

Venerable Gaspar de Oliden

† 1740

PURGATORY

Father Gaspar de Oliden was born in Elgoibar in Basque Country. Upon entering among the Theatine religious order, he distinguished himself in erudition and virtue. On January 6, 1683 he professed his vows in Madrid. He taught at the University of Salamanca, where he also devoted himself to spiritual direction. He refused the episcopacy of Gerona that Emperor Charles VI had offered him at Barcelona. After moving to Italy, he had the opportunity to preach many times in the presence of Benedict XIII.

Above all he promoted the propagation of “the heroic act of charity” by which one commits himself to offer all the merits of his personal actions, prayers, and good works, for the benefit of the Souls of Purgatory and not only the ones he received when alive, but also the ones offered to him after death.

Through seminars and speeches, Gaspar de Oliden continuously exhorted the faithful to apply this “heroic act”. Benedict XIII often participated in these seminars and he loved to call Gaspar Oliden “The advocate of the poor souls”. On December 11, 1788 the Pope granted

many indulgences for this act, whereas Benedict XIII had already approved it explicitly, remembering the effort of Gaspar Oliden. Popes Pius IX and Leo XIII confirmed it with several decrees of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences. A major collaborator and promoter of this “heroic act” was Saint Alphonsus Maria Liguori. On January 11, 1932 the Holy See granted a plenary indulgence applicable only to the souls of Purgatory to all who, after having received the Sacraments, would visit a church and pray for the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff.

Fr. Gaspar de Oliden was nominated in 1725 as the first superior of the new Theatine Monastery of Saint Cajetan in Palma de Mallorca. Here too he strived very much for the propagation of the “heroic act” of charity in favor of the poor souls, so much that Bishop Juan Fernandez Zapata of Mallorca, only after two years was able to write to Benedict XIII saying that Fr. Gaspar de Oliden had become also at Mallorca a “true Advocate of the Poor Souls”. At Mallorca, Fr. Gaspar also wrote his valuable book “Dialogue on Purgatory”. He died in 1740.

