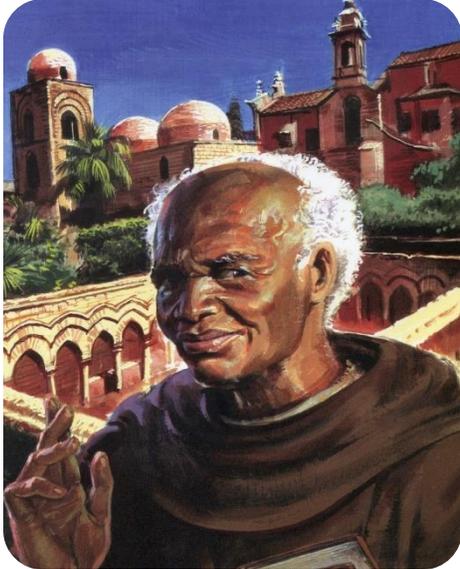


April 3

Saint Benedict of San Fratello



Good day, good people. May the Lord give you peace!

Many remarkable people have visited us so far this season, but no one so much as our guest today. Benedict was the son of black slaves who were taken from Africa to the town of San Fratello in Sicily. Here the family converted to Christianity. So devoted was their service to the owner, that at the age of 18 he granted Benedict his freedom. When 21 years of age, Benedict became acquainted with a man of prominence, Jerome Lanze. Jerome had left his life and joined the Franciscan Order. So inspired by Jerome, Benedict entered the Order.

Later he moved to the friary in Palermo and served for many years as the cook in the friary. So exemplary was he as a friar that he was elected the guardian of the community and later appointed the novice master. He was the recipient of many extraordinary gifts which he generously put at the service of all. Many people came to the friary seeking his consolation and assistance.

The Spirit of God will blow where it will. The life of a former slave became a spiritual leader, appointed to the honored positions in the Order. This in the 16th century! Some could not imagine such a thing even today. Yet, it happened. It reminds us of the words of the Angel Gabriel: "Nothing is impossible with God."

Let us pray.

God of surprises, we thank you for the marvelous things that you bring to us. We are stunned by the wonderful manifestations of your grace. May we always be alert to your surprises and the unexpected. May we see in these events the unfolding of your will for this world and participate in the building of your Kingdom here on earth. This we pray through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Benedict Larcari is a friend of God and the company we welcome today.