

Lives
of
Saints

St Philip Neri

1515-1595
Feastday: 26th May



"Let me get
through today,
and I shall not
fear tomorrow."

St Philip Neri

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S O C I E T A S
D O C T R I N Æ
C H R I S T I A N Æ

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I was born in Florence, Italy in 1515. Having studied the humanities under the best scholars I was sent to help my father's cousin in business at S. Germano. During this time, I would often withdraw for prayer to a little mountain chapel belonging to the Benedictines of Monte Cassino. It was here that my vocation became clear. I felt called to be the Apostle of Rome. I therefore abandoned the chance to become a businessman, moved to Rome and devoted my life to God.

For the next 17 years I lived as a layman in Rome, actively engaged in prayer and the apostolate. This was an unusual vocation at the time. My active apostolate began with solitary and unobtrusive visits to the hospitals. Then I began to frequent the shops, warehouses, banks, and public places of Rome, exhorting people to serve God.

I made a lot of friends, from all levels of society, from beggars to cardinals. We met for an informal prayer and discussion meeting, and served the needy of Rome together. One friend whom I met around this time was St Ignatius of Loyola.

At the urging of my confessor, I was ordained priest, after which I spent a lot of time in the confessional. I arranged talks, discussions and prayers for my penitents in a room above the church. Some of my followers also became priests and we lived together in community. This was the beginning of the Oratory, the religious institute that I founded. A feature of our life was a daily afternoon service of four informal talks, with vernacular hymns and prayers. The Oratory was finally approved. We had been accused of being an assembly of heretics.

Many prominent figures of my day sought my advice and I did my best to convert to personal holiness many of the influential people within the Church itself. In all I did I tried to practise the virtues of humility and gaiety. I believed that even while striving for holiness, we should never lose our humanity.