago, but that in her we are partakers of the grand heritage of the Apostolic Communion, and have real and true fellowship with all those who have followed, however imperfectly, our Divine Master in the Way which He ordained, which is His Body, Who is Himself the Way, the Truth, the Life.

So month by month this year we will look at one or more of the black letter festivals, and so learn it may be to think lovingly of the Church in the past, when she was still one in a visible unity; and, too, when she was torn asunder and "heavy laden" with worldliness and superstition, for through all she was the Bride of Christ:

"With His Own Blood He bought her,
And for her life He died."

The 21st day of January gives us the name of St. Agnes, Virgin and Martyr. Agnes is connected with the Latin "agna," a lamb, and so in pictures and statuary she is represented with this emblem of innocence. Tradition tells us that she lived in the end of the third and the beginning of the fourth centuries.

An edict for the toleration of the Christian Church in the Roman Empire was followed in 305 by a terrible persecution, which spread from Syria and Egypt westwards. Christian blood was shed like water, till the persecutors tired of the wholesale slaughter. Even worse than death were the other punishments resorted to, mutilation, degradation, and the slavery of the mines. It was in this reign of terror that St. George, the patron saint of England, was put to death, while St. Alban, the first martyr of the Church of England, perished a few years previously in the reign of Diocletian. In the midst of all this bloodshed lived Agnes, a Roman maiden of great beauty of mind as well as of face. These won the admiration of the son of the chief magistrate of the city. He would fain have married her and pressed her with the aid of costly and magnificent presents to yield her consent to their betrothal. But she, having already, youthful as she was, determined on a life of singleness, devoted to the service and contemplation of the Lord Jesus Christ, rejected the offerings and refused his love. "Away," she said, "ye encouragers of sin, the nourishment of evil and the food of death! To another lover I am betrothed, nobler than thou, a Giver of fairer jewels, reverences! in awe by sun and moon and stars, served with service of joy by the holy angels."

Her lover began to pine and when the physician having discovered his secret told to his father the only cure, the magistrate himself sought the maiden's presence, and besought her for his son's sake to unbend. But when she declared