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-Stories of great saints for children.-
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BL. MARTIN DA FORRES
MOSES

MARTYRS OF UGANDA
BENEDICT THE MOOR

ELESBAAN

BL. GHEBRE-MICHAEL

VICTOR

MELCHIADES

GELASIUS

STORIES OF
GREAT SAINTS
FOR CHILDREN

BY
Rev. Gerald G. Treacy, S. J.

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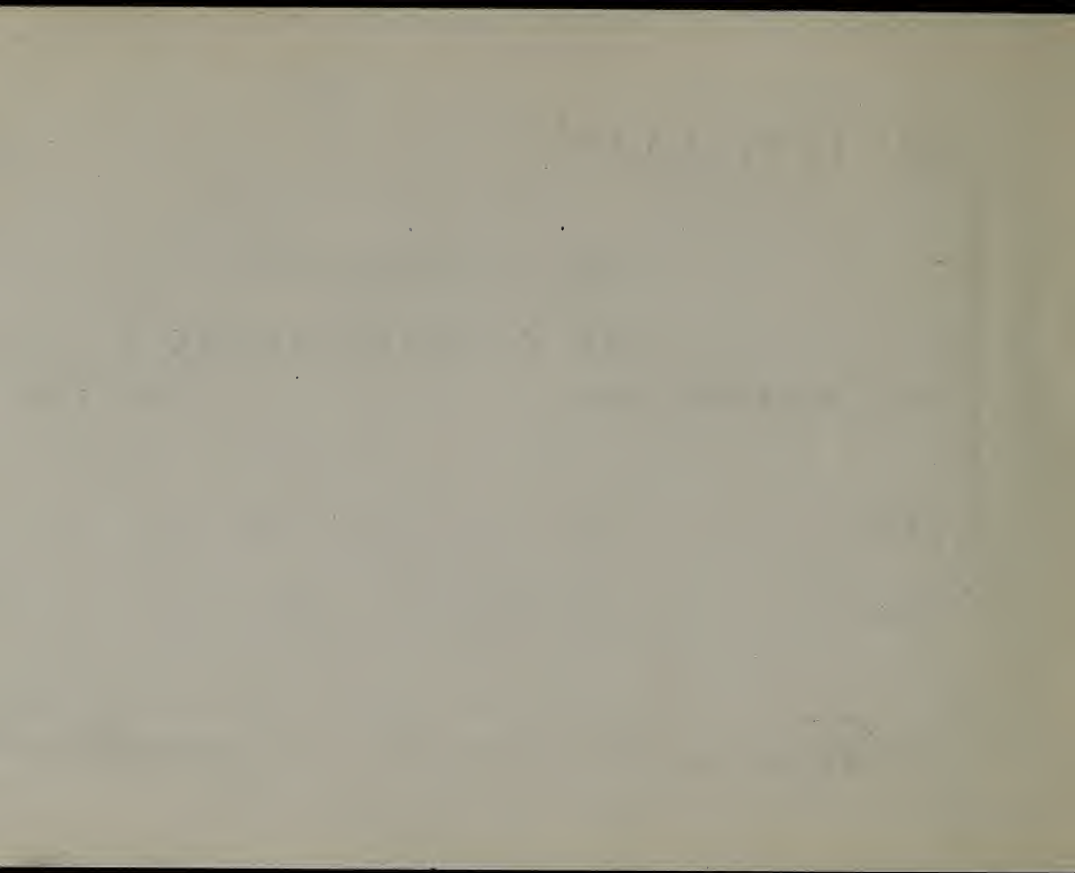
401 West 59th Street

New York, N. Y.

Title:

Price:

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Stories of Great Saints for Children

(GOLDEN BOOK)

By

REV. GERALD C. TREACY, S.J.

THE PAULIST PRESS
401 West 59th Street
New York 19, N. Y.

TO THE READER:

The saints are the friends of God. They are the friends of God because during their lifetime they did His Will. "You are My friends if you do the things I tell you," were the words of our Saviour.

This little booklet tells the story of some of these friends of God. Everyone who wants to, may become a friend of God. "This is God's Will, your sanctification," says Saint Paul.

Do you want to be a friend of God? The saints show you how to do it.

FATHER TREACY.

Imprimi Potest:

FRANCIS A. MCQUADE, S.J.,
Provincial, Maryland-New York.

Nihil Obstat:

JOHN M. A. FEARN, S.T.D.,
Censor Librorum.

Imprimatur:

✠ FRANCIS CARDINAL SPELLMAN,
Archbishop of New York.

New York, March 27, 1948.

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THE MISSIONARY SOCIETY OF ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE
IN THE STATE OF NEW YORK

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED IN THE U. S. A.
BY THE PAULIST PRESS, NEW YORK, N. Y.

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BLESSED MARTIN da PORRES

MARTIN DA PORRES is one of the best known Negro saints. People all over the world pray to him for different favors. In this country devotion to Blessed Martin has grown very quickly especially among those who are working for a better relationship between the white and Negro races.

Blessed Martin's father was a Spanish nobleman and his mother was a Negress. Blessed Martin was born on December 9, 1579, at Lima in Peru. He grew up in that famous South American city, and died there on November 3, 1639.

The childhood of this South American saint was not a happy one. His father neglected him and his mother was not always kind to him. But little Martin made himself happy by doing kind things for people, especially the poor and the sick. When he was still a little boy he learned a great lesson. It was taught by our Blessed Lord Himself, when He said: "You serve Me when you serve the poor, and the suffering."

Because Blessed Martin learned this lesson so well, he became well known all over the country of Peru. His father began hearing all the kind things Martin was doing, and one day he said to Martin's mother: "I have been unjust to Martin because I did not like the color of his skin. I am sorry and to make up for it I am going to see that Martin gets an education."

When Martin was twelve years old his father took him to a barber not to get his hair cut but to get an education. For this barber was a doctor and a druggist, as most barbers were in those days long ago in the city of Lima, Peru.

Martin learned very fast and was soon a good doctor himself. He was an unusual doctor for all the patients on his list were poor. Now after some time Martin said to himself: "I'm not praying enough, so I think I will become a Dominican Brother." He was fifteen at the time. He first became a Tertiary or Brother's helper, and he wanted to stay in that humble position all his life. He remained a Tertiary for nine years and then the Prior of his convent said to him: "Martin, you are to become a Dominican Brother." So he did.

The city of Lima called Martin the Good Doctor. By that title the people meant that he was not only good in the practice of medicine but that he was a good man and proved it by his devotion to the sick. Rich and poor, Spaniards, Indians and Negroes, if they were sick, were all treated alike by Martin. And

often if his medicines did not cure them his prayers would. God loved Martin very much and often answered Martin's prayer when he said: "Lord, I've done the best I know how. This poor man is not recovering. Help him, Lord, as You used to help the sick long ago when You walked this earth as The Great Physician."

But Martin not only loved persons. He loved animals, too, and was always kind to them. Dogs and cats and even mice and rats were his friends. There were a great many mice in the convent where Martin lived and they were causing a lot of trouble. One day Martin found a mouse caught in a trap and squealing very loud. He went up and spoke to him, saying: "Little brother, I am going to set you free, so you can go and tell all your little brothers and sisters to leave this convent and go and live in the garden. Every day I will bring you your food." All of a sudden there was a great noise as all the mice listened to the mouse that Martin had freed. They came running down the stairs and scampering along the halls, while Martin held

the door open so they could get out into the garden. They never came near the convent again for they built themselves a mouse city out of an old shed, and Martin kept his word and each morning as the sun came over the mountains he brought them their food. They were happy little mice and did not harm anybody. Martin was happy, too.

All the animals were friends of Martin. He knew their way of speaking and he spoke to them in a manner they understood. He was like Saint Francis of Assisi in this, and many of the things that Saint Francis did Martin was able to do.

When Martin was nearly sixty years old, he fell sick. He had a bad fever and the doctor ordered some medicine for him. Martin said to the doctor: "Don't waste the medicine. No medicine will do me any good now." When the people of Peru heard that Martin was sick they came in great crowds to see him. Among them was the man who ruled the whole of Peru, the Viceroy de Bobadilla, who asked Martin to pray for Peru when he got to heaven. "I will, and I will pray for you," he said.

Then all the Dominican Fathers and Brothers who lived in the big convent came into Martin's room. He told them that he was sorry for any bad example he had given them during the forty years he had spent with them. "Now, say the prayers for the dying, and I will join with you," said Martin. Just as the prayers were finishing, Martin da Porres died. He had almost completed his sixtieth year and his forty-fifth year as a Dominican Brother. On August 8, 1837, Martin da Porres was declared Blessed by Pope Gregory XVI.



SAINT MOSES

ONE of the earliest Negro saints was Saint Moses. He lived in the fourth century. He was a slave and belonged to a very rich official of Ethiopia. He was tall and strong and quarrelsome and had a very bad temper. One day he picked a fight with one of his fellow slaves and killed him.

To escape punishment Moses fled to a wilderness near the borders of Egypt. At this time of course he was not a saint and no one ever guessed that one day he would be. In the wilderness there was a band of robbers. Moses joined them and soon became their leader. For fifteen years these men terrorized the country until the people decided to unite against them. The whole countryside rose up as one man, attacked the robber band, killed some and drove the rest away.

What happened to Moses, their leader? He decided that he would get as far away as possible, so he went into the desert of Scete. This was a very wild spot and only hermits lived there. These holy men were called hermits because they lived by themselves and spent all their days in prayer. Moses was very hungry when he came among the hermits. They gave him whatever food they had. Moses thanked them and said: "I think I'll stay with you."

Now Moses had been very bad and he now made up his mind to be very good, so he said to his hermit friends: "I am going into a

mountain cave to pray and do penance for my sins." He did this. But he found it a hard task, for the devil kept tempting him all the time to leave his tiny mountain cave and go back to his life of robbing and killing people.

One day Moses said to Father Isadore, a hermit who lived in a cave next to his own: "I cannot keep this up. The devil is stronger than I am so I am going to surrender to him. God will not help me for I have been such a sinner."

Father Isadore said to him: "Wait a minute. Let me show you something." Then the holy old priest showed Moses a vision of the angels fighting against the devils all over the world, helping everyone who prayed to win the battle against temptation. "See how God sends His angels to help us," said Father Isadore. "All we have to do is to ask for God's help and He will give it. Then we must use it if we want to win the battle against sin and temptation."

This made Moses feel glad, and he never again doubted God's mercy. He answered Father Isadore: "I know now if I only remember

that God is strong and I am weak and pray to Him always, I can win the battle against the devil.”

And as the years passed by Moses grew closer and closer to God till he could think of nothing but God’s goodness, and how he could repay it by doing good to everyone. When the robber band whose chief Moses once had been heard about this, they got very angry. “Let us go and get this man and bring him out of the desert and make him our chief once more.”

So the whole band came riding into the desert, their horses lunging and snorting and kicking up the desert sands. And their riders shattered the silence of the desert with their piercing cry: “Give us back our old chief.”

Moses came out of his tiny cave and all the robbers gathered around him. “Keep quiet a minute,” he said to them. And when they were quiet he explained to them how much happier a hermit’s life was than the life of a cruel robber. “Then we will stay with you,” they shouted. Soon after Saint Moses died a martyr.



THE MARTYRS OF UGANDA

A BRAVE explorer named Stanley found a part of Africa near the equator where no white men had ever been. Everyone got excited about the discovery and a great many men started for this wild country hoping to find gold there and get rich. When the Pope heard about it he said: "I will send mission-

aries out there who will teach the pagan Negroes to love God.”

When the missionaries reached the coast of Africa they at once started for the new land. It took them fifteen months marching every day through forests and swamps to reach Uganda. That is where they wanted to go for the king of that place was a very kind man. The missionaries said to the king: “We want to teach your people to love God.” King Mtesa, for that was his name, said: “Go ahead.”

It was not long before a great many of King Mtesa’s people became Catholics. Soon, however, King Mtesa died and he was succeeded by a very bad king named Mwanga. One day this bad king called all the people to the yard in back of his palace and said to them: “All who pray, stand to one side. I will kill everyone who does not promise to stop praying.”

The first one to stand aside was Charles Lwanga. He was the teacher of all the little pages who used to run errands for the king. The king shouted to his soldiers: “Take hold

of Lwanga, start a slow fire and keep Lwanga in it till he is burned to death." The soldiers did that. And Lwanga kept on praying till he died.

When the pages, who were all very small boys, saw this happen they looked up at the king and cried out: "We are all Christians and we shall never stop praying as long as we live." This frightened the grown-up people, and one man whispered to the leader of the boys: "Run away into the forest or you will all be killed." The little boy answered back at the top of his voice: "We will not run away. We will stay right here and keep on praying even if we are killed." The king gave a sudden order to his soldiers. All the little boys were killed.

Now there was a very brave Negro chief who was also a very holy man. His name was Matthias Marumba. One of the soldiers grabbed him and said: "We are going to cut off your hands and feet and burn you to death in a slow fire. Will your God save you?" "Yes," said Matthias, "God will save me but you will not see how, for he will take my soul

and leave only my body in your hands." It took three days of torture before Matthias died. During all that time he never uttered a cry of pain.

The king was not satisfied until he had put to death about 100 brave Christians. This was on Easter Sunday, 1886, five years after the missionaries had come to Uganda and baptized the first Negro there. On June 6, 1920, Pope Benedict XV selected twenty-two out of the hundred, whose names were known, and declared them martyrs of the Catholic Faith. They are called The Martyrs of Uganda.



SAINT BENEDICT THE MOOR

SAINTE BENEDICT'S father and mother were Negro slaves and their names were Christopher and Diana Manaserri. That was their master's name, a very rich landowner who lived in San Fradello, a village near Messina in Sicily.

Christopher and Diana were true Christians for they loved God very much and proved

it by the good lives they led. Christopher had charge of all the slaves that worked on his master's big farm. He was so just and kind that all his fellow-slaves loved him. So did his master who one day said to him: "Christopher, you are so good that I am going to reward you. I will make your son Benedict a free man."

Benedict was a little baby then. He was born in 1524. He grew up as little babies do, but he grew better and better as he grew bigger and bigger. All little babies do not grow that way. When he was ten years old everybody loved him and they called him "The Holy Moor."

By the time Benedict was twenty-one he had saved enough money to buy some land and a yoke of oxen. One day when he was plowing his fields, some mean little boys came along and shouted at him: "You are not as good as we are, for your skin is black and ours is white and your parents are slaves while our fathers and mothers are free men and women."

Now Benedict did not get angry but talked very quietly to the mean little boys who were teasing him. He told them that money or fine clothes or white skins did not make people better than others, who were poor and slaves and had black skins. "Each person is good," he said, "who loves God, and there is no sense in talking about somebody being better than somebody else for only God knows that."

Just then a big man came walking along. He stopped and said to the mean little boys: "You make fun of this poor Negro now, but I want to tell you that some day very soon you will hear great things about him." Turning to Benedict he asked: "Will you join me and my companions? We are hermits, that is we live away from everybody on the top of a high mountain and spend our time in loving God." Benedict replied: "I will go with you." So he sold his oxen and became a hermit.

Benedict had been living as a hermit for some time when one day the others got together and said: "Let us make Benedict our leader." And Benedict became Superior of the little community. After seventeen years

the little group was told by Pope Pius IV to join one of the larger Religious Orders. Benedict joined the Franciscans as a lay brother. The lay brothers are not priests but they help the Franciscan priests.

“What can you do, Benedict?” was asked of him by the Superior or Guardian of the convent near Palermo, in Sicily. “I can cook,” said Benedict. But he did much more than cook. He prayed from his heart. And whenever he went to the chapel to pray a bright light shone all around him. His Franciscan brothers said it wasn’t the sun and it wasn’t the moon, so it must have been a special light that God sent out of heaven to show how white the soul of Benedict was even though his skin was black. They said too that sometimes when they peeked into the kitchen they saw angels helping Benedict with his cooking.

One day the Franciscan Guardian or Superior said: “Let us hold a meeting and elect a Guardian.” When the votes were counted, Benedict, the Negro cook who could neither read nor write, was the choice of all as Superior or Guardian. He said: “But I am not fit

to be Superior.” The Friars all answered: “Yes you are.” And that was that.

After a little while he was put in charge of the Novices. The Novices were the Friars or Brothers who had just entered the convent, and Benedict had to teach them how to love God. Even though he was not educated as we would say today, because he had never gone to school, he was such a good teacher that educated people came to him when they wanted something explained to them. How was that? Why God had taught him and God is the first and best Educator.

Benedict was very glad when the day came for him to lay down his office. “I will go back to the kitchen, hide away from everybody and be alone with God and my cooking,” said Benedict. But that was not what happened. For all sorts of people came knocking at the kitchen door and crying out: “Benedict, help us.” And he helped everybody, because God had taught him that when the rich or the poor, the smart or the stupid asked for help, it was Christ our Lord Who was asking for help.

In 1589 when he was sixty-three years of age Benedict "The Holy Moor" went to heaven, looking up into the eyes of Saint Ursula who had come to him out of heaven to guide him on his way there. He is the patron of all farmers and of the North American Negroes, as well as protector of Palermo, in Sicily. In 1807 he was declared a saint by Pope Pius VII.



SAINT ELESBAAN

SAINTELESBAAN was a king who lived in the sixth century. Like Saint Moses he came from Ethiopia. During the reign of King Elesbaan the province of Himyar across the Red Sea rose in revolt. The revolt was led by Dunaan, who was an infidel.

Dunaan's armies took the two Christian cities of Safar and Nagran. All Christians

in the cities were killed; many were thrown into pits of burning oil. About four thousand men, women and children gave their lives for the Faith of Christ.

King Elesbaan put himself at the head of his armies and gave battle to the forces of Dunaan. The rebels were defeated and King Elesbaan restored the captured cities. Dunaan was slain and the victorious king built a beautiful church at Nagran in honor of the Christian martyrs.

After a few years King Elesbaan said: "I am a king but I am a sinner. I have been cruel to my defeated enemies and I have not kept the Law of God. I will give up my kingdom and spend the rest of my life doing penance."

He called his son to him one day and said: "You are king. I am going far away into the wilderness." So he did. He became a hermit like Saint Moses. He sent his kingly crown to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher at Jerusalem, and his people never saw him again. He died in the desert in the year 555.



Blessed Ghebre-Michael Visits Pope Gregory XVI

BLESSED GHEBRE-MICHAEL

GHEBRE-MICHAEL at the age of sixteen entered a monastery. He was born in 1791 in Ethiopia. The religion of Ethiopia at that time was false. When Ghebre-Michael became a monk he did not know that.

He left his monastery and spent ten years traveling from library to library until he

came to Gonda, the capital of Ethiopia. There he met Father de Jacobis who said to him: "Keep on searching but be sure to pray and you will find the True Religion."

Then one day Ghebre-Michael said to Father de Jacobis: "Explain the Catholic Religion to me." A year after he said that, in 1844, he became a Catholic. Then he helped Father de Jacobis to teach the Catholic Religion to the Ethiopians.

The Emperor of Ethiopia, Theodore, got very angry when he saw the Catholic Faith spreading all over his empire. So he passed a law that told Ethiopians to believe what the emperor taught and not what the Catholic Church taught. To the emperor Ghebre-Michael said: "No. I believe what the Catholic Church teaches." He was put in prison and suffered many tortures for fourteen months. He died from these tortures in 1855.



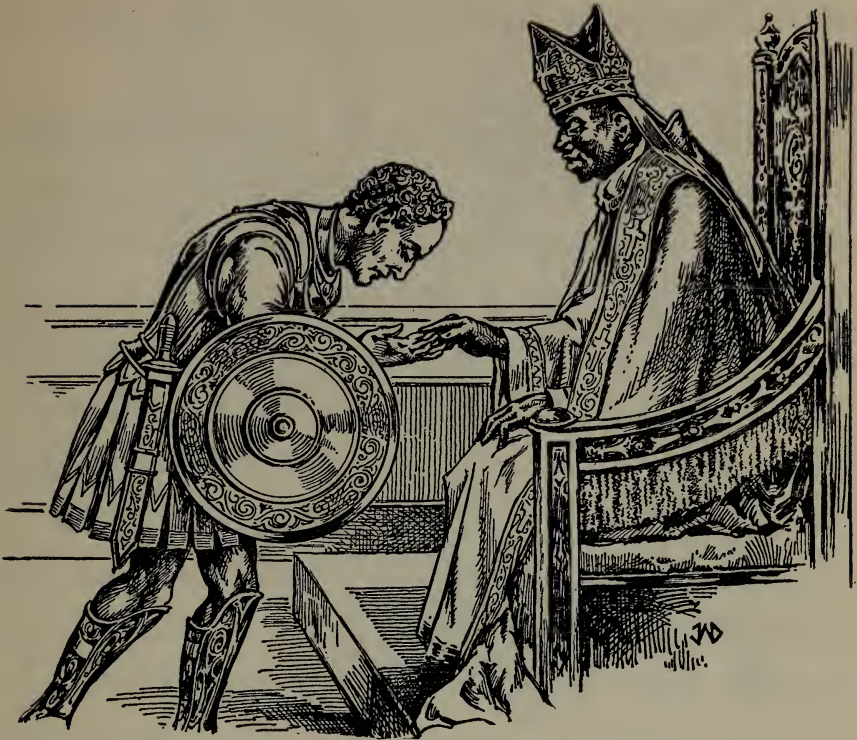
THREE NEGRO POPES

SAINT VICTOR

SAINTE VICTOR was the first Negro Pope. He was a native of Africa and became Pope in year 189. His first care was to see that the teaching of our Lord handed down by the Apostles was preserved free from any mistakes. In those days some people began

to teach false doctrine. Pope Victor condemned them and told all Catholics to have nothing to do with them. Saint Victor always said to his bishops and priests: "Keep the purity of the Faith with unity."

While Saint Victor was Pope a dispute arose in the Church about keeping the Feast of Easter. The Church in Asia kept it on the fourteenth day of the first moon after the Spring equinox, on whatever day of the week it fell. The Church in Rome and everywhere else kept it on the Sunday following the fourteenth day, just as we do now. Saint Victor called a meeting of all the bishops in Rome who could get there, and bishops' meetings were held in other places, too. For travel was so difficult in those times that it was not easy to have all the bishops of the Church meet in Rome. The result was that the observance of Easter was fixed for the Sunday following the fourteenth day against the custom of the churches in Asia, and it has remained so ever since. Saint Victor made Latin the official language of the Church. He died about the year 200.



SAINT MELCHIADES

SAINTE MELCHIADES, also called Miltiades, was elected Pope on July 2, 311. He was born in Africa. The following year the Emperor Constantine defeated Maxentius at the battle of Milvian Bridge. With Constantine as Emperor the Church began to live at peace after all the years of suffering and persecution. And Saint Melchiades was the

first Pope to witness the end of the days of persecution.

The one thing we know about Saint Melchiades is that he conducted the trial of Bishop Caecilian. When Bishop Caecilian became the Bishop of Carthage in Africa, some very bad men sent word to the Emperor Constantine that they did not believe that Caecilian was a bishop at all. When the Emperor heard this he wrote a letter to Pope Melchiades and said: "You are Pope and Supreme Bishop of the Church, and so you should put Caecilian on trial to find out if he is truly a bishop."

The Pope opened a council in Rome on October 2, 313. A great many bishops attended the council and all the charges against Caecilian were presented. When all the talking was over, Pope Melchiades stood up and said: "As Supreme Pastor of the whole Church I declare Caecilian the lawful Bishop of Carthage." Everyone went home happy because they knew there could be no mistake when Saint Melchiades gave the final word.

Saint Melchiades died the following year on January 11th.



SAINT GELASIUS

SAINTE GELASIUS became Pope in 492. He belonged to an African family but was born in Rome. His pontificate lasted less than five years. During that time he did a great deal of good for the Church.

One of the first things he did was to oppose a Roman senator who wanted to have the Lupercalia, which were very old pagan cere-

monies, observed in the city of Rome. Saint Gelasius wrote a book on the subject of pagan practices in which he explained that no true Christian could have anything to do with them. Besides that he allowed the Christians of his day to receive Holy Communion by drinking from the chalice as well as by taking the Sacred Host. He did this to teach a lesson. The lesson is that our Lord is completely present in the Blessed Sacrament under the appearance of wine and under the appearance of bread.

Another important truth that Saint Gelasius explained in a council held at Rome and in many letters that he wrote, was that because of what our Lord told Saint Peter when He made him Head of the Church, every Pope as Saint Peter's successor was to be Head of the Church and was to hold supreme power over all other churches.

Saint Gelasius wrote letters and books and hymns but a great many of his writings have been lost. He was known throughout the whole Church as a very learned and very holy Pope. He died on November 19, 496.

