

December 17

Rumi (1207-1273) righteous among the nations

Rumi, one of the greatest Sufi poets and mystics in Islamic history, died in Konia, in modern-day Turkey, on the evening of the fifth day of the month of Gumada II in the year 672. The corresponding date in the Gregorian calendar is December 17, 1273.

A descendant of Abu Bakr, the first Muslim caliph, Galal al-Din Muhammad was born in 1207 in Balkh, Persia. Forced to emigrate with his family because of the arrival of the Tartars, he moved to Armenia and later settled in Konia, where he spent the rest of his life.

In Konia he succeeded his father as an instructor of Sharia, Islamic law as taught in the Koran, but his life changed radically when he met the dervish Sams of Tabriz. Galal al-Din, now known as Mawlana Rumi or the "Master from Rome" (meaning from Byzantine Anatolia), left every other activity to form a circle of Sufi disciples.

Touched by the beauty of the divine, he wanted to dedicate himself to everything that could draw him into an ecstasy of love for the One God. In poetry and sacred dance he found the only expressions that adequately conveyed his joyful longing to meet the Beloved.

The cosmic symbolism Rumi's disciples expressed in their dance, which represented the movement of the planets around the sun (God, the Beloved), earned them the nickname of "whirling dervishes."

Rumi learned and then taught others to experience reality with a gaze transfigured by love, and not with the severe eyes of the ascetic or the lawgiver. This made him capable of entering into a state of sympathy with every living being, and he became the bearer of a universal message, whose essence was the need to seek the essential and combat the false images of the world that are inevitably created by those who do not seek to see the Invisible.

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

ANGLICANS:

O Sapientia (beginning of the preparation for Christmas)

Eglantyne Jebb (d. 1928), social reformer, founder of «Save the Children»

WESTERN CATHOLICS:

Alexander and companions (?), martyrs (Spanish-Mozarabic calendar)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (8 kiyahk/tahsas):

Barbara of Heliopolis (3rd-4th cent.; Coptic Church)

Esi and Thecla of Alexandria (3rd-4th cent.), martyrs

Samuel the Confessor of Kalamon (d. 695), monk (Coptic Orthodox Church)

Juliana of Nicomedia (d. ca. 304), martyr (Coptic Catholic Church)

Takla Alfa (16th cent.), monk (Ethiopian Church)

LUTHERANS:

Sturm of Fulda (d. 779), apostle and abbot

MARONITES:

Anania, Azaria and Misael, the three children in the furnace

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:

Daniel (6th cent. BC), prophet, and *the three children Anania, Azaria and Misael*

German (d. 1504), archbishop of Novgorod (Russian Church)

WEST SYRIAN ORTHODOX:

Rabbulah of Edessa (4th-5th cent.), bishop