

PETER CANISIUS 1521-1597

Peter Canisius was the first superior of the German Province of the Society of Jesus. He worked as a missionary to win back the lands that had declared allegiance to Martin Luther's reforms. An understanding of the political structure of the Jesuits allows us to see why these early missionaries were so prized during the Catholic Reformation. Unlike the medieval world, Ignatius's time needed a mobile, highly educated, rhetorically skilled, and independent religious order to confront a transformed society. The land-based economy with its inherited privileges was fast giving way to an economic system based on the exchange of goods and capital. The age of discovery had opened up the Americas and the Far East to European interests. Th

went through more than two hundred editions during his lifetime. He was inevitably a trusted adviser to Pius IV, Pius V and Gregory XIII, and was later called by Leo XIII (1878-1903) the "second Apostle to Germany after Boniface."

In the narrative scene we see Canisius instructing two seated men while a crucifix shines brightly before him. The scene is based on a painting by Cesare Fracassini, 1864. Vatican Museum. Canisius advises Emperor Ferdinand I and Cardinal Otto Truchsess of Walburg, Bishop of Augsburg. Canisius knew Ferdinand well and served him as an adviser, particularly during Ferdinand's negotiations concerning the Peace of Augsburg (1555) that ended the warfare between Catholic and Protestant forces in the Holy Roman Empire.

In the central image Canisius is robed in the plain sixteenth-century clerical garb the Jesuits wore. A cape is worn over his belted vestments, and a string of rosary beads, a devotion of which he was very fond, with the IHS crest hangs on his belt. He points to a book of Catechisms in his hand. Next to his head is a seated white dog, haloed with a red circle. The dog was a distinguishing attribute of Canisius because his name is derived from the