

**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.*

*From the common of the saints and blessed of our Order, or from the common of holy men.*

**Office of Readings**

**SECOND READING**

*Choose one of the following readings.*

From a letter to the monk Rusticus by Saint Jerome, priest  
(Ep. CXXV, 11:20: CSEL 56, pp. 129-131, 142)

*Let your mind and body both reach out toward the Lord*

Always have the Book in your hand and before your eyes, learn the psalms by heart, pray without ceasing, guard your senses and keep them closed against idle thoughts. Let your mind and body reach out toward the Lord. Overcome wrath by patience, love the knowledge of the Scriptures and you will have no affection for the sins of the flesh. Do not let your mind entertain disturbing thoughts; for if they once settle into your heart, they will master you and lead you into deadly sin.

See that you are always doing something, so that the devil may always find you busy. If the apostles who had the authority to get their living by the gospel still worked with their hands so as not to be a burden on anyone and gave relief to others whose worldly goods they had a right to enjoy in return for their spiritual ministrations, why should you not make provision for your own future needs?

Make fish baskets of reeds or weave wickerwork hampers. Hoe the soil and divide it up into equal beds; and when you have planted cabbage seed or arranged plants in rows, make ditches to water them and see what happens, like the onlooker in the beautiful lines: Lo, from the channelled slope he brings the stream, Which falls hoarse murmuring o'er the polished stones And with its bubbling flood allays the heat Of sun-scorched fields.

Graft buds or cuttings onto barren trees, so that you may, in a short while, pluck sweet fruit as a reward for your labours. Make hives for bees; for to them Proverbs sends you; and by watching these small creatures learn the way their kingdom is ruled, how order should be maintained in monasteries. Weave lines, too, for catching fish, and write books, so that your hand may earn your food and your mind be enriched with reading. *The lazy man is overcome with desires.* If you have a mind to be perfect, go out like Abraham from your native country and your relations, and travel to an unknown destination. If you have property, sell it and give the money to the poor. If you have none, you are free from a great burden. Naked, follow the naked Christ. The task is hard and great and difficult; but great also are the rewards.

RESPONSORY See 2 Thessalonians 3:12; Ephesians 4:28

V. We urge and implore you in the Lord Jesus Christ:

R. Earn your bread by working quietly, alleluia.

V. Engage in honest labour with your hands, that you may give to those in need.

R. Earn your bread by working quietly, alleluia.

*Alternative.*

*To taste the Lord be 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 gifts 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 labour.

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.

**RESPONSORY** See Matthew 26:41; Colossians 4:2

V. Watch and pray that you may not be tempted.

R. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.

V. Pray constantly, stay awake to give thanks.

R. The spirit is willing ...

### **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, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

**Note:** Some biblical texts are taken from: The New American Bible <http://www.vatican.va/archives/>