

For your sake “Jesus became poor although he was rich, so that by his poverty you might become rich” (2 Cor 8:9). Jesus became human that you might share in the divinity of the Trinity with life everlasting in the kingdom to come. “On June 22, the Catholic Church remembers Saint Paulinus of Nola, who gave up his life in politics to become a monk, a bishop, and a revered Christian poet of the 5th century.”ⁱ

Born at Bordeaux in present-day France in 354, Paulinus came from a wealthy and politically connected family. He entered politics himself and rose to the rank of governor in the Italian province of Campania. Although he was not a Christian, he was impressed by the faith of the people who revered the memory of a local martyr, Saint Felix. He took the unusual step of using public funds to “build a road for pilgrims, as well as a hospice for the poor near the site of Felix’s veneration.”ⁱⁱ

Having risen to prominence at a young age, he gave up the prestige and power and pursued a more leisurely life of wealth. He went to Milan to study under the renowned Church Father, Bishop Ambrose of Milan. “He then completed his Christian formation in his native land, where he was baptized by Bishop Delphinus of Bordeaux.”ⁱⁱⁱ Following his marriage to Therasia, a devout noblewoman from Barcelona, the two had a child but the boy lived for only a few days.

Paulinus and Therasia reexamined their lives in light of the Gospel and consciously chose a more radical form of Christianity. Although rich and married, they embraced poverty and chastity. From a secular and worldly view, some thought them mad. Paulinus later explained the Christian logic. “The relinquishment or sale of temporal goods possessed in this world is not the completion but only the beginning of the race in the stadium; it is not, so to speak, the goal, but only the starting point.”^{iv}

“In full agreement with his wife Therasia, he sold his possessions for the benefit of the poor and, with her, left Aquitaine for Nola. Here, the husband and wife settled beside the Basilica of the Patron Saint, Felix, living henceforth in chaste brotherhood according to a form of life which also attracted others.”^v Paulinus, who had been ordained a priest in Barcelona, took great care of the pilgrims. Their faith and piety continued to impress him and nurture his own faith. Upon the death of the bishop in 409, the Christian community chose Paulinus as the new Bishop of Nola.

Bishop Paulinus was known for his pastoral attention to the poor and to the pilgrims who came to Nola. “Scripture, read, meditated upon and assimilated, was the light in whose brightness the Saint of Nola examined his soul as he strove for perfection... After the ascetic life and the Word of God came charity; the poor were at home in the monastic community. Paulinus did not limit himself to distributing alms to them: he welcomed them as though they were Christ himself.” Paulinus “liked to say that their prayers constituted the foundations of his house.”^{vi}

ⁱ Catholicnewsagency.com/saint/st-paulinus-of-nola-703

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2007/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20071212.html

^{iv} Ibid.

^v Ibid.

^{vi} Ibid.