



Prayers for the Week Ahead

WEEK BEGINNING 5TH FEBRUARY

Monday 5th February



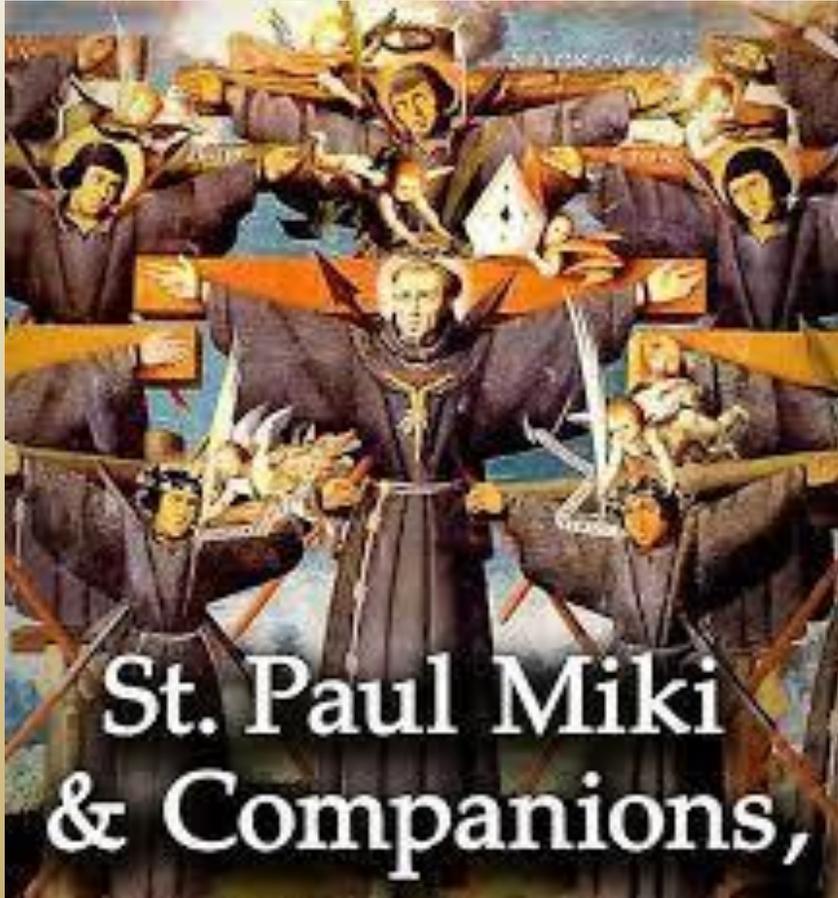
St. Agatha, also known as Agatha of Sicily, is one of the most highly venerated virgin martyrs of the Catholic Church. It is believed that she was born around 231 in either Catania or Palermo, Sicily to a rich and noble family. Agatha decided that she wanted to remain a virgin from a young age, however a high ranking diplomat wanted to marry her and tried to get her to change her mind by having her imprisoned. Agatha remained true to her convictions and faith despite the challenges she faced. The diplomat, Quintianus had her tortured and sexually assaulted when he still refused to marry him. St. Agatha is the patron saint of Sicily, bellfounders, breast cancer patients, Palermo, rape victims, and wet nurses. She is also considered to be a powerful intercessor when people suffer from fires

Reflection

Saint Agatha, you suffered sexual assault and indignity because of your faith and purity. Help heal all those who are survivors of sexual assault and protect those women who are in danger. Amen

St. Agatha

Tuesday 6th February



St. Paul Miki and
his companions

Nagasaki, Japan, is familiar to Americans as the city on which the second atomic bomb was dropped, immediately killing over 37,000 people. Three and a half centuries before, 26 martyrs of Japan were crucified on a hill, now known as the Holy Mountain, overlooking Nagasaki. Brother Paul Miki, a Jesuit and a native of Japan, has become the best known among the martyrs of Japan. While hanging upon a cross, Paul Miki preached to the people gathered for the execution: "The sentence of judgment says these men came to Japan from the Philippines, but I did not come from any other country. I am a true Japanese. The only reason for my being killed is that I have taught the doctrine of Christ. I certainly did teach the doctrine of Christ. I thank God it is for this reason I die. Ask Christ to help you to become happy."

When missionaries returned to Japan in the 1860s, at first they found no trace of Christianity. But after establishing themselves they found that thousands of Christians lived around Nagasaki and that they had secretly preserved the faith. Beatified in 1627, the martyrs of Japan were finally canonized in 1862.

Reflection

Today, a new era has come for the Church in Japan. Although the number of Catholics is not large, the Church is respected and has total religious freedom. The spread of Christianity in the Far East is slow and difficult. Faith such as that of the 26 martyrs is needed today as much as in 1597. Lord we ask you to help all those who suffer as a result of religious persecution. Help them to be strong and remain faithful to the Lord. Amen.

Wednesday 7th February



St. Mel of Ardagh

Mél of Ardagh, also written Mel or Moel, was a 5th-century saint in Ireland who was a nephew of Saint Patrick. He was the son of Conis (or Chonis) and Patrick's sister, Darerca. Saint Darerca was known as the "mother of saints" because most of her children (seventeen sons and two daughters) entered religious life, many were later recognized as saints, and several of her sons became bishops. According to the Life of St. Brigid, Mél is said to have had no fixed see for most of his life in ministry, which fits with other accounts of his being a traveling missionary and evangelist. Acting upon the apostolic precept, Mél supported himself by working with his hands; what he gained beyond bare necessities, he gave to the poor.

A prayer to St Mel of Ardagh

God our Father, who in the springtime of the faith in Ireland raised up your servant the bishop Saint Mel, to foster the growth of the Church; grant, we pray, that we who venerate his memory may never fail to imitate his tireless labour. 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.

Thursday 8th February



St. Josephine Bakhita

For many years, Josephine Bakhita was a slave but her spirit was always free and eventually that spirit prevailed. Born in Olgossa in the Darfur region of southern Sudan, Josephine was kidnapped at the age of 7, sold into slavery and given the name Bakhita, which means fortunate. Bakhita became babysitter to Mimmina Michieli, whom she accompanied to Venice's Institute of the Catechumens, run by the Canossian Sisters. While Mimmina was being instructed, Josephine felt drawn to the Catholic Church. She was baptized and confirmed in 1890, taking the name Josephine. When the Michielis returned from Africa and wanted to take Mimmina and Josephine back with them, the future saint refused to go. During the ensuing court case, the Canossian Sisters and the patriarch of Venice intervened on Josephine's behalf. The judge concluded that since slavery was illegal in Italy, she had actually been free since 1885.

A prayer to St Josephine Bakhita

O St. Bakhita, assist all those who are trapped in a state of slavery; Intercede with God on their behalf so that they will be released from their chains of captivity. Those whom man enslaves, let God set free. Provide comfort to survivors of slavery and let them look to you as an example of hope and faith. Help all survivors find healing from their wounds. We ask for your prayers and intercessions for those enslaved among us. Amen.

Friday 9th February



St. Teilo

St Teilo was a 6th century monk and bishop, and an early Welsh saint. The patron saint of fruit trees and horses, his feast day is celebrated on 9th February.

Although a largely forgotten saint today, there are more than 25 churches in Wales, Cornwall and Brittany dedicated to Teilo, showing us the importance of this early Welsh saint. Only the patron saint of Wales, St David, has more churches dedicated to him. According to tradition, Teilo (also known as Elios, Eliau, Teliarus, Teliiau or Télo), was born at Penally near Tenby in South Pembrokeshire around 480-500AD. He went on to study under St Paulinus at the monastic school at Whitland, Carmarthenshire. Here he met and became firm friends with Dewi (St David), who may have been his cousin. Teilo subsequently travelled with him to Mynyw, now known as St David's, where Dewi set up his religious community.

A prayer to St Teilo

St. Teilo, pray for us,

Amen.

Saturday 10th February



St. Scholastica

St. Scholastica, sister of St. Benedict, consecrated her life to God from her earliest youth. She visited her brother once a year, and as she was not allowed to enter his monastery. On one occasion they had passed the time as usual in prayer and pious conversation and in the evening they sat down to take their reflection. St. Scholastica begged her brother to remain until the next day. St. Benedict refused to spend the night outside his monastery. She had recourse to prayer and a furious thunderstorm burst so that neither St. Benedict nor any of his companions could return home. They spent the night in spiritual conferences. The next morning they parted to meet no more on earth. Three days later St. Scholastica died, and her holy brother beheld her soul in a vision as it ascended into heaven. She died about the year 543, and St. Benedict followed her soon after.

A prayer to St Scholastica

O God, to show us where innocence leads, you made the soul of your virgin Saint Scholastica soar to heaven like a dove in flight. Grant through her merits and her prayers that we may so live in innocence as to attain to joys everlasting. This we ask through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, forever and ever. Amen.