

May 11

Blessed Benincasa



Benincasa was born around 1375, probably in Montepulciano, Italy. He entered the Servite Order as a youth and lived a life of solitude and penance.

He died about 1426 and his body is at present venerated in the parish church of St. Leonard in Monticchiello.

Pope Pius VIII approved devotion to him in 1829.

To taste the Lord he withdrew into solitude

Benincasa was born around the year 1375, most probably in Montepulciano, Italy. As an adolescent he took the Servite habit, and at the age of twenty-five he withdrew to a grotto on Monte Amiata near Siena, very close to where Saint Philip is said to have spent some time in penance.

Benincasa is among those men whom the Spirit has frequently raised up within the Order—men called to more intense contemplation in solitude and silence. While living the life of hermits, they maintained the bond of fraternity with the Order.

Fra Michele Poccianti, a sixteenth century writer, described the life of Blessed Benincasa in these words: "When he was tempted by the spirit of impurity, he used to pray to God, not to remove the trial but to grant him strength. When he was ill, he would not permit anybody to come to him, saying, 'I am being burned to take away my sin.' When visitors offered him alms, he did not want to accept them; but, satisfied with a bit of bread and a little water, he used to say, 'Our enemy is most easily overcome by those who own nothing.' In actual fact, he used to give goods made with his own hands to those who provided him with the necessities of life." Contrary to his usual prolix style, Poccianti describes here quite simply the life of a man who lived in seclusion, dedicated himself to prayer and penance, and earned what little he needed through his own labor.

Benincasa died in 1426 at the age of fifty. His body was placed in the church of St. Martin in Monticchiello, a town not far from the grotto where he had lived. As a sign of their gratitude, the people built a priory for the Servites near the church. After some difficulties, the remains of the Blessed were taken to the parish church of St. Leonard where they are still venerated. Pope Pius VIII approved devotion to Blessed Benincasa in 1829.

Prayer

Lord God, through the example of your Son, you called Blessed Benincasa to a life of solitude, prayer and penance. May his holy life inspire us to follow your Son in freedom of spirit. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ.

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