



Prayers for the Week Ahead

WEEK BEGINNING 15TH APRIL

Monday 15th April

Abundius was born at Thessalonica. Around 448 Abundius became the fourth Bishop of Como, succeeding Amantius.[3] He was present at the Council of Constantinople in 448, and took an active part against the Eutychian heresy at Chalcedon (451), where he was the representative of Pope Leo the Great. In 452 he also took part in the Council of Milan, convened to refute the same heresy. Abundius is one of those to whom the authorship of the Te Deum is attributed.

The Romanesque church of Sant'Abbondio at Como, consecrated in 1095 by Pope Urban II, is dedicated to him, and his relics are conserved beneath its principal altar.

Saint Abundius

Our Father ...



Tuesday 16th April



Saint Benedict Joseph
Labre

Benedict Joseph Labre, TOSF (French: Benoît-Joseph Labre, 25 March 1748 - 16 April 1783) was a French Franciscan tertiary, and Catholic saint. Labre was from a well to do family near Arras, France. After attempting a monastic lifestyle, he opted instead for the life of a pilgrim. He traveled to most of the major shrines of Europe, subsisting by begging. Labre is patron saint of the homeless.

Labre's confessor, Marconi, wrote his biography and attributed 136 separate cures to his intercession within three months of his death. Those miracles were instrumental in the conversion of the Reverend John Thayer, the first American Protestant clergyman to convert to Catholicism, who was resident in Rome at the time of St. Benedict's death.[6] A cult grew up around him very soon after his death; he was declared Blessed by Blessed Pius IX in 1860, and canonized by Pope Leo XIII in 1881.[7] Benedict is patron saint of the homeless.[8] His feast day is observed on April 16.

Our Father ...



Kateri was the daughter of a Christian Algonquin woman captured by Iroquois and married to a non-Christian Mohawk chief. Kateri was orphaned during a smallpox epidemic, which left her with a scarred face and impaired eyesight. She converted and was baptised in 1676 by Father Jacques de Lamberville, a Jesuit missionary. She was shunned and abused by relatives for her faith. Kateri escaped through 200 miles of wilderness to the Christian Native American village of Sault-Sainte-Marie. She took a vow of chastity in 1679. Kateri was known for spirituality and austere lifestyle and for being a miracle worker. Her grave became a pilgrimage site and place of miracles for Christian Native Americans and French colonists. Kateri was the first Native American proposed for canonization and her cause was started in 1884 under Pope Leo XIII. The Tekakwitha Conference, an international association of Native American Catholics and those in ministry with them, was named for her.

Our Father ...

*Wednesday 17th April
Saint Kateri Tekakwitha*



Born to the nobility, the daughter of Nikita and Marina, Athanasia grew up in a pious family. She early felt drawn to the religious life and legend says that when she was a young girl learning to weave, a star suddenly appeared, settled over her heart, and she was enlightened. However, at her parent's request, she married at age 16 to an army officer. She was widowed after 16 days of marriage when her husband died in battle against invading Arabs. She again considered the religious life, but an imperial edict required all single women of marriage age to marry soldiers.

Her second marriage was to a deeply religious man; the two conducted Bible studies in their homes, and took in the sick and poor. Her husband felt drawn to become a monk, and Athanasia agreed with his new vocation. She became a nun, gave away the bulk of her possessions, converted her home into a convent, obtained a spiritual director named Matthias, had other sisters move in with her, served as abbess, and lived a life of severe austerity. She built three churches. The community later moved to Timia where Athanasia became widely known for miraculous healings. To escape the press of people who were drawn to her reputation of holiness, and return to the quiet, prayerful life, she and two sisters fled in secret to Constantinople where she lived as an anchoress in a cell for seven years; while walled away, she was an advisor to Empress Theodora. Obeying the appeals of her sisters, she returned to Timia very late in life, and spent her last days there.

Our Father ...

*Thursday 18th April
Saint Athanasia of Aegina*

Friday 19th April



Pope Saint Leo IX

Leo was the son of Count Hugh of Egisheim and the cousin of Emperor Conrad II. In 1021, while still in the military, he was chosen bishop of Toul, France, a position he held for 20 years. He commanded troops under emperor Conrad II in the invasion of Italy in 1026. Very disciplined himself, he brought order to the monasteries in his diocese, discipline to the clergy, and the Cluniac reform to many of his houses. Leo was mediator between France and the Holy Roman Empire. He was chosen as the 151st pope with the support of the Roman citizens and Henry III of Germany.

Leo brought his reforming, disciplinary ways to the Church as a whole, reforming houses and parishes, fighting simony, enforcing clerical celibacy, encouraging liturgical development and the use of chant. He brought Hildebrand, later Pope Saint Gregory VII, to Rome as his spiritual advisor. He fought the coming Great Schism between the Eastern and Western churches and he received the nickname of Pilgrim Pope due to his travels through Europe, enforcing his reforms, insisting that his bishops, clergy, and councils follow suit. He held synods at Pavia, Italy, in Rheims, France, in Mainz, Germany, and in Vercelli, Italy where he condemned the heresy of Berengarius of Tours. Leo authorized the consecration of the first native bishop of Iceland. Leo was a peacemaker in Hungary and he proposed that Popes be elected only by cardinals.

Leo's papacy was marred by his military action. He added new Italian regions to the papal states, and when Normans invaded these areas in 1053, he personally led an army to throw them out. This resulted in wide-spread criticism, defeat in the field, his capture at Civitella, and several months of imprisonment at Benevento, Italy. He spent his time there well, learning Greek to better understand the writings of the Eastern Church, but his health suffered badly, and he died soon after his release.

Our Father ...

Saturday 20th April



St Agnes of Montepulciano

Agnes was born wealthy. A pious child, at age six she began nagging her parents to join a convent. She was admitted to the convent at Montepulciano, Italy at age nine. When her spiritual director was appointed abbess at Procena, she took Agnes with her. Agnes's reputation for holiness attracted other sisters. She became an abbess at age fifteen after receiving special permission from Pope Nicholas IV. Agnes insisted on greater austerities in the abbey; she lived off bread and water, slept on the ground, used a stone for a pillow. In 1298 she returned to Montepulciano to work in a new Dominican convent. She was the prioress of the house for the last seventeen years of her life.

Many stories grew up around Agnes, including that her birth was announced by flying lights surrounding her family's house. As a child, while walking through a field, she was attacked by a large murder of crows; she announced that they were devils, trying to keep her away from the land; years later, it was the site of her convent.

She was known to levitate up to two feet in the air while praying and she received Communion from an angel, and had visions of the Virgin Mary.

She held the infant Jesus in one of these visions; when she woke from her trance she found she was holding the small gold crucifix the Christ child had worn. On the day she was chosen abbess as a teenager, small white crosses showered softly onto her and the congregation. *Our Father ...*

Sunday 21st April



St Anselm of Canterbury

Anselm was an Italian, Frenchman, and Englishman; a monk, prior, abbot, archbishop, philosopher, theologian, and spiritual writer; today he is a saint, a Doctor of the Church, and commonly referred to as the father of Scholasticism. Anselm was born into a noble family in the town of Aosta, located in the Italian Alps. As a youth, his devout mother set a pious example which he readily followed. When Anselm was fifteen, he wanted to enter the monastic life but his father would not give consent, so the abbot refused his entrance. His mother had since passed so she could not intervene. Disillusioned, Anselm's faith wavered for the next several years. Coming to his senses, he pursued studies in France and eventually arrived at the Benedictine Abbey of Bec around the age of twenty-six. Anselm quickly became close with and a devoted student of the prior, Lanfranc. When Anselm's father died, Anselm was in a quandary about what to do. Should he return home to receive the inheritance of his father's estate and put it to good use? Or should he abandon it and become a monk? Lanfranc directed him to a holy bishop for spiritual advice and Anselm decided on religious life. He returned to the Abbey of Bec and became a monk at the age of twenty-seven.

Saint Anselm, you had a profound, intimate, and personal love of God that arose from your fervent life of prayer. From that prayer, faith was enkindled within you. From that faith, understanding poured forth from your intellect to inspire others and teach them the way to God. Please pray for me, that I may always turn to God through prayer so that my interior life of prayer will be the foundation of all I do and all I am. Saint Anselm, pray for me.