

Raymond of Penyafort

Raymond of Peñafort, O.P., (ca. 1175 – 6 January 1275) (Catalan: *Sant Ramon de Penyafort*, IPA: [ˈsan rəˈmon də ˌpɛɲəˈfɔɾ]; Spanish: *San Raimundo de Peñafort*) was a Catalan Dominican friar in the 13th-century, who compiled the *Decretals of Gregory IX*, a collection of canon laws that remained a major part of Church law until the 20th century. He is honored as a saint in the Catholic Church and is the patron saint of lawyers, especially canon lawyers.

1 Life

Raymond of Peñafort was born in Vilafranca del Penedès, a small town near Barcelona, Catalonia, around 1175. He was educated in Barcelona and at the University of Bologna, where he received doctorates in both civil and canon law. From 1195 to 1210, he taught canon law. In 1210, he moved to Bologna, where he remained until 1222, including three years occupying the Chair of canon law at the university. He came to know the newly founded Dominican Order there. Raymond was attracted to the Dominican Order by the preaching of Blessed Reginald, prior of the Dominicans of Bologna, and received the habit at the age of 47,^[2] in the Dominican Convent of Barcelona, to which he had returned from Italy in 1222.^[3]

Raymond was instrumental in the founding of the Mercedarian friars in 1218.^[4] When approached by Peter Nolasco, Raymond encouraged and assisted him in obtaining the consent of King James I of Aragon for the foundation of the Order.

Raymond had written for confessors a book of cases, the *Summa de casibus poenitentiae*. More than simply a list of sins and suggested penances, it discussed pertinent doctrines and laws of the Church that pertained to the problem or case brought to the confessor. One result was that Pope Gregory IX summoned Raymond to Rome to serve as his personal confessor. In 1230 the pope asked Raymond to organize the myriad of decrees in canon law in the 80 years since the publication of the *Decretum Gratiani*. The result was the *Decretals*, issued in 1234.^[5] Having reached his 60th year, Raymond retired to a reclusive life in Barcelona.^[5]

Within the year, however, Raymond was appointed to the position of Archbishop of Tarragona, the capital of the Kingdom of Aragon, over his strenuous objections. He did not appreciate the honor bestowed on him and ended

up getting sick and resigning within two years.^[5]

Raymond returned to Barcelona in 1236. Not long able to remain in seclusion, however, he was elected the Master of the Order of Preachers by the General Chapter of 1238. He immediately set out on foot to visit all the houses of friars and nuns of the Order. Even in the midst of this, he was able to draft a new set of Constitutions of the Order, in which he included a resignation clause for the Master. When it was adopted by the next General Chapter of 1240, he immediately took advantage of that option.^[5]

Rejoicing to see himself again free of office, he applied himself with fresh vigor to the Christian ministry, especially working for the conversion of the Moors. To this end he encouraged Thomas Aquinas to write his work *Against the Gentiles*. He instituted the teaching of Arabic and Hebrew in several houses of the friars. He also founded priories in Murcia (then still ruled by Arabs) and in Tunis. Additionally he went to help establish the Church in the recently conquered island of Mallorca.^[6]

Raymond died at the age of 100 in Barcelona in 1275 and was canonized by Pope Clement VIII in the year 1601. He was buried in the Cathedral of Santa Eulalia in Barcelona.

2 Gregorian Decretals

Knowing Raymond's reputation in the juridical sciences, Pope Gregory IX summoned him to Rome in 1230 to help in the rearranging and codifying of canon law. Canon laws, which were previously found scattered in many publications, were to be organized into one set of documents. In particular papal decretal letters had been changing the law over the course of the previous 100 years since the publication of the *Decretum* of Gratian. Being pleased with Raymond's efforts, the pope announced the new publication in a Bull directed to the doctors and students of Paris and Bologna in September 1234, commanding that the work of Raymond alone should be considered authoritative, and should alone be used in the schools. His collection of canon law, known as the *Decretals of Gregory IX*, became a standard for almost 700 years. When Raymond completed his work, the pope appointed him Archbishop of Tarragona, but he declined the honour. Raymond followed this with the publication of a work on penitential discipline, *Summa casuum*, which is widely considered an authoritative work on the subject. Canon

law was finally fully codified by 1917.

3 Conversion of Jews and Muslims



Tomb of Saint Raymond in Cathedral of Barcelona.

There, his principal aim became to convert Jews and Muslims to Christianity, and for the furtherance of this aim he caused both Arabic and Hebrew to be studied and taught in the higher schools conducted by Dominicans, the *Studia Linguarum*. He also encouraged Thomas Aquinas to write his work *Summa contra Gentiles*.

He exercised great influence over King James of Aragon and succeeded in persuading him to order a public debate, concerning Judaism and Christianity, between Moshe ben Nahman, a rabbi in Girona, and Paulus Christiani, a baptized Jew of Montpellier who belonged to the Dominicans. In this debate, which took place in the royal palace at Barcelona from 20–24 July 1263, in the presence of the king and of many of the higher clergy, Raymond took an important part. He was at the head of the theologians present, and in agreement with the king gave the rabbi perfect freedom of speech. Raymond simply observed to Moses ben Nachman that he must not allow himself to blaspheme Christianity, to which Moses replied that he knew what the laws of propriety demanded. On the Jewish Sabbath following the close of the debate, the king, together with many preaching friars and other clergy, visited the synagogue. There, Raymond allegedly delivered an address on the Trinity, which Moses ben Nachman denied.

He was among those who established the Inquisition in Catalonia.^[7]

4 Feast day

His feast day was inserted in the General Roman Calendar in 1671 for celebration on 23 January. In 1969 it was moved to 7 January, the day after that of his death.^[8]

He is the patron saint of canon lawyers, specifically, and lawyers, in general.

5 Influence and tribute



The St. Raymond Peñafort Building

The St. Raymond Peñafort Building in the University of Santo Tomas which houses the College of Commerce and Business Administration and the Faculty of Arts and Letters is named in his honor. St. Raymond's Church and cemetery, both located in the New York City borough of the Bronx were also named in his honor.

6 Notes

- [1] "St. Raymond of Peñafort". AmericanCatholic.org. Retrieved 7 January 2013.
- [2] "The Feast Day of Saint Raymond of Penafort", Dominican Laity of the Province of St. Joseph, Lancaster, Pennsylvania
- [3] O'Kane, Michael. "St. Raymond of Peñafort." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 12. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911. 30 Jan. 2014
- [4] Attwater, Donald and Catherine Rachel John. *The Penguin Dictionary of Saints*. 3rd edition. New York: Penguin Books, 1993. ISBN 0-14-051312-4.
- [5]
- [6] "Saint Raymund of Pennafort". *Lives and Prayers of Dominican Saints, Blessed and Pius Men and Women*. Retrieved 7 January 2013.
- [7] Michael Walsh, ed. "Butler's Lives of the Saints," Harper-Collins Publishers: New York, 1991, pp. 7.
- [8] "Calendarium Romanum" (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1969), pp. 85 and 114

7 References

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