



Castilian nobility who mis-spent a worldly youth. Educated by his uncle, the bishop of Astorga, Spain. Priest, primarily as a step to high office. Obtained special papal dispensation to become Canon of Palencia when he was officially still too young. During a grand Christmas Day entrance into the city, his horse was spooked by the noise of the crowds. It threw him in all his finery onto a dung-heap, much to the delight of the citizens who knew his was a political, not a spiritual appointment.

Dazed, filthy, humiliated, and with the undeniable understanding that his parishioners thought he was a hack, he withdrew from the world for a period of prayer and meditation. It worked. He had a true conversion experience and spent the rest of his life making up for his lost youth and the mockery he made of his position. Joined the Dominicans. Family and friends tried to draw him back to his old life and their planned pursuit of position, but he responded, "If you love me, follow me! If you cannot follow me, forget me!"

Confessor and court chaplain to King Saint Ferdinand III of Castile. Against the opposition of more worldly courtiers, he reformed court life around the king. Worked for the Crusade against the Moors, accompanied Ferdinand into the battlefields, and then worked for humane treatment of Moorish prisoners.

A favourite of the king, Peter feared the honours and easy life would lead him to a return to his previous ways, so he left the court and evangelized to shepherds in the hills, along the waterfronts, and among Spanish and Portugese sailors who still venerate him and consider him their special patron, blending his story with that of Saint Elmo, and calling upon him for protection in the face of bad weather.

Legend says that when he lacked food for those in his charge, he would kneel and pray by a river; fish would leap onto the banks.