

Faithful Disciple

Pope Pius V

The pontificate of Pope Pius V occurred during the Renaissance and the Age of Exploration. Pius V was born Antonio Ghislieri into a humble and modest family from Bosco, Italy, in 1504.

From a young age, Antonio exhibited great holiness and self-discipline. He eventually joined the Dominican Order and was ordained as a priest in 1528, taking the first name of “Michele.” He spent the next decade and a half teaching philosophy and theology. Even as he entered various leadership positions within the order, he remained humble and led by example, fervently praying, performing acts of penance, fasting, and serving those living in poverty.

Made bishop in 1556, he gained a reputation as a staunch opponent of various heresies that were arising within European society. His zeal for presenting doctrinal matters accurately but charitably was due in significant part to his spiritual training as a Dominican. He strongly opposed nepotism within the Church and stood up against the powerful Medici family when they attempted to arrange for the ordination of Ferdinand de’ Medici, who was only thirteen at the time.

Antonio was elected pope in 1566 and took the name “Pius V.” Pope Pius V did not waver in his holiness, and shortly after becoming pope, he directed large amounts of money toward the service of those living in poverty rather than squandering it as some of his predecessors had done. Pope Pius V also frequently ministered to the needy, including by visiting the sick and dying, whom he sometimes personally cleaned. On witnessing the pope personally kissing the feet of a beggar covered with ulcers, an English nobleman converted to Christianity.

Furthermore, in collaboration with his close associate, the archbishop and saint Charles Borromeo, Pope Pius V raised the moral standards of the clergy, including by defending the requirement of celibacy for all members of the clergy and requiring bishops to spend most of their time providing ministerial efforts within their home dioceses. Pope Pius V remained strongly devoted to the Holy Eucharist and encouraged the laity to remain devoted as well. Throughout his pontificate, Pope Pius made at least two daily visits to the Blessed Sacrament, kneeling in adoration.

Pope Pius V was able to unite Christians in Europe to oppose the advance of the Muslim forces of the Ottoman Turks, who were defeated at the Battle of Lepanto off the coast of southwestern Greece on October 7, 1571. Pius V burst into tears when he heard of the victory of the united Christian army. He attributed this victory to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and he therefore promoted the recitation of the Holy Rosary (a practice begun by St. Dominic more than three hundred years earlier) among the faithful.

One of Pius V’s most enduring legacies is his contribution to the implementation of the Church’s reforms stemming from the Council of Trent in the wake of the Protestant Reformation. After a relatively short but very spiritually productive pontificate of a little more than six years, Pope Pius V died in 1572. Popes from the era of the Renaissance and the Age of Exploration have a negative collective reputation, but Pope Pius V was a model of holiness and Christian leadership by example.

Reading Comprehension

1. To which religious order did Pope Pius V belong? What was his chosen religious name?
2. Name two ways Pope Pius V modeled holiness when he became pope.
3. To what did Pope Pius V attribute the victory of the united Christians over the Ottoman Turks in the Battle of Lepanto? What did he thus ask the faithful to do?

Writing Task

Pope Francis's own hands-on ministry is very reminiscent of the hands-on service of Pope Pius V. Cite an example of a time Pope Francis has acted in the manner of Pope Pius V.

Explaining the Faith

Why should Catholics be concerned with spreading the Gospel to those who have not yet heard it? Isn't that imposing personal beliefs on someone else?

As you have read in this chapter, unfortunately, at various times in history—including during parts of the Age of Exploration—the Catholic faith has been imposed on non-Catholic populations. In time, missionaries have learned to carefully ensure that they are actually *inviting* others to follow the Good News, rather than *coercing* them. If the Gospel is spread by coercion, it is not necessarily being spread truthfully, let alone lovingly.

Christ does indeed expect Catholics to spread his message of redemption and salvation; this *Great Commission* (sending forth) was the last command he gave to his Apostles prior to his Ascension into heaven (see Matthew 28:16–20). However, you are called to spread the Faith not only through your words but also through your deeds. Look to the example of the saints from this chapter and beyond who were missionaries and served those whom they were evangelizing with Christian charity, making the Gospel a living reality for those who were coming to know Jesus Christ for the first time.



Further Research

Read the first few paragraphs, under the heading “Introduction,” of Pope John Paul II’s apostolic exhortations *Ecclesia in Africa* (1995), *Ecclesia in America* (1999), and *Ecclesia in Asia* (1999). Each is available online at www.vatican.va. Write two to three paragraphs summarizing how the seeds of faith planted on those three continents by missionaries hundreds of years ago continue to grow and bear fruit today.

Chapter 5 Teacher Resources

Faithful Disciple: Pope Pius V

Reading Comprehension

1. To which religious order did Pope Pius V belong? What was his chosen religious name? *He belonged to the Dominican Order and took the name “Michele.”*
2. Name two ways Pope Pius V modeled holiness when he became pope. *He directed large amounts of money toward the service of those living in poverty. He also frequently ministered to the needy, including by visiting the sick and dying, whom he sometimes personally cleaned.*
3. To what did Pope Pius V attribute the victory of the united Christians over the Ottoman Turks in the Battle of Lepanto? What did he thus ask the faithful to do? *He attributed the victory to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and then promoted the praying of the Rosary by the faithful.*

Writing Task

Pope Francis’s own hands-on ministry is very reminiscent of the hands-on service of Pope Pius V. Cite an example of a time Pope Francis has acted in the manner of Pope Pius V. *Students might cite a number of such actions during the papacy of Pope Francis. Examples from early in his pontificate include his first Holy Thursday Mass as pope, during which he washed the feet of teenagers detained in a juvenile justice center in Rome, or an account of his embrace of a man covered in sores during an audience. They might also look to his much-anticipated pastoral visit to the United States in 2015, when his schedule included not only an address before Congress, but also visits to a grade school in East Harlem and a correctional facility in Philadelphia.*

Additional Background Information

“St. Pius V, Pope,” a brief video offering further biographical nuances, particularly related to the events surrounding the Battle of Lepanto, is available at www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=5515.

Pope Pius V encouraged the faithful to pray the Rosary during the Battle of Lepanto, asking Mary’s intercession under the title “Help of Christians.” Following the battle, he added this title to the Litany of Loreto, a litany of many titles honoring the Mother of God. This title would later become a special devotion of St. John Bosco, nineteenth-century founder of both the Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Many Catholic schools across the United States trace their founding and charism to these orders.

October 7, the day marking the victory at Lepanto in 1571, is now celebrated as the Feast of the Holy Rosary, thanks to Pope Pius V.

Explaining the Faith

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- *How to find these documents on the Vatican website: After choosing “English” in the upper right corner, scroll down to the list of popes and select John Paul II. Click the link to his website, and then in the sidebar click the link to open his list of apostolic exhortations. These three documents will be listed within the chronology of all such exhortations.*
- *In each of these documents, Pope John Paul II describes the particular graces that flowed from a gathering of bishops on each continent, describing how the unique cultural context of each region made it a fertile ground for God’s work at the dawn of the third millennium. Whether or not the work of the missionaries of the Age of Exploration were referenced explicitly in the introductions to these exhortations, the legacy of these evangelists may be inferred, and certainly the implications for evangelization and the growth of the Church today are described directly.*

Additional Background and Resources

The *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* directly addresses the awkwardness with which many people of faith approach the idea of evangelization, especially in our present culture: “In many ways, attitudes and actions in the United States have fostered a ‘culture of disbelief.’ The First Amendment, which prohibits the establishment of a state religion, has been interpreted in such a way that it excessively marginalizes religion. Society has reached the stage in which people of faith are pressured to act publicly as though religion does not matter. This has caused many believers to think their faith is strictly a private matter and that it should have no influence on society and politics” (*United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, p. 44).

The bishops go on to emphasize that “evangelizing a culture means dealing with people. It involves more than persuading people of the truth of Christ and the Church. Sharing the Gospel with others means offering them its transforming power, not just for their minds, but also for their hearts” (*United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, p. 45).

Consider also the thoughts of a few present-day Catholic authors on the subject of authentic evangelization:

- Meg Hunter-Kilmer, “How to Evangelize (and How Not To),” *Held by His Pierced Hands*, July 28, 2013, www.piercedhands.com/how-to-evangelize.
- Jared Dees, “The Friendship Evangelization Strategy: How to Share Your Faith without Feeling Bad about It,” jareddees.com/friendship-evangelization.