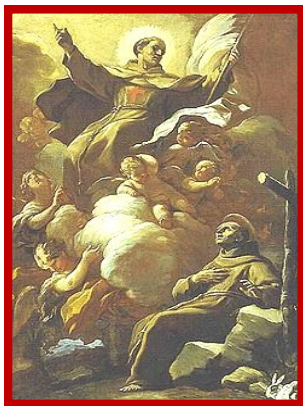


When Mohammed II was threatening Vienna and Rome, St. John Capistran, at the bidding of Pope Callixtus III, enrolled for a crusade 70,000 Christians. In a vision he was assured of victory in the Name of Jesus and by the Cross he bore. Marching at the head of the crusaders, he entered Belgrade at the head of the army. This General of the Friars Minor won a remarkable victory, when 40,000 of the enemies of the Christians perished. Western Europe was saved, for the time being, but infection bred by thousands of corpses which laid unburied around the city cost the lives of many people, including several months later St. John himself.

He died peacefully at Villach on October 23, 1456, and was canonized in 1690 or 1724 (different references have different dates as to his canonization). His feast day was originally the day of his death, 23 October; it was moved to 28 March in 1890, when his feast was made general for the entire Roman Catholic Church. He is regarded as a martyr, for enemies of the faith twice succeeded in giving him poison, which was ineffectual; he died only from the immense fatigue he had suffered in the defense of the city of Belgrade. "An infinity of miracles" followed his death. \*(excerpted from: [www.magnificat.ca](http://www.magnificat.ca) : [//wiki.franciscanweb.com](http://wiki.franciscanweb.com) : and [www.katolikus.hu](http://www.katolikus.hu))



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## ***Saint John of Capistrano***

***Feast Day: March 28***



***Lord,  
You raised up St. John to console your people in their distress.  
Grant that we may be always safe  
under Your protection and  
preserve Your Church in unending peace.  
Amen.***

## St. John of Capistrano

\*Saint John of Capistrano was born on June 24, 1386 and died on October 23, 1456. He was an Italian friar, theologian and inquisitor, who was born in the village of Capistrano, near Naples, in the diocese of Sulmona in the Abruzzi. His Father had come to Italy with the Angevin court of Louis I of Anjou, King of Naples. He lived at first a wholly secular life, studied law at the University of Perugia under the legal scholar Pietro de Ubaldis, married, and became a successful magistrate. In 1412 Ladislas of Naples appointed him governor of Perugia, a tumultuous and resentful papal fief held by Ladislas as the Pope's champion, in order to effectively establish public order. When war broke out between Perugia and Sigismondo Malatesta in 1416, John was sent as ambassador to broker a peace, but Malatesta threw him in prison.

During the captivity, his young wife died and Ladislas his protector abandoned him. He resolved in the future to serve only the interests of God. Studying with St. Bernadino of Siena and St. Giacomo Della Marca, he entered the Franciscan order at Perugia on October 4, 1416. He was 30 years old when he entered the order, and his novice-master, seeing a man of such strength of will, and who had been accustomed to getting his own way, decided that a very severe training was necessary to test the genuineness of his vocation. He had not yet even made his first communion. He was subjected to humiliating trials, he persevered, and later in life often expressed his gratitude to the relentless instructor who had made it clear to him that self-conquest was the only sure road to perfection. In 1420, John was raised to the priesthood. Unlike most Italian preachers of repentance in the 15th century, John was effective in the north, in Germany, Bohemia, Austria, Hungary and Poland. The

largest churches could not hold the crowds, so he preached in the piazzas; at Brescia he preached to a crowd of 126,000. When he was not preaching, he was writing tracts against heresy of every kind. This facet of John's life is covered in great detail by his early biographers, Nicholas of Fara, Christopher of Varese and Girolamo of Udine. While he was evangelizing, he was actively engaged in assisting Bernadino in the reforms of the Franciscan order, largely in the interests of a more rigorous hierarchic discipline.

Like Saint Bernadino of Siena he greatly proselytized devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus, and together with that saint, was accused of heresy on this account. In 1429 John, together with other observant friars, was called to Rome on the charge of heresy, and he was chosen by his companions to defend them; the friars were acquitted by the commission of Cardinals.

After his acquittal John began to preach all over Italy, and brought about the reform of lives. Five popes in succession gave commissions to this remarkable Franciscan to represent them in important affairs, and he traveled to France, Austria, Poland and Germany. Everywhere, his negotiations were crowned with success. But none of the popes succeeded in raising him to the episcopal dignity; their efforts met with an absolute resistance to his humility.

It was the capture of Constantinople by the Turks which brought John's spiritual campaign to an end. St. John was called upon to rally the defenders of the West and to preach a crusade against the infidels. His extraordinary qualities proved to be of great assistance to the Holy See.