

April 2

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Francis of Paola (1416-1507) monk

Today the Catholic Church commemorates Francis of Paola, a hermit and founder of the Order of Minims. Francis was born in the town of Paola in Calabria, Italy. His family was strongly influenced by Franciscan spirituality, and as a child Francis spent a year at the convent of San Marco Argentano. He continued his vocational search by making pilgrimages to Assisi, Montecassino, and Rome, and by visiting hermitages throughout central Italy. Impressed by the poor, evangelical lifestyle of the hermits, he decided at a very young age to live a life of extreme solitude and prayer, and found a quiet retreat in the Calabrian countryside. He soon became a well-known spiritual father, and had to make room for many companions who asked to share his way of life. For them he founded hermitages and wrote several rules, and before his death he obtained official recognition for them from Church authorities.

Faithful to his eremitic vocation, but convinced of the primacy of love in every form of Christian life, Francis spent his entire life struggling to reconcile his desire for solitude with the commandment to love the brothers and sisters who never stopped seeking his company.

His fame became so great that he was ordered by the Pope to visit the dying king of France, Louis XI. He spent the last years of his life at the French court, where he conserved intact his total poverty and evangelical simplicity. A simple lay Christian, barefoot and rigorously ascetic, Francis did not hide the Gospel's demands from the powerful, and he worked to defend the poor and those who were persecuted for the sake of righteousness.

Francis died on April 2, 1507 in Tours, at the age of ninety-one.

TRACCE DI LETTURA

*O good Jesus,
merciful shepherd,
protect the righteous,
sanctify sinners,
have mercy on all believers,
the living and the dead,
and be gracious to a sinner like me.*

Last words of Francis of Paola

BIBLICAL READINGS

Sir 3:17-24; Mt 11:25-30

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

WESTERN CATHOLICS:

Francis of Paola, hermit (Roman and Ambrosian calendars)

COPTS AND ETHIOPISANS (24 baramhat/maggabit):

Macarius I (d. 953), 59th patriarch of Alexandria (Coptic Orthodox Church)

LUTHERANS:

Friedrich von Bodelschwingh (d. 1910), benefactor in Westfalia

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATHOLICS:

Titus the Taumaturge (9th cent.), igumen