



Prayers for the Week Ahead

WEEK BEGINNING 4TH MARCH

Monday 4th March



Casimir, born of kings and in line to be a king himself, was filled with exceptional values and learning by a great teacher, John Dlugosz. As a teenager, Casimir lived a highly disciplined, even severe life, sleeping on the ground, spending a great part of the night in prayer and dedicating himself to lifelong celibacy.

When nobles in Hungary became dissatisfied with their king, they prevailed upon Casimir's father, the king of Poland, to send his son to take over the country. Casimir obeyed his father, as many young men over the centuries have obeyed their governments. The army he was supposed to lead was clearly outnumbered by the "enemy"; some of his troops were deserting because they were not paid. At the advice of his officers, Casimir decided to return home.

His father was irked at the failure of his plans, and confined his 15-year-old son for three months. The lad made up his mind never again to become involved in the wars of his day, and no amount of persuasion could change his mind. He returned to prayer and study, maintaining his decision to remain celibate even under pressure to marry the emperor's daughter. He reigned briefly as king of Poland during his father's absence. He died of lung trouble at 25 while visiting Lithuania, of which he was also Grand Duke. He was buried in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Our Father...

St Casimir of Poland

Tuesday 5th March



Kieran (Irish Ciarán) of Saighir is known as the “first-born of the saints of Ireland”. Most of what we know about him comes from various Lives which were written down much later, so that while they are primarily intended to edify and entertain, it cannot either be concluded or excluded that the Lives reflect what actually happened.

In one of the Lives of Ciarán it is claimed that “before Patrick there were none to maintain faith and belief in Ireland but Kieran, Ailbe, Declan and bishop Ibar”. These four were from the southern half of the country and this tradition may reflect faith interaction with Christians of south Wales before St Patrick came to Ireland.

Kieran’s father belonged to the Osraighe. On a trip to the southwest of Ireland he met a woman called Liadán, who belonged to the Corca Loegde in southwest Cork. Kieran was born of their marriage and, according to the Lives, was fostered on Cape Clear, where there are many monuments dedicated to him.

Kieran set out for Rome, where he was baptised and studied scripture there “under the abbot of Rome”. On his way back to Ireland it is said he met St Patrick, who told him exactly where to found his settlement, giving him a bell which would only ring when he found the place. This turned out to be Saighir Chiaráin, near the village of Clareen about four miles south-east of Birr, Co Offaly.

Our Father...

St Kieran of Saighir

Wednesday 6th March



St Colette of Corbie was the daughter of a Carpenter. Her parents were nearly 60 at her birth. She became an orphan at the age of 17 and was left in the care of a Benedictine abbot. Colette's guardian wanted her to marry, but Colette was drawn to religious life. St Colette of Corbie had visions in which she saw Saint Francis of Assisi, ordering her to restore the Rule of Saint Clare to its original seriousness. Colette was struck blind for three days and mute for three more days when she hesitated. These to her were signs that she should take action.

St Colette of Corbie tried to follow her mission by explaining it but had no success. Realizing she needed more sovereignty behind her words, she walked to Nice, France being barefoot and clothed in a habit of patches, to meet Peter de Luna. He professed her a Poor Clare and was so impressed that he made her superioress of all convents of Minoresses that she might reform or found.

St Colette of Corbie travelled from convent to convent, meeting opposition, slander, abuse, and was also accused of sorcery. Eventually, she made some development, especially in Savoy. St Colette of Corbie was known for her deep devotion to Christ's Passion with an appreciation and care for animals. She fasted every Friday, meditating on the Passion.

Our Father...

St Collette of Corbie



Thursday 7th March
Commemoration of Saints
Perpetua and Felicity

In the eyes of the world, Saints Perpetua and Felicity were separated by status: one a well-educated noblewoman, the other a servant or slave. Yet, in life and in death, these two women from early 3rd century Carthage, North Africa, were sisters in Christ. Both catechumens, they were arrested along with their companions under a decree of the emperor, Septimus Severus, that forbade anyone to become Christian. The group was condemned to death in the “games” of the arena, authentic sporting contests as well as public executions, often by means of wild beasts. These amphitheater killings were staples of the Roman persecutions of Christians.

Reflection:

Persecution for religious beliefs is not confined to Christians in ancient times. Consider Anne Frank, the Jewish girl who with her family, was forced into hiding and later died in Bergen-Belsen, one of Hitler’s death camps during World War II. Anne, like Perpetua and Felicity, endured hardship and suffering and finally death because she committed herself to God. In her diary, Anne writes, “It’s twice as hard for us young ones to hold our ground, and maintain our opinions, in a time when all ideals are being shattered and destroyed, when people are showing their worst side, and do not know whether to believe in truth and right and God.”

Our Father ...

Friday 8th March



Commemoration of saint John of God

John left home at a young age and worked as a shepherd. The man he worked for wanted him to marry his daughter but John wanted to find his way in the religious life.

John went through many tough times before he found what God wanted him to do. He was a soldier in the Spanish army. He worked loading ships and later selling books and holy pictures. He even opened his own bookstore for a while. But John began spending more and more time with the sick and the poor.

He was put in the hospital for a time and while he was there he helped others who were sick like him. When he got out of the hospital, he decided to keep helping the sick and the poor. He first worked helping the poor people living in the streets and later opened a house for the sick and the poor. He begged on the streets for beds and medicine and food.

One night the hospital in the city caught on fire and he went and rescued all the patients who could not save themselves. He passed through the flames without getting burned. This is why John of God is one of the patron saints of firefighters as well as booksellers, hospitals and the sick.

Reflection:

The utter humility of John of God, which led to a totally selfless dedication to others, is most impressive. Here is a man who realized his nothingness in the face of God. The Lord blessed him with the gifts of prudence, patience, courage, enthusiasm, and the ability to influence and inspire others. He saw that in his early life he had turned away from the Lord, and, moved to receive his mercy, John began his new commitment to love others in openness to God's love.

Saturday 9th March



Commemoration of Saint Frances of Rome

Frances was a devoted and loving wife. She longed for a lifestyle of prayer and service, so she organized a group of women to minister to the needs of Rome's poor. Born of wealthy parents, Frances found herself attracted to the religious life during her youth. But her parents objected and a young nobleman was selected to be her husband. Frances fell ill for a time, but this apparently only deepened her commitment to the suffering people she met. The years passed, and Frances gave birth to two sons and a daughter. With the new responsibilities of family life, the young mother turned her attention more to the needs of her own household. The family flourished under Frances' care, but within a few years a great plague began to sweep across Italy. It struck Rome with devastating cruelty and left Frances' second son dead. In an effort to help alleviate some of the suffering, Frances used all her money and sold her possessions to buy whatever the sick might possibly need. Later, Frances' daughter died, and the saint opened a section of her house as a hospital. Frances became more and more convinced that this way of life was so necessary for the world,

Reflection:

Looking at the exemplary life of fidelity to God and devotion to her fellow human beings which Frances of Rome was blessed to lead, one cannot help but be reminded of Saint Teresa of Calcutta, who loved Jesus Christ in prayer and also in the poor. The life of Frances of Rome calls each of us not only to look deeply for God in prayer, but also to carry our devotion to Jesus living in the suffering of our world. Frances shows us that this life need not be restricted to those bound by vows.

Sunday 10th March



John Ogilvie's noble Scottish family was partly Catholic and partly Presbyterian. His father raised him as a Calvinist, sending him to the continent to be educated. He decided to become Catholic and was received into the Church at Louvain, Belgium, in 1596 at the age of 17.

John secretly entered Scotland posing as a horse trader or a soldier returning from the wars in Europe. Unable to do significant work among the relatively few Catholics in Scotland, John made his way back to Paris to consult his superiors. Rebuked for having left his assignment in Scotland, he was sent back. He warmed to the task before him and had some success in making converts and in secretly serving Scottish Catholics. But he was soon betrayed, arrested, and brought before the court. Condemned to death as a traitor, he was faithful to the end, even when on the scaffold he was offered his freedom and a fine living if he would deny his faith. His courage in prison and in his martyrdom was reported throughout Scotland. John Ogilvie was canonized in 1976, becoming the first Scottish saint since 1250.

Reflection

John came of age when neither Catholics nor Protestants were willing to tolerate one another. Turning to Scripture, he found words that enlarged his vision. Although he became a Catholic and died for his faith, he understood the meaning of "small-c catholic," the wide range of believers who embrace Christianity. Even now he undoubtedly rejoices in the ecumenical spirit fostered by the Second Vatican Council and joins us in our prayer for unity with all believers.

Saint John Ogilvie