

Saint Raymond of Penyafort

SAINT OF THE DAY

07_01_2021



Nothing precise is known about the actual date of his birth but contemporary chronicles report that he died at about 100 years old. During his long life, Saint Raymond of Penyafort (c. 1175-1275), a great connoisseur of canon law and third Superior General of the Dominican Order, left a significant mark on the history of the Church. Born into a noble Catalan family, he taught logic and rhetoric in Barcelona in his youth, then moved to Bologna to study canon law. He met Blessed Reginald of Bologna, whose teaching inspired him (who had meanwhile been appointed canon at Barcelona cathedral) to join

the Dominicans, taking the habit at the age of 47. The following year (1223) he encouraged Saint Peter Nolasco to found the Order of Mercedarians, that is, those religious who committed themselves body and soul to redeem the Christians enslaved by Muslims, at the same time Spain was fully engaged in the period known as the Reconquista.

One of his best-known doctrinal works is a guide for confessors, entitled *Summa de casibus poenitentiae*, dealing with major cases of conscience. His fame as a jurist and theologian, as well as a man of prayer, prompted Gregory IX to entrust him with important assignments, including that of collecting and ordering the decretal letters, issued by popes on disciplinary, dogmatic or liturgical matters. Raymond's meticulous work converged into the *Liber Extra*, which the Pope promulgated in 1234: the provisions contained in this collection remained in force for almost seven centuries, until the publication of the Code of Canon Law in 1917.

Following the death of Blessed Jordan of Saxony (1238), the first successor of Saint Dominic, Raymond was elected Master of the Order of Preachers. Being a practical man, he immediately set off on a journey to visit the various Dominican convents, while also drafting new constitutions for the Order, whose leadership he left two years after his election. Raymond was extremely committed to announcing Jesus Christ to Jews and Muslims. To this end, he established a Hebrew school in Murcia and an Arabic school in Tunis. He also asked Saint Thomas Aquinas to write a text that could help the missionaries evangelise non-Christians by countering their objections: this was how Aquinas composed the *Summa contra Gentiles*.

Patron of: jurists, canon lawyers