



St. Leonard of Porto Maurizio was a preacher, a writer and a missionary. He displayed great servitude and spiritual stamina. He lived his life with Christian perseverance, directing all his energy and efforts in building the Kingdom of God. His feast day is on November 26.

St. Leonard was born Paul Jerome Casanova on December 20, 1676 in Porto Maurizio, Italy. At age 13, his father entrusted him to the care of his wealthy uncle Augustine in Rome, who sent the boy to the Roman College of the Jesuits. St. Leonard soon realized that he had a religious vocation. But his uncle, who wanted him to become a physician, objected and turned him out of the house. St. Leonard found shelter with another relative, Leonard Ponzetti, until he received his father's permission to become a friar.

On October 2, 1697, he received the habit and took the name of Brother Leonard, after the relative who took him in. After making his novitiate at Ponticelli in the Sabine mountains, he completed his studies at St. Bonaventura on the Palatine in Rome.

After his ordination in 1703, he remained there as a lector and was expected to be sent on a mission to China. However, a severe gastric hemorrhage forced him to abort his plan. In 1704, he went back to Porto Maurizio, where there was a monastery of the Franciscan Observants, and he spent the next four years there to recover from the illness. He was healed through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary after making a vow to her.

Once recovered, he began preaching in Porto Maurizio and the vicinity. In 1709, St. Leonard was sent to San Miniato, a city near Florence, where he preached in the city and in the region of Tuscany. In 1710, he founded the monastery of Icontro, on a peak in the mountains near Florence, where he and his assistants could retire occasionally after missions and devote themselves to spiritual renewal and fresh austerities.

In 1720, he began celebrated missions in Central and Southern Italy. Everywhere the saint went, he drew large crowds. Pope Clement XII and Pope Benedict XIV called him to Rome; the latter especially held him in high esteem both as a preacher and as a propagandist and exacted a promise that he would come to Rome to die.

St. Leonard founded many pious societies and confraternities. Through his preaching, he exerted himself especially to spread the devotion of the Stations of the Cross, the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the perpetual adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament and devotion to the Immaculate Conception. One of his accomplishments was erecting 571 Stations of the Cross in all parts of Italy, including the one at the Colosseum.

In 1744, he was sent to preach in the Island of Corsica, where he restored discipline to the holy orders.

In November 1751, when he was preaching to the Bolognese, Pope Benedict XIV called him to Rome, as already there were indications of his rapidly approaching end. He arrived on the evening of November 26, 1751 at his beloved monastery of St. Bonaventura on the Palatine, and expired on the same night at 11 p.m. at the age of 75.