

Although acclaimed a saint by his contemporaries, Vincent was not formally beatified until 1729. In 1737 he was canonized by Clement XII and in 1885 he was named patron of all works of charity of which he is in any way the inspiration. Vincent de Paul was neither a profound nor an original thinker; yet few have accomplished as much. His success was a result of natural talents and of a tremendous amount of work, but above all of a profound spiritual life. In this he was deeply influenced by Bérulle and Francis de Sales, but he modified their ideas according to his own insights. The piety that he practiced and taught was simple, nonmystical, Christocentric and oriented toward action.

Feast: July 19.

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VINCENT FERRER, ST.

Dominican apostolic preacher called the ‘‘Angel of the Judgment’’; b. Valencia, Spain, Jan. 23, 1350; d. Vannes, Brittany, France, April 5, 1419. He was the fourth child of William Ferrer and Constance Miguel, who early decided on a Church career for him. He was a brilliant dialectician at the age of 15 and, despite parental opposition, he entered the Order of Preachers in his native city, making profession on Feb. 6, 1368. He studied at Tarragona for two years and then taught logic at Lerida. It was during these years that he wrote the treatises *De suppositionibus dialecticis* and *De natura universalis*. In 1373 he began his theological studies at the Biblical Studium of the order at Barcelona, where for a time he taught the natural sciences. In 1379 he completed his formal studies at Toulouse. As he described his early life, ‘‘study followed prayer, and prayer study.’’ He was ordained at Barcelona in 1379 by Cardinal Pedro de Luna.

In Vincent growth in holiness paralleled intellectual development. From his earliest years he had cultivated a fervent devotion to Our Lord and His blessed Mother. He embraced and practiced the austerities of his order with all the ardor of his passionate nature. Marvels accompanied his prayers even during his formative years. Such indeed was his prominence that almost immediately after his ordination he was chosen prior of the convent in his native Valencia. It was probably while governing his brethren that he wrote his brief but admirable treatise *De vita spirituali*. He resigned as prior, however, in 1384 to teach theology in the cathedral school at Valencia. In 1389 he was made master of theology.

The Schism. But it was not as professor he was to do his most distinguished work. The evils that afflicted society after the Black Death (1347–50) were aggravated and intensified by the Western Schism. All Christendom was divided in its allegiance. Vincent had early espoused the cause of Clement VII, the Avignonese claimant to the throne of St. Peter, convinced that the election of the Roman pontiff, Urban VI, had been invalidated by fear. In support of Clement, Vincent had addressed his impassioned *De moderno Ecclesiae schismate* to Pedro IV, king of Aragon. About the same time St. CATHERINE OF SIENA was laboring in behalf of Urban.

In the service of his compatriot Cardinal de Luna (1390–94), Vincent made use of all his eloquence and learning to persuade the clergy, kings, princes, and people of nearly the whole of the Iberian peninsula to give their allegiance to Clement. So far as his official duties permitted, he also devoted himself to preaching, administering the Sacraments, settling disputes, and protecting and converting the Jews. He was then convinced that the effective revival of Christian life and morals depended

primarily upon the healing of the Schism. Yet it was by his preaching that he rose to the height of his power and influence.

Upon the death of Clement in 1394, Vincent was called to Avignon by his learned and admired friend Cardinal de Luna, who had been elected to succeed the Avignonese pope and who took the name of Benedict XIII. At the papal court, as apostolic penitentiary and Master of the Sacred Palace, Vincent was indefatigable in his efforts to bring an end to the Schism; but he declined all honors, even the cardinalate. He had expected that Benedict would, in fulfillment of the oath taken by all the cardinals in the conclave that elected him, arrange with the pope for a double resignation, thus opening the way for the election of an undisputed successor. But Benedict remained obdurate, even after he had been deserted by the French king and nearly all his cardinals.

Apostolic Preaching. Vincent was disillusioned; he became gravely ill. In a vision, he was commissioned by the Lord, who was accompanied by St. Dominic and St. Francis, “to go through the world preaching Christ.” After a year had passed Benedict permitted him to go. In November 1399, therefore, he set forth from Avignon and spent 20 years in apostolic preaching. As the spirit moved him or as he was requested, he visited and revisited places throughout Spain, southern France, Lombardy, Switzerland, northern France, and the Low Countries. With fiery eloquence he preached the need of repentance and the coming of the Judgment. He seldom remained in any place for more than a day, and then only when the people had been long neglected or when heresy or paganism was rife. Miracles in the order of nature and of grace accompanied his steps. He had with him fellow priests to assist in instructing the ignorant and in reconciling sinners. Flagellants joined his suite—both men and women whom he had inspired to make public atonement. These he organized into what was called “The Company of Master Vincent” to assist in the apostolate. By his personal influence and constant direction he was able to prevent enthusiasm from degenerating into fanaticism, for no reproach was ever leveled against his select group.

Repudiation of Benedict XIII. Despite his incessant journeyings and his unique apostolate, Vincent never forgot the sad plight of the Church in schism, though he had now come to look upon the Schism as a symptom rather than a cause of the frightful evils against which he preached. Twice (in 1408 and again in 1415) he sought to persuade Benedict that he should resign in the interest of unity. But in vain. In his last effort he became convinced that the obstinate Benedict was not the true pope. Once again, close to death, he suddenly recovered his strength, mounted the pulpit, and, in dramatic fashion be-

fore an enormous assembly over which Benedict was presiding, thundered his denunciation. Benedict fled for his life, abandoned by those who had previously supported him. He took refuge on the fortified isle of Peniscola where, tragically, he lived out what was left of his life.

Vincent had no part in the Council of Constance, which brought an end to the Schism. He resumed his preaching with renewed vigor. His relics are preserved at Vannes in Brittany where he died. He was canonized by Calixtus III, June 3, 1455; however, the formal Bull was issued by Pius II, 1458.

Feast: April 5.

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[J. B. WALKER]

VINCENT MADELGARIUS, ST.

Married man, abbot of Soignies (Hainaut, Belgium); d. c. 687. Madelgarius or Mauger married WALDETRUD, also called Waudru or Valtrude, daughter of a count of Hainaut; they had four children who are all regarded as saints, but to lead a more perfect life, separated and both entered religious life. While Waudru (c. 650) was establishing at Mons a convent, which later bore her name and which was to continue in existence until 1792 as a noble chapter of canonesses, Madelgarius, tonsured by St. Aubert, Bishop of Cambrai, founded a monastery at Hautmont and there became a monk about 653. Soon Madelgarius, longing for still greater solitude, changed his name to Vincent and retired to his own estate of Soignies, there building a monastery of which he became abbot. Shortly before his death, he entrusted the monastery to his son (St.) Landry, later said to have become bishop of Meaux. The biography of Vincent Madelgarius seems suspect to more than one historian: the oldest *Vita* of this saint goes back no further than the 11th century, and the first mention of the Abbey of Soignies dates only from 870. Nevertheless the saint's relics are venerated in the collegiate church of Soignies dedicated to him (choir dating from about 1000; nave, 12th century; remodeled 15th to 17th century). Every Pentecost Monday a great