

Memorial of St. John Kanty

Homily of Bishop John Barres

St. Agnes Cathedral

December 23, 2020

St. John of Kanty, a Patron of Poland, Lithuania, and the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, lived from 1390 to 1473 and was canonized by Pope Clement X in 1676. He was a renowned and holy University Professor of Philosophy and has much in common with Pope St. John Paul II who often prayed at his tomb located in the Church of St. Anne in Krakow.

As a revered University Professor, he became well known in Krakow for his generosity and compassion toward the poor. He went the extra mile with his students to help them with their spiritual, financial, academic and life discernment needs.

In the papal bull of 1676 proclaiming St. John of Kanty a saint, Pope Clement X wrote: “Thus not only did (St. John of Kanty) bring splendor and embellishment to the faculty of that University, but also left a marvelous example for times to come to all engaged on similar tasks, of the diligence with which they should go about their duties of the ideal tutor, endeavoring as attentively as they can in their teaching to disseminate the wisdom of the saints, along with its attendant skills, all for the greater glory of the One God. The Blessed John will never cease to look down from on high in favor on the University which he once adorned with his virtues, and will grant his patronage and protection to his illustrious nation, renowned not only for its devotion to the true Roman faith, but also as the valiant defender of its legacy. And as all the effort Blessed John Cantius put into his scholarship was for the greater honor and glory of the One God, he shone like a brilliant light in God’s Church, no less by the miracles he wrought after his death than by the virtues of his life.”

In his 1997 pilgrimage to Poland, Pope St. John Paul II alluded to the great charism and ecclesial mission of St. John of Kanty by saying “Knowledge and wisdom seek a covenant with holiness.”

What an impact virtuous and holy University Professors can have on their Universities, their fellow faculty members, their students, alumni and the people of the University town in which they live.

Think for a moment of the University Professors and teachers at all levels of your education who impacted and influenced the course of your life.

Early this morning, praying in front of the Blessed Sacrament and considering the University Professor legacy of holiness of St. John of Kanty, I had a wonderful time with the Lord reviewing the various professors and teachers who have made a difference in my own life.

I pray at this Mass this morning for the souls of the Princeton University Professors who enriched my life: Professor Joseph Frank, the multi-volume biographer of Feodor Dostoevsky; Professor Andre Maman, Professor of Romance Languages, French Senator and Commander in the French Legion of Honor; Professor Paul Ramsay, the great Christian ethicist who was prophetic about the emerging field of Bioethics; Professor Thomas P. Roche, my thesis adviser, an authority on Renaissance poetry especially the poetry of Edmund Spenser, and the literary trustee of the estate of F. Scott Fitzgerald; and finally my hard-charging JV Basketball Coach Bob Dukiet whose funeral I celebrated in June 2009.

Each one of these professors had unique and providential influences. I would invite all of you to join me in praying for the University Professors and educators at every level, both living and deceased, who have influenced your life.

Together, let's pray that the character, virtue, ethics and holiness of University Professors in the United States and throughout the World can be salt and light for generations to come.

Mary, Mother of the Church, pray for us!

St. John of Kanty, pray for us!



Tomb of St John Kanty, located in the Church of St Anne, Krakow, Poland