

BASP-1974

SIR FRANCIS TREGIAN

Sir Francis Tregian, a Cornishman and a Roman Catholic, was imprisoned for his beliefs during the reign of Elizabeth I. He later escaped to Iberia and spent the last twenty years of his life in Portugal, dying in Lisbon in 1608. He was buried in the Church of São Roque (St. Roch), upright instead of, as is more usual, recumbent. A century later his body was found to be in a state of perfect preservation and his tomb, still to be found 'hard by the Preacher's Chair' at São Roque, became an object of pilgrimage.

From the Right Reverend Monsignor Sullivan, Prior of the English College, we have received the following moving verses both about and by Sir Francis.

Here 'neath the marble Tregian stands, not lies;
In life supreme, in death without a peer.
Believe a miracle of faith: in death
All lie; his faith so strong, he could but stand.
Great marvel this, but worthy of belief.
If further of his story you would learn:
Of English birth, he fled to Spain, he rests
With Roch, in Portugal; faith gave him heaven.
In bliss his soul; his body here bides whole.

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Hard by the Preacher's Chair they set his tomb...
While life abode, he ever taught by deed;
In voiceless death example teaches still.
He lies beneath, yet bids us seek the stars.

Extracts from a letter Sir Francis wrote from prison to his wife. He excuses himself for writing it in verse. For lack of ink it is pinned, not penned. It includes a prayer he himself used, and composed.

Let prayer be your practice, let prayer be your play,
Let prayer be your staple of trust, let prayer be your stay,
Let prayer be your castle strong, let prayer be your fort,
Let prayer be your place of rest, let prayer be your port,
Let prayer always plead for grace, let prayer purchase right,
Let prayer be your chief delight by day as well as by night..
Pray therefore unto that King who rules the rolling spheres,
To oppress your grief, to send relief, He will regard your tears..
If often on the blessed life and bitter pains of Christ,
You firmly fix a faithfull mind, and thereby oft persist..
You may thereby triumphantly despise the force of foes,
You may thereby great comfort get in all extremes and woes..
My keeper knocks at door, who comes to see his hawks in mew,
Wherefore good wife I must make short farewell, my stay of life,
Farewell, the anchor of my hope, farewell, my faithfull wife,
Farewell again thou lamp of light, vicegerent of my heart,
He that takes leave so oft, I think, he likes not to depart:
And yet we must depart of force, to my no little grief,
God send us well to meet again, God send us still relief:
And well to run our restless race, though rough and full of pain,
That through the blessed Blood of Christ, true glory we may gain.