

St. Peter of Tarantaise



Cistercian archbishop. Peter was born near Vienne, in Dauphine, France, and joined the Cistercian Order at Bonneveaux at the age of twenty with his two brothers and father. Known for his piety, at age thirty he was sent to serve as the first abbot of Tamie, in the Tarantaise Mountains, between Geneva and Savoy. There he built a hospice for travelers. In 1142, he was named the archbishop of Tarantaise against his wishes, and he devoted much energy to reforming the diocese, purging the clergy of corrupt and immoral members, aiding the poor, and promoting education. He is also credited with starting the custom of distributing bread and soup the so called May Bread just before the harvest, a custom which endured throughout France until the French Revolution. After thirteen years as bishop, Peter suddenly disappeared. Eventually he was discovered serving as a lay brother in a Cistercian abbey in Switzerland and was convinced to return to Tarantaise and resume his episcopal duties. Trusted as an advisor by popes and kings, he defended papal rights in France and was called upon to assist in bringing about a reconciliation between King Louis VII of France and then Prince Henry II of England. Peter was canonized in 1191. He should not be confused with Peter of Tarantaise, who became Pope Innocent V.