Prayers for the Week Ahead

WEEK BEGINNING 27TH NOVEMBER

Monday 27th November
St Catherine of Alexandria

Catherine was exceptionally bright and beautiful, and reported to be the most beautiful young woman in Alexandria. She publicly denounced the Emperor Maxentius for worshiping idols when she was only eighteen. Smitten by her beauty, Maxentius tried to convert her to idolatry by having Catherine appear before fifty philosophers who were ordered to convince Catherine of her heresy. When Catherine was able to demolish all of the philosophers' arguments and convince them of the Christian religion, Maxentius burned them to death. Maxentius was so dazzled by Catherine's predominance before his philosopher that he ordered Catherine to many him. Catherine refused and Maxentius had her flogged and imprisoned for several days without food Fasting was not apparently a problem for Catherine who was fed daily by a dove that flew through her prison window. Maxentius then tried a more sophisticated torture. He had a spiked wheel constructed (the Catherine-wheel) on which Catherine was tied spread-eagle. The wheel was set in motion and as its speed was increased, the spikes began to be hurled off, impaling the onlookers who had come to witness Catherine's torture. When Catherine came out of the ordeal unharmed, Maxentius' wife (whom the Emperor had planned on replacing with Catherine) converted to Christianity along with 200 of the emperor's personal guards, thus provoking Maxentius to finally have Catherine beheaded. When her head was removed, milk flowed from her veins instead of blood. Her body (and head) were then transported by angels to Mount Sinai where her alleged relics are revered at the famous monastery of St. Catherine's.
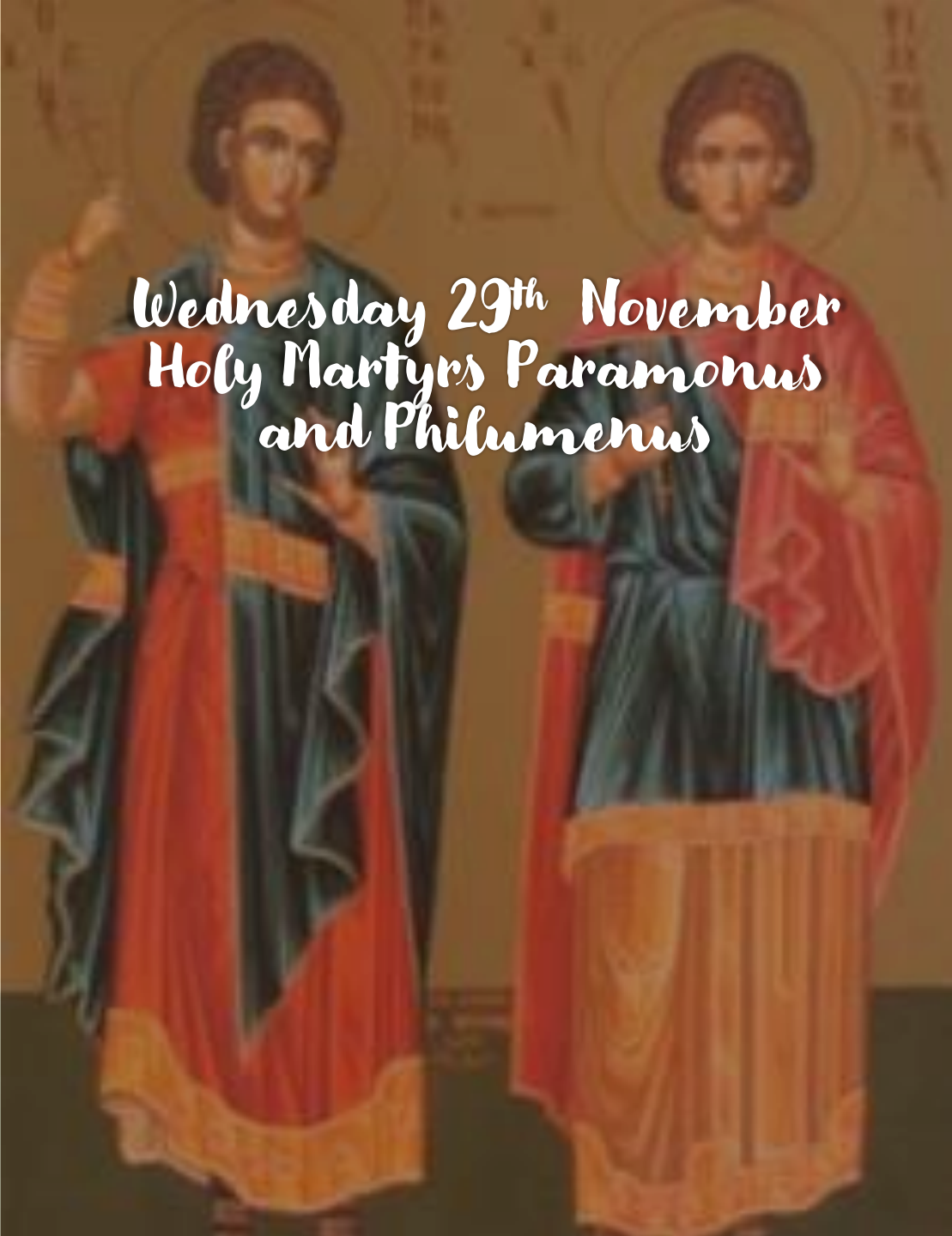
Our Father…

St. Catherine Labouré was born on May 2, 1806, in a quaint village in Burgundy, France. She was the ninth of eleven children. At the age of nine, her mother died, and in her sorrow, St. Catherine turned to the only other mother she knew. Standing on her tiptoes to see the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary in her home, St. Catherine tearfully said, "Now, dear Blessed Mother, you will be my mother."

At the age of 23, she joined the Daughters of Charity, a religious order of Sisters that St. Vincent de Paul founded. It was here that our Blessed Mother appeared to St. Catherine in 1830 and told her to have the Miraculous Medal made. During the next 46 years, St. Catherine was aware of the countless miracles God was working through the Medal, yet she chose to remain anonymous. After his much-publicized conversion to Catholicism—which was sparked by the Miraculous Medal—Alphonse Ratisbonne asked if he could meet the Sister who had seen our Blessed Mother. Nobody knew which sister it was. That was the way St. Catherine preferred it. She wanted nothing more than to humbly perform her daily duties and devote herself to the care of the sick and elderly (due to the great care she gave them, she is called the patroness of seniors).

Right before her death, St. Catherine told her superior that she was the Sister of the Miraculous Medal; up until that point, the only person she spoke to about the apparitions was her confessor. On December 31, 1876, St. Catherine left this earth for heaven, and after her passing, her superior broke the silence about the Sister who had seen and touched the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Her body was exhumed 57 years later. Miraculously, it was in perfect condition. Even death respected the Sister whose hands rested on the knees of the Blessed Virgin Mary. She was declared a saint because of the heroic virtues she lived while doing her commonplace duties. A "Saint of Ordinary People," St. Catherine holds the secret of sanctity for us all. St. Catherine was canonized by Pope Pius XII on July 27, 1947.

Hail Mary…

Wednesday 29th November
Holy Martyrs Paramonus
and Philumenus

The Holy Martyr Paramonus and the 370 Martyrs with him suffered for their faith in Christ in the year 250 during the rule of the emperor Decius (249-251). The governor of the Eastern regions, Aquianus, had locked up in prison 370 Christians, urging them to abjure Christ and instead offer sacrifice to idols. They subjected the captives to beatings, hoping by tortures and the threat of death to persuade them to renounce Christ and worship the pagan gods. One of the local inhabitants, Paramonus by name, openly denounced the cruel governor and confessed his faith in the One True God, the Lord Jesus Christ. They beheaded Saint Paramonus after fierce tortures together with the other 370 martyrs.

The Holy Martyr Philumenus suffered for Christ in the year 274, during the persecution against Christians by the emperor Aurelian (270-275). Saint Philumenus was by occupation a bread merchant in Ancyra. Envious persons reported to the governor Felix that Philumenus was confessing the Christian faith, and he thus came before a judge. Saint Philumenus did not renounce Christ. For this they hammered nails into his hands, feet, and head, and they forced him to walk. The holy martyr bravely endured the torments and he died from loss of blood, giving up his soul to God.

Hail Mary…

Thursday 30th November

Saint Andrew

Saint Andrew is the patron saint of Scotland, Greece and Russia and was Christ's first disciple.

St. Andrew, also known as Andrew the Apostle, was a Christian Apostle and the older brother to St. Peter. According to the New Testament, Andrew was born in the village of Bethsaida on the Sea of Galilee during the early first century. Much like his younger brother, Simon Peter, Andrew was also a fisherman. Andrew's very name means strong, and he was known for having good social skills.

A Prayer to St Andrew

O Glorious St. Andrew,
you were the first to recognize and follow the Son of God.
With your friend, St. John,
you remained with Jesus,
for your entire life,
and now throughout eternity.

Just as you led your brother, St Peter,
to Christ and many others after him,
draw us also to Him.
Teach us how to lead them,
solely out of love for Jesus
and dedication to His service.
Help us to learn the lesson of the Cross
and carry our daily crosses without complaint,
so that they may carry us to God the Almighty Father. Amen.

Friday 1st December

St Eligius

Born around AD 588, originally from Chaptelat in Limousin, the "Good St. Eligius" belonged to a wealthy rural family who worked their own land, unlike many landowners who left the cultivation to slaves. He left the care of the family farm to one of his brothers, and entered trade as a goldsmith apprentice in a shop in which the royal coin was hammered according to ancient Roman methods. He saved some of the income from his family and gave it in charity to the poor and to slaves.

When they asked him to make a gold throne for King Clothair II (613-629), he made a second with the extra gold he did not want to hold for himself. This gesture, extraordinary at the time, earned him the trust of the king, who asked him to reside in Paris as the Royal Goldsmith, a royal court officer and court counselor.

Named coinmaster in Marseilles, he would redeem many of the slaves sold at the port. When Dagobert became king in 629, he was summoned to Paris where he directed the shops of the Frankish kingdom in which coin was minted, which were in Paris on the Quai des Orfèvres at the present-day Rue de la Monnaie. Among others, he had the task of embellishing the tombs of Saint Genevieve and Saint Denis. He made reliquaries for Saint Germain, Saint Severinus, Saint Martin, and Saint Columba, and numerous liturgical objects for the new abbey of Saint Denis. Thanks to his honesty, his frankness, and his capacity for peaceable judgment, he came so far into the king's trust, who often called him to himself, that he entrusted him with a peace mission to the Breton king, King Judicael.

Eligius was eventually ordained a priest and became the Bishop of Noyon.

Our Father…