

Saint Ranieri

SAINT OF THE DAY

17_06_2021



Saint Ranieri (c. 1115-1160) was born in Pisa, the city of which he is patron saint, to a family of merchants. Despite the efforts of his parents to give him a Christian upbringing, he spent his early youth gallivanting with friends, ignoring the calls of his family to live more soberly. He had a great passion for singing and was skilled at playing the hurdy-gurdy, a stringed instrument of medieval origin. In this period he was perhaps guilty of a serious crime. In his most famous hagiography, written five years after his death by his friend and canon Benincasa, who retained part of the information of a

previous *Life*, he defines himself several times as a “homicide”. In any case, what we know for certain is that he suddenly began to feel the need to serve God.

Decisive was the meeting with a nobleman from Corsica, named Alberto

Leccapecore, who had turned his back on the world after seeing his brother die in an armed clash and had retired to live in penance, as a layman, in the monastery of San Vito. From the moment of his conversation with Alberto, the young Ranieri began a gradual but unstoppable conversion of his life, which led him to fully embrace the Divine Will. Towards the age of twenty he travelled to the East for commercial reasons and for about four years he continued to exercise his profession as a merchant, until his final call, which he experienced in the Holy Land. As soon as he arrived in Jerusalem, he went to the chapel of Golgotha, inside the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre. There he made the act of doffing his rich robes and donning the habit of the penitent, called the “pilurica”. From that day on, it was Good Friday in 1140, he lived in complete poverty, giving all his possessions to the needy. He intensified his prayers and meditations on the Passion of Jesus.

He visited all the main places of Our Lord's earthly life, such as Bethlehem, Nazareth, Tabor, the Quarantine Mount (where Jesus was tempted by Satan). His favourite place was the Holy Sepulchre, where he stopped day and night to pray and contemplate the mystery of the Risen One. He exercised his will in continuous fasting, normally abstaining from food every day of the week except Thursday and Sunday. Around 1154 he decided to return to Pisa to share with his fellow citizens the joy of the irruption of Christ in his life. After returning to the city, where he was received in a monastery, his fame as a thaumaturge soon spread. The saint worked several miraculous healings with the gift of holy water and this is probably why Benincasa called him in his hagiography “*Ranieri dall'Acqua*”.

By divine inspiration he then moved to the monastery of San Vito, where his conversion had begun thanks to his meeting with Albert. He continued to live as a layman, in chastity and obedience to the Church. At the same time he dedicated himself to preaching, which he saw as an integral part of his mission as a Christian. He died with a reputation for holiness on 17 June 1160.