

St. Peter Canisius

December 21



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1521–1597 • Netherlands

During the life of Peter Canisius, Germany was facing a great crisis of faith. The new Protestant religion was sweeping through the land, and many people were leaving the Catholic Church.

Peter Canisius had left behind the promise of a brilliant career to join the Jesuit order, where he was taught by the holy founder St. Ignatius of Loyola himself. Peter knew that he must do all he could to preach to the German people that the Catholic Church was the true Church that Jesus had founded when He was on earth. And so Peter preached to the rich and the poor, the old and the young—especially to children. He even wrote three catechisms so that all could read and learn about the Catholic Faith.

Not only did Peter Canisius preach with words, he also preached with actions. He took special care of the sick, and when a terrible plague struck Vienna, where he was teaching, he tended to the sick and won the people's hearts. When he preached with words, he preached with great love. Since many Protestants had been born into their new religion, he understood that they did not know any other faith. Because of this, he was kind and gentle when he spoke to those of the Protestant faith, though he was never afraid to speak the truth.

Peter Canisius was not even afraid to preach to the Holy Roman emperor!

The emperor's son had appointed a Protestant minister to a high position at court. Peter went to the emperor and his son, and he told them that having the Protestant minister at court would confuse the faithful about the truth of the Catholic Faith. The emperor greatly respected Peter Canisius, and so he dismissed the minister. But from that day on, his son, who would become the future emperor, held a grudge against Peter Canisius. But Peter did not mind. He knew that whatever a future emperor thought of him was not as important as what God thought of him.

Peter Canisius understood that education in the true Faith was so important if Catholics were going to share the true Faith with their Protestant brothers and sisters. So he founded many colleges throughout Germany and Austria to teach the Faith. He also founded many seminaries to train priests. Throughout his life, he wrote and preached in defense of the Catholic Faith, until he died a holy death. Because of all of Peter Canisius's hard work, the Catholic Faith returned to Germany, and he is called one of the Apostles of Germany. St. Peter Canisius, please help me never be afraid to speak the truth with gentleness and love!