

Lives of Saints

St Vincent Ferrer

1350? - 1419
Feastday: 5th April



“The rules of perfection may be reduced to the practice of 3 things: First, the sincere desire of contempt and abjection. Secondly, the most affective devotion to Christ crucified. Thirdly, patience in bearing all things for the love of Christ.”

St Vincent Ferrer

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I was born in 1350. Despite parental opposition, I entered the Dominican Order at 19. My parents were against my decision, but I persisted. I did really well in my studies. I studied in Valencia, Barcelona and Toulouse, and was ordained priest by Cardinal Peter de Luna. Almost immediately after my ordination I was chosen prior of the Dominican monastery in Valencia. This was during the time of the Western schism and Christianity was divided first between two, and then three popes. I was convinced that the election of Pope Urban of Rome was invalid, although St Catherine of Siena supported this Roman pope. I worked hard to persuade Spaniards to follow Pope Clement of Avignon. When Clement died, the same Bishop who had ordained me priest, and whom I had served faithfully, Cardinal de Luna, was elected Pope at Avignon and became Benedict XIII. But the new pope did not resign as all candidates in the conclave had sworn to do. He remained stubborn despite being deserted by the French king and nearly all of the cardinals.

I became disillusioned and very ill, but finally took up the work of simply "going through the world preaching Christ," though I felt that any renewal in the Church depended on healing the schism. I was what many considered an eloquent and fiery preacher. I spent the last 20 years of my life spreading the Good News in Spain, France, Switzerland, the Low Countries and Lombardy, stressing the need of repentance and the fear of coming judgment, so much so that I became known as the "Angel of the Judgment."

In 1408 and in 1415, I tried, unsuccessfully to persuade my former friend to resign. I finally concluded that Benedict was not the true pope. I was very ill, but I mounted the pulpit before an assembly over which Benedict himself was presiding and thundered my denunciation of the man who had ordained me priest. I then had to flee for my life, since I was abandoned by those who had formerly supported me. This schism was finally settled in the Council of Constance.