

wanted, his garden enclosed, his cloister that shut him off in the middle of the world; and the more he was spurned and ignored, the more did he lift up his eyes to God in thanksgiving.

The remainder of Benedict's life was one of continue prayer. He lived in retirement and solitude. He accepted no one as a friend or companion. He would only have God in his life. The few who had come to notice him, and who helped him when he would allow them, were invariably treated as patrons and benefactors, but no more. When a convent of nuns, at which occasionally he applied, had observed him and began to show him more interest and respect, once Benedict discovered their esteem, never went near them again. He deliberately tried to be despised and shunned, and when men could not refrain from showing him contempt in their manner, then would Benedict's face light up with real joy.

He loved most of all the Church of Our Lady of the Mountain in Rome. He spent most of his time there, it was his favorite place of devotion. One day, as he was praying, he had fallen into ecstasy. A visitor to the church saw him and upset said to the sacristan, "what happened to the beggar?" His answer was, "The Saint is in ecstasy." He was floating in the air above the ground. Saint Benedict was also known for the gift of bilocation. He also had a rare gift of counseling people, and bringing them to peace. His reputation spread throughout Rome and people came from all over to speak to him. He had such wisdom and understanding.

Benedict continued to neglect himself, and finally entered a hospice for the poor. During Wednesday of Holy Week in the year 1783, he died on the steps of his favorite church, Santa Maria del Monti. In less than 3 months after his death, 136 miracles had already been reported. He was canonized by Pope Leo XIII in 1881.

At his canonization Mass there hung a painting of this sainted beggar dressed in rags. It can still be seen at The galleria Nazionale d' Arte Antica in Rome.

*(excerpted from: www.etwn.com; www.holyspiritinteracyve.net; [//lazarusspeaks.org](http://lazarusspeaks.org))

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Saint Benedict Joseph Labre

Patron Saint of the Homeless

Feast Day April 16



Let us learn from the life of Saint Benedict Joseph to remember that we are always in the presence of God, and particularly so when in church; for Jesus is really, truly, and substantially present in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

Saint Benedict Joseph Labre

*Saint Benedict Labre was born on March 26, 1748 at Amettes, Boulogne in France. He was the oldest child of 15 children in a well-off middle class family. His father was a store owner. Benedict was taught by his uncle, a parish priest of Erin, in view of his future ordination. While with his uncle, Benedict adopted a minor practice in austerity (self-denial). Every night he would replace his pillow with a plank of oak wood. When asked about it he explained "I do it not to sleep to deeply."

His studies went well until he was sixteen years old. He did not want to learn anything that did not have to do with God. At around the same time his uncle died from cholera. After his uncles death Benedict decided he wanted to become a monk. He was drawn to the very austere orders. He was not certain, however, that he was called to the priesthood, and said "It is very beautiful to be a priest, but I fear losing my soul while saving others." He desired the contemplative life and entered the Carthusian Order. But it was not long before his superiors decided he did not have the vocation to that order.

After making several more requests to enter monasteries where he might serve God according to his heart's desire, he was finally received in November 1769 by the Cistercians whom he greatly edified by his silent prayer and communion with God. His happiness, however, proved to be short-lived; he was taken ill and again his Superiors decided that he was not called to be one of their number. Providence had permitted these events. Upon his recovery, he discovered God's holy will for him, which was, he wrote, that "remaining in the midst of the world, he devoutly visited as a pilgrim the famous places of Christian devotions."

Benedict began his solitary journey on foot. He visited many of the great shrines of Europe. He wore a plain cloth robe, a crucifix over his heart, a rosary around his neck, and a little sack containing his New Testament, the *Imitation of Christ* and a Breviary. He visited the shrine of Our Lady of Loreto no fewer than ten times in his life. He slept on the bare ground. The only food he had was what kind people gave him. If they gave him money, he would give it to the poor.

Saint Benedict paid no attention to the beautiful sights in the cities he visited. His only interest was in the churches where Jesus dwelt in the Blessed Sacrament. When he knelt in front of the tabernacle, he became as still as a statue. His pale, tired face glowed. It was often said, that he floated in the air when he looked at Jesus' Crown of Thorns and deeply felt His pain. He would talk to Jesus and to the Blessed Mother. He would whisper, "Mary, O my Mother!" He was truly happy when he was keeping Jesus and Mother Mary company.

Although Benedict had his earthly consolation in the shape of much kindness and respect, he had, of course his trials. The life he had chosen with its constant exposure to the elements, its hunger and thirst, and its weariness, was all a form of the "cross" to be daily reckoned with. Occasionally there would be sufferings arising from men. At Moulins, in France, he was imprisoned for awhile under suspicion of a share in a robbery that had occurred in the district. His half-ragged and generally odd appearance often exposed him to both ridicule and even ill-usage. He usually wore what had once been a Trappist's habit, but which, in time, became a mere "thing of shreds and patches," and to this was added an old cloak and girdle. His Chinese-like features, tall emaciated frame, and long delicate hands, were remarkable. But jibe and jeer, or even praise were lost on one who lived in a continual union with God. His most haunting fear seems to have been that he might not be included among the "fewness of the elect."

As a result of his poverty, Benedict soon ceased to be clean; the smell of Benedict was not always pleasant; even his confessor, who wrote his life, tells us very frankly that when Benedict came to confession he had to protect himself from vermin. Men of taste, even those who later came to look on him as a saint, could scarcely refrain from drawing aside when he came near them; and when they did not come near him, then was Benedict's heart full of joy. He had found what he