

Saint Vincent Ferrer

1350 - 1419

PURGATORY

Saint Vincent Ferrer was born in Valencia, Spain on January 23, 1350. On February 3, 1367 he entered among the Dominicans of the city and began to study logic and philosophy. He studied also the Bible and Hebrew. He commented on the *Summa Teologica* of Saint Thomas Aquinas and completed his advanced studies first in Lleida and then at Toulouse. In 1384 he was named prior of the friary of Valencia and a few years later began to preach. On November 22, 1399 Vincent had a vision in which he was asked to announce the Gospel to all of humanity. His preaching stirred consciences and very numerous were the conversions that he fostered. Starting from the Scriptures and giving examples from the lives of the Saints he succeeded in motivating the crowds to recognize in Christ the only hope for humanity. He traveled through Spain, France, and northern Italy in order to bring to all the good news of the Kingdom of God and to put an end to the dissent and divisions that plagued the Church. He was involved above all in the settlement of the Western Schism, at first by his attempt at mediation between Gregory XII and Benedict XIII, and then he tried to convince Benedict to renounce the papacy and due to his refusal, Vincent tried to take away from him the obedience of Spain. The opportunity came to him in 1412 when, after Martin I of Aragon died

without heirs, Vincent was among the judges in charge of the establishment of the succession to the throne (Compromise of Caspe). The throne was assigned to the candidate supported by Vincent, Ferdinand I of Aragon (the "Just"), who at the Council of Constance fought to end the schism and recognized as legitimate the election of Martin V Colonna, that put to rest every demand of Benedict XIII.

Vincent tried to convert the Cathars and Waldensians and to cease the Hundred Years War. Some faithful, called Flagellants, began to follow him. Vincent gave them some rules of life from which arose some confraternities. He died on April 5, 1419 in Vannes, Brittany, while he was in that region preaching. Callixtus III canonized him in 1458.

Vincent imposed upon himself penances and prayed diligently for the conversion of sinners, but also for the liberation of the Souls of Purgatory. The Saint had a sister named Francesca, who in life had been a bit too taken by worldly things. Nevertheless she was saved thanks to her repentance and the confession she made at the moment of death. A few days later she appeared to her brother as he was celebrating Mass, completely surrounded by flames and immersed in terrible sufferings. She told



him that she had been condemned to those punishments until the Day of Judgment, but that she could be liberated completely from them if he would celebrate the thirty Masses of Saint Gregory in supplication for her soul. Saint Vincent then did what was requested of him and began the celebration of the Gregorian Masses. On the last day his sister appeared to him surrounded by Angels as she was ascending to Heaven.

