

Saint John of Kety

SAINT OF THE DAY

23_12_2023



Karol Wojtyła was very devoted to Saint John of Kety (1390-1473), also known as John Cantius, a Polish priest, theologian and university teacher, who always gave half of his academic salary to the poor. He had studied in the famous Krakow academy – which was later renamed *Jagellonian University* in honour of its re-founders, the Lithuanian king Ladislaus II of Poland (forefather of the Jagiellonian dynasty which reigned in Lithuania and Poland until 1572 and briefly also in Bohemia and Hungary), who converted to Catholicism, and his wife Edvige, canonised by John Paul II. After graduating in

philosophy, John became a priest and moved to Miechów, where he had been appointed rector of a school run by an Augustinian order.

At 39 years old, John returned to Krakow, where a chair of philosophy had become vacant. He then devoted himself to the care of souls in the parish of Olkusz, where he was sent as a result of having been made the target of hostility and slander at the university; but a few years later he was called back there and his responsibilities increased as he was appointed director of the theology department. At that time faith in Poland was shaken because of the Taborites, the extreme wing of the heretical movement of the (Bohemian) Hussites: John defended orthodoxy from the university lecture rooms, patiently enduring offences and provocations that sometimes degenerated into physical clashes. "Fight all errors, but do it with humour, patience, kindness and love," said the Saint, who also dedicated much of his free time to spreading the correct doctrine by copying the Holy Scriptures as well as a number of theological treatises.

In Krakow his generosity was well known. He felt a special calling towards needy students, whom he supported both materially and spiritually. He visited poor families in their modest homes, giving them as much money as possible: he fasted in order to put money aside. To those who told him to take care of his health he replied that the ancient desert Fathers had lived long lives with much less food, while nourishing their souls with God. His was a pure, simple faith, made of prayers, penances and pilgrimages. In fact, he walked all the way to Rome four times, to pray near the tomb of Saint Peter, and he also made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. He died an old man, during Mass on Christmas Eve in 1473, already considered a saint.

Patron of: Lithuania, Poland, Jagiellonian University