



Prayers for the Week Ahead

WEEK BEGINNING 22ND JANUARY



Tuesday 23rd January

It is certain that a real matrimony was contracted by Joseph and Mary. Still Mary is called "espoused" to Joseph ("his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph", Matthew 1:18) because the matrimony was never consummated. The term spouse is applied to married people until their marriage is consummated. This feast dates from 1517 when it was granted to the nuns of the Annunciation by Pope Leo X with nine other Masses in honour of Our Lady. Adopted by many religious orders and dioceses, it was observed for a time by nearly the whole Church but is no longer in the Calendar.

A prayer for married couples

Father, we pray that you give married couples the words to speak to each other. Use every word from their mouths to speak love and encouragement to the other. We understand that harsh words are the tools of the enemy of love and marriage. Give them the awareness in every situation to only speak that which builds each other up. Amen.

Espousal of Mary and Joseph

Monday 22nd January



Laura was born in Santiago, Chile, in 1891. Laura's father died suddenly when she was still just a small child. Mrs. Vicuna, with her two daughters, sought refuge in Argentina. In 1900, the Salesian Sisters welcomed Laura Vicuña into their college in Junin de los Andes. The following year, Laura made her First Communion, and like St. Dominic Savio, she took the resolution to love God with her whole heart, to mortify herself and to die rather than sin. Laura wanted to make Jesus known and make reparation for the offenses Jesus receives.

When Laura realized that her mother was living in a sinful situation, she offered her life to God for her mother's conversion. Fr. Crestanello, the first to write a biography of Laura Vicuña, tells us, "Laura suffered secretly in her heart... One day she decided to offer her life and to accept death willingly, in exchange for the salvation of her mother. She begged me to bless this ardent desire of hers. I hesitated for a long time." Laura grew in virtue and, with the consent of her confessor, privately vowed to live the three vows professed by religious Sisters, poverty, chastity, and obedience. Worn out with sacrifice and ill health, she died in Junin de los Andes, Argentina, on January 22, 1904.

On September 3, 1988, on the Young People's Mount of the Beatitudes, in the presence of thousands of young people, and in the year of the 100th anniversary of John Bosco's death, St. Pope John Paul II beatified Laura Vicuña. St. John Paul proposed her as a model of evangelical courage, to the point of giving one's life, for the mission of salvation.

Our Father...

Blessed Laura Vicuña

Wednesday 24th
January



St. Francis de Sales

St. Francis de Sales (21 August 1567 – 28 December 1622) was a Bishop of Geneva and is revered as a saint in the Catholic Church. He became noted for his deep faith and his gentle approach to the religious divisions in his land resulting from the Protestant Reformation. He is known also for his writings on the topic of spiritual direction and spiritual formation, particularly the Introduction to the Devout Life and the Treatise on the Love of God.

A prayer of St. Francis de Sales

*Do not look forward in fear to the changes in life;
rather, look to them with full hope that as they arise,
God, whose very own you are, will lead you safely through all things; and
when you cannot stand it, God will carry you in His arms.*

*Do not fear what may happen tomorrow; the same understanding Father
who cares for you today will take care of you then and every day.
He will either shield you from suffering or will give you unfailing strength
to bear it.*

Be at peace, and put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginations.

Amen.



Thursday 25th January

Saul, the young man who looked after the cloaks of the men who were stoning St. Stephen, grew into a dedicated and efficient persecutor of Christians. Today's feast celebrates the day that Christ appeared to him in a vision as he was on the way to Damascus, reproached him for his persecutions and converted him to the true faith. From a fierce persecutor he became the great Apostle of the Gentiles. He made three missionary journeys which brought him to the great centres of Asia Minor and southern Europe, and made many converts. Fourteen of his Epistles are found in the New Testament. He was beheaded in Rome around 66 A.D., and his relics are in the Basilica of St. Paul Outside-the-Walls near the Ostian Way.

A prayer in honour of St. Paul

O God, who taught the whole world through the preaching of the blessed Apostle Paul, draw us, we pray, nearer to you through the example of him whose conversion we celebrate today, and so make us witnesses to your truth in the world.

Amen.

The Conversion of St. Paul



Friday 26th January

Sts. Timothy and Titus were converted to Christianity by St. Paul, and became his companions and helpers. Paul entrusted Timothy with the care of the Christians in Ephesus, and sent Titus to Crete to look after the Christians there. He wrote them the so-called "pastoral" epistles, giving advice for pastors and people alike.

A prayer in honour of Sts. Timothy and Titus

*God our Father,
You gave Your saints Timothy and Titus
the courage and wisdom of the apostles:
may their prayers help us to live holy lives
and lead us to heaven, our true home.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.*

Sts. Timothy and Titus

Saturday 27th January

Angela Merici (21 March 1474 - 27 January 1540) was an Italian religious educator, who is honoured as a saint by the Roman Catholic Church. She founded the Company of St. Ursula in 1535 in Brescia, in which women dedicated their lives to the service of the Church through the education of girls. From this organisation later sprang the monastic Order of Ursulines, whose nuns established places of prayer and learning throughout Europe and, later, worldwide, most notably in North America.

A prayer to St. Angela Merici

St. Angela,

*You were generous and joyful in answering God's call,
and you happily shared the gifts you had been given.*

*When you recognised the need for education,
you overcame obstacles and prejudice by your prayer and your commitment to
those living in poverty.*

*Open our eyes to the needs of others; remind us that Jesus calls us to
serve our sisters and brothers, and to bring joy to those around us.*

Amen.

St. Angela Merici