



Friar and Priest

Roman Martyrology: At Cordova in Spain, blessed Alvarez of Zamora, also called “Saint Alvarez”, from the Order of Preachers, a Master in Theology and named major superior of the reformed priories by Pope Martin V. He visited the Holy Land and was the first to institute the Way of the Cross-in the priory of Scala Cæli which he founded.

Beatification date: September 22, 1741 by Pope Benedict XIV (cultus confirmed)

SHORT BIOGRAPHY

Born at Lisbon, Portugal or Cordova, Spain. Joined the Dominicans at Cordova, Spain in 1368. Renowned and well-travelled preacher, well known in Andalusia and Italy. Pilgrim to the Holy Lands. Preached Crusade. Personal confessor, spiritual guide and political advisor to Queen Catherine. In charge of the education of young King John II. Opposed the Avignon pope Peter de Luna. Reformed many of the practices common at court.

Founded Escalaceli (Ladder of Heaven), a Dominican house of strict observance in the mountains around Cordova; it became a well known center of piety and learning. Alvarez spent his days there preaching, teaching, begging alms in the street, and spending his nights in prayer. In the gardens of the house he set up a series of oratories with images of the Holy Lands and Passion, similar to modern Stations of the Cross.

There are many wonderful stories attached to Alvarez, which include:

Angels are reported to have helped built Escalaceli, moving stone and wooden building materials to the site during the night, placing them where workmen could easily get them during the day.

Once when the entire food stocks for the house consisted of a single head of lettuce, he gathered all the brothers at table, gave thanks for the meal, and sent the porter to the door; the porter found a stranger leading a mule loaded with food.

After unloading the mule, the stranger and the animal disappeared.

Alvarez once found a beggar dying alone in the street. He wrapped the poor man in his own cloak, and carried him back to Escalaceli. When he arrived at the house and unwrapped the cloak, instead of man, he found a crucifix. It still hangs in Escalaceli.

A bell in the chapel with Alvarez's relics rings by itself just before the death of anyone in the house.

Attempts were made to move Alvarez's relics to Cordova, but each try led to violent storms that kept the travellers bottled up until they gave up their task, leave the bones where they are.

He died on c.1430 at Escalaceli near Cordova, Spain of natural causes, and buried there.