

Paul of the Cross

Feast Day: October 20

Patron: Hungary

Death: 1775

Born in northern Italy in 1694, Paul Daneo lived at a time when many regarded Jesus as a great moral teacher but no more. After a brief time as a soldier, he turned to solitary prayer, developing a devotion to Christ's passion. Paul saw in the Lord's passion a demonstration of God's love for all people. In turn that devotion nurtured his compassion and supported a preaching ministry that touched the hearts of many listeners. He was known as one of the most popular preachers of his day, both for his words and for his generous acts of mercy.

In 1720, Paul founded the Congregation of the Passion, whose members combined devotion to Christ's passion with preaching to the poor, and rigorous penances. Known as the Passionists, they add a fourth vow to the traditional three of poverty, chastity, and obedience, to spread the memory of Christ's passion among the faithful. Paul was elected superior general of the Congregation in 1747, spending the remainder of his life in Rome.

Paul of the Cross died in 1775, and was canonized in 1867. Over 2,000 of his letters and several of his short writings have survived.

Reflection

Paul's devotion to Christ's passion must have seemed eccentric if not bizarre to many people. Yet it was that devotion that nurtured Paul's compassion and supported a preaching ministry that touched the hearts of many listeners. He was one of the most popular preachers of his day, known for both his words and his generous acts of mercy.