

Reflection Saturday Week 32 St Josaphat 2022

Saint Josaphat (c.1580) was born in Ukraine of Orthodox parents. In 1595 the Union of Brest brought the Ruthenian Church into communion with Catholic Rome while still preserving its own liturgy. The result was a schism within the church. One party wanted to remain Orthodox and in the orbit of Moscow and Constantinople. The other accepted the Union. The Greek Uniates, a remnant of a century-old attempt at church union (who remain a living church to this day) created another difficulty. Josaphat joined the first monastery of the order of St Basil to be united to the Catholic Church: the first person to do so. He was ordained priest and, eventually and reluctantly, appointed bishop of Polotsk in 1617. Although Sigismund III Vasa, King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania, supported the union, the local aristocracy were against it because it threatened their control of ecclesiastical benefices. Plotting with the Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, who visited the Ukraine in 1621, they stirred up trouble and as a result Josaphat was murdered by a mob in 1623 while on a pastoral visit to Vitebsk.

St Paul makes clear the qualities of a good leader who must be charitable, selfless, gentle and patient. To work for a unity bound by peace making clear that there is only one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God who is Father of all, over all, through all and within all. In being called to be a leader he must recognise that each person in the community has been given their own share of grace, given as Christ allotted it. St Paul continually worked for unity in the church as his letters testify. Josaphat lost his life in an attempt to bring about unity between east and west.