

ANGELUS PAOLI (16424720)

Venerable, priest

Angelus was born on Sept. 1, 1642, at Argigliano, then a section of the commune of Fivizzano, now of Casolà in Lunigiana (Massa, Italy); at Baptism he received the name Francis. In 1660 he received the tonsure and the first two minor orders. After some months spent with his family, he took the habit of the Carmelites at Fivizzano and was sent to Siena for his novitiate. There he pronounced his vows on Dec. 18, 1661. He studied philosophy and theology at Pisa and Florence; and here, on Jan. 7, 1667, he celebrated his first Mass.

His life can be divided into two periods: the years spent in his religious province of Tuscany, and those spent in Rome. The first period is characterized by frequent transfers: in 1674 to Argigliano and to Pistoia; in 1675, again to Florence, as master of novices; after eighteen months, to Carniola as pastor; and after another ten months, in 1677, he was transferred to Siena. Then, in 1680, he was sent to Montecatini, where, two years later, he was charged with teaching grammar to his young confreres. But in the same year he was transferred to Pisa and, after a few months, to Fivizzano, to act as organist and sacristan. In 1687 the general of the Order called him to Rome, where, in the convent of St. Martin of the Mountains, he spent the thirty-two years of life that remained to him, first, as novice-master, then as bursar, sacristan and organist, and also as director of the conservatory for girls founded by Livia Viperaschi.

Wherever he had worked during the first period of his religious life, he had given a fine impression as a religious steeped in silence, prayer and mortification, but, above all, given to the works of charity, both spiritual and corporal, in favor of the sick and the poor — so much so that at Siena they gave him the name of

"Father Charity". He never belied this name wherever he happened to be, and merited it especially in Rome, where he had the care of the two hospitals (for men and for women) of St. John and established the hospice for the convalescent poor on the street that led from the Colosseum to the basilica of St. John Lateran. His motto was: "Whoever loves God must go to find Him among the poor". He also knew how to inspire many persons to imitate him in helping the needy. This was especially apparent in times of public calamity, like those of the earthquakes and floods that afflicted Rome in the years 1702-03, at a time when the pomp of a few contrasted with the misery of the many.

In him the wealthy found a generous counselor. They esteemed him, followed his advice and made him the intermediary of their charity. He taught the poor to be grateful and to find in their concrete circumstances incentives for moral perfection. He was the counselor and guest of princes and of other important people of Rome. Cardinals and high prelates held him in high esteem. He refused the cardinalate offered to him by Innocent XII and Clement XI, because — as he said — «it would have been hurtful to the poor, whom I would not have been able to help».

He had an outstanding trust in divine providence, which he used to call his pantry where nothing is ever wanting. It was a trust not rarely rewarded by humanly inexplicable events like the multiplication of simple things destined to be the food of the poor. In his practice of charity he took care not to infringe upon justice: he was an example in giving just retribution to his workers, and he knew how to obtain the same response from those who had forgotten it. His deep union with God was sought out in solitary prayer whether in a cave, as when he was a child at Argigliano, or in the unlimited spaces of the Alps of St. Pellegrino, in a basement of the convent of Florence or in the Roman catacombs, in his cell or in the small choir of the church of St. Martin; here the night passed like a flash for him while he reposed, like St. John — as he loved to say — «on the breast of Christ in prayer». Outstanding too was his

love of the cross, which he strove to place even materially wherever he could: between Argigliano and Minucciano, in the Alps of St. Pellegrino, near Corniola; in Rome, three in the Testaccio section and three within the Colosseum. At times the Lord granted him knowledge of distant events (like the death of Louis XIV and the victory of Prince Eugene of Savoy at Petrovaradin) or of future ones (like the time of his own death and that of others). Several persons attributed signal graces to him while he was still alive. He died on Jan. 20, 1720, and was buried in the church of St. Martin of the Mountains, where he still lies in the left nave. Three years after his death the informative diocesan process was begun at Florence, Pescia and Rome; the apostolic process was carried on from 1740 till 1753. The heroicity of his virtues was recognized by Pope Pius VI in 1781. Actually, only one miracle is lacking, in order to proceed to his beatification.

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