

About Saint John of Avila (1500 – 1569)

Saint John (of Avila) was born in Almodóvar del Campo, in the Spanish province of Ciudad Real, around the year 1500. As a priest he travelled throughout Andalusia, the southernmost region of Spain, drawing crowds by his preaching. His enemies, jealous and disturbed by his success, challenged by his teaching and denounced him as a heretic. Saint John of Avila didn't seek revenge on his enemies, nor did he try to avoid trial or imprisonment. Instead, he used his time for good and continued to preach the Catholic faith with even greater conviction and fervour.

He played an important role in the Council of Trent. His voice was heard through the treatises he wrote for the Council, since he wasn't well enough to attend. He wrote a further treatise to guide the Bishop of Córdoba in the implementation of the Council's reforms.

He spent his last years in the city of Montilla, a city in Andalusia, where he died in on 10 May 1569.

Saint John of Avila (Priest and Doctor) 10 May



What can we learn from The life of Saint John of Avila?

As we have been researching the lives of the saints and preparing these reflections on them, we have found that a common problem for these saints was that they experienced jealousy and misunderstanding and suffered a great deal mentally and/or physically as a result of the unkindness shown towards them. They truly were disciples of Christ. For in his Passion he did not seek revenge. Rather, he prayed for His enemies – “Father, forgive them they know not what they do.” Saint John of Avila is no exception. He, like many other saints just copped it on the chin and went about preaching the Gospel. He didn't waste any time in planning evil acts.

We too, must be the same. We must use our time here on earth for good, to be kind and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus.

It is interesting to note, that in Saint John of Avila's case, like many others, no one knows nor cares about the names of those who set out to destroy him. He has had the final word in being made a saint. Let's aim to be the same, so that in 500 years from now, we will be numbered among the saints!

The Collect

Almighty and eternal God,
who gave your holy Church blessed John of Avila as Doctor,
grant that what he taught when moved by the divine Spirit
may always stay firm in our hearts;
and, as by your gift we embrace him as our patron,
may we also have him as our defender to entreat your mercy.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading Matthew 5:13-19

Your light must shine in the sight of men

Jesus said to his disciples:

'You are the salt of the earth.

But if salt becomes tasteless, what can make it salty again?

It is good for nothing,

and can only be thrown out to be trampled underfoot by men.

'You are the light of the world.

A city built on a hill-top cannot be hidden.

No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub;

they put it on the lamp-stand where it shines for everyone in the house.

In the same way your light must shine in the sight of men,

so that, seeing your good works,

they may give the praise to your Father in heaven.

'Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets.

I have come not to abolish but to complete them.

I tell you solemnly, till heaven and earth disappear,

not one dot, not one little stroke,

shall disappear from the Law until its purpose is achieved.

Therefore, the man who infringes even one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be considered the least in the kingdom of heaven; but the man who keeps them and teaches them will be considered great in the kingdom of heaven.'

Antiphon

He who ponders the law of the Lord day and night
will yield his fruit in due season, alleluia.

Hymn for the Memorial of Saint John of Avila

O Saint John of Avila, you travelled throughout your land,
preaching the Lord's Holy word with great success and crowds grand.
By your preaching you would make enemies who were jealous,
causing you great suffering, but making you more zealous.

In the Council of your time you played an important part.
Guiding the Church in your day, helping it make a fresh start:
reshaping the Catholic Church, reforming its public prayer,
renewing the liturgy in which all God's people share.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ must be preached in every age
to a world that does not care and with Christ will not engage.
We must find new ways to tell the world about the Lord's Word,
so that all repent of sin, and by love all hearts be stirred.

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