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SAINT JOHN OF GOD

Patron of Hospitals

It seems timely to throw the searchlight for a few moments on the man whom Pope Leo XIII declared the patron of hospitals.

His name was John. His parents were poor Portuguese peasant folk. His jobs in youth were shepherding, then soldiering, then shepherding again. He did not always keep to the straight and narrow path—but he found his way back to it by much prayer and meditation. They made him a new man—John of God. The love for God that was kindled in him transformed him from an ordinary shepherd into a *good shepherd* and from a soldier in the army of Charles V into a soldier in the army of Christ. His love for Christ became manifest in the love for those in need. He began to serve them—by giving himself—with every fibre of his being. He made his debut in this personal service by offering himself as ransom for Christians who were held in bondage by the Moslems in Africa. Then he labored with bricks and mortar to earn money to keep an impoverished nobleman and his family alive. When they were on their feet again, he took to peddling religious books—making them available at a cheap price. On his apostolate-of-the-press peregrinations he met a poor boy who walked the rough country roads barefoot. John took off his shoes to bestow them on the lad—but alas, they were too big. So John shouldered the boy and car-

ried him a long distance. They stopped at a stream to drink—where the boy revealed himself as the boy Jesus, and pointed out his future vocation by telling him: “Go, thou shalt bear the cross in Granada.”

On his arrival there, he gathered the poor and sick—making his shoulders do ambulance service when they were too ill to walk. He did not wait for an elaborate building—but started with a shed and called it the *hospital of charity*. For a long time the tasks of nursing, cooking, cleaning and getting provisions fell on him. And how did he provide for his sick and poor? How did he solve the question of finances? When the day's work was done, he set out with a wallet slung from his shoulder and a skillet in his hand begging from door to door! As the people around him saw his earnestness more and more—they helped him, and some young men even began to gather about him.

After ten years of work in his hospital of charity he died of an illness brought on by his attempt to rescue a drowning boy.

Although St. John of God left this earthly vale of ours four hundred years ago—the glow of his love of God still cheers and warms poor sick people in hospitals of charity—and the intensity of his personal service has made an irremovable impress on the world for better.—*The Medical Missionary*.