

Peter Faber: A Saint for Turbulent Times

Jon Sweeney

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The story of how the Jesuits began usually focuses on Ignatius of Loyola and Francis Xavier, but Jon Sweeney's fascinating biography adds a third name: Peter Faber.

Faber was born in 1506 and grew up in a French hamlet as the child of shepherds. He followed his love of learning to the Sorbonne, where he met and became roommates with Ignatius, who was beginning his work on his spiritual exercises. Ignatius found an apt pupil and friend in Faber. The two went on to forever alter Christianity with their spiritual development tools, which helped to transform the lives of the faithful.

Faber's life is placed in historical context: Europe was undergoing fascinating, rapid changes as he grew up, following Martin Luther's departure from the church and growing talk of Catholic reform. In culture, Albrecht Durer's series of prints, *Apocalypse with Pictures*, was sold in huge quantities, as "the graphic novels of the time." Such topics are treated in brief, as are theological developments, like the publication of Saint Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologica* in 1485, that had implications for Faber and the Jesuits. The result is an engrossing intellectual history.

Faber, who lived through an amazing, important time of religious development, responded by turning inward to develop his spiritual muscles. The book includes snippets from Faber's autobiography to show how he felt "great longing to yield to Christ in my heart's center." His approach to faith was rigorous—a kind of scholastic mysticism. He sought to understand the soul and to mold his in the image of Jesus.

Peter Faber is a compelling religious biography of a Jesuit leader who approached challenging times with faith.

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