

Saint Lawrence Majoranus

V-VI Century

Saint Lawrence was appointed to be Bishop of Siponto, but his fame is due to the three apparitions that indicated the birth of the Sanctuary Shrine dedicated to the Archangel Michael, which was constructed in a grotto on Mount Gargano, Italy.

In 490, a rich gentleman was letting his herds graze on the mountain of Gargano. Suddenly his best bull disappeared and was found kneeling at the opening of a cave. Overcome with anger, he shot an arrow towards the rebellious animal, but in an inexplicable way, instead of striking the bull, the arrow injured the foot of the rich gentleman.

Troubled by the event, he went to Bishop Lawrence, who, after listening to the story of the extraordinary adventure, ordered

Archangel appeared to the Bishop and predicted a sure and total victory. This message filled with hope the hearts of the besieged people. The defenders came out of the city and started a furious battle, accompanied by strikes, thunderous blasts, and arrows with lightning speed and extraordinary intensity. The victory of the Sipontines was resounding.

In the third apparition, which took place in the year 493, Saint Lawrence had by now decided to execute the order of Saint Michael to



three days of prayer and penitence. At the end of the third day, the Archangel Michael appeared to the Bishop and said this to him: “I am the Archangel Michael and I am always in the presence of God. The cave is sacred to me, it is a selection of mine; I myself am the watchful guardian... There where the rock opens wide the sins of men can be pardoned... That which will be asked here in prayer will be granted. Go, therefore, to the mountain and dedicate the grotto to the worship by Christians.”

But since that mysterious nearly inaccessible mountain had been also the place of worship by pagan cults, the Bishop hesitated for a long time before deciding to obey the words of the Archangel.

In 492 Saint Michael appeared a second time. The city of Siponto, besieged by enemy troops, was by now close to surrendering. Saint Lawrence obtained from the enemy a truce of three days and trustfully turned to Saint Michael with prayer and penitence. At the end of the third day, the

consecrate the grotto to him as a sign of recognition, comforted also by the positive opinion of Pope Gelasius I, but again the Archangel appeared to him and announced that He himself had already consecrated the Grotto. At that time the bishop of Siponto along with seven other Apulian bishops in procession, with the Sipontine people and clergy, started off towards the sacred place. Along the way, a portent was verified: several eagles, with their wings spread open, sheltered the bishops from the rays of the sun. Upon arrival at the Grotto, they found a rough altar, covered by a vermilion “pallio” and surmounted by a Cross; in addition, as the legend has it, in the rock they found the footprint of a child – a supernatural sign left by Saint Michael. The Saint as Bishop there offered with immense joy the first Divine Sacrifice of the Mass. It was the 29th of September – Feast Day of the Archangels.

This same Grotto, as the only place of worship not consecrated by human hands, has received over the centuries the title of “Celestial Basilica.”