

Saint of the Month for December 2013

(A monthly series compiled by Tom Quinlan)

Saint John of Kanty, Priest
Monday, December 23

Saint John receives his name from his birthplace, Kanti, near Oswiecim in Poland, where he was born in 1390. (This is spelled Kanti or Kanty in English; you might also see it spelled Cantius in Latin.) The town Kanty is not far from Cracow (or Krakow), Poland.

John's parents were country people of respectable position, and they recognized their son's intelligence and goodness. He eventually attended the University of Cracow, did well, and was ordained a priest. Saint John was appointed to a lectureship at the University, and did well for a while. He led a very ascetic life, and was warned to take care of his health. He responded that the desert fathers were notably long-lived!

Saint John took a sincere interest in the poor, an attitude he maintained until his death.

Later his success as a preacher and teacher raised envy against him, and his rivals contrived to get him removed from the University and assigned as a parish priest in another town.

John tried to carry out his new duties with energy, but was anxious about the responsibilities of his new position. The parishioners did not care for him. Saint John pushed on, and by the time he was called back to Cracow he had won a following- many accompanied him on the road with considerable grief. John is reported to have said "This sadness does not please God. If I have done any good for you in all these years, sing a song of joy."

Back at the University John was appointed a professor of Sacred Scripture, and he held this post until the end of his life. He was a welcome guest at the tables of the nobility, but was also well known to the poor in Cracow. His possessions were at their disposal, and often they "cleared him out."

He was never tired of telling his students to "fight all false opinions, but let your weapons be patience, sweetness, and love. Roughness is bad for your own soul and spoils the best cause." Not a bad approach in this age of rough language and name calling and worse.

He died on Christmas Eve, 1473, at the age of eighty-three, and was canonized in 1767.

The commemoration is given the rank of Optional Memorial. (**Daily Roman Missal, Third Edition** (Scepter Publishers); **Butler's Lives of the Saints, 2nd Edition** (Ave Maria Press); **Magnificat**, December 2013)

Collect from the Mass of Saint John of Kanty:
Grant, we pray, almighty God,
that by the example of the Priest Saint John of Kanty
we may advance in the knowledge of holy things

and, by showing compassion to all,
may gain forgiveness in your sight.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. (**Roman Missal, Third Edition**)

We need to keep going when we have reversals in life, and when others oppose our just actions and life. Both of these are so very hard to do, but Jesus often talked about the need for perseverance. Saint John of Kanty, pray for us in this Advent season especially.