

that he might never fall into mortal sin; the other, that he might die for the Faith. He took with him his crucifix, Bible, Breviary, and the book of the rule of his order; for the rest, he went in absolute poverty, trusting in Divine providence for his daily sustenance. He arrived in Mayenfeld in time for Advent and began at once preaching and catechizing. His coming aroused strong opposition and he was frequently threatened and insulted. He not only preached in the Catholic churches and in the public street, but occasionally in the conventicles of the heretics. At Zizers one of the principal centers of his activity, he held conferences with the magistrates and chief townsmen, often far into the night. They resulted in the conversion of Rudolph de Salis, the most influential man in the town, whose public recantation was followed by many conversions.

Heretic preachers were alarmed at his success and claimed that his mission was political rather than religious and that he was preparing the way for the subjugation of the country by the Austrians. During Lent of 1622, he preached with especial fervor. At Easter he returned to Feldkirch to attend a chapter of the order and settle some affairs of his community. By this time the Congregation of the Propaganda had been established in Rome, and Fidelis was made superior of the mission in the Grisons. In re-entering the country of the Grisons he was met with the cry: "Death to the Capuchins!" On 24 April, being then at Grusch, he made his confession and afterwards celebrated Mass and preached. Then he set out for Sevis. At Sevis he entered the church and began to preach when a disturbance erupted, several Austrian soldiers who were guarding the doors of the church were killed and Fidelis himself was struck. Outside the church he was surrounded by a crowd led by the preachers who offered to save his life if he would apostatize. Fidelis replied: "I came to extirpate heresy, not to embrace it", whereupon he was struck down. He was the first martyr of the Congregation of Propaganda. His body was taken to Feldkirch and buried in the church of his order, except his head and left arm, which were placed in the cathedral at Coire. He was beatified in 1729, and canonized in 1745. In art he is usually represented with a crucifix and with a wound in his head; his emblem is a bludgeon.

*(excerpted from www.newadvent.org; www.traditioninaction.org)

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Saint Fidelis of Sigmaringen

Feast Day: April 24



If a poor man needed some clothing,
Fidelis would often give the man
the clothing right off his back.
Complete generosity to others
characterized this saint's life.

Saint Fidelis of Sigmaringen

*Mark Rey was born in 1577 at Sigmaringen, Prussia and died at Sevis, 24 April, 1622. His father Johannes Rey was burgomaster of the city. He entered the University of Freiburg in Breisgau to study law and philosophy. In 1604, he became tutor to Wilhelm von Stotzingen, with whom he traveled in France and Italy. In the process for Fidelis's canonization Wilhelm bore witness to the severe mortifications his tutor practiced on these journeys.

In 1611, he returned to Freiburg to earn his doctorate in canon and civil law, and then began practice as a lawyer in Kolmar. Disappointed with the open fraud in the law courts and general corruption of society, he decided to abandon the world and to enter the Church. He was ordained a priest the following year, and immediately afterwards was received into the Order of Friars Minor of the Capuchin Reform at Freiburg, taking the name of Fidelis. He was at this time 35 years of age.

He has left an interesting memorial of his novitiate and of his spiritual development at that time in a book of spiritual exercises which he wrote for himself. He writes: "From now on I want to live in complete poverty, chastity, and obedience amidst sufferings and persecutions and in austere penance and profound humility. I came from the womb of my mother with nothing, and with nothing I desire to return to the arms of the savior." His writings were re-edited by Father Michael Hetzenauer, O.F.M. Cap., and republished in 1893 at Stuttgart under the title: "S. Fidelis a Sigmaringen exercita seraphicae devotionis."

From the beginning of his apostolic career he was untiring in his efforts to convert heretics nor did he confine his efforts in this direction to the pulpit, but also used his pen. As a remarkable orator, he preached in numerous German, Austrian and Swiss cities. He wrote many pamphlets against Calvinism and Zwinglianism though he would never put his name to his writings. Unfortunately, these publications have long been lost.

Fidelis was still guardian of the community at Feldkirch when in 1621 he was appointed to undertake a mission in the country of the Grisons with the purpose of bringing back that district to the Catholic Faith. The people there had almost all gone over to Calvinism, owing partly to the ignorance of the priests and their lack of zeal. In 1614, the Bishop of Coire had requested the Capuchins to undertake missions amongst the heretics in his diocese, but it was not until 1621 that the general of the order was able to send friars there. In that year Father Ignatius of Bergamo was commissioned with several other friars to place himself at the disposal of this bishop for missionary work, and a similar commission was given to Fidelis who however still remained guardian of Feldkirch.

Before setting out on this mission Fidelis was appointed by authority of the papal nuncio to reform the Benedictine monastery at Pfafers. He entered upon his new labors in the true apostolic spirit. Since he first entered the order he had constantly prayed, as he confided to a fellow-friar, for two favors: one,