

St. Celestine



When the father of this Italian saint died, his good mother brought up her twelve children well, even though they were very poor. "Oh, if I could only have the joy of seeing one of you become a saint!" she use to say. Once when she asked as usual, "which one of you is going to become a saint?" little Peter (who was to become Pope Celestine) answered with all his heart, "Me, mama! I'll become a saint!" And he did.

When he was twenty, Peter became a hermit and spent his days praying and reading the Holy Bible. If he was not praying or reading, he would copy books or do some hard work so that the devil would not find him doing nothing, and tempt him. Because other hermits kept coming to him and begging him to guide them, he started a new Order.

Peter was an old monk, eighty-four years of age when he was made Pope. It came about in a very unusual way. For two years, there had been no Pope, because the Cardinals could not decide whom to choose. St. Peter sent them a message to decide quickly, for God was not pleased at the long delay. Then and there, they chose the holy old hermit himself! Poor Peter wept when he heard the news, but he sorrowfully accepted and took the name Celestine V.

He was Pope only about five months. Because he was so humble and simple, everyone took advantage of him. He could not say "no" to anyone, and soon matters were in great confusion. At last, the Saint decided that he had better give up his position as Pope. He did so and then threw himself at the feet of the Cardinals for not having been capable of governing the Church. What an impression his humility made on all of them!

St. Celestine hoped to live in one of his monasteries in peace. But the new Pope thought it would be safer to keep him where wicked people could not take advantage of him. The saint was put in a cell and died there. Yet he was cheerful and close to God. "You wanted a cell, Peter," he would repeat to himself, "and a cell you have." His feast day is May 19th.