

SAINTS ALIVE! SEPTEMBER 9: ST. MARIA



Saint Maria de la Cabeza and her husband, Saint Isidore, are the patron saints of farmers and of rural communities. They lived in Madrid, Spain (1070-1130 A.D.). They were simple, poor farm laborers who worked for and on the estate of a wealthy landowner.

They were spiritual, attending daily mass and devoting themselves to offer their day to God.

Being poor, Isidore and Maria had very few earthly possessions yet they constantly shared their table with the poor and the beggars, eating only the scraps left over after the poor were fed.

Maria always kept a pot of stew on the fireplace in their humble dwelling. She knew that her husband Isidore would often bring home anyone who was hungry. The story goes that one day he brought home more hungry people than usual. After she served many of them, Maria told him that there simply was no more stew in the pot. He insisted that she check the pot again, and she was able to spoon out enough stew to feed them all.

The virtues found in the lives of Isidore and Maria – commitment to family, love for the land, service to the poor and a deep spirituality – are qualities that still can be found in rural America.

Rural communities and small towns are the backbone of the social and economic life of America.

Without rural communities America loses touch with nature and all of God's creation.

Without rural communities America becomes populated by larger urban areas of cement and anonymity.

Without rural communities America becomes dependent on industrial agriculture.

St. Maria died around 1180. Her feast day is September 9 but is celebrated with her husband on May 15. Their lives are a model for regular folks who aspire and are striving to find sanctity and holiness through simple, ordinary lives lived with Godly purpose: finding joy and holiness through daily mass, fervent daily prayer and generous charity to those who are in need.

Oregonians living in farming communities are 25% more unemployed than urban residents. We must support agricultural policies that will reinvigorate rural communities through rural development programs.

And we must pray:

"We thank God for our rural lives, formed still by the rhythms of nature and church. With you, help us to rejoice in the relationships with God and each other. Isidore and Maria, pray for us." Amen.



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