

December 15

BLESSED BONAVENTURE OF PISTOIA

Bonaventure was born in Pistoia, Italy, about 1250. Inspired to lead a holy life by the example of St. Philip, he entered the Servite Order and was ordained a priest. As prior he showed great understanding and wisdom in directing the affairs of the monastery. While he was prior of the monastery of Montepulciano he received the profession of St. Agnes, a young woman of that town, and helped her found a convent for cloistered Dominican nuns. He died at Orvieto about 1315 and his cult was officially confirmed by Pius VII in 1822.

From the common of 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 *The Duties of Ministers* by Saint Ambrose, bishop
(Lib. III, 131-135: PL 16 [ed. 1880] 191-193)

Christ has left us a model of friendship which we are to follow

Maintain the friendships you have begun, for there is nothing more beautiful in human life than friendship. It is indeed a consolation of this life that you have someone to whom you may open your heart, with whom you may share your secrets, to whom you may entrust your deep personal desire. It is a consolation to have at your side a faithful friend who can rejoice with you in good fortune, or sympathize with you in difficulty, or encourage you in time of persecution. What good friends the Hebrew children were; even the flames of the fiery furnace could not separate them from their love. How well holy David spoke: *Delightful and dearly loved were Saul and Jonathan; inseparable in life, they were not separated in death.*

It is the fruit of friendship that our faith is not destroyed because of it; nobody could be a friend to another if he were to be unfaithful to God. Friendship is the guardian of loyal devotion; it is the judge of fairness by which the superior shows himself to be the equal of the inferior, and the inferior equal to the superior. Friendship is not possible where there is social disparity; for both parties, then, it is fitting that grace should be present. When the situation demands it, authority should not be lacking in the inferior, nor humility in the superior. The latter should have the courage to act as an equal; the former should, as a friend, admonish and correct the other, not in a spirit of rivalry but out of charity.

The admonition should not be unduly severe nor should the correction be motivated by contempt. Just as friendship should avoid adulation, in the same way it should shun arrogance. After all, what is your friend? Your equal in love; heart-to-heart you join yourself to another and share yourself in such a way that you wish to form, as it were, a single person from the two. You may entrust yourself as to your other self; you have nothing to fear since you yourself do not dishonestly seek something for your own good. Friendship is not a means of income but is full of honour and grace.

Friendship is a virtue, not a possession. For it is brought forth in grace, not by money; it originates not in the sale of goods but in the confluence of good Will. Friendships are better with the poor than with the rich. Often the rich are without friends while the poor have many friends. There is no true friendship where there is a false adulation. Many people flatter the rich but no one plays the flatterer to a poor person. It is a sure fact that whatever is done for the poor out of friendship is free of envy.

What is there more precious than friendship which is shared by both humans and angels? So the Lord Jesus says: *Use your worldly goods to win friends for yourselves so that when money is a*

thing of the past, you may be received into an eternal home. And God himself turns us from servants into friends, as he himself puts it: *Now you are my friends if you do what I command you.* He has left us a model of friendship which we are to follow: we should do the will of our friend, open to him our innermost secrets, and, in turn, know well the secrets of his heart. Let us reveal our heart to him and he will open his to us. *Behold*, he says, *I call you friends because whatsoever I have heard from my Father, I have made known to you.* If one's friend is genuine, he hides nothing; he pours out his deepest feelings just as the Lord Jesus poured out the mysteries of the Father.

RESPONSORY See Sirach 6:16 and 15

V. A faithful friend is a lifesaving remedy.

R. Whoever fears the Lord shall find such a friend.

V. There is nothing more valuable than a faithful friend, no sum can be of equal worth.

R. Whoever fears the.

Alternative.

He did and said only those things be thought pleasing to God and useful to others

Blessed Bonaventure was born in Pistoia, Italy, about the middle of the thirteenth century. Tradition relates his entrance into the Servite friars in this way: While the general chapter of the Order was being celebrated at Pistoia in 1276, our holy father Philip, the prior general, exhorted the citizens of that town, torn by internal strife and factions, to be reconciled to God and to one another. This young Ghibelline leader turned from his former ways to a life of penance at the words of the saint and asked Saint Philip to receive him into the Order. At his own request he was given the name Bonaventure. Michele Poccianti in his work *Chronicon rerum Ordinis Servorum beatae Mariae Virginis* (1567) describes his conversion in these words: "Many were reconciled to the Lord by the words of Saint Philip; they left their homes and gave their possessions to the poor, choosing Philip as a father. They made their decision to serve the Virgin in poverty under the leadership of Philip. Among them was a certain Ghibelline leader who went to Philip right after he had finished speaking. He humbly asked to be received into the Order of Servants and to begin, with the help of God, a life of penance. The saint accepted this violent and vengeful man's request, but he first ordered him to ask forgiveness of each of his enemies and to return fourfold what he had stolen. To the admiration of all, Bonaventure fulfilled this evangelical command willingly and was received into the Order of Servants."

Although the author of the *Chronicon* does not indicate the sources of his information and usually embellishes the facts in the course of his narration, Servite writers, including those of more recent times, give credence to his words and they believe the "conversion of Bonaventure" approaches the truth.

Bonaventure remained a good friend of our holy father Philip, and when in 1285, Philip went to Pope Martin IV, then living at Perugia, to treat of problems relating to the survival of the Order and its approbation, he took as a companion Fra Bonaventure, whose wisdom and understanding he admired, along with Fra Lotharingus.

In the following years, Fra Bonaventure, because of his foresight and wisdom, was made prior of the monastery in Bologna and then in Pistoia, and for several years was provincial of the Roman Province. The period when Bonaventure was prior of the monastery of Montepulciano is worthy of special mention. Men and women came in great numbers to hear him preach and many entered the Order and received the habit from his hands. In 1306, at the order of Hildebrand, bishop of Arezzo, he laid the first stone of the church of Saint Mary built by Saint Agnes of Montepulciano. Bonaventure directed the construction of the convent and then gave the veil to Saint Agnes and her six companions and received their profession according to the Rule of Saint Augustine. He confirmed her election as Abbess and helped her in this office with his advice.

Bonaventure died at Orvieto about 1315 and immediately accounts of miracles attributed to

his intercession spread. Pius VII confirmed his cult in 1822. In 1915, the sixth centenary of his death, his body was moved to Pistoia where it is venerated to this day in the Servite church.

RESPONSORY See Proverbs 4:6; 14:33 Romans 8:6

V. Love wisdom and it will be your safeguard.

R. Wisdom abides in the heart of the understanding.

V. The tendency of the flesh is toward death, but that of the spirit toward life and peace.

R. Wisdom abides in...

PRAYER

Almighty God, grace our hearts with the gift of wise counsel so manifest in the life of Bonaventure, who was a spiritual guide for your dedicated Servants. 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.