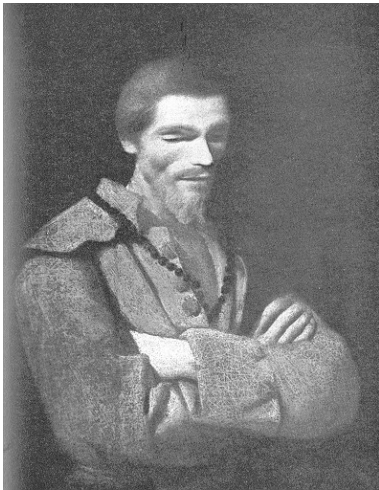


Lives
of
Saints

St Benedict Joseph Labre

1748 - 1783

Feastday: 16th April



“God is so good
and merciful,
that to obtain
Heaven
it is sufficient to
ask it of Him
from our hearts.”

**St Benedict Joseph
Labre**

S. D. C.
SOCIETAS
DOCTRIN
CHRISTIANÆ

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I was born in 1748 in France. My father was a shopkeeper, and I was the oldest of 15 children. As a boy, though very amiable, I was also very serious. I practised habits of self-restraint and "mortification".

At the age of 12, I was sent to my uncle, a parish priest to be educated. I was an intelligent student. And yet, my yearning for solitude, ardent love of austerity, and habitual union with God, made the hours spent in the acquisition of purely secular knowledge appear a sheer waste of both time and opportunity.

I assisted my uncle in the work of the parish, teaching the children their catechism, reading to the sick and witnessing to the families. When my uncle died, I went to live with another uncle, himself a priest too.

As I grew into an adult, I tried to join the Trappists, the Carthusians, and the Cistercians, but was rejected by them all. I therefore resolved to become a "traveller," to journey on foot from shrine to shrine as a pilgrim, living a life of piety, humility and mortification. I spent 8 years wandering Europe, lodging in various humble abodes, including the ruins of the Colosseum. I received much kindness and respect, but I also suffered constant exposure to the elements, hunger, thirst, weariness, ridicule and even ill-usage. I also enjoyed great spiritual consolations. I used to go into religious ecstasies when in contemplation, and some have said that I used to levitate and bilocate. I begged in the streets, and if I was given more than I needed for the day, I would give the remainder to someone else. God used me to cure some of my fellow homeless, to multiply bread for them and to counsel all sorts of people in Rome. I died in 1783 in a hospice in Rome, exhausted from my life of austerity. I was canonized in December 1883 by Pope Leo XIII.