

## AVERTANUS and ROMAEUS (XIII cent.) Saint and Blessed

According to the Catalogue of the Saints of the Carmelites, the actual compilation of which is dated between the end of the XIV century and the beginning of the XV, Avertanus was born in the diocese of Limoges /France/, in a place that no one has been able to identify. He entered the Order of Carmelites as a lay brother and immediately became known for his exceptional virtues. Having come into Italy on pilgrimage to the various sanctuaries of the peninsula, he worked numerous miracles there and then, while he was returning to his fatherland, he died at Lucca and was buried in the old church of the hospice of St. Peter outside the walls. Miracles, attested by pictures extant in the church of St. Peter and in the cathedral of Lucca, were worked over his tomb.

The year of death of St. Avertanus seems to have been in the XIII century, to judge from the antiquity of these pictures, which were «ancient» at the end of the 1300's or the beginning of the 1400's, and from the existence of an inscription (s. V/e/rtanus) thought to be not before the XII cent. and not after the XIII; finally, in 1325 there was reputedly a hospital dedicated to him. Moreover, the fact that he was buried in the hospice of St. Peter, and not with the Carmelites of Lucca, would date the death of Avertanus before 1284, the year in which the religious obtained the church of Santa Maria del Corso, outside the gate of St. Donatus, near the hospital.

Another problem is posed by the exhumation of his body. The inscription which speaks of it is of genuine humanistic tenor and was carved on his marble tomb, which is attributed to Matthew Civitali (1436-1501). In the inscription it is said that the exhumation (made nuper, i.e., recently) came about through the efforts of Graecus Johannes Lucensis origine / John, the Greek, born in Lucca/ — who also had the body of the Bl. Romaeus placed in the same tomb of St. Avertanus. Now, the only bishop of Lucca by the name of John, in the period that goes from 1100 to 1646, was the Franciscan, formerly bishop of Bethlehem, John of Fucecchio, initially auxiliary and then, from 1383 to 1393, bishop. The body of St. Avertanus was transferred to the cathedral in 1513, then in 1646 brought back to the church of St. Peter, reconstructed within the walls; and finally, in 1806, it was placed in the church of SS. Paulinus and Donatus, where it is preserved still today.

His name was introduced into the calendar of the Carmelite missal in 1514, for Feb. 25. His office was made obligatory by the general chapter of the Order (1564) and sanctioned by the Holy See (1609); the proper lessons were approved by the S. Congregation of Rites on May 12, 1672. On July 16, 1828, the office and Mass were extended to the entire archdiocese of Lucca. The Life of St. Avertanus, written in a later epoch by the Carmelite, Segero Pauli, and also published by the Bollandists, is an imaginative reconstruction.

About Bl. Romaeus, buried with Avertanus, any item worthy of notice is lacking. He reputedly died a few days after St. Avertanus, on March 4, and was buried at the side of his friend. (See also, below, the entry on Romaeus.)

BIBLIOGRAPHY: *Acta SS. Februarii*, III, Venice 1736, pp. 616-623; G. Fanucchi, *Compendia della vita di s. A.*, Lucca 1895; G. Barsotti *Lucca sacra*, Lucca 1923, pp. 313 sg., 359; F. Bonnard, in DHGB V, coll. 1096-97; M. Luti, *S. A.*, in *Il Monte Carmelo XXVII* (1941), pp. 30-35; A. Lettieri, A. e R. pellegrini del Medioevo, in *Il Mattino delVItalia Centrale*, 10 luglio 1G48; *Catalogus Sanctorum*, pp. 281-313; *Vies des Saints* II, p. 536 sg.; Emond, I, p. 194; see also below, under Romaeus.

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