

February 19

Blessed Elizabeth Picenardi



Elizabeth was born around 1428, probably in Cremona, Italy. From her childhood, however, she lived near the Servite Church of St. Barnabas in Mantua and there became associated with the friars of our Order.

She received the Servite habit and was distinguished for her chastity as well as her love for the Eucharist and the Mother of God. She died in 1468 and Pius VII approved devotion to her in 1804.

From the Life of Blessed Elizabeth Picenardi (In *Moniales OSM*, I, [1963] pp. 29-32)

Faithful messenger of the blessed Mother of God

Elizabeth was born in 1428 and from early childhood was brought up in Mantua. Her father was Leonard of Cremona. She was so devoted to the Blessed Virgin Mary that she observed chastity perpetually in the virginal habit of the Servants, even though her father, then a steward of the Marquis Gonzaga, tried often to force her to marry into the nobility. While observing virginity her entire life, she went about from the first flower of her youth until she died clothed with a hair shirt next to her flesh, fastened with an iron belt four fingers in width. Daily she would recite the divine office following the rite of the Roman Curia and often she was nourished by holy communion from the hands of Fra Barnabas of Mantua who would daily hear her confession. She would be, as it were, dissolved in tears while receiving these sacraments. Her body was afflicted with many infirmities especially after the death of her father, when she went to live with her sister Orsina, also known as Orsolina, the wife of the nobleman Bartholomew of Gorno. She lived there until the end of her life in her own small room not far from the church of Saint Barnabas of the Order of Servants in the quarter of the city called Cigno.

Those living in the area would run to her for advice almost as to an oracle, for they regarded her in some way as a most successful intercessor with the blessed Mother of God. She was endowed with the gift of prophecy and she predicted the day and hour of her own death. When her death approached, although grievously afflicted with colic, for nine days she gave thanks unceasingly to God and the Blessed Virgin because she would die with the flower of virginity unharmed and because she had never sought anything from the Mother of grace without her prayers being answered.

At the moment of her death, however, she seemed to be listening intently, as if she heard a divine melody. Nor could even her pain hinder her from rejoicing with happy countenance and serene face; she seemed, in fact, to be watching intently, as if she saw Jesus Christ our Lord and his holy Mother standing beside her. She died on Friday, 19 February 1468. As she had steadfastly borne her pain with the crucified Christ, so it was on Friday together with him that she died.

Prayer

Lord God, while on earth Elizabeth was highly favored by Mary, Mother of your Son, Jesus. Now, in heaven, may she help us to be faithful in your service and secure in your love. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ.

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