

Lives
of
Saints

St George Preca

1880 - 1962

Feastday: 9th May



“Thank you
Lord God, and
forgive me,
Lord God.”

St George Preca



I was born in Malta in 1880. Feeling that I was called to be a priest, I went to the Seminary. As a seminarian, I used to go to the Grand Harbour, meet and chat with the sailors, gradually moving on to discussions on spiritual matters. There were serious doubts whether I would live to celebrate my first Mass in 1906 because of my ill-health, but I survived.

Around this time, I also struck up a steady friendship with a group of youngsters who were in the habit of meeting regularly. Soon this group of youths grew so that premises had to be rented out where their meetings could be held. I slowly started wielding these men. I wanted them to be indistinguishable from common people in dress, but to be so well instructed and formed in their spiritual life that they would stand out, by their example, in their everyday life, whether at home or at work. At a time when the laity had not yet been officially recognized as important in the mission of spreading the Gospel, I also entrusted them with the responsibility of teaching catechism. This little group of men and, later women too, grew up to be the Society of Christian Doctrine, SDC, (known in Malta as M.U.S.E.U.M.).

When word came to the then Vicar General that a group of youths were meeting regularly to talk about God and to read the Bible, suspicions arose. The climax came when I was ordered to close down all the catechetical centres I had opened. However, the same Archbishop who ordered me to close down the centres would later trust and confide in us unreservedly.

I was captivated by the mystery of the Incarnation; I liked calling Christ's words in the Gospel "the Voice of the Beloved"; I considered Christ Crucified, "the Great Book" and often spoke about God's mercy and justice. I also emphasized the virtue of meekness, and the value of having the right intention for one's actions. Of course, I tried to put the Christian virtues in practice. Especially evident were my sense of humility and my poverty.

Despite my ill-health, I was a man of great dynamism and resources. My wish was to educate Malta in its love for God and neighbour and to see the whole world accepting the Gospel. For this purpose, I spoke at every opportunity, founded the Society of Christian Doctrine and wrote around 140 books.

I died in 1962, at the age of 82. I was declared a saint by Pope Benedict XVI in Rome in 2007, exactly a hundred years since I started my SDC society.