Saint John of Matha
1154-1213

He was born in the town of Faucon, in Provence, France, around the year 1154. He completed his studies at the University of Paris, where he then taught Theology. Ordained a priest, while he was celebrating his first Mass, he understood that the Lord called him to the redemption of the slaves.

In fact during the Mass, God sent an Angel to him to make him understand His will.

The Angel appeared in an immaculate and luminous gown; on his chest was a cross the color of red and azure; to his sides also appeared two slaves: one Christian, the other Muslim.

To initiate a religious Congregation, however, the approval of the Pontiff was necessary. At the time it was Pope Innocent III. Saint John of Matha and Valerio presented themselves to him; they were well received; but the Pope wanted to better examine their request and again the Lord came to their aid by means of an Angel.

The Angel put his hands on the heads of the two slaves and soon after disappeared.

Years passed and the Saint continued to pray to know better the plans of God. He tightened his friendship with a certain Felix Valeria, who conducted a hermetic life. One day, while they were conversing between themselves about celestial things, a deer appeared who had branched between his horns a cross of two colors: red and azure. Valerio was bewildered and then Saint John of Matha confided to him the vision of the Angel, which occurred on the day of his first Mass. For three nights both of them had a celestial vision. The Lord revealed to him that it was His desire that he establish a Congregation for the redemption of slaves.

While the Pope was celebrating the Holy Mass, in the act of lifting up the Consecrated Host, he saw an Angel appear, with the white gown, with a bi-color cross on his chest and with two slaves at his sides. He understood that God wanted the new Congregation and he approved it.

Finally in 1194 in Cerfroid (north of Paris), the Order of the Most Holy Trinity for the Redemption of Captives (Trinitarians) was founded, whose Rule was approved by the same Innocent III, on the 17th of December 1198. It worked numerous redemptions of slaves and dedicated itself tirelessly to the works of mercy, living as God the Trinity. He died in Rome on the 17th of December 1213, in the home of Saint Thomas in Formis al Celio.