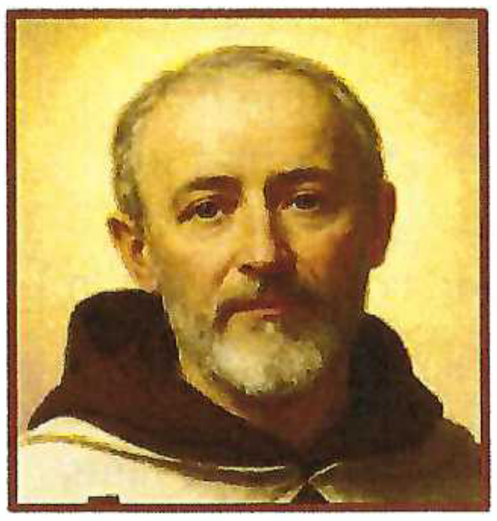


Saint Raphael Kalinowski

Feast Day November 15
Born on September 1, 1835
Died on November 15, 1907
Beatification: June 22, 1983 by Pope John Paul II
Canonization: November 17, 1991 by Pope John Paul II

Kalinoski was born in Vilna (now Vilnius), Lithuania to a Catholic family. He was a gifted student and received an excellent education. He graduated from the Academy of Military Engineering in Saint Petersburg with an engineering degree and the rank of lieutenant. His promising professional career changed dramatically at age 28 during the Polish uprising against Russian rule. Kalinowski resigned from the Russian military and accepted responsibility as minister of war for the insurgents in the Vilna region because he felt compelled to help his compatriots and sought to prevent unnecessary bloodshed. At age 29, he was arrested and condemned to death. His sentence was subsequently reduced to ten years of hard labor in Siberia. He began the long journey into exile carrying a crucifix and *The Imitation of Christ*, a Christian devotional book. Siberia became a defining period in his spiritual development. Rather than allowing suffering to close him off from others, he shared what he possessed and appealed to relatives for assistance for those in need. During that time, he advanced significantly in his faith. He wrote the following about his deepening relationship to God and others:

> I keep my eyes fixed on Eternity, and from this source I draw constancy in the midst of the confusion of daily life. God empties my heart of all natural attachments, probably to fill it with things more pure, of which nothing surpasses the desire to do good to my neighbor. I like to find at least a few moments each day spent in doing good for others out of love for God. These few moments, almost unnoticeably used, bring something like rays of peace and comfort behind them. They unite us with people and God with purity and sweetness.

Kalinowski regained his freedom at age 39, although he was forbidden to return to live in Lithuania. He accepted a position as tutor to the young Prince August Czartoryski and lived mainly in Paris. This work gave him an opportunity to guide a young person's intellectual and spiritual development. For Kalinowski, teaching became another form of service during his transition from exile to his religious vocation. At age 42, he entered the Discalced Carmelites in Graz, Austria, taking the religious name Raphael of Saint Joseph. He made his first vows at age 43, studied philosophy and theology in Hungary, and made his solemn vows at age 46. On January 15, 1882, he was ordained a priest at Czerna, near Kraków. This new vocation did not erase his earlier experiences; instead, it gave him a different purpose. The discipline of the soldier, the precision of the engineer, the patience of the prisoner, and the attentiveness of the tutor all found expression in his priestly service. His ministry centered on helping individuals return to God and to persevere in their faith. **His teachings on forgiveness likewise drew attention to a demanding Christian principle: people become better able to forgive others when they recognize that they themselves have received forgiveness.** This message gave coherence to a life that had included conflict, punishment, and displacement. He answered those experiences not by celebrating resentment, but by encouraging charity and hope.

Raphael's life followed an extraordinary path: he was an engineer, a military officer, a participant in an uprising, a prisoner in Siberia, and finally a Carmelite priest. He experienced both the demands of public responsibility and the suffering of exile before dedicating his later years to religious life. These very different chapters are connected by his growing commitment to serving others. His enduring legacy is one of reconciliation: helping people find peace with God, offering compassion to those who suffered, and encouraging forgiveness rather than bitterness.