

St. Peter Nolasco



1189-1256

Feast Day:
January 28

Little is known of St. Peter Nolasco's life. He was probably from Languedoc, France and participated in the crusade against the Albigensian heresy, which taught that Jesus was only a spirit and did not have a physical body because the material world was evil.

After the defeat of the heresy, Nolasco was appointed the private tutor of King James I of Aragon and lived in Barcelona, Spain. He became friends with Raymond of Penafort and together they founded the Order of Mercedarians.

At this time in history, Muslim forces known as Moors occupied parts of southern France, Spain, Sicily, and North Africa. Christians who lived near the borders of Muslim territories were in constant danger of raid by the Moor armies. Many were taken prisoner to be ransomed or sold as slaves. Nolasco and Raymond of Penafort took Christ's command to visit the imprisoned to heart. They founded the Mercedarian religious order, under the patronage of the Blessed Mother, for its members to be offered as ransom for Christian captives.

To this day, the members of the order are devoted to offering their lives for the lives of other Christians. Peter himself was offered as ransom on multiple occasions. It is believed that on one trip to Moorish prisons in southern Spain, he won the release of more than four hundred Christians who were held prisoner there.

Peter Nolasco was canonized by Pope Urban VIII in 1628.

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