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Apostolic Letter issued “Motu Proprio” of the Supreme Pontiff Francis “Fide Incensus”

APOSTOLIC LETTER ISSUED
“MOTU PROPRIO”

OF THE SUPREME PONTIFF
FRANCIS

FIDE INCENSUS

BY WHICH ALL ORDERS, CONGREGATIONS AND COMMUNITIES INSPIRED BY THE CHARISM OF
SANTO SPIRITO IN SASSIA
ARE GRANTED THE LITURGICAL CULT OF BROTHER GUY DE MONTPELLIER, WITH THE TITLE OF
BLESSED

“Inflamed with faith, ardent with charity, so pious and loving of the poor as to honour them as teachers, venerate them as patrons, love them as brothers, care for them as sons, finally venerate them as the image of Christ” (P. Saunier, *Dissertation on the Holy Head of the Order of the Holy Spirit: in which he discusses the origin and development of the whole Order, especially the expansion of the Roman House, its prerogatives and its structure*, Lyon 1649, p. 32). With these words Pierre Saunier described the deep faith of Guy de Montpellier, which inspired him to dedicate his life to the service of those most in need.

Guy was born in the second half of the twelfth century, in the French city of Montpellier, into a wealthy family. Before the year 1190 he began to serve the poor and needy, founding for them a hospital-home in the outskirts of Montpellier. From the very beginning, Guy entrusted this work of mercy to the Holy Spirit.

In a short time, Guy found many followers who, inspired by his example, wanted to serve the poor and needy. A community was thus born, whose members were men and women, laypeople and ecclesiastics.

Lotario di Segni, the future Pope Innocent III, during his studies in France, came to know of the works of mercy carried out by Guy and, following his election to the papacy, gave them his support.

In the Bull *Hiis precipue* of 22 April 1198, asking all bishops to support the initiatives of Guy de Montpellier, Pope Innocent III wrote: "Therefore, as we have learned from the truthful account of many, the hospital of the Holy Spirit, which the solicitude of the beloved son Brother Guy has built in Montpellier, among other newly erected hospitals, shines out for religiosity and practices a hospitality of greater charity, as those who, having had experience of their alms, have been able to learn more fully. For there the hungry are fed, the poor are clothed, the sick are provided with necessities, and those most in need are offered greater consolation, so that the master and brothers of this house must be called not so much receivers of the needy as servants, and those who charitably distribute necessities to the poor are indeed the needy among the poor" (*Hiis precipue*: ed. critica ex registris Vaticanis: O. Hageneder - A. Haidacher (ed.), *Die Register Innocenz' III*, p. 139).

On 23 April 1198 the hospital of Montpellier came under the direct jurisdiction of the Holy See and the Supreme Pontiff confirmed the monastic rule prepared by Guy for his community: "While we approve those who elect the religious life and other things connected with it, we take under the protection of blessed Peter and ours and protect with the privilege of the present document the above-mentioned hospital of the Holy Spirit built in Montpellier, in which you have dedicated yourselves to divine service, [...] establishing that all the houses which you legitimately possess at the present time and may reasonably acquire in the future, must be dependent on the aforesaid hospital of the Holy Spirit of Montpellier, and likewise their proxies must be subject to you, Brother Guy, and to your successors, humbly obeying and humbly receiving and preserving your correction and that of your successors" (*Religiosam vitam eligentibus*, O. Hageneder - A. Haidacher (ed.), *Die Register Innocenz' III*, p. 142-143).

In 1198, besides the hospital of Montpellier, the community had a further ten similar places in the south of France and two in Rome. With the Bull *Cupientes pro plurimis*, issued in Anagni on 1 December 1201, the Church of *Sancta Maria in Saxia* in Rome (now the Church of the Holy Spirit in Sassia), together with the *domus hospitalis*, founded by Innocent III between 1198 and 1201, was entrusted to Guy de Montpellier and his companions.

Guy, wishing to fulfill as faithfully as possible the ideal of mercy proclaimed by Jesus, outlined a very broad purpose for his work, which aimed to embrace man in his entirety, in soul and body, and extended to the youngest and the oldest. "The suffering is the Lord, doctors and nurses are His servants" recommended Guy in the *Liber Regulae ospitalis Sancti Spiritus*. The ideal of helping everyone took shape in a particularly tangible way in the care for abandoned babies and unwanted children. Besides material and spiritual assistance for mothers on their own and for prostitutes, one of the first foundling wheels was built in the Hospital of the Holy Spirit in Sassia, where babies could be left anonymously under the care of Guy's community. Abandoned babies thus received an opportunity for integral development in the *domus hospitalis*. Guy did not limit himself only to helping those who came to him, but also encouraged his sisters and brothers to go out into the streets in search of those in need. The founder of Montpellier combined this unconditional service to the poor with religious contemplation of God's love. From this constant encounter with God, he drew the strength to serve the unfortunate, becoming for them a source of comfort, joy and peace.

On 19 June 1204, with the Bull *Inter opera pietatis*, Pope Innocent III reconfirmed the new order and his jurisdiction over the Roman hospital at the Church of *Sancta Maria in Saxia*, making it the general house for the entire order.

Guy died in Rome in the early months of 1208. Innocent III, in the Bull *Defuncto Romae*, reiterated the importance of the works of mercy he had initiated, and the need for them to be continued by his successors.

The memory of the humble and modest servant of the poor of Montpellier was silently preserved for the next four centuries in monasteries and hospitals, which lived according to the rule drawn up by Guy. Successive

generations of sisters and brothers, inspired by the faith and life of their Founder, remembered him in daily prayer and in the faithful fulfilment of the charism of their order.

Pierre Saunier, in the image of Guy included in his aforementioned work, placed the following inscription on his death, which tells us so much about how he was remembered: “Guy/ of the Counts of Montpellier/Founder of the Order of the Holy Spirit/ Guy, to whom the breath of the Spirit/ the Rule, the compass, the rudder was the Holy Cross, has reached the port’ (p. 10). On the other hand, Odorico Raynaldi in his *Annales Ecclesiastici* published in 1667 wrote of Guy: “... he was the founder of the religious order of the Hospitallers, he was dear to Pope Innocent for his exalted holiness, and deserved the name of Blessed, a native of Montpellier” (p. 25).

Even today, the work of Guy bears numerous and good fruit, thanks to the religious communities that tirelessly help the poor, continuing the works of mercy begun by their founder in Montpellier. This type of life, spent in the service of those in need, inspired by faith in the words and works of Jesus Christ, is what Vatican Council II speaks of: “Just as Christ, then, went about all the towns and villages, curing every kind of disease and infirmity as a sign that the kingdom of God had come, so also the Church, through her children, is one with men of every condition, but especially with the poor and the afflicted. For them, she gladly spends and is spent” (*Ad Gentes*, 12). It continues, “Let religious men and women, and the laity too, show the same fervent zeal toward their countrymen, especially toward the poor” (*ibid.*, 20).

The example of Guy de Montpellier, an absolutely unique man in his humble spiritual life, obedience and service to the poor, has always attracted and inspired. We believe, therefore, that the moment has come in which he should be presented in a special way to the Church of God, to whom he continues to speak through his faith and works of mercy.

In view of the laudatory judgements expressed by some of our Predecessors concerning the holiness of Guy de Montpellier's life, and after the numerous requests constantly forwarded by Cardinals, Bishops, Religious, and above all by Orders, Congregations and Institutes inspired by Guy's Rule and life, as well as by lay people who have approached the Holy See with a view to conferring liturgical honours on Guy de Montpellier, We, with sure knowledge, considering the excellent merits of Guy de Montpellier, hitherto present in the Church, of Our own free will, for the good of souls, have decided to grant a special sign of grace.

Therefore, by Our Apostolic authority, We inscribe in the catalogue of the Blessed Guy de Montpellier, whose memory, with the Liturgy of the Hours and the Eucharistic Celebration to be held on 7 February, We decree that it shall be obligatory on that day for the Orders, Congregations and Institutes of the Holy Spirit in Sassia, as well as for Institutes inspired by Guy's charism.

Given at Rome, at the Lateran, on 18 May 2024, Vigil of the Solemnity of Pentecost, the twelfth year of Our Pontificate.

FRANCIS
