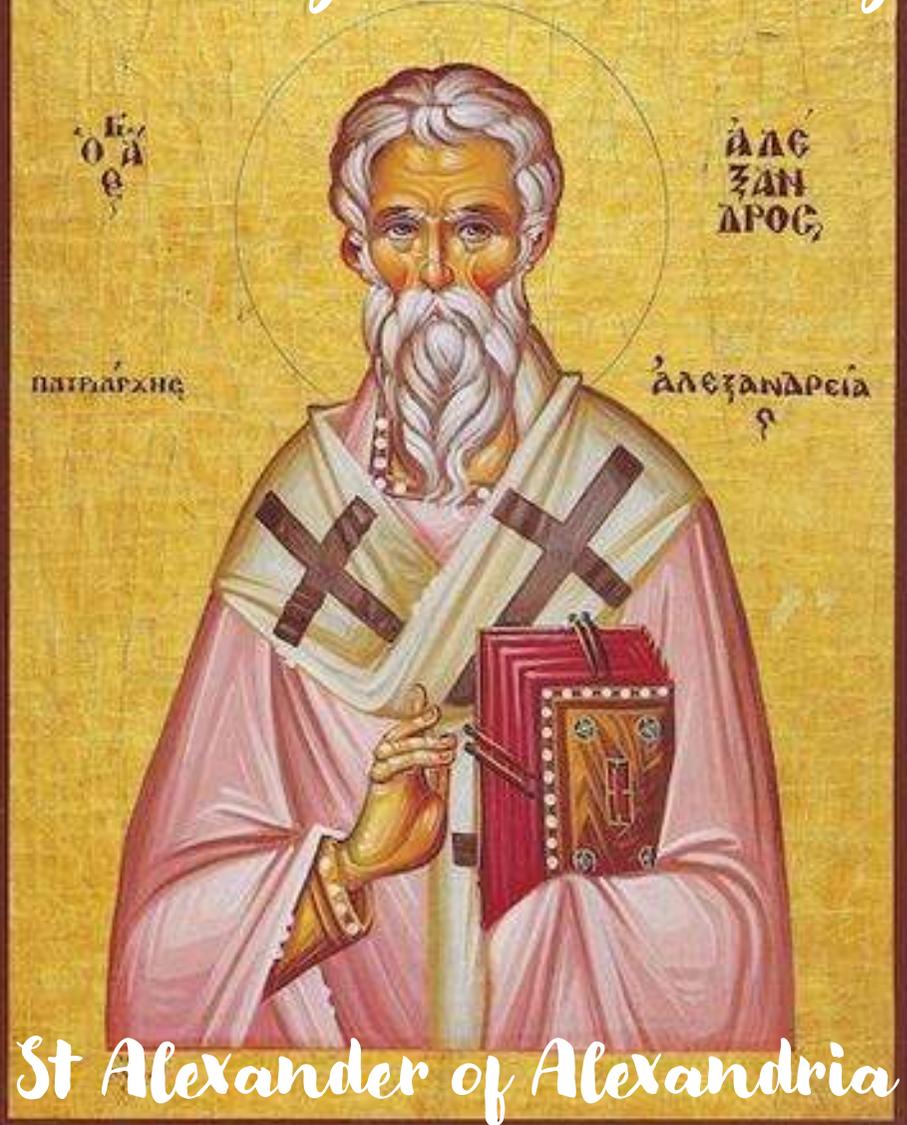




Prayers for the Week Ahead

WEEK BEGINNING 26TH FEBRUARY

Monday 26th February



Patriarch of Alexandria, date of birth uncertain; died 17 April, 326. He is, apart from his own greatness, prominent by the fact that his appointment to the patriarchal see excluded the heresiarch Arius from that post. Arius had begun to teach his heresies in 300 when Peter, by whom he was excommunicated, was Patriarch. He was reinstated by Achillas, the successor of Peter and then began to scheme to be made a bishop. When Achillas died Alexander was elected, and after that Arius threw off all disguise. Alexander was particularly obnoxious to him, although so tolerant at first of the errors of Arius that the clergy nearly revolted. Finally the heresy was condemned in a council held in Alexandria, and later on, as is well known, in the general Council of Nicaea, whose Acts Alexander is credited with having drawn up. It is worth recording that the great Athanasius succeeded Alexander, the dying pontiff compelling the future doctor of the Church to accept the post. Alexander is described as "a man held in the highest honour by the people and clergy, magnificent, liberal, eloquent, just, a lover of God and man, devoted to the poor, good and sweet to all, so mortified that he never broke his fast while the sun was in the heavens."

Our Father...



Gabriel was born in Italy into a large family and baptized Francis. Gabriel lost his mother when he was only four years old. He was educated by the Jesuits and, having been cured twice of serious illnesses, came to believe that God was calling him to the religious life. Young Francis wished to join the Jesuits but was turned down, probably because of his age, not yet 17. Following the death of a sister to cholera, his resolve to enter religious life became even stronger and he was accepted by the Passionists. Upon entering the novitiate he was given the name Gabriel of Our Lady of Sorrows.

Ever popular and cheerful, Gabriel quickly was successful in his effort to be faithful in little things. His superiors had great expectations of Gabriel as he prepared for the priesthood, but after only four years of religious life symptoms of tuberculosis appeared. He died peacefully on February 27, 1862, at age 24, having been an example to both young and old. He was canonized in 1920.

Reflection

When we think of achieving great holiness by doing little things with love and grace, Therese of Lisieux comes first to mind. Like her, Gabriel died painfully from tuberculosis. Together they urge us to tend to the small details of daily life, to be considerate of others' feelings every day. Our path to sanctity, like theirs, probably lies not in heroic doings but in performing small acts of kindness every day.

Tuesday 27th February
St Gabriel of Our Lady of Sorrows

Wednesday 28th
February



St Oswald

Saint Oswald (born c. 604–died 642, Maserfelth, Eng.; feast day August 5) Anglo-Saxon king of Northumbria from 633 to 642 who introduced Celtic Christian missionaries to his kingdom and gained ascendancy over most of England.

Oswald's father, King Aethelfrith (d. 616), had ruled the two ancient Northumbrian kingdoms of Bernicia and Deira. Expelled from Northumbria upon the accession of his uncle Edwin in 616, Oswald and his brother Oswiu took refuge in Iona in the Hebrides, where they were converted to Christianity.

Edwin was killed fighting King Cadwallon of Gwynedd (in northern Wales) and Penda of Mercia in 633, but the next year Oswald defeated and killed Cadwallon near Hexham (in present-day Northumberland). At Oswald's invitation, St. Aidan led a group of Irish monks from Iona to found a monastery and missionary bishopric for the kingdom at Lindisfarne. The historian Bede says that he asserted his authority over all the peoples of southern England. The pagan king Penda defeated and killed Oswald at Maserfelth (or Maserfeld, probably near Oswestry, in present-day Shropshire). The dead king was venerated as a martyr of the Northumbrian church, and it was believed that his remains worked miracles.

Our Father...

Thursday 29th
February



Pope St Hilary

Hilary was Pope from 461-468 and guardian of Church unity. He was born in Sardinia, Italy, and was a papal legate to the Robber Council of Ephesus in 449, barely escaping with his life from this affair. Hilary was used by Pope St. Leo I the Great on many assignments. When Leo died, Hilary was elected pope and consecrated on November 19, 461. He worked diligently to strengthen the Church in France and Spain, calling councils in 462 and 465. Hilary also rebuilt many Roman churches and erected the chapel of St. John Lateran. He also publicly rebuked Emperor Anthemius in St. Peter's for supporting the Macedonian heresy and sent a decree to the Eastern bishops validating the decisions of the General Councils of Nicaea, Ephesus, and Chalcedon. Hilary consolidated the Church in Sandi, Africa, and Gaul. He died in Rome on February 29.

Reflection:

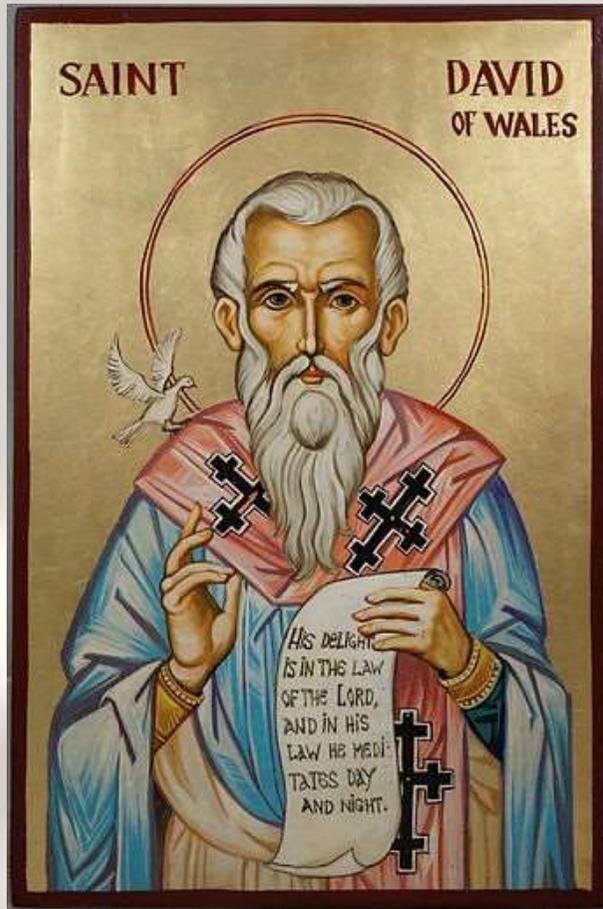
Does our lives a true witness of the Risen Christ? Are we a genuine promoter of God's love to the world?

Prayer:

All-powerful and ever-living God, you called Saint Hilary to guide your people by his word and example. With him we pray to you: watch over the pastors of your Church with the people entrusted to their care, and lead them to salvation.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Friday 1st March



St David of Wales

David is the patron saint of Wales and perhaps the most famous of British saints. Ironically, we have little reliable information about him. It is known that he became a priest, engaged in missionary work, and founded many monasteries, including his principal abbey in southwestern Wales. Many stories and legends sprang up about David and his Welsh monks. Their austerity was extreme. They worked in silence without the help of animals to till the soil. Their food was limited to bread, vegetables and water.

In about the year 550, David attended a synod where his eloquence impressed his fellow monks to such a degree that he was elected primate of the region. The episcopal see was moved to Mynyw, where he had his monastery, now called St. David's. He ruled his diocese until he had reached a very old age. His last words to his monks and subjects were:

"Be joyful, brothers and sisters. Keep your faith, and do the little things that you have seen and heard with me."

Saint David is pictured standing on a mound with a dove on his shoulder. The legend is that once while he was preaching a dove descended to his shoulder and the earth rose to lift him high above the people so that he could be heard. Over 50 churches in South Wales were dedicated to him in pre-Reformation days.

Almighty God,

You called your servant David to be a faithful and wise steward of your mysteries for the people of Wales: Mercifully grant that, following his purity of life and zeal for the Gospel of Christ, we may with him receive our heavenly reward; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen

Saturday 2nd March



St. Angela of the Cross is the Foundress of the Institute of the Sisters of the Company of the Cross.

Angelita was greatly influenced by the teaching and example of her pious parents, and was taught from an early age how to pray the Rosary. She could often be found in the parish church praying before the image of "Our Lady of Good Health", while her mother prepared a nearby altar. In their own home, a simple altar was erected in honour of the Virgin Mary during the month of May, where the family would recite the Rosary and give special honour to Our Lady. On 2 August 1875 three other women joined Angelita, beginning community life together in a room they rented in Seville. From that day on, they began their visits and gave assistance to the poor, day and night.

These Sisters of the Company of the Cross, under the guidance of Angelita, named "Mother Angela of the Cross", lived an authentically recluse contemplative life when they were not among the poor. Once they returned to their home, they dedicated themselves to prayer and silence, but were always ready when needed to go out and serve the poor and dying. Mother Angela saw the sisters as "angels", called to help and love the poor and sick in their homes who otherwise would have been abandoned. Mother Angela of the Cross died on 2 March 1932 in Seville. She was beatified by Pope John Paul II on 5 November 1982.

Blessed Angela, your decision to serve and live with the poor leads me to examine my own attachment to wealth and comfort. Amen.

St Angela of the Cross

Sunday 3rd March



Katharine Drexel was born on November 26, 1858 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Though her birth mother died when she was an infant, she had a close relationship with her stepmother, whom her father married in 1860.

Katharine's parents instilled a strong faith in their three daughters. The family prayed together and served the poor. Katharine was taught to be kind and generous to those who were in need. The Drexel family believed wealth must be shared. Several times during the week, her parents would invite poor people into their home or quietly seek out local people short of resources. During the summers, Katharine helped teach Sunday school to local children. When her father died in 1886, Katharine and her sisters inherited a large sum of money. She became more involved in helping those in need. Katharine started schools and churches for Native Americans and African Americans all over the United States. During her lifetime, she opened, staffed and directly supported nearly 60 schools and missions, especially in the West and Southwest United States. She began Xavier University in New Orleans, the first Catholic university in the United States for African Americans.

Katharine believed that everyone had a right to a free education and that education is the only way to improve lives. Katharine Drexel died on March 3rd, 1955. She was beatified by Pope John Paul II on November 20, 1980. She was canonized in 2000 by Pope John Paul II. Katharine was the second American to be canonized a saint.

Reflection:

By her prayers and example, enable us to work for justice among the poor and oppressed. Draw us all into the Eucharistic community of your Church, that we may be one in you. Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

St. Katharine Drexel