

Reflection Friday Week 15 St Bonaventure 2022

St Bonaventure was born at Bagnoregio in Etruria about 1218. Becoming a Franciscan in 1243, he studied philosophy and theology in Paris. He became a famous teacher and philosopher, contributing to the intellectual flowering of the 13th century. He was a friend and colleague of St Thomas Aquinas. The Franciscans were a new and revolutionary force in the Church. Their radical embrace of poverty and rejection of institutional structures raised suspicion and opposition. Bonaventure defended them and was elected general of the order in 1255. He ruled with wisdom and prudence and is regarded as the second founder of the Order. He declined the archbishopric of York in 1265 but was made cardinal bishop of Albano in 1273. He died in 1274 at the Council of Lyons. Bonaventure wrote extensively on philosophy and theology adding great value to intellectual history. However, he always insisted that the simple and uneducated could have a clearer knowledge of God than the wise. He was declared a Doctor of the Church in 1588 by Pope Sixtus V.

Paul's prayer for the Colossians is also Bonaventure's prayer *that God give us the power of his Spirit to grow strong, so that Christ may live in our hearts through faith, and that built on love, we become saints who know the love of Christ, which is beyond all knowledge, and we are filled with the utter fullness of God.*

We are called to be saints of God who allow Jesus to speak through us for the glory of God and who live a life of service based on and inspired by a love that sees service as an honour and privilege as did Jesus in his service to us.

At the end of the semester at a prestigious university of philosophy, the 100+ students wait eagerly for their final exam. The professor enters, puts his chair on top of his podium and says, "Using everything that you know about philosophy, write an essay proving to me that this chair does not exist". The students begin furiously writing, except one chap sitting at the back. He writes something down, turns it in, and is gone in less than a minute. A week passes and the students gather to view the results. Every one of them had failed the course... except the one chap. The students then asked him how he proved that the chair did not exist.

His reply? **"What chair?"**