

St. Francis of Paola



Francis was born at Paola, Italy and was educated at the Franciscan friary of San Marco there, and when fifteen became a hermit near Paola. In 1436, he and two companions began a community that is considered the foundation of the Minim Friars. He built a monastery where he had led his eremitical life some fifteen years later and set a Rule for his followers emphasizing penance, charity, and humility, and added to the three monastic vows, one of fasting and abstinence from meat; he also wrote a rule for tertiaries and nuns. He was credited with many miracles and had the gifts of prophesy and insight into men's hearts. The Order was approved by Pope Sixtus IV in 1474 with the name Hermits of St. Francis of Assisi (changed to Minim Friars in 1492). Francis established foundations in southern Italy and Sicily, and his fame was such that at the request of dying King Louis XI of France, Pope Sixtus II ordered him to France, as the King felt he could be cured by Francis. He was not, but was so comforted that Louis' son Charles VIII, became Francis' friend and endowed several monasteries for the Minims. Francis spent the rest of his life at the monastery of Plessis, France, which Charles built for him. Francis died there on April 2nd and was canonized in 1519. His feast day is April 2.