

I was raised to this position, I, Celestine V, Pope, do hereby freely and voluntarily renounce the Sovereign Pontificate and abandon the dignity and position to which I was raised." He was the last non-conclave Pope to be elected in the history of the Roman Catholic Church.

His notable acts as pope include (in what seems to be the only instance of such an act in the history of the Church) empowering one Francis of Apt, a Franciscan friar, to confer the clerical tonsure and minor orders on Lodovico (who would later become Bishop of Toulouse), the son of the King of Sicily. However, this decree seems not to have been carried out. He issued two other decrees--one confirming that of Pope Gregory X (1271-76), which orders the shutting of the cardinals in conclave; the second declaring the right of any Pope to abdicate the Papacy--a right that he himself exercised.

Celestine V was not allowed to remain in solitude, however. His successor, Pope Boniface VIII (1294-1303), sent for him, and finally, despite the former Pope's desperate attempts to escape, captured him and imprisoned him in the castle of Fumone near Ferentino in Campagna. Saint Peter built himself a boarded cell and continued his hermit's life; and when, lest his simplicity might be taken advantage of to distract the peace of the Church, he was put under guard. He said, "I desired nothing but a cell, and a cell they have given me." There he enjoyed his former loving intimacy with the saints and angels, and sang the Divine praises almost continually.

On Whit-Sunday, he told his guards that he would die within the week, and immediately fell ill. He received the last sacraments; and on the following Saturday (May 19, 1296), as he finished the concluding verse of Lauds, "Let every spirit bless the lord!" he closed his eyes to this world and opened them to the vision of God.

This was a saint remarkable for running from glory during his life. He is called the Phoenix of the Church, and was truly unique in his role: a solitary religious suddenly placed on the Throne of Saint Peter who spontaneously abdicated from that glorious situation even though none disputed his position.

*[excerpted from: www.sacred-texts.com; www.traditionsinaction.org; [//en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org)]

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Saint Peter Celestine

Feast Day: May 19



RELECTION:

"Whose," says the *Imitation of Christ*,
"withdraweth himself from acquaintances and friends,
to him will God draw near with His holy angels."

Saint Peter Celestine

*Pope Saint Celestine V, born Pietro Angelerio, also known as Pietro da Morrone, according to a tradition, was born in the village of Sant'Angelo Limosano, in Molise, the son of Angelo Angelerio and Maria Leone. After his father's death he started to work in the fields. His mother Maria was a key figure in Pietro's spiritual development. She imagined a different future for her deeply beloved son than just becoming a farmer or a shepherd.

From the time he was a child, he showed great intelligence, and love for his fellow beings. As a child, Peter had visions of our blessed Lady, and of the angels and saints. They encouraged him in his prayer, and chided him when he fell into any fault. His mother, though only a poor widow, put him to school, feeling sure that he would one day be a Saint. He became a Benedictine monk at Faifoli in the diocese of Benevento when he was seventeen. He showed an extraordinary disposition toward asceticism and solitude, and in 1239 retired to a solitary cavern on the mountain of Morrone, whence his name. Five years later he left this retreat, and with two companions, departed to a similar cave on the Mountain of Maiella in the Abruzzi region of southern Italy, where he lived a life as strictly as possible to the example of Saint John the Baptist.

For three years, he was assaulted by the evil spirits and beset with temptations of the flesh, but consoled by angel's visits. While living in this manner he founded, in 1244, the order subsequently called after him, the Celestines. Angels assisted in the church which Peter built; unseen bells rang peals of surpassing sweetness, and heavenly music filled the sanctuary when he offered the holy Sacrifice.

In 1274, Peter went to Rome to defend his foundation that had been threatened. With the help of a miracle, he received the approbation of Pope Gregory X for his religious Order. As he prepared to say Mass before the Pontiff, he had the desire to have his dignified, but poor and simple vestments that he had left behind. Immediately Angels appeared and delivered them into his hands. After receiving the approbation, he returned to his solitude.

Upon the death of Nicholas IV, the see of Rome remained vacant for two years and three months. Peter, who was still living in his mountain retreat of Morrone, and was well known to the cardinals as a Benedictine hermit, sent a letter to them warning the cardinals who had assembled at Perugia, that divine vengeance would fall upon them if they did not act quickly to elect a Pope. Latino Malabranca, the aged and ill dean of the College of cardinals cried out when hearing this, "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, I elect brother Pietro di Morrone." The cardinals promptly ratified Malabranca's desperate decision.

Alarmed at hearing the news, Peter took to flight in the company of one of his monks, but was intercepted. He returned to Mount Morrone, where the Kings of Hungary and Naples came to implore him to accept the Papacy for the good of the Church. Peter agreed after hearing a Divine Voice convinced him "I am not worthy of offering the Holy Sacrifice" respond: "And who is worthy of such a thing? Celebrate it, despite your unworthiness, but offer it in fear." This hermit who had hesitated to say the Holy Mass was elevated to the Supreme Priesthood on August 29, 1294. He took the name of Celestine, to remind himself of the heaven he was leaving and for which he sighed.

In the Pontifical See, Peter conformed himself to the will of God, but could not stop thinking that this was not his vocation. He continued his former austerities and lived in solitude among the crowds that surrounded him. Finally, he decided to abdicate. When his decision became public, many vigorously opposed the motion, but no solicitations or motives could change his resolution. Therefore, on December 13, 1294 clothed in full pontifical vesture, he read before the Cardinals this act of his great renunciation: "Inspired by many legitimate reasons, desiring a more humble state and a more perfect life, fearing to compromise my conscience and seeing my weakness and incapacity, considering the malice of men and yearning for the rest and spiritual consolation I enjoyed before