

Samuel of Trent and companions (d. 1475) Jewish martyrs

In 1475, the merchant Samuel and about thirty other Jews of Trent, Italy were burned at the stake. Several months earlier they had been accused of the homicide of Simon, a young child who had been found brutally strangled on Easter morning near the house of one of the city's Jewish residents.

The strongly anti-semitic climate of the time, exacerbated by the explicitly anti-Jewish tone of Lenten sermons, led swiftly to the arrest of a group of Jews. They were repeatedly tortured and sentenced on the charge of ritual homicide, despite the lack of substantiating evidence.

The case of Trent was then deplorably prolonged when the church authorized the cult of the young Simon, who within a short time became a martyr venerated well beyond the local church of Trent. He was included by Baronio in his Roman Martyrology, and the church instituted a liturgical office and Mass in his name.

In 1965, modern hagiographic studies and a changed cultural context finally led to the abolition of the cult of the young victim of Trent by an official act of Pope Paul VI.

These events give us good reason to remember not only Simon, who was an innocent victim of human cruelty, but also Samuel and his companions, who were the true victims of the odium fidei that Christians have too often instigated against the children of Israel.

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

ANGLICANS:

Etheldreda (d. 678), abbess of Ely

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (16 ba'unah/sane):

Onophrius (4th-5th cent.), anchorite (Coptic Church)

LUTHERANS:

Argula von Grumbach (d. 1568), witness to the faith in Bavaria

MARONITES:

Agrippina (3rd cent.), martyr

Third Ecumenical Council (431)

Zenon and Zena, martyrs

Joseph Cafasso (d. 1860), priest

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:

Agrippina of Rome and companions, martyrs

Finding of the relics of Basil (1609), bishop of Rjazan

Synaxis of all saints of Rjazan

John (d. 1715), metropolitan of Tobolsk

Synaxis of all saints of Siberia (Russian Church)