July 15: St Bonaventure

**SEVENFOLD GIFTS**

St Bonaventure was christened Giovanni Fidanza in 1221. He was taught by Alexander of Hales in the University of Paris, where he decided, in 1243, to join the Order of Friars Minor. As Friar Bonaventure, he established the Franciscan House, the theological school of the Order, within the University. In 1253, he held the chair of theology vacated by the death of Alexander of Hales in 1245.

Bonaventure was forty years old when he was elected as the seventh Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor, which, only thirty-one years after the death of St Francis, was falling apart from factions. But, as a remarkable administrator, he introduced procedures that saved the Order. Some think of St Bonaventure as the second founder of his Order.

The prayer of the Sevenfold Gifts of the Holy Spirit is attributed to St Bonaventure It witnesses the depth of his spirituality.

Lord Jesus, as God's Spirit came down and rested upon you, may the same Spirit rest on us, bestowing his sevenfold gifts.

First, grant us the gift of understanding, by which your precepts may enlighten our minds.

Second, grant us counsel, by which we may follow in your footsteps on the path of righteousness.

Third, grant us courage, by which we may ward off the enemies' attacks.

Fourth, grant us knowledge, by which we can distinguish good from evil.

Fifth, grant us piety, by which we may acquire compassionate hearts.

Sixth, grant us fear, by which we may draw back from evil, and submit to what is good.

Seventh, grant us wisdom, that we may taste fully the life-giving sweetness of your God. Amen.

St Bonaventure was exemplary in carrying out his Christian missionary commitment. The German Friars, in *The Marrow of the Gospel*, commented:

“Staunchness of character, personal attractiveness and approachability, a deep and reverent love for the person and the work of St Francis, were joined in him to deep learning, a calm judgment, and a genius for organization” (p*.* 81).

Let us pray with St Bonaventure to Jesus, that we may be in our turn a light to the world and that all we do will add to that light.