

St. John of Capistrano (O.F.M.) [1386 – October 23, 1456]

(Feast Day: October 23)

St. John was born at Capistrano in Italy. His father who was a German knight, died when John was still young. John studied law at the University of Perugia and then became a lawyer and governor of the city of Perugia.

When war broke out between Perugia and Malatesta, John tried hard to make peace but failed. Enemies of the city threw John into prison and he started to think about the real meaning of life.

John's enemies were not in a hurry to set him free. He realized that the salvation of his soul was more important than anything else.

So, when he was miraculously set free, at the age of 30, John joined a Franciscan monastery. For John, life as a poor friar was a big change. He had to sacrifice his freedom for the love of Jesus and he tried with all his heart to do this.

After he became a priest, John was sent out to preach. He and St. Bernardine of Siena, spread devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus, everywhere. John traveled all over Europe preaching for forty years and those who heard him were moved to love and serve Jesus better.



When St. John was 70 years old, the Turks decided to conquer Europe and to wipe out the Church of Jesus.

Pope Callistus II sent St. John to all the Christian kings of Europe to beg them to unite and fight the mighty Turkish army. The kings obeyed this poor, barefoot friar.

He then marched off at the head of 70,000 Christian soldiers leading them and encouraged the men to keep fighting.

He stirred up their love of God and their courage with his fiery words. But even though a big army of Christians came to fight Mohammed II and his Turks, it looked as though they would lose. The enemy army was much bigger.

Then the saint himself ran to the front lines. Holding his crucifix up high, this thin, small old man kept crying, "Victory, Jesus, victory!" And the Christian soldiers felt full of courage. They fought until the enemy ran away in fear and they won the battle of Belgrade.

St. John Capistrano died a short time later, on October 23, 1456.