



YEAR OF FAITH 2012
2013

LIVING
OUR
Relationship
WITH
JESUS CHRIST



“We must speak with our hands before we try to speak to them with our lips.”

St. Peter Claver

Witnesses of Love

Living signs of Christ's presence in the world

Saint Peter Claver (1581-1654)

If you've ever brought someone into the Church, you'll appreciate the tremendous zeal of St. Peter Claver who baptized an estimated 300,000 people during thirty-three years of devoted missionary service in South America. Born near Barcelona, Spain, into a prosperous farming family, he grew up some seventy years after King Ferdinand of Spain first authorized the purchase of 250 Africans to serve as slaves in Spain's new colonies in the Americas. He was blessed with parents who demonstrated to the impressionable boy the goodness that sprang from their Catholic Faith.

As a young Spanish Jesuit priest, Peter left his homeland in 1610 to minister to slaves who poured by the thousands into what was then the center of the slave trade, now

Columbia. As each ship arrived at port, Peter would enter its infested and crowded quarters to minister to the ill-treated and exhausted passengers. He dispensed medicines, food, brandy and tobacco along with instructions in the Faith, assuring the passengers of their human dignity even while their masters exposed them cruelly to the public, like chained animals.

His preaching was believable and took root because, avoiding the hospitality of the planters, Peter chose to live in most wretched quarters with the slaves. He died in 1654 and was canonized in 1888. Pope Leo XIII designated him the worldwide patron of missionary work among black slaves.

Sr. Mary Loretta Pastva, SND

For Reflection

1. What prevents me from performing concrete services to relieve the suffering of people in my family and parish?
2. Peter was 300 years ahead of his time. What neglected social issues today are in need of my attention and action?
3. In what visible ways do I hand on my faith to my children, spouse, and neighbors?
4. What attitudes in my inmost heart do I hold toward people of other faiths, nationalities, political parties or races?

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