



Prayers for the Week Ahead

WEEK BEGINNING 18TH MARCH

Monday 18th March



The crises that the Church faces today may seem minor when compared with the threat posed by the Arian heresy, which denied the divinity of Christ and almost overcame Christianity in the fourth century. Cyril was to be caught up in the controversy, accused of Arianism by Saint Jerome, and ultimately vindicated both by the men of his own time and by being declared a Doctor of the Church in 1822.

Raised in Jerusalem and well-educated, especially in the Scriptures, he was ordained a priest by the bishop of Jerusalem and given the task during Lent of catechizing those preparing for Baptism and catechizing the newly baptized during the Easter season. His Catechesis remain valuable as examples of the ritual and theology of the Church in the mid-fourth century.

Reflection

Those who imagine that the lives of saints are simple and placid, untouched by the vulgar breath of controversy, are rudely shocked by history. Yet, it should be no surprise that saints, indeed all Christians, will experience the same difficulties as their Master. The definition of truth is an endless, complex pursuit, and good men and women have suffered the pain of both controversy and error. Intellectual, emotional, and political roadblocks may slow up people like Cyril for a time. But their lives taken as a whole are monuments to honesty and courage.

St Cyril of Jerusalem

Tuesday 19th March



St Joseph

Everything we know about the husband of Mary and the foster father of Jesus comes from Scripture and that has seemed too little for those who made up legends about him.

We know he was a carpenter, a working man, for the sceptical Nazarenes ask about Jesus, "Is this not the carpenter's son?" (Matthew 13:55). He wasn't rich for when he took Jesus to the Temple to be circumcised and Mary to be purified, he offered the sacrifice of two turtledoves or a pair of pigeons, allowed only for those who could not afford a lamb (Luke 2:24).

Despite his humble work and means, Joseph came from a royal lineage. Luke and Matthew disagree some about the details of Joseph's genealogy but they both mark his descent from David, the greatest king of Israel (Matthew 1:1-16 and Luke 3:23-38). Indeed, the angel who first tells Joseph about Jesus greets him as "son of David," a royal title used also for Jesus.

We know Joseph was a compassionate, caring man. When he discovered Mary was pregnant after they had been betrothed, he knew the child was not his but was as yet unaware that she was carrying the Son of God. He knew women accused of adultery could be stoned to death, so he resolved to send her away quietly to not expose her to shame or cruelty. However, when an angel came to Joseph in a dream and told him, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins," he did as the angel told him and took Mary as his wife. (Matthew 1:19-25).

Our Father...

Wednesday 20th March



St Cuthbert

Cuthbert was thought by some to be Irish and by others, a Scot. Bede, the noted historian, says he was a Briton. Orphaned when a young child, he was a shepherd for a time, possibly fought against the Mercians, and became a monk at Melrose Abbey. In 661, he accompanied St. Eata to Ripon Abbey, which the abbot of Melrose had built, but returned to Melrose the following year when King Alcfrid turned the abbey over to St. Wilfrid, and then became Prior of Melrose. Cuthbert engaged in missionary work and when St. Colman refused to accept the decision of the Council of Whitby in favour of the Roman liturgical practices and immigrated with most of the monks of Lindisfarn to Ireland, St. Eata was appointed bishop in his place and named Cuthbert Prior of Lindisfarn. He resumed his missionary activities and attracted huge crowds until he received his abbot's permission to live as a hermit, at first on a nearby island and then in 676, at one of the Farnes Islands near Bamborough. Against his will, he was elected bishop of Hexham in 685, arranged with St. Eata to swap Sees, and became bishop of Lindisfarn but without the monastery. He spent the last two years of his life administering his See, caring for the sick of the plague that decimated his diocese, working numerous miracles of healing, and gifted with the ability to prophesy. He died at Lindisfarn.

Our Father ...



Philemon and Domninus were Martyrs. According to tradition, they were two Romans who became preachers and wandered throughout Italy announcing the Gospel. They were arrested by Roman authorities and they were put to death, although there are no reliable sources for their martyrdoms.

Lord Jesus,

Help me to stand up for something when I know that it isn't right. Give me the courage and confidence to keep on working for a better world which will be your Kingdom of love, justice and peace.

Our Father ...

*Thursday 21st March
Sts Philemon and
Domninus*

Friday 22nd March



Paul was a notable missionary who is known principally because of reports made of him by St. Gregory of Tours . According to Gregory, Paul was ordained at Rome and, with other missionaries including Sts. Saturninus and Dionysius. He was assigned to Gaul to preach the Gospel. He enjoyed considerable success in the region around Narbonne, founding several churches there. He is also mentioned in various legends.

Our Father ...

St Paul of Narbonne

Saturday 23rd March



Together with Rose of Lima, Turibius is the first known saint of the New World, serving the Lord in Peru, South America, for 26 years.

Born in Spain and educated for the law, he became so brilliant a scholar that he was made professor of law at the University of Salamanca and eventually became chief judge of the Inquisition at Granada. He succeeded too well. But he was not sharp enough a lawyer to prevent a surprising sequence of events.

When the archdiocese of Lima in Peru required a new leader, Turibius was chosen to fill the post: He was the one person with the strength of character and holiness of spirit to heal the scandals that had infected that area.

He cited all the canons that forbade giving laymen ecclesiastical dignities, but he was overruled. Turibius was ordained priest and bishop and sent to Peru, where he found colonialism at its worst. The Spanish conquerors were guilty of every sort of oppression of the native population. Abuses among the clergy were flagrant, and he devoted his energies and suffering to this area first.

The Lord indeed writes straight with crooked lines. Against his will, and from the unlikely springboard of an Inquisition tribunal, this man became the Christlike shepherd of a poor and oppressed people. God gave him the gift of loving others as they needed it

St Turibius of Mongrovejo

Sunday 24th March



Aldemar was an abbot and miracle worker, called "the Wise." Born in Capua, Italy, he became a monk in Monte Cassino and was called to the attention of a Princess Aloara of the region. When she built a new convent in Capua, Alder became the director of the religious in the established house. He performed many miracles in this capacity. Aldemar was reassigned by his abbot to Monte Cassino, a move that angered the princess. As a result, Aldemar went to Boiana, Italy, where a companion involved in the dispute tried to kill him. Aldemar fled into the region of Bocchignano, Abruzzi, where he founded several more religious houses.

Reflection:

Grant, we beseech Thee, almighty God, that the examples of St. Aldemar the Wise may effectually move us to reform our lives; that while we celebrate his feast, we may also imitate his actions. Look upon our weakness, almighty God, and since the burden of our own deeds weighs heavily upon us, may the glorious intercession of St. Aldemar protect us. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Saint Aldemar