

**Popular Religious Traditions and Meteorological Events in Western Europe during the
Vulgar Era: The *Meteo* - *Providential* Saints**

Authors:

*Matteo De Vincenzi**

National Research Council - Institute of BioEconomy (Italy)

e-mail matteo.devincenzi@ibe.cnr.it

**Corrisponding author*

Gianni Fasano

National Research Council - Institute of BioEconomy (Italy)

gianni.fasano@ibe.cnr.it

Address:

CNR-IBE

Area della Ricerca CNR

Via Madonna del Piano, 10

50019 Sesto Fiorentino - Florence- Italy

Abstract - Ancient Greeks and Romans often connected meteorological events to the action of divinities and address them for obtaining an intercession. The spread of Christianity and the polytheism end meant that ordinary people often thought that bad weather was due to the devil; this couldn't be accepted by the Church. However, after some centuries, the Church accepted the "specialization" of saints by intercessions with the Almighty for meteorological miracles and graces. Over the time, these devotions spread so much so that the *Pantheon of Meteorophile Saints*, included those in charge of obtaining rain or to stop it, those against storms, lightning, floods, etc. The rites associated with weather-providential saints developed for centuries and became part of the European immaterial tradition. Although currently popular devotion has decreased in Europe, the mass-media still report some rites, held in some areas of Continent, to obtain divine intercession to fight drought or to stop rains.

Keywords

- Celebrations;
- Religious Rituals
- Calendar Rites
- Meteorological Events
- Sayings

Popular religious traditions and meteorological events in Western Europe during the Vulgar Era: the *Meteo - providential* Saints

Introduction

The ancient Greeks and Romans often linked meteorological events to the action of the various divinities and turned to them to obtain an intercession, despite the first studies on the meteorology of Aristotle and his followers.

In 4th century BCE Aristotle provided in *Meteorologica* a theoretical foundation of meteorological phenomena: their efficient cause is the Sun, while the material causes are the elements. In Greek tradition and in Aristotelian Physics were present four Classical elements as the material basis of the physical world and all are personified by a god (Kingsley 2007) (Grimal 2006)

Earth by *Hera*;

Water by *Persephone*;

Air by *Zeus*;

Fire by *Hades*;

Aristotle added later a 5th element: aether.

Aristotelian physics and meteorology influenced the scientific interpretation of atmospheric phenomena for about two thousand years, because Aristotle had assumed (and not only in this specific field) an indisputable authority. In the ancient Greek word, the atmospheric phenomena were all "personified", such as (Grimal 2006):

- *Eos* (the Dawn, for Latins *Aurora*) was the sister of Helios (the Sun) and Selene (the Moon) and the mother of the *Anemoi* that is the winds: *Zephyrus*, *Boreas*, *Eurus* and *Notus*. (Sissa and Etienne 1994)
- *Iris* (the rainbow) was the goddess who acted as a link between Heaven and Earth or between gods and men, link which the Rainbow makes perceptible. She was depicted with wings and covered by a light veil which, in the sun, takes on the colors of the rainbow. Like *Hermes*, Iris carried the messages, orders, or advice of the gods, and like him she had a caduceus (staff with two intertwined snakes at the top) which she used to chase away the clouds, as she passed by, clearing up the sky.
- *Nephele* (the cloud; latinized to *Nubes*) was a cloud nymph. Aristophanes made the *Clouds* (*Nephelai*) the characters of one of his comedies by endowing them with a genealogy: they were daughters of *Ocean* (like all the divinities of Water) and lived all over the world: on Olympus, in the lands where the Nile is born, in the country of the Ethiopians etc.

The rain, by its nature linked to thunder and lightning, was directly dependent on Zeus; in fact, one of his epithets was *Zeus ombrios* (in Latin *Iuppiter Pluvius*), but the rain was not measured and was simply described. The classical poets (Homer, Vergilius, Hesiod etc), described Zeus-Jupiter with this name and they indicated him with meteorological expressions such "thunder-bearing and cloud-gathering" *νεφεληγερέτα, κελαινεφής* and "beneficial rain giver" *ὄμβριος, νάιος* (Giannelli and Libertini 1937). Even in artistic representations, as in the case of a marble sculpture of the 1st century AD. preserved in Villa Albani - Rome, Zeus was represented with lightning bolt in his left hand, the thunder staff, and the eagle at his feet.

The spread of Christianity and the “explanation” of meteorological events

The spread of Christianity and the end of polytheism, and consequently the disappearance of the gods who dealt with meteorological events, arose a problem: to whom to attribute the causes of the weather "bad events"? The ordinary people often tended to attribute the responsibility for bad weather to the devil or to the ancient gods, or to magicians, fairies, evil spirits, unknown forces. The Church could not accept these beliefs because in contrast to monotheism and therefore from the 6th century it took a position stating that the power to cause meteoric events belongs only to God.

In fact, the 1st Council of Braga (Portugal, 561-563) (*Congregatio Pro Doctrina Fidei* 1975) (Peltier and Migne 1847, pages 371-374), among other topics, hurled anathema against the people:

- who believed that *the devil by his own will could produce cataclysms* (thunder, lightning, storms, droughts, and other adverse weather conditions, 8th canons)¹ (Peltier and Migne 1847).
- who claimed that *the stars determined the fate of human beings* (9th and 10th canons) (Peltier and Migne 1847).

In treatise *Liber contra insulsam vulgi fiduciam de grandine et tonitruis*² (Agobard de Lyon 1841), written between 814 and 816, the bishop Agobard of Lyons (769 or 779 circa - 840) emphasized the Council's affirmations and he lashed out against the *tempestarii*, or magicians deemed capable of provoking, with the help of the devil, storms and diseases (Caruso 2012) (Cabaniss 1953). Agobard stated *neither the magicians nor the priests have the power to unleash the storm and to make the hail fall, a power that belongs only to God*.

In the book, Agobard ironically described Magonia, an imaginary celestial kingdom, from where sky pirates departed abroad “*cloud ships*”. They used meteorological magic to generate storms during which to steal the crops from the fields. Agobard wrote «[...] *We have also seen many of those fools who, believing in the reality of such absurd things, showed the assembled crowd four chained people, three men and a woman, who according to them had fallen from these ships. For some days they had kept them in chains when they had brought them before me, followed by the multitude, to stone them; but after a long discussion, having finally triumphed the truth, those who had shown them to the people found themselves, as a prophet says “As a thief is shamed when caught”*³. [...]» (Agobard de Lyon 1841).

Agobard's description of this fantastic kingdom inspired numerous ufologists, who wanted to see in it a report of ancient sightings of alien visitations.

From the fourteenth century, however, the attitude of the ecclesiastical authorities changed radically. The belief spread that it was possible to come to terms with the Evil One and obtain the ability to exercise magical arts in exchange for one's soul; therefore, magic was assimilated to witchcraft, starting the witch hunt. In the meantime, however, a current of learned magic had also developed from the twelfth century that sought to discover the secret correspondences that bind man, nature and the cosmos, in relationship with the rediscovery of Hellenistic and Arab works of magic, alchemy and astrology. There was no diabolical intervention in this magic but rather expressed the desire for a somewhat scientific approach to the natural world. This current of magic was not assimilated to witchcraft, but on the contrary it was practiced at the court of popes and kings and princes and in humanistic cenacles⁴. Over time, with the exclusion of the Evil One and witchcraft from meteorological events, the Church accepted over time with various *beatifications* and *sanctifications*, the specialization of saints and blessed, in intercessions with the Eternal Father, for graces and meteorological miracles,

taking root such beliefs in the people. Unfortunately, things did not always go in the desired direction: sometimes either the prayers were excessively effective, or the saint invoked was distracted and, for example, he forgot to close the "windows of heaven" and at this point, in the presence of floods, the people had to look for a new "saint to vow to" to stop the rain and return floodwaters to riverbeds (Figure 1). In other case how we can see in the following the people prayed same Saint for two opposite reasons: to stop the rain or to obtain rain or against drought (i.e. Genevieve de Paris, Benno, Melaine).



Figure 1 - Don Camillo (starring Fernandel), in the movie *The Return of Don Camillo*, prays in the flooded church, with the water bathing the surplice, so that the waters of the *Great River* (the Po) return to the banks.

From robigalia to the rogations

In the agro-pastoral field the Romans celebrated *robigalia*, a festival dedicated to the two numina of Latin mythology, *Rōbīgo* and *Rōbīgus* (the first female the second male) personifications of the diseases that could affect plants; in particular the wheat rust (fungal infection that destroys the crops). Some wood was consecrated to them on the fifth mile of the *Via Clodia* north of Rome, beyond the Milvio bridge (Grimal 2006). On 25th April, there was a procession of people all dressed in white to have the benevolence of the numina, at the end of which a two-year-old bitch and sheep were sacrificed.

With the advent of Christianity, the Latin holiday was transformed in the *rogations* (requests, supplications, prayers) holidays that were celebrated, in Western Christianity, for centuries to protect crops from adverse weather events and to obtain a good harvest. The rogations were days of prayer and fasting and were observed with processions and the litany of the saints. These practices had more to do with the magical and religious sphere than with the scientific and technological one. In Catholic worship until the end of the 1950s, the rogations were of two types: *major rogations* that were made on 25th April, the day of the Roman *robigalia* and *minor rogations*, born in Gaul in the fifth century AD, which took place in the three days

preceding the Ascension. These latter originally had a penitential character but then became processions, in particular, in rural areas. The Second Ecumenical Vatican Council (1962-1965) decided to abolish the major rogations and no longer place the minor ones in relation to the solemnity of the Ascension. The Council decided to consider the minor rogations only as days of *public supplications* issued by the Church for the *needs of men, especially for the fruits of the earth and the work of man*, and thanks to the Lord for these gifts. In the tradition of the Anglican Church, in the British Isles, rogation days were celebrated on the fifth Sunday after Easter and were associated with the blessing of fields during planting. The British colonists brought the rogation tradition to Jamaica, Barbados, and South Carolina. Currently in the United States the days of Rogation are an optional observance for the Episcopal Church. Although the rogations were initially associated with rural life, agriculture and fishing, the Book of Common Prayer has been expanded to include goods for trade and industry and the management of creation, and also it allows their celebration at other times. to adapt to different regional growing seasons.



Figure 2 - Ancient Custom of Blessing the Fields on Rogation Sunday at Hever, Kent (1967) (photo by Ray Trevena, license CC BY-SA 2.0⁵)

The Saints "experts" in meteorology

Over the centuries, in particular in Catholic Church, it was witnessed the birth and spread of these devotions, so much so that the *Pantheon of Meteorophile Saints*, includes those in charge of obtaining rain (the most numerous) or to stop it, those against hail, storms, lightning, floods, drought etc.

Here is a small list of meteorophile saints that are obviously divided by specialty in seven tables. The same saint can be cited in several tables (a short biography is reported for names marked with an asterisk, at the end of the tables); the saints are listed in alphabetical order since we do not want to give any judgment of merit. Furthermore, we cannot, nor do we know, suggest how to request their intervention, as this is a topic of other disciplines. The indications given in the tables and in the biographies, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the *Martyrologium romanum* (Sacra Congregatio de Culto divino 2004) (CEI 2004) and from the *Santi e Beati* Web portal.

Table 1 - Saints for stopping rains and floods

| <i>Name</i> | <i>see table</i> | birth/ death | feast |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Benno or Bennone*</i> | 2 | 1010 / 1106 | 16 th June |
| <i>Geneviève of Paris*</i> | 7 | c. 422 / c. 500 | 3 rd January |
| <i>Godeberta of Noyon</i> | - | c. 640 / c. 695 | 11 th April |
| <i>Medardus of Noyon*</i> | - | c. 456 / c. 550 | 8 th June |
| <i>Melaine or Melanius of Rennes</i> | 7 | c. 456 / c. 530 | 6 th January |
| <i>Ranieri Scacceri of Pisa *</i> | - | 1118 / 1161 | 17 th June |

Table 2 - Saints for obtaining rain.

| <i>Name</i> | <i>see table</i> | birth/ death | feast |
|---|------------------|--|---------------------------|
| <i>Agricola of Avignon*</i> | - | c. 630 / 700 | 2 nd September |
| <i>Baud or Baudin of Tours</i> | - | ??? / c. 552 | 7 th November |
| <i>Benno or Bennone *</i> | 1 | 1010 / 1106 | 16 th June |
| <i>Calamanda of Calaf</i> | 7 | 8 th / 9 th century | 5 th February |
| <i>Columba of Sens *</i> | - | III secolo | 31 th December |
| <i>Elijah*</i> | 7 | end of 10 th cent. / c. 850 BCE | 20 th July |
| <i>Heribert of Cologne*</i> | - | c. 970 circa / c. 1021 | 16 th March |
| <i>Eulalia of Barcelona*</i> | - | 290 / 303 | 12 th February |
| <i>Eurosia of Jaca*</i> | 3, 4, 6 | 864 / 880 | 25 th June |
| <i>Gaudéric de Mirepoix*</i> | 7 | c. 820 / c. 900 | 16 th October |
| <i>Gens du Beauce*</i> | 7 | 1104 / 1127 | 16 th May |
| <i>John of Nepomuk or Jan Nepomucký *</i> | - | before 1349 / 1393 | 20 th March |
| <i>Libaire de Grand</i> | 3 | 4 th century | 8 th October |
| <i>Odo of Cluny</i> | - | c. 880 / c. 942 | 18 th November |
| <i>Orentius and Patientia</i> | - | 3 rd century | 1 st May |
| <i>Scholastica of Nursia*</i> | 4, 6 | 480 / 547 | 10 th February |

Table 3 - Saints for stopping hail.

| <i>Name</i> | <i>see table</i> | birth/ death | feast |
|---|------------------|---|--------------------------|
| <i>Abdon and Sennen</i> | - | III century | 30 th July |
| <i>Amalberga of Temse</i> | - | 741 circa / 772 | 10 th July |
| <i>Barnabas*</i> | - | beginning 1 st century - 61 | 11 th June |
| <i>Christopher of Licia*</i> | 4, 6 | ??? / c. 250 | 25 th July |
| <i>Domenico of Sora</i> | 6 | 951 / 1031 | 22 th January |
| <i>Eurosia of Jaca*</i> | 2, 4, 6 | 864 / 880 | 25 th June |
| <i>Filippo Neri*</i> | - | 1515 / 1595 | 26 th May |
| <i>Gotthard of Hildesheim</i> | - | 960 / 1038 | 5 th May |
| <i>Leonard of Noblac or Limoges or Noblet</i> | - | beginning 6 th century / 545 | 6 th November |
| <i>Libaire de Grand</i> | 2 | 4 th century | 8 th October |
| <i>Vincent Ferrer*</i> | 4 | 1350 / 1419 | 5 th April |

Table 4 - Saints against lightning

| <i>Name</i> | <i>see table</i> | birth/ death | feast |
|--|------------------|---|---------------------------|
| <i>Barbara*</i> | - | 3 rd cent. / ending 3 rd -beginning 4 th cent. | 4 th December |
| <i>Columba of Iona or Colum Cille</i> | - | 521 / 597 | 9 th June |
| <i>Christopher of Licia*</i> | 3, 6 | ??? / c. 250 | 25 th July |
| <i>Deotile and Gertrude, abbesses of Blangy*</i> | - | 8 th century | 14 th July |
| <i>Eurosia of Jaca</i> | 2, 3, 6 | 864 / 880 | 25 th June |
| <i>Scholastica of Nursia*</i> | 2, 6 | 480 / 547 | 10 th February |
| <i>Vincent Ferrer*</i> | 3 | 1350 / 1419 | 5 th April |

Table 5 - Saints against cold and frost.

| <i>Name</i> | <i>see table</i> | birth/ death | feast |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|---|-------------------------|
| <i>Pancratius or Pancras of Rome*</i> | - | 289 / 304 | 12 th May |
| <i>Sebaldus of Nuremberg</i> | - | 9 th or 10 th century | 19 th August |
| <i>Servatius of Tongeren*</i> | - | 3 rd -4 th century/ 384 | 13 th May |

Table 6 - Saints against storm.

| <i>Name</i> | <i>see table</i> | birth/ death | feast |
|--|------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <i>Acisclo and Victoria of Cordoba</i> | - | 2 nd century /304 | 17 th November |
| <i>Christopher of Licia*</i> | 3, 4 | ??? / c. 250 | 25 th July |
| <i>Domenico of Sora</i> | 3 | 951 / 1031 | 22 th January |
| <i>Eurosia of Jaca*</i> | 2, 3, 4 | 864 / 880 | 25 th June |
| <i>Scholastica of Nursia*</i> | 2, 4 | 480 / 547 | 10 th February |

Table 7 - Saints against drought.

| <i>Name</i> | <i>see table</i> | birth/ death | feast |
|--|------------------|--|----------------------------|
| <i>Angadrisma</i> | - | 630 / 695 | 14 th October |
| <i>Calamanda of Calaf</i> | 2 | 8 th / 9 th century | 5 th February |
| <i>Calimerius*</i> | - | 3 rd century / c. 280 | 31 th July |
| <i>Comasia*</i> | - | between 2 nd e 4 th century | 5 th November |
| <i>Elijah*</i> | 2 | end of 10 th cent. / c. 850 BCE | 20 th July |
| <i>Ermengol or Armengol or Armengod</i> | - | end of 10 th century / 1035 | 3 rd November |
| <i>Eudald</i> | - | 535 / 581 | 11 th May |
| <i>Francisco Solano*</i> | - | 1549 / 1610 | 14 July |
| <i>Gaudéric de Mirepoix*</i> | 2 | c. 820 / c. 900 | 16 th October |
| <i>Geneviève of Paris*</i> | 1 | c. 422 / c. 500 | 3 rd January |
| <i>Gens du Beauce*</i> | 2 | 1104 / 1127 | 16 th May |
| <i>Ingenuinus and Albuino of Sabiona</i> | - | in order 6 th and 9 th century | 5 th February |
| <i>Notburga di Klettgau</i> | - | 1265 / 1313 | 13 th September |
| <i>Melaine or Melanius of Rennes</i> | 1 | c. 456 / c. 530 | 6 th January |

Biographies of some Meteorophile Saints

Agricola of Avignon (Avignon, c. 630 – Avignon, c. 700 <Table 2>), French bishop, patron saint of Avignon. Perhaps due to the etymology of his name, he was destined to watch over the crops; people invoked him to obtain rain, successfully according to ancient traditions, in periods of drought.

Barbara (Nicomedia? 3rd century /ending 3rd – beginning 4th century <Table 4>) virgin and martyr. There are many editions of her *passio* (account of the saint's martyrdom) but they are full of legendary aspects of little historical value; there are in fact many differences both on the period in which she lived, and on the places of birth and martyrdom. According to the most widespread tradition, Barbara was tortured because she did not want to abjure the Christian faith and on 4th December she was beheaded, with a sword, by her father who was struck by lightning at the moment of execution. Traditionally Barbara is invoked against lightning, fire, and sudden death; she is the patroness of those who carry out dangerous activities such as bomb squads, artillerymen, carpenters, miners as well as firefighters. In some neo-Latin languages (Italian, French, Spanish) the saint gives the name to the ammunition depot on warships and the gunpowder magazine in the fortresses (e.g. in Italian *santabarbara*). The use of the name in this sense is attested since 1769.

Barnabas (Cyprus, beginning 1st century A.D. – Salamina 61 <Table 3>), even though Barnabas is not part of the *Twelve* he is called, like Saint Paul, *apostle to the Gentiles*. Since the 17th century he has been venerated in Marino (Rome) as the patron saint of the city and his protection against hail is invoked. In fact, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, after disastrous hailstorms that had damaged the crops for three consecutive years on 11 June (the Saint's feast), the inhabitants of Marino wrote to their bishop asking to be able to venerate St. Barnabas as their patron saint. After episcopal approval, the people of Marino began to celebrate St. Barnabas as saint patron and protector from hail (Onorati 2016). There are some Italian regional proverbs linked to the day of St. Barnabas, such as: *Se piove per San Barnabà / l'uva bianca se ne va; / se piove mattina e sera se ne va la bianca e la nera*⁶ (Lapucci and Antoni 1985). Barnabas preached the Gospel with Paul of Tarsus in the Christian community and together they participated in the Council of Jerusalem (49 AD). He spread the gospel in Cyprus and Italy; a Milanese devotional legend told that upon his arrival in Milan (13th March 53) the snow around him would have disappeared as he passed, and the first flowers would have blossomed. Barnabas continued to travel and preach to Salamis (Greece), where he was stoned by some Jews in the year 61.

Benno or **Bennone** (Hidesheim, 1010 – Meissen, 1106 <Table 1-2>) German Benedictine monk, bishop of Meissen, was considered the *manager* of rain and good weather. In Germany, seeing a fertile field, it was customary to say: *Bishop Benno passed through here* (Bazzarini 1836, p. 784). Another popular sentence in Saxony was *Rain is something that sometimes you want it, sometimes you don't. In both cases, this saint must be invoked* (Cammilleri 2002). In 1085 the emperor Henry IV deposed him from his diocese because he had defended Pope Gregory VII, so Benno threw the keys of the cathedral into the Elbe River. Returning, years later, he retrieved them from the belly of a fish; for this episode he is the patron saint of fishermen. He was canonized in 1523 and the solemn exhumation of his remains in 1524 inspired Martin Luther to write a violent *pamphlet* against the cult of the saints.

Calimerius of Milan (Greece 3rd century – Milan, c. 280 <Table 7>). He was bishop of Milan in a period between 270 and 280; according to tradition he died a martyr as he was thrown into a well by some pagans. He was then buried in a sacellum, near the well, and in the 5th century a basilica dedicated to him was built on this site. In the 8th century, in the crypt of the basilica, his relics were found immersed in water. A well was then dug, which still exists today, to drain the crypt. In the past, on the feast of the saint, 31st July, the well water was distributed to the sick and, during periods of drought, a bottle of well water was consecrated during mass and then

overturned on the churchyard, to propitiate the beginning of the rains.

Columba of Sens (3rd century <Table 2>) virgin and martyr of Spanish origin. She was a very popular saint in the Middle Ages even if the news about her life is shrouded in legend. According to tradition, she fled to Gaul after converting to Christianity. In Sens (Burgundy) she was arrested (in 273?) As a Christian during the persecution of the emperor Aurelian (270-275); she condemned to the stake she was saved from a providential downpour that put out the flames. In Sens (Burgundy) she was arrested (in 273?) As a Christian during the persecution of the emperor Aurelian (270-275); she was condemned to the stake, but she was saved from a providential downpour that put out the flames. From this episode people began to invoke the saint for protection against fires and more generally to obtain rain. However, the *providential* rain did not save Colomba who, a few days later, was beheaded by the emperor.

Comasia (lived between the 2nd and 4th centuries A.D. <Table 7>) Roman martyr. His body was rediscovered in the Catacombs of Saint Agnes, on the *Via Nomentana* in Rome, and it was donated in 1646, with the permission of Pope Innocent X, to the people of Martina Franca (Taranto, Apulia - Italy). According to a popular tradition, the transfer of body of Comasia from Rome to the Basilica of San Martino (Martina Franca) took place under a rain that lasted several days. Similarly in November 1714, the arrival from Naples to Martina Franca of a Saint statue was accompanied by continuous rain. Since then, in Martina Franca, in periods of drought the urn containing the bones of the Saint is carried in procession. Also in July 2000, a year particularly poor in rains, the bones of the Saint were carried in procession through the streets of the town. According to a tradition the name of the martyr was unknown and therefore she was called "*Santa Come Sia*" (lit. *Saint as it is*) from which Saint Comasia. A recent study supposes that the name Comasia derives from a Greek term which means *solemn translation*. Finally, even today, when the rain is particularly persistent, the specificity of the saint is emphasized with the dialect exclamation: *a' ssòt u curpe de Santa Cumasie!* (lit. *the body of Saint Comasia has come out!*).

Christopher of Lycia (??? – Lycia, in the current Turkey, c. 250 <Table 3-4-6>) martyr by beheading during the persecution of the emperor Decius. He is one of the fourteen *auxiliary saints*, or those saints invoked on serious natural calamities. The name Christopher (*Christ-Bearer* in Greek) was attributed to the martyr since, according to tradition, he carried on his shoulders, to make him cross a river, a child who later turned out to be Jesus. Hence the patronage for travelers, in general, and by waterways, in particular. This devotion arose in the 12th century. and developed in the 14th century. The saint was especially invoked by navigators, sailors, against the dangers of the sea, lightning, hurricanes, hail, sudden death, etc.

Elijah (end of 10th century – c. 850 BCE <Table 2-7>) Hebrew prophet. *Ēliyāh* (meaning in Hebrew *My God is Yahweh*), announced to the king of Israel Ahab that *Yahweh* would send a three-year drought to punish him and the people of Israel for their idolatry due the cult of Phoenician god Baal. The fulfillment of this prophecy led the king to accept Elijah's challenge to the priests of Baal to prove who the true God was. When only on the altar raised by Elijah a flame was miraculously lit, and "*All at once the sky grew dark with clouds and wind, and a heavy rain fell*"⁷, the people lynched the idolatrous priests. Hence the invocation to the prophet to obtain rain and the cessation of periods of drought.

Heribert of Cologne (Worms, c. 970 – c. 1021 <Table 2>), German Archbishop of Cologne. He was considered a pious man and was attributed miraculous works: among these he brought to an end a period of drought. From this originates the invocation of the faithful to the saint to obtain beneficial rains.

Eulalia of Barcelona (Barcelona, 290 – Barcelona, 303 <Table 2>), martyr during the persecution of Diocletian. She was the patron saint of Barcelona until 1687 when the main religious festival of the city became that of the *Virgen de la Merced* (24th September), an often-rainy period. Tradition attributes the rain to Eulalia's tears, sad because her fellow citizens had forgotten her. The existence of Eulalia of Barcelona has sparked many discussions. For some scholars she could be the same person of Saint Eulalia of Mérida, whose story is similar, she was too a martyr during the persecution of Diocletian. Since the 2004 edition of the *Martyrologium romanum* (Sacra Congregatio de Culto divino 2004) (CEI 2004), Eulalia in Barcelona is no longer present and is considered a traditional saint whose veneration is locally authorized because she is well rooted.

Eurosia of Jaca (864 – 880 <Table 2-3-4-6>), born to a noble Bohemian family, she was martyred in a village in the Spanish Pyrenees. Modern scholars have discovered the falsity of the traditional tale that depicted Eurosia as a Bohemian princess who went to Spain to get married. This legend, however, remains the best known from which we can deduce the connection of the Saint with atmospheric events. In the moment in which a Saracen chief killed Eurosia: *a furious hail broke out, a frightening roar of water, lightning and deafening thunder, strong winds, the Saracens fled in terror while a voice more powerful than the storm said from heaven: " given to her the gift of quelling storms, wherever her name is invoked!"* (Santi e Beati Web Portal). Her cult spread from the fifteenth century throughout Spain and northern Italy, mainly in the hilly wine-growing areas of Piedmont and Lombardy, where, according to tradition, the intercession of the saint, on many occasions, protected the crops from storms. The saint is still invoked to obtain rain.

Filippo Neri (Florence, 1515 – Rome, 1595 <Table 3>), Italian priest, founder of Congregation of the Oratory (in Latin *Confoederatio Oratorii Sancti Philippi Neri*), a society of secular clergy. He spent part of the summers of his youthful years in Castelfranco di Sopra (a village in Arezzo Province) where, according to local chronicles, he undertook to ensure that the hail did not damage the crops. His commitment was decisive because after his death the hail phenomena were rare and not very harmful. According to tradition, when the sky turns black and suggests hail, some locals run to the bell tower of the church of San Filippo Neri and they vigorously ring the bell and *"and the sound waves, vibrated by the bells, crash on the hostile clouds and often cause the immediate cancellation of the danger"* (Gatteschi 2002). Since the beginning of the eighteenth century, on the third Sunday of May the *"hail festival"* has been celebrated in Castelfranco di Sopra during which a relic of Filippo Neri is carried in procession to thank him for his protection from the scourges of time (diseases, natural calamities, poverty etc.) (Toscana oggi 2006).

Francisco Solano (Montilla, Andalusia, 1549 – Lima, Perú, 1610 <Table 7>), friar minor and Spanish missionary among the Indigenous peoples of Latin America. In his evangelical work he defended the Indians against the oppression of the *conquistadores*. According to hagiographic stories, he was the author of extraordinary works: he tamed ferocious animals, healed the sick, supplied the needy with food in times of famine. But the most important miracle of him did it

when his Indian people began to suffer from drought: the Saint had a well dug from which gushed a spring of fresh water which is still called *fuenta del santo Solano* (lit. *the fountain of Saint Solano*) (Sánchez de Feria 1762, pp. 102-103). For this miracle he is invoked against drought.

Gaudéric de Mirepoix* or *de Viéville (Saint-Gaudéric, c.820 – Saint-Gaudéric, c. 900 <Table 2-7>); French peasant born in a small village (Viéville), in the county of Carcassonne (diocese of Mirepoix), which took his name in honor of the saint. Gaudéric is invoked to obtain rain because, according to tradition, in 960 in Toulouse, during a period of drought, the display of his relics would have caused a resurgence (Faure 2013).

Geneviève of Paris (Nanterre, c. 422 – Paris, c. 500 <Table 1-7>), patroness saint of Paris. She has always been the object of intense worship by the Parisians, who invoked her on the Seine floods and against drought, as well as in times of famine and pestilence. Among the many hagiographic episodes of her life, some interventions are meteorophilic such as: to remove the storm clouds from the sky, over a field where the harvest took place; his full-throated song to calm the boatmen terrified by a sudden storm that had broken out on the river. It is narrated that in 822 Paris was affected by a flood of the Seine; while the faithful were looking for a place not flooded to celebrate mass, they discovered that the waters of the river had not touched the tomb of the Saint.

Gens du Beaucet (Monteux 1104 – Le Beaucet 1127 <Table 2-7>) French hermit. As an adolescent he abandoned his family to live as a hermit in a valley around Le Beaucet. After rehadjusting a ruined monastery, he lived in solitude working the land. Among the various tales about the saint, it is also said that, when he reached the place of his hermitage, the village suffered from a prolonged drought; then Gens suggested to the local priests to organize a procession; this wasn't over yet when it started raining. The invocation to Gens in times of drought originates from this episode.

John of Nepomuk, in Czech Jan Nepomucký (Nepomuk, in today's Czech Republic, before of 1349 – Prague 1393 <Table 2>), bohemian priest. He is the patron saint of the waters and of all people in danger of drowning. He was killed by order of King Wenceslaus IV of Bohemia by drowning in the Vltava River on 20th March 1393, as attested by documents, ecclesiastical records, and chronicles of the time. According to some sources, John was killed because he did not want to reveal the queen's confessions to the sovereign (whose fidelity the king doubted). Other sources attribute the penalty to the fact that John did not consider the king's orders in relation to the appointment of an abbot of a monastery. Some historical annals written 60-80 years after his death indicate 16th May as the date of his martyrdom; the *Martyrologium romanum romanum* considers 20th March as the official date (Sacra Congregatio de Culto divino 2004).

Medardus of Noyon in French *Médard* (Salency, c. 456 – Noyon, c. 550 <Table 1>), bishop of Saint-Quentin Noyon (Gaul). He was one of the most popular bishops of his time and many legends have flourished about his life. One of these, with a meteorological flavor, narrates that as a child an eagle protected him from the rain by spreading its wings over him. It was said that Medardus had the gift, according to need, to make it rain or to bring good weather (Renault 2002, p. 11). Perhaps also for this story, for a long time, his name was linked to meteorology and agricultural work. In fact, many popular sayings, mainly French, are linked to his name; for

example, one, also known in northern Italy, states: *Se piove nel giorno di san Medardo, pioverà ancora per altri quaranta giorni* (lit. *If it rains on Saint Medard's day, it will rain for another forty days*).

Pancras of Rome (Synnada Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey, 289 – Rome, 304 <Table 5>) roman martyr. He is one of *Ice Saints*. He is invoked against spring frosts. He was beheaded by the emperor Diocletian. In the place of his martyrdom, on the Janiculum in Rome, the Basilica dedicated to him was erected.

Ranieri (or *Raniero* or *Ranierius*) **Scacceri of Pisa** (Pisa, 1118 – Pisa, 1161 <Table 1>), Italian hermit and patron saint of Pisa. Son of a merchant, he lived his youth full of fun, entertainment, and some illicit acts. At the age of 19, he met a hermit who brought about a radical change in him: he gave all his wealth to the poor and left for the Holy Land. In 1154, after a long hermitage in Palestine, he returned to Pisa where, already in the odor of sanctity, he worked miracles for the sick and sailors. Due to his custom of giving blessed bread and water, the canon Benincasa, his disciple and biographer, called him saint "*Ranieri dall'Acqua*" (lit. *Ranieri from Water*), attesting to his thaumaturgical powers of healing by means of holy water. The figure of Ranieri is accompanied by legendary tales and miraculous facts that occurred after his death. The Pisans tell of the *burrasca di san Ranieri* (lit. *gale of Saint Ranieri*), according to which every year the saint would test his fellow citizens by unleashing the rain in the days preceding his feast (16th June). The poet Renato Fucini speaks of the invocation to the saint to protect the city from the Arno River, in the sonnet *san Ranieri Miraoloso* (lit. *Saint Ranieri miraculous*) (Fucini 1872). In the first verses of sonnet the poet recalls the tradition that Ranieri would be the patron saint of thieves; while in the last verses he describes the brusque ways in which Ranieri orders the Almighty to stop the flood of the river.

Scholastica of Nursia (Nursia, today's Norcia, 480 – Piumarola, 547 <Table 2-4-6>). Nun, traditional foundress, and patroness of Benedictine nuns, twin sister of Benedict of Nursia. Few events are known about his life, which are reported in the second book of the *Dialogues* (in Latin *Dialogi*) of Saint Gregory the Great. In this work it is narrated that Scholastica, and Benedetto met once a year in a house near Montecassino. In the last of these meetings, which took place shortly before her death, Scholastica asked his brother to continue the spiritual conversation until the following morning, but Benedict objected so as not to break the *Rule of Silence*. Then Scholastica begged the Lord not to let her brother leave and suddenly a violent storm broke out. This forced Benedict to stay with her and converse until the following morning. Perhaps for this episode the faithful invoke Scholastica to protect themselves from storms and lightning, and to obtain rain.

Servatius of Tongeren (4th century – close to Maastricht, 384 <Table 5>), born in Armenia, bishop of Tongres (*Gallia Belgica*); he is one of *Ice Saints*. There are many popular meteorological sayings associated with Servatius, especially in Belgium and France: *Quand il pleut à la Saint Servais (13 mai) pour les blés, c'est signe mauvais* (lit. *When it rains at Saint Servais [13th May] for wheat, it is a bad sign*) (VV.AA. 1891).

Vincent Ferrer (Valencia 1350 – Vannes, France, 1419 <Table 3-4>) Spanish Dominican friar, famous as an apocalyptic preacher. He was particularly committed to the composition of the

Western Schism (1378-1417) and to the unity of the Church. He was credited with healing powers and many miracles such as bringing rain to drought-stricken fields and saving a bricklayer from a fall. The farmers, especially during rogations, asked for his protection from storms, lightning and hail and for the protection of crops. He is revered as the patron saint of winemakers, bricklayers, preachers, epileptics and of Valencia. He is also invoked against earthquakes, and to ward off disease.

Phrases, sayings, idioms, proverbs and weather-climatic events

The feasts of some saints, moreover, are linked to both popular meteorological sayings and weather-climate. Here are some examples.

- *Candlemas* (2nd February): feast of the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple. Over time it took on an eminently Marian character, merging the celebration of the presentation of Jesus with that of the *Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, which took place according to the Jewish law concerning mothers, forty days after childbirth. The name of Candlemas (*chandeleur* in French, *candelora* in Italian, *Lichtmess* in German) derives from the French custom, of the 10th century, of blessing the candles that were brought lit during the procession. In many zones of Europe there are folk sayings that forecast about the season based on the weather conditions of the day of Candlemas:
 - *If Candlemas Day is clear and bright, / winter will have another bite. / If Candlemas Day brings cloud and rain, / winter is gone and will not come again.* (Simpson & Speake 2009)
 - *Ist's zu Lichtmess klar und hell, kommt der Frühling nicht so schnell.* (Kirschgruber 2015)
 - *À la Chandeleur, l'hiver se meurt ou prend vigueur.* (Rozé 2005)
 - *Per santa Candelora, se nevica se plora, dell'inverno siamo fora; ma s'è sole e solicello, noi siam sempre a mezzo il Verno.* (Bellonzi 2000; sentence 1606)
- *Nodi del freddo* (lit. *the knots of cold*), March-April: this Italian phrase indicates a meteorological singularity, or an event that recurs with a certain regularity in a certain period of the year. This singularity leads to meteorological conditions different from those that are normally expected in that period. The *Nodi del freddo* appear with sudden returns of cold during the spring - early summer period. They are often referred to with the names of the saint or the festival of the day. In March the best-known cold nodes are those of Saint Joseph (19) and the Annunciation (25). In April, Saint Mark (25) *nodo* occurs.
- *Ice Saints* in other words Mamertus (feast 11th May), Pancras (12th May), Servatius (13th May), Boniface (14th May) and Sophia of Rome (15th May). These drops in temperature, in particular those of May with the related late frosts, are due to an irruption of cold air of polar origin, but popular tradition has associated them with the aforementioned saints, giving rise to the belief of the Ice Saints. In France, a popular saying states *Avant Saint-Servais, point d'été, après Saint-Servais, plus de gelée*⁸ (Cellard and Dubois 1985). A dutch sentence states *Pancraas, Servaas en Bonifaas, zij geven vorst en ijs helaas*⁹ (Meteo Maarssen Web site).
- *The tears of Magdalene*: rain that falls around the feast of Mary of Magdala (22th July); it probably refers to the tears that the saint shed while she was outside the sepulcher of Jesus.¹⁰
- *Saint Anne's rain* (26th July): it means the rain that the saint would drop as refreshment for the reapers, of which she is patron, in the days close to her feast. Like the *tears of the Magdalene*,

it represents the rain that often eases the summer heat. An Italian saying goes *A Sant'Anna la pioggia è più preziosa della manna* (lit. *At Saint Anne, rain is more precious than a godsend*). (Cutuli and Poggi 2011)

- *Estate di San Martino* (first half of November) in Italy or *Été de la Saint-Martin* in France, (lit. *Summer of Saint Martin*).

The saint was born in Sabaria in Pannonia (region of today's Hungary) in about 316 and died in Candé in Touraine (France) in 397. His father directed him to a military career; on Easter 339, he received baptism in Amiens. According to legend, in that city, on a cold autumn day, Martin met a poor half-naked man to whom he gave half of his cloak. As a result of this act of charity, the temperatures were milder for several days. Having obtained his leave, he was ordained a priest and in 371 he was elected bishop of Tours. The saint's feast takes place on 11th November. An Italian saying goes: *L'estate di San Martino dura tre giorni e un pochino* (Lapucci 1993); a saying French is very similar: *été de la Saint-Martin, dure trois jours et un brin*, lit. *summer of St. Martin, lasts three days and a bit*.

Miracles aside, it is true that especially in the first half of November, after the first cold episodes of October, it is easy to have a relatively quiet and mild period of atmospheric conditions. But more prosaically in that period the expansions of the Azores anticyclone or even of the African subtropical ridge are frequent (which can also occur at other times of the year). At the beginning of November our hemisphere has only recently begun to cool down and although the Sun is now quite low and the hours of light are considerably reduced, it takes very little to regain the warmth of a *late summer*.

Conclusions

The rites associated with meteo-providential saints span several centuries and are part of the intangible European tradition. Although devotion in most of Europe has grown less and often only a few manifestations remain at the folkloristic level, the mass media, still today, report some processions or rites, held in some area of our continent, to obtain divine intercession to combat drought or to stop the rains; for example in February 2020 in Marianopoli, Caltanissetta province - Sicily, there was a procession to obtain the rain (Toscano 2020). Their presence is part of manifestations that can be classified in intangible popular traditions in which the magical and religious aspects are welded in an ancient relationship with natural phenomena.

In conclusion we want to remember that in reference to meteorology, if on the one hand the Church (in particular the Roman Catholic) has brought forward aspects of popular beliefs combined with the devotions of the saints, on the other many scholars of the subject (physics, designers, creators of instruments, etc.) were religious. Since the late Middle Ages, clerical scholars, the so-called "scientists in cassocks", had a very significant contribution (especially in Italy) to the transformation of meteorology into a scientific discipline. Among these we want to remember Nicholas of Cusa, Egnazio Danti, Benedetto Castelli, Leonardo Ximenes, Giuseppe Toaldo, Louis Cotte, Angelo Secchi, Francesco Denza, Václav Prokop Diviš, José María Algué.

References Cited

Agobard de Lyon. 1841. *De la grêle et du tonnerre - De grandine et tonitruis [Liber contra insulsam vulgi opinionem de grandine et tonitruis]*. Translated in French by Péricaud, Antoine. Lyon : printed by Dumolin, Rouet et Sibuet.

- Barbero, Alessandro and Chiara Frugoni. 2005. *Dizionario del Medioevo*. Bari: Laterza
- Bazzarini, Antonio. 1836. *Supplemento al Dizionario enciclopedico delle scienze. Venezia: lettere ed arti: co' i tipi di Antonio Bazzarini*.
- Bellonzi, Fortunato. 2000. *Proverbi toscani*. Firenze: ed. Giunti.
- Caruso, Paola. 2012. "La trattatistica di Agobardo di Lione in difesa dell'ortodossia contro le superstizioni: traduzione e commento". PhD diss. in Classical, Christian and Medieval-Humanistic Philology, Greca e Latina, XXXVI cycle Università Federico II Napoli, Italy <http://www.fedoa.unina.it/id/eprint/9810>
- Cabaniss J. Allen. 1953. *Agobard, Churchman and Critic*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press
- Cammilleri, Rino. 2002. *Un santo al giorno. Aneddoti, curiosità e notizie*. Milano: PIEMME
- CEI. 2004. *Martirologio Romano. Riformato a norma dei decreti del Concilio Ecumenico Vaticano II e promulgato da Papa Giovanni Paolo II*. Roma: Libreria Editrice Vaticana
- Cellard, Jacques, and Gilbert Dubois. 1985. *Dictons de la pluie et du beau temps*. Paris : Éditions Belin. <https://stel.uib.edu/paremio-rom/es/sources/cellard-jacques-gilbert-dubois-dictons-de-la-pluie-et-du-beau-temps?page=13>
- Congregatio pro Doctrina Fidei. 1975. "Fede cristiana e demonologia" in *L'Osservatore Romano*, 26th June 1975 https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19750626_fede-cristiana-demonologia_it.html (accessed May 5th, 2022)
- Cutuli, Rino, and Marcello Poggi. 2011. *Rosso di sera... Guida ai modi di dire, alle credenze e ai proverbi sul tempo*. Milano: Alpha Test.
- Faure, Robert. 2013. "Saint Gauderic" in Du Cote de Treziers <http://robert.faure.pagesperso-orange.fr/MIREPOIX/SaintGauderique.htm> (accessed July 15th, 2022)
- Fucini, Renato. 1872. *Cento sonetti in vernacolo pisano di Neri Tanfucio*. Firenze: ed. Pellas.
- Gatteschi, Riccardo. 2002. *Santi Diavoli e brava gente*. Firenze: Centro Editoriale Toscano.
- Giannelli, Giulio, and Guido Libertini. 1937. *Zeus*. entry in *Enciclopedia Italiana Treccani*, Roma
- Grimal, Pierre. 2006. *Enciclopedia della Mitologia*. Milano: Le Garzantine, Garzanti Libri
- Kingsley, Peter. 2007. *Misteri e magia nella filosofia antica. Empedocle e la tradizione pitagorica*. Milano: Il Saggiatore.
- Kirschgruber Valentin. 2015. *Von Sonnwend bis Rauhacht Feste, Bräuche & Rituale im Kreislauf des Jahres*. Munich: Kailash Verlag,
- Lapucci Carlo. 1993. *Cielo a pecorelle I segni del tempo nella meteorologia popolare*. Milano: A. Vallardi
- Lapucci, Carlo and Anna Maria Antoni. 1985. *I proverbi del mese*. Milano: Garzanti.
- Meteo Maarssen. "GEDICHT" https://www.meteo-maarssen.nl/wsp_05.html (accessed April 19th, 2022)
- Onorati, Ugo. 2016. *Leggende e miracoli nella tradizione popolare di Marino.*, Marino – Roma: ed. Archeoclub "Colli Albani"
- Peltier, Adolphe Charles, and Jean-Paul Migne. 1847. *Encyclopédie Théologique - Dictionnaire des conciles, tant généraux que particuliers, des principaux synodes diocésains et des autres assemblées ecclésiastiques les plus remarquables* tome 1^{er} (tome 13^{eme} de l'Encyclopédie). Paris : Ateliers Catholiques du Petit MontRouge
- Renault, Christophe. 2002. *Reconnaître les saints et les personnages de la Bible*. Paris : Éditions Jean-Paul Gisserot,
- Rozé, Sylvie. 2005 *1600 proverbes pour briller et s'amuser en société*. Paris : Éditions Omnibus.

- Sacra Congregatio de Cultu Divino et Disciplina Sacramentorum. 2004. *Martyrologium romanum. Ex decreto sacrosancti oecumenici Concilii Vaticani II instauratum auctoritate Iohannis Pauli PP. II promulgatum*. Roma: Editio typica altera. Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
- Sánchez de Feria y Morales Bartholome. 1762. *Compendio de la vida, virtudes, y milagros del apostol del Perú San Francisco Solano del Sagrado Orden de San Francisco, y Patrono de la Ciudad de Montilla*. Madrid: printed by Miguel Escribano <http://www.bibliotecavirtualdeandalucia.es/catalogo/es/consulta/registro.cmd?id=1002442>
- Simpson, John, and Jennifer Speake, eds. 2009 *The Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 5th edition
- Santi e Beati. *Santi, beati e testimoni - Enciclopedia dei Santi* <http://www.santiebeati.it>
- Synodus Bracarenensis prima in Collectio Hispana Gallica Augustodunensis http://www.benedictus.mgh.de/quellen/chga/chga_057t.htm (accessed April 29th, 2022)
- Sissa, Giulia and Marcel Etienne. 1994. *La vita quotidiana dei greci*. Milano: Mondadori.
- Toscana oggi. 2006. "Cosa c'è in Toscana". From n.18 of May 14th 2006 <https://www.toscanaoggi.it/Eventi/Appuntamenti/Cosa-c-e-in-Toscana-dal-13-al-21-maggio-2006/>
- Toscano, Salvo. (2020). "Sicilia, tutti in processione per la pioggia". Corriere della Sera, Febraury 24th 2020. https://www.corriere.it/cronache/20_febbraio_24/sicilia-tutti-processione-la-pioggia-0efc124c-573a-11ea-b89d-a5ca249e9e1e.shtml
- USCCB. 2011. *The New American Bible (Revised Edition)* <https://bible.usccb.org/bible>
- VV.AA. 1891. *Bullettin de la Société d'horticulture du Doubs* p. 114 vol.35-36, Besançon (Doubs, France)

¹ 8th canon *Si quis credit quod aliquantas immundas creaturas diabolus fecerit, et tonitrua et fulgora et tempestates et siccitates ipse diabolus sua auctoritate faciat, sicut Priscillianus dixit. Anathema sit.* (Synodus Bracarenensis prima)

² tr. *Book against stupid people's lores on hail and thunder*

³ *Jeremiah* 2, 26 (USCCB 2011)

⁴ Entry *Magia* in (Barbero and Frugoni 2005)

⁵ <https://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/556094>

⁶ lit. *If it rains for Saint Barnabas (11th June) / the white grapes go away; / if it rains morning and evening the black and white [grapes] go away.*

⁷ *King I*, 18, 45 (USCCB 2011)

⁸ lit. *Before Saint Servatius, no summer, after Saint Servatius, no more frost*

⁹ lit. *Pancras, Servatius and Boniface, they give frost and ice alas*

¹⁰ *John*, 20, 11-18. (USCCB 2011)