

March 28

St. John of Capistrano

God day, good people! May the Lord give you peace.

One of the most visited California missions is San Juan Capistrano. It is known for its most famous visitors, the Cliff Swallows. Some say that they have been making this yearly retreat for centuries.

The lived experience of John of Capistrano, however, is not as simple or delightful. John Capistrano was what some might call a "driven" man. He was passionate and forbearing, zealous and intense, uncompromising to an extreme. Blessed and gifted with an organized and legal mind, the persuasive words of a skilled orator and the unbending determination to win all for Christ, he was uncompromising if not ruthless in his actions to reform the Franciscan Order and triumph in his confrontations with advancing Moslem as well as those who had fallen from the faith.



At the age of 70, emaciated and gravely weakened from living an extreme interpretation of Franciscan poverty, the call of the pope enlivened him to use his preaching talents to mobilize a crusade against the Ottoman Turks in the Siege of Belgrade. John of Capistrano was not afraid to press into Christ's service some of the more infamous historical actors such as Vlad Dracul, the Impaler. His goal was to keep the West Christian, even it meant forming ill-famed alliances with Count Dracul of vampire legend. Winning the battle is what mattered!

The story of this saint may disturb many of us. He is not the image we so often associate with the Franciscans. Today the Franciscans are known for their preaching that draws people to Christ out of love and not out fear. They do not preach crusades for the destruction of perceived enemies, but use the power of their words to invite reconciliation and heal the wounds of divisions. And while they still are zealous in their quests to live the gospel, their manner leads others with a kindly light to guide them out of the darkness caused by brokenness and despair.

Let us pray.

Lord, St. John of Capistrano was zealous and uncompromising in his desire to keep faithful to gospel living and Franciscan life. Help us to be no less focused in our desire to lead others to win the necessary battles that will overcome the rancor and anger that fails to serve you and global understanding. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

St. John Capistrano is a friend of God, the company we welcome today.