

# The Liturgical Veneration of Hebrew Saints

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In his March 8<sup>th</sup> "Questions and Answers" column in *The Catholic Miscellany*, Fr. Kirby answered the question "Why are there no saints from the Old Testament? Doesn't even Moses qualify?"

I have been interested in that subject because of my many pilgrimages to the Holy Land. The fact is that Moses is venerated as a Saint there, particularly on the Mount of the Transfiguration. He appeared there with the Prophet Elijah and conversed with Jesus. The basilica there has a chapel dedicated to each of them where Mass can be celebrated in their honor. It is a Latin/Roman rite church staffed by the Franciscans.

Not only that, but at the Cave of Elijah on Mount Carmel, facing the Mediterranean Sea, there is another place where Mass can be celebrated in his honor. At the other end of this small mountain range is Muhraka, where St. Elijah confronted the numerous pagan priests. His Mass can be celebrated at the church there as well.

The Carmelites consider St. Elijah as their founder and celebrate his Solemnity on July 20<sup>th</sup>. It has frequently happened that a feast celebrated locally has been extended to the universal Church. An example of this is Corpus Christi, the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ.

Since there are precedents in the Holy Land, perhaps the same can happen with the celebrations for these two special Old Testament saints.

I see two benefits from this. First, with the new lectionaries, Catholics are becoming more familiar with the entire Bible and many have been attending scripture studies. This would help us keep in mind such contributors to our Judeo-Christian heritage in a devout way.

Secondly, it could enhance Judeo-Christian relations by showing the Jewish people that Catholics honor Hebrew saints by such a universal liturgical commemoration.

This brings to mind a unique experience I had in the Holy Land. While celebrating Mass at the Mount of the Beatitudes, four college-aged Jewish girls came in and sat against the back wall. They were looking attentively. As I was leaving, they approached me and expressed their surprise at hearing quotes from their Hebrew scriptures. I explained that we believe in them and that they have a

part in our worship. I showed them the Hebrew readings in our lectionary.

Recalling this meeting later that day, I suddenly remembered that my intention for that Mass was the evangelization of the Jews, that they would enjoy the blessings of the New Covenant. And, suddenly, there I was at the end of that Mass answering the questions of those young Jewish women about our worship. It seemed clear to me that Divine Providence arranged this meeting as a sign to hope and pray for better fraternal relations.

## An AHC Calendar

*Ed. In the 1980s, Elias Friedman, OCD proposed a calendar as "a means for the edification of a distinct Hebrew Catholic identity." His explanation, which follows, complements the article by Fr. Smolenski SPMA.*

Like the Jewish People, the Hebrew Catholics are dispersed worldwide, their motives for entering the Church are highly personal, their individualism is pronounced, their sense of continuity with Israel's past, weak. An AHC Calendar could offset these deficiencies by providing Hebrew Catholics with a common framework for their lives and collective memory. An AHC Calendar has no pretension to preempt the decision by the Holy See relative to the sanctity of some of the persons included in its list. A full Calendar would have to commemorate days already sanctified by the Latin Rite, and some days of particular significance for the modern Hebrew Catholic such as: Holocaust Day, the anniversary of the Apparition of Our Lady of Zion to Alphonse Ratisbonne on 20 January, the anniversary of the death of Edith Stein on 9 August. It includes the names of saints of the Old Testament, not generally in the Latin Rite except in the Proper of Jerusalem, Latin Rite, and many names of lesser actors in the drama of Calvary who are ignored by the Latin Rite liturgy but not by the Martyrology.

In the new Vatican document concerning Jews and Judaism we read: "*The patriarchs, prophets and other personalities of the Old Testament have always and will always be venerated as saints in the liturgical tradition of the Oriental and Latin Churches*" (*Notes for the correct presentation of Jews and Judaism in Catholic preaching and catechism, July 1985*).

The passage has particular meaning for Hebrew Catholics, legitimate heirs and successors of the prophets, the "proto"-Hebrew Catholics of the Old Testament. It provided the immediate stimulus for the list which follows. An intelligent use of the proposed Calendar in reunions of the AHC should place it in the forefront of the means used to implement the program proposed by the "Notes".

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old book, so Israel has a great love for the Torah, because it is not only the sign of God's covenant love for them but also their history book and the record of their customs which have shaped their very identity to this day. If the adopted son had truly desired to share the computer with his brother, the firstborn son, he could have simply told him about it and all the great things that it did, with enthusiasm and excitement. But he also could have shown some interest, respect, and appreciation for the old family album and everything it represented. This surely would have strengthened the friendship between the two boys and caused the firstborn son to be more interested in the computer.

Likewise, many supersessionist Gentile Christians rail against Israel for having rejected the Gospel. Instead of proclaiming the good news of Christ with joy and love, with gratitude and appreciation to the Jewish people because they as Gentiles have now been "adopted into the household of Israel" (Eph 2), demonstrating a humble eagerness to learn about the rich Jewish traditions (many of whom not only were divinely revealed but also shaped who Jesus was and is), they spend more time denigrating the Torah and the Mosaic Covenant – appreciating it, perhaps, for its historical value as a preparation for the Gospel and retaining the moral foundation of the Decalogue, but dismissing the rest as outdated and superseded – certainly of no practical use today for the people to whom it was

given. These advocates of replacement theology are blind as to why Israel would still love and cherish the Torah, not realizing that it is their own arrogant attitude that constitutes the chief obstacle to the Jewish people accepting the Gospel.

Before we may hope to see Israel's eyes opened to the light of the Gospel, may we pray that the veil of arrogance over too many Christian eyes be lifted, that we may come to a more humble appreciation of the root into which we have been grafted:

And if some of the branches [unbelieving Jews] were broken off, and you [gentile Christian], being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in." Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? (Rom 11:17-24)

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**January**

- 14 Malachi, the Prophet
- 15 Habakkuk and Micah, Prophets
- 20 (Mary's Conversion of Alphonse Ratisbonne)

**February**

- 3 Simeon and Anna, the prophetess
- 18 Simeon, son of Cleophas, second bishop of Jerusalem

**March**

- 11 (Elias Friedman, OCD, AHC founder, born 1916)
- 25 the Good Thief
- 31 Amos, the Prophet

**April**

- 7 Hegesippus, first ecclesiastical historian
- 10 Ezechiel, the Prophet
- 24 Mary Cleophas and the other saintly women disciples of the Lord\*

**May**

- 3 James, first bishop of Jerusalem
- 9 Isaiah, Prophet
- 24 Menahem, companion of Herod the Tetrarch  
Johanna, wife of Chusa, procurator of Herod

**June**

- 11 (Elias Friedman, OCD, died 1999)
- 14 Elisha, Prophet; Obadiah, Prophet
- 21 Jeremiah, Prophet\*
- 26 Anna, mother of Mary
- 29 Lazarus, Mary and Martha

**July**

- 13 Joel and Ezra, Prophets
- 20 Elijah, Prophet
- 21 Jeremiah, Prophet\*
- 29 Lazarus and Mary

**August**

- 1–9 (AHC Novena to St. Teresa Benedicta)
- 3 The Seven Maccabees, Martyrs
- 16 Joachim, husband of Anna
- 20 Samuel, Prophet
- 31 Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus\*

**September**

- 1 Joshua and Gideon
- 4 Moses, Legislator
- 6 Zechariah and Haggai, Prophets

**October**

- 9 Abraham, Patriarch\*
- 11 Phillip, the deacon\*
- 22 Mary Salome, mother of James and John

**November**

- 5 Zachary and Elizabeth, parents of John the Baptist

**December**

- 1 Nahum, Prophet
- 3 Zephaniah, Prophet
- 16 David King and all the holy ancestors of the Lord\*

*N.B. \* marks the names taken from the Proper of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. The remaining names are taken from the Roman Martyrology. Dates enclosed in parentheses are AHC commemorations.*