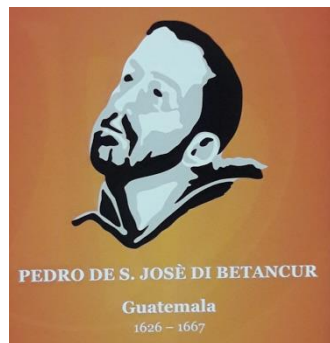


Diocese of Westminster

AGENCY FOR EVANGELISATION
MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE

‘Learn From Me’

**Reflecting on the Lives of Saints
and Blesseds of Catechesis**



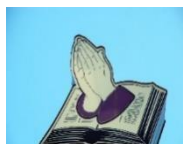
“Grant me always, Lord, faith, hope and charity.”

St Pedro de San Jose Betancur Feast, 26th April

Opening Prayer

O God, who have taught your Church to keep all the heavenly commandments by love of you as God and love of neighbour; grant that, practising the works of charity after the example of St Pedro we may be worthy to be numbered among the blessed in your kingdom.

(Collect, Common of Holy Men and Women, III)



Scripture Reflections **Ephesians 3:14-19**

And, now, I kneel in the presence of the Father, from whom, every family in heaven and on earth has received its name. May he strengthen in you, the inner self, through his Spirit, according to the riches of his glory; may Christ dwell in your hearts, through faith; may you be rooted and founded in love. All of this, so that you may understand, with all the holy ones, the width, the length, the height and the depth—in a word, that you may know the love of Christ, that surpasses all knowledge, that you may be filled, and reach the fullness of God.

(Christian Community Bible)

Matthew 25:31-46

When the Son of Man comes in his glory with all his angels, he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be brought before him; and, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, so will he do with them, placing the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left. The king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, blessed of my Father! Take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the

world. For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger, and you welcomed me into your home. I was naked, and you clothed me. I was sick, and you visited me. I was in prison, and you came to see me.' Then the righteous will ask him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry, and give you food; thirsty, and give you something to drink; or a stranger, and welcome you; or naked, and clothe you? When did we see you sick, or in prison, and go to see you?' The king will answer, 'Truly I say to you: just as you did it for one of the least of these brothers or sisters of mine, you did it to me.' Then he will say to those on his left, 'Go, cursed people, out of my sight, into the eternal fire, which has been prepared for the devil and his angels! For I was hungry, and you did not give me anything to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me nothing to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not welcome me into your house; I was naked, and you did not clothe me; I was sick, and in prison, and you did not visit me.' They, too, will ask, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry, thirsty, naked or a stranger, sick or in prison, and did not help you?' The king will answer them, 'Truly I say to you: just as you did not do it for one of the least of these, you did not do it for me.'

(Christian Community Bible)

- Is there a word or phrase that stands out or remains with you after reading these passages?

Biography

Born : 16 May 1619 at Villaflores, Tenerife Island, Canary Islands, Spain

Died: 25 April 1667 at Guatemala City, Guatemala of natural causes

Venerated: 25 July 1771 by Pope Clement XIV (decree of heroic virtues)

Beatified: 22 June 1980 by Pope John Paul II

Canonized: 30 July 2002 in Guatemala City, Guatemala by Pope John Paul II

- Descendant of Juan de Betancur, one of the Norman conquerors of the Canary Islands.
- Born of a poor family. Parents raised him in the faith. Contact with nature, being a shepherd, nurtured his contemplative soul. He learned to see God in everything around him. Pedro devoted his time with the flocks to prayer.
- Felt called to take the Christian message to the 'West Indies' (modern day America) when he'd heard about the people's miserable living conditions there. In 1650, left for Guatemala where a relative had already gone to become secretary of the Governor General. Funds ran out at Havana; worked on a ship to pay for his passage until Honduras from where he walked to Guatemala City.



- He was poor that he joined the bread queue at the Franciscan Friary where he met Friar Fernando Espino, a famous missionary who became his lifelong counsellor. Was befriended by the Jesuits and Franciscans of the area,
- Enrolled in the Jesuit College of San Borgia in hopes of becoming a priest. However, with little background education he was unable to master the material, and withdrew. Fr Manuel Lobo SJ became his confessor.
- Friar Fernando invited him to join the Franciscan Order as a lay brother but Pedro wanted to remain 'in the world' and took private vows, and became a Franciscan tertiary, in 1655, taking the name Peter of Saint Joseph (Pedro de San Jose). He dedicated his time to working among the those less fortunate.
- Became Apostle to African-American slaves, Indios, emigrants and abandoned children.
- Three years later (1658) he opened Our Lady of Bethlehem, a hospital for the convalescent poor. Soon after there was a shelter for the homeless, schools for the poor, and an oratory. Not to neglect the rich of Guatemala City, Pedro walked through their part of town, ringing a bell, begging support for the poor, and inviting the wealthy to repent.

Hospitaler Order of Bethlehemites

- Other men were drawn to Pedro's work, and they formed in 1658 the foundation of the Bethlehemite Congregation or Hospitalers Bethlehemite, which earned papal approval after Pedro's death. He is the first canonized Guatemalan native.
- The order spread to other Latin American countries. The brothers established hospitals, schools, orphanages, built churches, and opened a monastery in the Canary Islands and in Rome. However, secular authorities in 1821 suppressed the existence of the order. Only the female branch survived.
- In 1984, inspired by Fr. Luis de la Cruz Álvarez García, the men's order was restored by decree of the Holy See. Two years later, the first brother took his vows as a Bethlehemite. The house of the renewed community was established in San Cristóbal de La Laguna in Spain in the Canary Islands. Apart from him, there is also a second house today, which is located in Antigua Guatemala, in the city where Pedro founded the first community.
- Pedro built chapels and shrines in the poor sections of the city, where instruction was also given to children. and promoted the ministry of intercessory prayer among those who had nothing except their time. Every year, on 18 August, he would gather the children and sing Seven Joys of the Franciscan Rosary in honour of the Blessed Mother, a custom still continued today in Guatemala.
- He is sometimes credited with originating the Christmas Eve *posadas* procession in which people representing Mary and Joseph seek a night's lodging from their neighbours. The custom soon spread to

Mexico and other Central American countries. Legend says that petitioners need only tap gently on Peter's stone tomb in order to have their prayers fulfilled. Stone tablets scratched with thank-you notes are often left on the tomb afterwards.

- Known as the 'St Francis of the Americas' as the Child of Bethlehem was the focus of Pedro's spiritual meditation.

Significance for Catechists

Reflection

As humans, we often pride ourselves on our ability to reason. But as Pedro's life shows, other skills may be an even more crucial element of our humanity than a clever mind: compassion, imagination, love. Unable to master studies for the priesthood despite his efforts, Pedro responded to the needs of homeless and sick people; he provided education to the poor and salvation to the rich. He became holy—as fully human as any of us can ever be.

For reflection: What does the life of St Pedro de San Jose say to us as catechists? What can we learn from him?

Closing Prayer

St Pedro:

Pray for us that we will generously remember the poor and marginalised in our prayers and material support.

'Take Away' : Going Deeper

Canonisation Homily by St John Paul II,

https://www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/saints/ns_lit_doc_20020730_betancurt_en.html

Video (in Spanish): <https://youtu.be/kjdEuGU8gWA>

Short video (in English) : <https://youtu.be/CdeXPBEfINM>

Acknowledgements

Illustration of St Pedro Jose de Betancur: from 'Saints of Catechesis' exhibition, II International Catechetical Congress, September 2018, Rome.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Peter_of_Saint_Joseph_Betancur#/media/File:Sanhermanopedro.JPG

Biography notes: <https://catholicsaints.info/saint-pedro-de-san-jose-betancur/>

Reflection from <https://stswithuns.org.uk/sod-0426/saint-pedro-de-san-jose-betancur>
(Franciscan Media)

History of the Order : Facebook page Orders and Congregations of the world – Polish)