

# VENERABLE CAESAR CARDINAL BARONIUS, C.O.

1538-1607, DECLARED VENERABLE IN 1745

Cesare Baronio was born in Sora to a Neapolitan family in 1538. He came to Rome in 1557, his legal studies in Naples interrupted by the Franco-Spanish War. He later recalled that upon meeting Father Philip for the first time, he was so impressed that he resolved never to leave. Baronius became intensely attracted to the spiritual life and service to God, and began attending the exercises of the Oratory at San Girolamo. For his part, Philip commanded him to continue his studies, thus establishing a pattern of obedience that came to characterize their relationship. Philip regularly subjected Baronius to exercises in mortification that helped the young man to grow in humility. He always obeyed with great freedom of spirit.



Beginning in 1558, Philip regularly asked Baronius to give talks to those gathered at the Oratory, and the young Neapolitan's fondness for the themes of death and judgment gives evidence of his melancholy temperament. Philip, the Saint of Joy, literally changed the subject, and had Baronius devote himself to the study and explanation of Church history. These talks continued for thirty years, during which he covered the entirety of Church history seven times, and were the genesis for Baronius' most lasting achievement: the twelve volume Annals of Ecclesiastical History, which established Baronius as the Father of modern Church history.

After several years of preparation, Baronius was ordained a priest in 1564. As a sign of his renunciation of worldly ambition, he burned his doctoral diploma. His early priesthood coincided with the initial development of what would become the Congregation of the Oratory. In 1588, he finally began to publish the Annals, which, along with his revision of the Roman Martyrology, brought him wide acclaim and a scholarly reputation. However, Philip kept his young protégée humble through mortifications and continued involvement in apostolic work. Baronius continued to grow in his desire for perfection through prayer and penance.

In 1593, Father Philip hand-picked Baronius as his successor, and he was unanimously elected Superior. The following year he became papal confessor to Clement VIII. After Philip's death, Baronius reluctantly accepted the title of Protonotary Apostolic, was created Cardinal by Clement VIII in 1596, and served as Vatican Librarian from 1597. When Clement VIII died in 1605, Baronius narrowly escaped being elected pope, and only avoided election because he had angered King Philip II of Spain, the strongest Catholic monarch in Europe.

Desiring to die a simple priest, Baronius returned to the Oratory in 1606, and when he died on June 30, 1607, thirty cardinals attended his funeral. Humble even in death, Baronius is buried at S. Maria in Vallicella with only a simple plaque. Pope Benedict XIV proclaimed him Venerable on January 12, 1745.

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Adapted from the biography of Baronius given in Italian on the website of the Procurator General

See also: [Catholic Encyclopedia: Venerable Cesare Baronius](#).