



St. John of God



LIFE AND WORKS

St. John of God, pray for us.

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**Patron Saint of the patients and hospitals (proclaimed by Pope Leo XIII)
and of the nurses (proclaimed by Pope Pius XI).**

Montemor in 1668 by Pier Baldi - to the center the Church built on the house of the Saint



The son of André Cidade and Teresa Duarte was born in 1495, in Montemor-o-Novo, Portugal, in a street called Rua Verde, meaning Green Street. He received the name of João Cidade, but History would know him as St. John of God (São João de Deus). During his life, he created a hospital in the city of Granada in Spain for the ill, the poor and the abandoned patients. He himself died there, on March 8th, 1550.

Birth in Montemor-o-Novo and departure to Spain

As you can see in the image, it's believed that the bells of Montemor-o-Novo village rang when João Cidade was born in 1495. He would be known a couple of years later as John of God, the name given to him by Jesus Christ.

João Cidade was only 8 years old when he left his parents. It was the year of 1503 and the reasons for his departure are unknown. What is



Birth of João Cidade in Montemor

known, however, is that Teresa Duarte, his mother, died only 20 days after his departure and, following these events, his father, André Cidade, entered a convent in Lisbon. He died in 1520.

When he left the small Portuguese village, João Cidade followed a cleric to Oropesa, Spain, and lived there for the next few years. He served the Mayoral Francisco Cid who was the regent of D. Fernando Álvarez de Toledo' flocks and herds.

The military in the Pyrenees and Vienna from Austria

When João Cidade turned 28 years old in 1523, he joined the army of Carlos V fighting against the French, in Fuenterrábia in the Pyrenees. Nine years later in 1532 he left again, this time to head up to Vienna, a city that was besieged by the Ottoman.

One year later, in 1533, he returned to Montemor-o-Novo, a village that had spread now into the outskirts and included new buildings - the chapel of Nossa Senhora da Visitação and the Church of Misericórdia in Carvoeiros Street - just next to the street where João Cidade' parents used to live.

It is his uncle, Afonso Duarte, who informed João Cidade about his parents' death and invited him to stay. However, he followed his own path and departed again to Spain, this time to be a shepherd in the region of Seville.

Work at Portuguese Ceuta fortifications

His stay in Seville was not long. Two years later João Cidade found himself again on the road. His path took him to Ceuta (ruled by the Portuguese) in 1535, and he found work rebuilding the fortifications of the city. He also encountered and helped Luís de Almeida - once a nobleman that was exiled in Ceuta with his family - wife, and children - who were in dire need.

In 1537 St. John of God returned from Africa and spent some time selling books on chivalry and religious stamps in the county of Gibraltar.

Encounter with Christ and conversion

It is in Guacín, Málaga, Spain, that the child Jesus appeared to João Cidade, near the Adelfilla fountain. In this encounter, child Jesus called him João de Deus (God's John) and changed his name forever. Child Jesus also carried a pomegranate (that means "Granada" in Spanish, also the name of the city). Child Jesus let the newly baptized John of God know that Granada will be his cross.



Jesus points out Granada and gives him the name of John of God

St. John of God then departed to Granada where, under an arch of the wall near to Elvira entrance, sold books and stamps.



S. John of God assisted by St. John of Avila

St. João de Ávila homily and St. John of God taken to Hospital Real

On January 20th in 1538, after hearing a S. João de Ávila homily at the Ermida dos Mártires of Granada on the day of S. Sebastião, St. John of God had a conversion crisis. He is then taken as a madman to Hospital Real, where he suffered all the treatments for demented patients, including being beaten and whipped. He stayed in that Hospital for three months.

He then searched for St. João de Ávila and they met in Montilla. More than likely as a result of St. João de Ávila's advice, St. John of God visited the monastery and hospital of Guadeloupe where he started to learn some nursing techniques.

Hospital in the street Lucena

At this time, poverty was widespread in Granada, which had been conquered to the Moors in 1492. People would die in the middle of the streets from pain, hunger, cold and diseases. Returned to Granada in the early days of 1539, St. John of God made a first attempt to help and started sheltering those who were in need in the family house of D. Miguel Venegas who made his own patio available as a refuge. The patio soon became oversubscribed so D. Miguel Venegas gave over his complete house on Lucena Street to St. John of God thereby creating the first hospital which had 42 beds on mats.

St. John of God took on all hospital duties during his days, while during his nights he roamed the city of Granada with a large basket done with ropes, and pans, proclaiming: "Brothers, do good to your own selves, by giving to the poor!"

By this time the city's Bishop called in St. John of God, asking in disbelief about the hospital. Realizing the extent of his activity, he confirmed the name of "John of God" and gave him a habit, while forbidding St. John of God from exchanging his clothes with the poor, which he previously had been doing.

During the following years, St. John of God managed to support and sustain the sick and the pilgrims in the hospital; he also worked to remove woman from prostitution, convince families to



St. John of God assisted by the Archangel St. Raphael - Murillo

adopt abandoned children and bury the dead whose bodies were abandoned on the streets of Granada.

Haunted by constant debt and worries, St. John of God trusted entirely in Jesus Christ. He also benefited from unexpected help (assigned to St Raphael the Archangel), bilocation and intuition of the patients at risk or dying.

Disciples and the new hospital

In 1546 S. John of God got his first disciples, Antão Martin and Pedro Velasco and, in 1547, the hospital was transferred to a larger building, a former convent in the hill of Gomelles.

In April or May 1548 St. John of God went to Valladolid, the location of the royal court, to seek help from Prince Philip, the future Philip II of Spain.

Fire at Hospital Real

On the 3rd of July, 1549, a fire swept through the Hospital Real of Granada, the same hospital where St. John of God had been treated years before. In his most evident miracle, witnessed by the whole population of Granada, St. John of God was the only man who faced the flames and one by one, he picked up every single ill person, without being burnt in the process.

This year wrote his most important letters to benefactors: They ask help for 150 persons from his hospital but they are also an important and true source of spirituality.



His rescue of all the inmates during a fire in the Grand Hospital at Granada



Death of St. John of God in the house of the Pisa in Granada

Illness and final days

In January of 1550, St. John of God tried to rescue a child that was drowning in Genil river after which he became seriously ill. He was then transferred to the house of "Pisas" on 20th of February. Goodbyes from his patients were particularly dramatic. On March 8th 1550, he died while praying on his knees.

Following his passing, his works and teaches spread and in the year of 1600 more than 50 new hospitals were founded in Spain and Italy, bearing the name of St. John of God.

Pope Paul V recognized the Brothers Hospitallers of Saint John of God in 1611 for Spain and in 1617 for Italy. It was beatified by Pope Urban VIII on September 1st, 1630 and sanctified by Pope Alexander VIII on October 16th of 1690.

In 1606 two brothers came from Granada to Montemor-o-Novo to identify the house where St. John of God was born and in 1625 construction began on this site of the Church of St. John of God, now the Mother Church of the city.



Mass in the house where St. John of God was born

Foto Chapa



St. John of God hospital in Montemor-o-Novo



Procission on March 8th in Montemor

Note: all dates included can be found in the chronology of Portuguese Province of Brothers Hospitallers of Saint John of God, in www.isjd.pt, with the exception of the date of his conversion, which is 20.1.1538 (as per the homily of St. João de Ávila, page 41 in Marques Gastão).

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