

Saint John Francis Regis

1597-1640

Saint John Francis Regis

throughout his lifetime nurtured a devotion to Angels, offering his good works especially to his Guardian Angel who would offer them to God.

He was accustomed to invoke the Guardian Angel of any church he would pass both for the parish itself and its parishioners. When passing a cemetery he would pray to the dead asking their help as he blessed the site.

Walking along one day, he felt an invisible hand holding him back from proceeding any further. At that moment, some one was calling from an open window of a nearby house, seeking help for a dying person. He rushed into the house and was in time to administer the last rites and to hear the dying man's confession. It was his Guardian Angel

missions to the poor of the countryside and had occasion to observe first hand their poverty, their ignorance of religion and their ever present suffering. He centered his ministry mainly in the districts of Vivrais and Velay. His religious instructions were greatly renowned and acknowledged at LePuy. He always traveled on foot, preaching and teaching through nearly half of France, especially in mountainous regions. He spent entire days in the confessional, "the holy tribunal of penance", so much so that he often forgot to eat. His humble demeanor was the reason many heretics converted; many



who held him back thus enabling him to reconcile the dying man to God.

Saint John Francis Regis was born at Fontcouverte in the Diocese of Narbonne, France, on January 31, 1597 in a Catholic family. As a young man he was attracted to the spiritual things of God and to the pursuit of study. As a result, he entered the Jesuit College of Beziers in 1616. Convinced that God was calling him to join the Society of Jesus, he moved to Toulouse to begin his novitiate. He was later sent to Cahors where he professed his simple vows. He was then sent to Dijon as a teacher of grammar. After three years he was sent to Tournon to further his studies in philosophy and then return to Toulouse for theology. After ordination in 1630 he dedicated himself to preaching missions. When an epidemic of the plague broke out, he dedicated himself to help the victims who were dying. When the epidemic had passed, he began to preach

disreputable persons forsaked their dishonorable lifestyle to assume a new and better manner of living.

Although the Lord revealed to him that his final days on earth were approaching, he nevertheless decided to go on mission despite his weakened and fragile health. Unfortunately, he succumbed to a fever and he took refuge in a hut for the night. On December 24, 1640, he finally reached his destination, Lalouveche, in the south of France. Despite his serious health, he still wished to preach, but his health finally confined him to his bed. Assisted by two of his priest colleagues, he received the sacraments and he died on December 31, 1640, seeing a vision of the man who "is opening the doors of Paradise." Pope Clement XI beatified him on May 8, 1716 and Pope Clement XII canonized him on April 5, 1737.