

**VIRTUE OF THE MONTH: Cheerfulness: looking on the bright side**  
**SAINT OF THE MONTH: Saint Philip Neri**

Philip Neri was born on July 21, 1515 in Florence, Italy. He was known as a child as “good little Phil” because he was cheerful, thoughtful, humble, obedient, and well liked. When he was 18 years old, he was sent to live with relatives to learn the family business. However, soon after he arrived he had a mystical vision which changed his life and his own goals for his life.

He felt a call from the Holy Spirit to radically live for and serve the Lord Jesus Christ and His Church. In answer to this call Philip moved to Rome where he became a tutor. He was known for living a simple and Christian life. Initially, he began studying with a thought of the priesthood, but after three years he changed his mind, deciding that his call was “to help the poor people of Rome and to re-evangelize the city.”

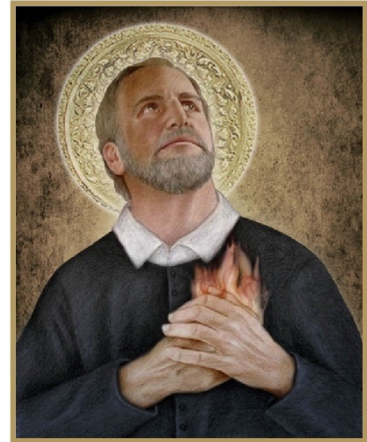
Philip, the evangelist of Rome, talked to everyone, everywhere. He was compared to Socrates, and had a knack for starting up conversations and leading his listeners to consider a new and better way of life, the Christian Way. He easily caught others' attention with his warm personality and incredible sense of humor. He encouraged groups of people to gather for discussions, studies, prayer and the enjoyment of music. His customary question was always, "Well, brothers, when shall we begin to do good?" He would follow this up by leading the group to serve in hospitals, wait on the sick, or pray at the Church.

Eventually, Philip's confessor convinced him that he would be even more effective at his evangelizing efforts if he became ordained a priest. Philip was ordained to the priesthood on May 23, 1551. After becoming a priest, Philip spent most of his time hearing confessions. Sometimes Philip broke out informal discussions for those who desired to live a better life. He spoke to them about Jesus, the saints and the martyrs.

A large room was built above the church of San Girolamo, where Philip was assigned, to tend to Philip's large number of pilgrims, and other priests were called on to assist him. Philip and the priests were soon called the "Oratorians," because they would ring a bell to call the faithful in their "oratory." The Congregation of the Priests of the Oratory would be approved a few years later with members who encouraged others to deepen their faith. Philip's rule for them was simple - share a common table and to perform spiritual exercises. Philip didn't want his followers to bind themselves to the life with a vow and he did not want them to denounce their property.

Even at the height of his fame, he still made sure to make time for everyone. In the words of one of his biographers, Philip was "all things to all men.... When he was called upon to be merry, he was so; if there was a demand upon his sympathy, he was equally ready..." Philip was respected and loved throughout Rome; he became a trusted advisor to popes, kings, cardinals and equally as important to the poor." Saint Philip kept a Bible and a joke book by his bed. He hung a little sign on his door that said "The House of Christian Mirth." He said, "Christian joy is a gift from God flowing from a good conscience." Many came to know Christ through the cheerfulness of Saint Philip Neri.

On the Feast of Corpus Christi, May 25, 1595, Philip knew he was sick. He heard confessions all day, and then, before heading off to bed, Philip stated, "Last of all, we must die." He died at midnight. St. Philip Neri was beatified by Pope Paul V on May 11, 1615 and canonized by Pope Gregory XV on March 12, 1622. He is the patron saint of Rome, US Special Forces, humor and joy and his feast day is celebrated on May 26.



**Question: What did St. Philip Neri keep by his bed?**