

Saint Januarius

SAINT OF THE DAY

19_09_2020

"San Genna', jesse e facci 'a grazia! Faccia gialla fa' 'o miracolo! ["Saint Januarius, come out and grant us the grace! Yellow face, perform the miracle!"]. The invocation that the faithful have been repeating for centuries in Naples, the city where the remains of Saint Januarius (c. 272-305) were moved, relates to the well-known phenomenon of the liquefaction of the blood of the glorious martyr. [*'Yellow face'* is the saint's nickname, referencing the golden bust representing him.] The blood is contained in two very ancient ampoules, in which according to tradition it was collected by a woman named Eusebia. Out of prudence, the Church has so far avoided declaring the event miraculous, but spectroscopic analyses on the ampoules have detected the presence of haemoglobin. Moreover, according to current knowledge, the phenomenon of liquefaction with subsequent return to the solid state remains unexplained.

Januarius was Bishop of Benevento. Traces of his veneration exist in several ancient sources, first and foremost the Jeromian Martyrology. His martyrdom took place at the beginning of the 4th century, during Diocletian's persecutions. At that time the deacon Sossius, a friend of Januarius, had been arrested because he was a Christian. The saint, accompanied by Festus and Desiderius, went to visit him in prison, asking for his release and professing his faith. But the judge had them arrested too, condemning them to be mauled to death by wild beasts in the amphitheatre of Pozzuoli. But the beasts became docile after being blessed by Januarius, so the sentence was changed to beheading (which took place on 19 September).

Patron of: blood donors, goldsmiths; Naples