

April Holy Hero St. Benedict Joseph Labre

Feast Day April 16, patron of the homeless, and beggars
By Stephanie Purcell, Catholic Identity Committee

The story of St. Benedict Joseph Labre reminds us to look for Jesus in all people, and not to judge others by the way they look. Benedict was born in France in 1748. He was the oldest of 15 children and was well educated under the care of his loving parents and his uncle, a parish priest. Beginning at age 16, he tried to join three different priestly orders, but was rejected by them all. Becoming a priest was not his vocation (a calling to a way of life). He realized that God's will for him was to spend his life as a pilgrim; this is one who travels distances to worship at a shrine. This was his way to become holy.

He spent many years making pilgrimages (holy trips) to the great shrines of Europe, taking only a rosary, a crucifix, his Bible, and a prayer book. With only the clothes on his back, he slept on the ground and ate scraps of bread that strangers gave him. He never kept any extra food, but gave it away to others that were hungry. Even though he suffered hunger, thirst, heat, cold, rain and snow, he was always happy. People passing by often made fun of Benedict and thought he was a fool, but he was not bothered by this because it reminded him of the poverty and sufferings of Jesus and Mary.

During Holy Week in 1783, while visiting his favorite place, the Church of Our Lady of the Mountains in Rome, Benedict became sick and died at age 35. Those with him in his last moments said, "Holy Mary, pray for him."



*St. Benedict,
You were poor in the eyes of the world, but rich in God's eyes.
Help us to see Jesus in the poor and not to judge others
By the way they look. Remind us that by helping others
We are helping Jesus. Amen*