



Prayers for the Week Ahead

WEEK BEGINNING 20TH MAY

Monday 20th May



Mary the Mother of the Church

Little is said about the most glorious Mother of God in the Scriptures. In many ways, she lived a quiet and hidden life. Since her Assumption into Heaven, the Church has prayerfully pondered her life and role in the mystery of salvation. Little by little, saint after saint and pope after pope have shed greater light upon her singularly unique and glorious role in the Father's eternal plan. As the Church's understanding of the Blessed Mother has deepened, new titles and new dogmas have been proclaimed about Mary. In 2018, a new liturgical memorial honored her with the title "Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church."

Today, the Mother of the Church reigns in Heaven next to her Son; from there, she continues to nurture the Church as a loving mother. She not only intercedes for us but also mediates her Son's saving grace, making her the ongoing instrument of grace and mother of all.

Most glorious Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, to you I entrust myself just as Jesus entrusted John to your care. Receive me as your spiritual child, and nurture me with your Son's divine grace. Thank you for your "Yes" to the Father's plan, for your life, and for your continuous "Yes" through time and eternity. May my "Yes" echo yours as I surrender fully to God's plan. Mother Mary, Mother of the Church, pray for me. Jesus, I trust in You.

Tuesday 21st May



Like Blessed Miguel Agustín Pro, SJ, Cristóbal and his 24 companion martyrs lived under a very anti-Catholic government in Mexico, one determined to weaken the Catholic faith of its people. Churches, schools, and seminaries were closed; foreign clergy were expelled. Cristóbal established a clandestine seminary at Totatiche, Jalisco. He and the other priests were forced to minister secretly to Catholics during the presidency of Plutarco Calles (1924-28). All of these martyrs except three, were diocesan priests. David, Manuel and Salvador were laymen who died with their parish priest, Luis Batis. They all belonged to the Cristero movement, pledging their allegiance to Christ and to the Church that he established, to spread the Good News in society—even if Mexico’s leaders had made it a crime to receive baptism or celebrate the Mass. These martyrs did not die as a single group but over 22 years time in eight Mexican states, with Jalisco and Zacatecas having the largest number. They were beatified in 1992 and canonized eight years later.

Reflection:

Every martyr realizes how to avoid execution, but refuses to pay the high price of doing so. A clear conscience was more valuable than a long life. We may be tempted to compromise our faith while telling ourselves that we are simply being realistic, dealing with situations as we find them. Is survival really the ultimate value? Do our concrete, daily choices reflect our deepest values, the ones that allow us to “tick” the way we do? Anyone can imagine situations in which being a follower of Jesus is easier than the present situation. Saints remind us that our daily choices, especially in adverse circumstances, form the pattern of our lives.

*Saint Cristobal Magallanes
and his companions*

Wednesday 22nd May



St Rita of Cascia

St. Rita was a female saint living during the 14th and 15th century in Italy. Although she was married at any early age to an abusive husband, with whom her relationship lasted for more than 18 years, she was a model wife who prayed constantly for her husband. Even after her husband died in a feud, she discouraged her sons from trying to seek revenge. Following their death, Rita entered the convent in Cascia.

Today, St. Rita is known as the patron saint for abused women, mourning wives and impossible causes. Many women turn to her during times of despair, after a death in the family or even after a divorce. She is often depicted in artwork and on medals in a religious sister's habit, with roses or a rose crown.

Reflection:

- *Holy Patroness of those in need, Saint Rita, so humble, pure and patient, whose pleadings with thy Divine Spouse are irresistible, obtain for me from thy Crucified Christ my request (mention it here). Be kind to me, for the greater glory of God, and I promise to honor thee and to sing thy praises forever.*
- *Oh glorious St. Rita, who didst miraculously participate in the sorrowful Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, obtain for me the grace to suffer with resignation the troubles of this life, and*
- *protect me in all my needs. Amen*

Thursday 23rd May



St John the Baptist De Rossi

John was born in 1698, near Genova, Italy. When he was 10, he went on a summer holiday to his relatives, a very pious couple. They noted the piety of the youth, and asked permission of his parents to take him to their house in Genova to educate him there. Capuchin priests came often to visit the house of this couple to ask for assistance for the poor. These religious recommended the youth to the Provincial Father. He made arrangements for John to study in Rome. In the Roman College he studied with great application, gaining the liking of his professors and friends. He was ordained a priest at the age of 23.

From the time he was a seminarian, he felt a great predilection for the poor, the sick and the abandoned. The Supreme Pontiff had founded a shelter to receive people that did not have anywhere to spend the night and the young John Batiste went there for many years to care for the poor and the needy, to teach them catechism and to prepare them to receive the Sacraments. He took several friends with him, over whom the work had a great influence. He taught the children and the adults catechism and prepared to make their confession and receive first Communion. The Supreme Pontiff entrusted to him the office of going to confess and preach to the prisoners in jail and the employees that worked at the prisons. And there he obtained many conversions. They invited from everywhere the sick, prisoners, and people that desired to be converted. He went to many places to preach missions and obtained from heaven numerous conversions. In the hospitals he was an esteemed confessor and consoler of the sick. His friends were always the poor, the helpless, the sick, street children and sinners seeking conversion. He lived for them and he spent his life for them. He always remained humble and ready to help as many as possible. .

On May 23, 1764, he suffered a heart attack and died at the age of 66. His poverty was such that they had to use alms to pay for his burial. 260 priests, the Archbishop, many religious and an immense crowd attended his funeral. The requiem Mass was sung by the Pontifical choir of the Basilica in Rome.

Hail Mary....

Friday 24th May



David, the youngest son of Scotland's virtuous queen, (Saint) Margaret, succeeded his brother to the Scottish throne in 1124. David's friend, (Saint) Aelred, abbot of the English monastery of Rievaulx, was later to recount David's religious devotion and his generosity to the poor. From his riches he also endowed the founding of several dioceses and many monasteries. David was to express profound remorse for an ill-conceived and ill-fated invasion of England he had ordered on behalf of his niece. He also suffered the sorrow of the premature death of his only son. On Friday, May 22, 1153, as David was nearing death, he received the anointing of the sick and Viaticum, after which he devoted himself to reciting the Psalms with those at his bedside. The next day, the king told those urging him to take a rest from his devotions, "Let me rather think about the things of God, so that my spirit may set out strengthened on its journey from exile to home. When I stand before God's tremendous judgment seat, you will not be able to answer for me or defend me." He thus continued with his prayers. David died at dawn on Sunday, May 24.

Hail Mary...

St David 1st of Scotland

Saturday 25th May



St Pope Gregory VII

The 10th century and the first half of the 11th were dark days for the Church, partly because the papacy was the pawn of various Roman families. In 1049, things began to change when Pope Leo IX, a reformer, was elected. He brought a young monk named Hildebrand to Rome as his counselor and special representative on important missions. Hildebrand was to become Gregory VII. Three evils plagued the Church then: simony—the buying and selling of sacred offices and things; the unlawful marriage of the clergy; and lay investiture—kings and nobles controlling the appointment of Church officials. To all of these Hildebrand directed his reformer’s attention, first as counselor to the popes and later as pope himself. Gregory’s papal letters stress the role of the bishop of Rome as the vicar of Christ and the visible center of unity in the Church. He is well known for his long dispute with Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV over who should control the selection of bishops and abbots. Gregory fiercely resisted any attack on the liberty of the Church. For this he suffered and finally died in exile. He said, “I have loved justice and hated iniquity; therefore, I die in exile.” Thirty years later the Church finally won its struggle against lay investiture. The liturgical feast of Saint Gregory VII is celebrated on May 25.

Reflection:

The Gregorian Reform, a milestone in the history of Christ’s Church, was named after this man who tried to extricate the papacy and the whole Church from undue control by civil rulers. Against an unhealthy Church nationalism in some areas, Gregory reasserted the unity of the whole Church based on Christ, and expressed in the bishop of Rome, the successor of Saint Peter.