

# GATHERED INSPIRED SENT



On the liturgical calendar of the Servite Order, we remember Blessed Bonaventure of Pistoia on December 15. By doing and saying only those things he thought pleasing to God and useful to others, Bonaventure's witness speaks to us about the important of constantly turning our hearts toward Jesus.

Blessed Bonaventure was born in Pistoia, Italy, about 1250. Inspired to lead a holy life by the example of Servite Saint Philip Benizi, he entered the Servite Order and was ordained a priest.

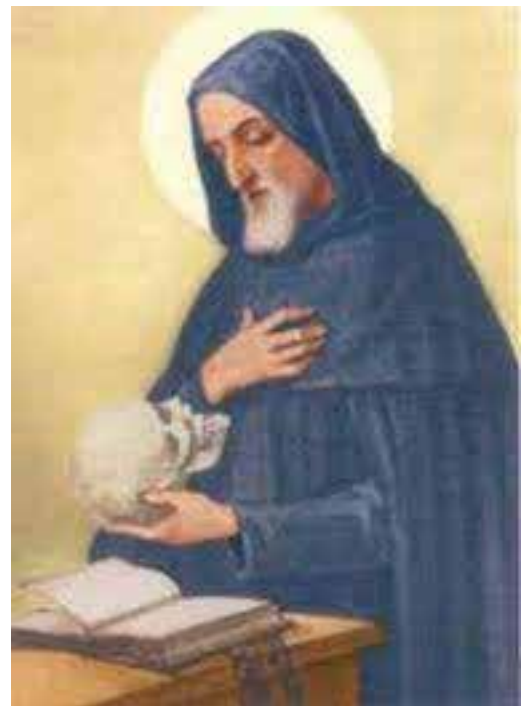
Tradition relates Blessed Bonaventure's entrance into the Servite friars in this way: While the general chapter of the Order was being celebrated at Pistoia in 1276, our holy father Saint Philip Benizi, the prior general, exhorted the citizens of that town, torn by internal strife and factions, to be 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. His conversion was described 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

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ORDER OF FRIAR SERVANTS OF MARY  
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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." 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 Bonaventure, whose wisdom and understanding he admired, along with another Servite friar, Lotharingus.

In the following years, 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 Servite Order and received the habit from his hands. In 1306, at the order of the local



bishop, Bonaventure 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. Blessed Bonaventure died at Orvieto about 1315 and immediately accounts of miracles attributed to his intercession spread. Pope Pius VII confirmed his devotion in 1822. In 1915,

as a Servite religious speaks to us about the importance of constantly turning our hearts towards Jesus by doing and saying only those things that are pleasing to God and useful to others. In your discernment, honest prayer with the Lord, reading and praying scripture, and sharing your discernment with someone you trust is a workable process of discernment. Remember the Lord calls those whom He knows can witness His love through loving and serving others. May the life and prayers of Blessed Bonaventure inspire your discernment.



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follow



the sixth centenary of his death, his body was moved to Pistoia where it is venerated to this day in the Servite church.

Discerning the Lord's invitation is the process of conversion: becoming the best reflection of Jesus. This process involves honest prayer in which we tell the Lord the desires of our hearts, our hesitations and our fears. Honest prayer is a real and deep sharing of our feelings, ideas and thoughts with Jesus. Honest prayer is where we listen to God speaking to our hearts. Honest prayer is hopeful, for we know that all that we share with God is received in love, and this is the foundation of our hope. As Blessed Bonaventure discerned the Lord's call upon his life, he prayed in trust that God would bless his efforts to answer the call. Through prayer, pondering the scriptures and speaking with trusted people, Bonaventure discerned his call to Servite religious life. His witness to Jesus

Know that we Servites are praying for you in your process of discernment. We wish you a joyous and blessed Christmas with a New Year filled with good health, great joy and the Lord's abundant blessings. Peace.

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