

Blessed Contardo Ferrini (O.F.S.)

[April 4, 1859 – October 17, 1902]

(Feast Day: October 20)



Contardo was born on April 4, 1859 in Milan of a distinguished family. His father was a teacher. When Contardo was still a student in high school and college, he encouraged his companions to lead good lives and exercised a kind of lay apostolate among them. He was acquainted with some dozen languages and received a doctorate in law in Italy and then earned a scholarship that enabled him to study Roman-Byzantine law in Berlin. As a renowned legal expert, he taught in various schools of higher education until he joined the faculty of the University of Pavia, where he was considered an outstanding authority on Roman law.

Contardo was learned about the faith he lived and loved. “Our life,” he said, “must reach out toward the Infinite, and from that source we must draw whatever we can expect of merit and dignity.” As a scholar, he studied the ancient biblical languages and read the Scriptures in them. His speeches and papers show his understanding of the relationship of faith and science.

Contardo was a noted Italian jurist and legal scholar. He was also a fervent Roman Catholic, who lived a devout life of prayer and service to the poor. He attended daily Mass. In 1886, Contardo joined the Third Order of St Francis [**Secular Franciscan Order**], and for the rest of his life he faithfully observed its Rule. He also enrolled himself in the St. Vincent de Paul Society. In his speeches and writings as well as in his conduct, he made it a point to show that faith and science are not only not opposed to each other, but that faith is rather a shield to protect us from error and guide us to true heights.

In 1900, Contardo was afflicted with a heart lesion in consequence of excessive labor. In the autumn of 1902, feeling the need of rest, he repaired to his country house at Suna. There, however, he was stricken with typhus. Due to his weakened condition, he was unable to resist the malignant fever, and died on October 17, 1902, at the age of 43.

The high esteem in which the deceased was held now became evident. Letters of condolence from the professors of the university praised him as a saint. The people of Suna promptly expressed a desire to see him numbered among the saints. The demand for his beatification grew more insistent with time, and there was universal rejoicing when in 1909 Pope St. Pius X appointed Cardinal Ferrari to begin the process. Pope Pius XI conferred on Contardo Ferrini the title Venerable in 1931; and Pope Pius XII beatified him on April 13, 1947.

[Bold was added for emphasis and sometimes for clarification.]