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**Bernard, Mary and Grace**

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## **Bernard, Mary and Grace († ca. 1180)**

1. Name variants: Ahmet ben Almanzor, Zaida and Zoraida; Bernardus Martyr, Bernat, Maria i Gràcia; Maria et Gratia

2. Places: Pintarrafes, Carlet, Valencia, Poblet, Alzira

3. Biography: According to the oldest written sources from the 16<sup>th</sup> c., B. and his sisters were the children of a Muslim nobleman in Pintarrafes, Spain. B. had been educated at the Muslim court of Valencia, and sent as an ambassador to the Christian count Raimond-Berengar IV. On his way back, he converted at Poblet. He was baptized by the abbot, took his name in honor of Bernard of Clairvaux, and made monastic vows. Among other duties at the monastery, he worked as cellarer. The first miracles began. He asked his abbot for permission to go back to Muslim lands to preach the Christian faith. He baptized his two sisters. Henriquez relates that the sisters made profession as Cistercians as well. All three were taken prisoner by their elder brother. Despite threats and torture, the siblings refused to renounce their faith. B. was bound to a tree and a nail was driven through his head, while Mary and Grace were decapitated. Mozarabic Christians buried their bodies.

4. Cultus:

a. Relics: Relics were discovered after a Christian army conquered the region in 1243. A Trinitarian monastery was built and pilgrimages set in. Relics were lost around 1520, found in 1599, and distributed among Poblet, Carlet, the church of Saint Catherine in Alzira, and the Real Colegio del Corpus Christi (Valencia) after 1603. In 1609, a bronze reliquary for B. was made, and several years later another two for relics of his sisters. Almost all the relics in Poblet were lost in 1835. A monument marks the supposed place of their martyrdom.

b. Liturgical commemoration: 1 Jun (LENSSEN, 122), 23 Jul in Alzira and Carlet, Diocese of Valencia: date of the relics' rediscovery (ROSADO), 20 Aug (MÉNARD, 71), 23 Aug (HENRIQUEZ [1630] 282), 2 Sept (Poblet: Capitulum Generalis 1701 [Pontificia Archicofradía]). The cult is still very popular today, especially in Carlet and Alzira, where confraternities sustain it.

c. Patronage: City—patrons of Alzira (approved in 1643 by Pope Urban VIII) and Carlet (also in Carlet: Ermita de Sant Bernat). Patron of San Bernardo Martir Parish in Poblenu. An altar is dedicated to them in Poblet.

d. Attributes: Nail, carrying palm branches

5. Fontes: AS, Augstii 4, Antwerp 1739, 452–463; H. G. DE CASTRO, Libro de la vida, martyrio y algunos Milagros de S. Bernardo, natural del territorio de la Villa de Alzira, Valencia 1600; C. HENRIQUEZ, Menologium Cisterciense notationibus illustratum, Antwerp 1630, 282; C. HENRIQUEZ, Fasciculus Sanctorum Ordinis Cisterciensium 2, Brussels 1623, 339–340; S. LENSSEN, Menologium cisterciense: a monachis Ordinis Cisterciensis Strictioris Observatae compositum et a Capitulo generali anno 1951 approbatum, Westmalle, 1952; N.–H. MÉNARD, Martyrologium Sanctorum ordinis Sti. Benedicti, Paris, 1629.

6. Literature: A. M. ROSADO, Historia de los Santos Bernardo, Maria y Gracia, Alzira 2001.

7. Illustrations: Painting showing the martyrdom by Antonio Perez, 15th c.; painting in Alzira, scene of martyrdom; fresco in Carlet, 18th c.; shrines and altars with sculptures in Alzira, Church of Saint-

Catherine, 18th c., and in Carlet, Ermita de Sant Bernat, 18th c.  
(<https://www.ermitascomunidadvalenciana.com/vraclt.htm>).

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