



**St. Robert
Bellarmine**
September 17

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1542–1621 • Italy

Robert Bellarmine belonged to a noble but poor family. His father knew that Robert was intelligent, and he wanted his son to go to university and gain an important position to bring wealth back to the family. But Robert was not interested in money, because God had called him to something more important. God had called him to be a priest!

Robert Bellarmine lived during the Reformation, the time when many people were leaving the Catholic Church to become Protestants and make their own churches. After Robert Bellarmine became a priest, he wrote many important books explaining how the Catholic Church is Jesus' true Church. He suffered from terrible headaches and weakness. His health was so poor that, many times, his friends thought he was going to die! But he never let his headaches stop him from his important work of defending the Catholic Faith.

Robert Bellarmine's writings were so wise, and his preaching touched so many hearts, that the pope made him a cardinal, which is an important office in the Church, second only to the pope. Being a cardinal came with riches, and Cardinal Bellarmine also made money from selling his books. But instead of spending his wealth on himself, he gave all of his money to the poor.

Once, a thief stole a valuable stone from a cathedral and tried to sell it at a low price. He was caught and brought before Robert Bellarmine, who learned that the thief was a poor man. After telling the thief about the wickedness of stealing (from a church too!), Robert Bellarmine gave the sorrowful thief ten times the amount he had tried to sell the stone for. He also sent the thief money every month to make sure he was taken care of. Another time, Robert Bellarmine gave away all of the tapestries, curtains, and covers in his room to be turned into clothes for the poor. He said, "The walls won't feel cold, but the poor will!"

When Robert Bellarmine was in his early sixties, the pope appointed him to be the head of the great Vatican Library. There, Robert Bellarmine continued writing about and defending the truth of the Catholic Faith. When he was ill and close to death, he was often heard saying, "Dear Lord, I would gladly go home." Soon, the Lord granted his wish for a holy death.

St. Robert Bellarmine, help me remain faithful to Jesus' true Church!