



Prayers for the Week Ahead

WEEK BEGINNING 27TH MAY

Monday 27th May



St. Augustine of Canterbury

In the year 596, some 40 monks set out from Rome to evangelize the Anglo-Saxons in England. Leading the group was Augustine, the prior of their monastery. Hardly had he and his men reached Gaul when they heard stories of the ferocity of the Anglo-Saxons and of the treacherous waters of the English Channel. Augustine returned to Rome and to Gregory the Great—the pope who had sent them—only to be assured by him that their fears were groundless.

Augustine set out again. This time the group crossed the English Channel and landed in the territory of Kent, ruled by King Ethelbert, a pagan married to a Christian, Bertha. Ethelbert received them kindly, set up a residence for them in Canterbury and within the year, on Pentecost Sunday 597, was himself baptized. After being consecrated a bishop in France, Augustine returned to Canterbury, where he founded his see. He constructed a church and monastery near where the present cathedral, begun in 1070, now stands. As the faith spread, additional sees were established at London and Rochester.

Laboring patiently, Augustine wisely heeded the missionary principles—quite enlightened for the times—suggested by Pope Gregory: purify rather than destroy pagan temples and customs; let pagan rites and festivals be transformed into Christian feasts; retain local customs as far as possible. The limited success Augustine achieved in England before his death in 605, a short eight years after his arrival, would eventually bear fruit long after in the conversion of England. Augustine of Canterbury can truly be called the “Apostle of England.”

Hail Mary...

Tuesday 28th May



ST. BERNARD of MENTHON

Patron of Skiers

St. Bernard of Menton

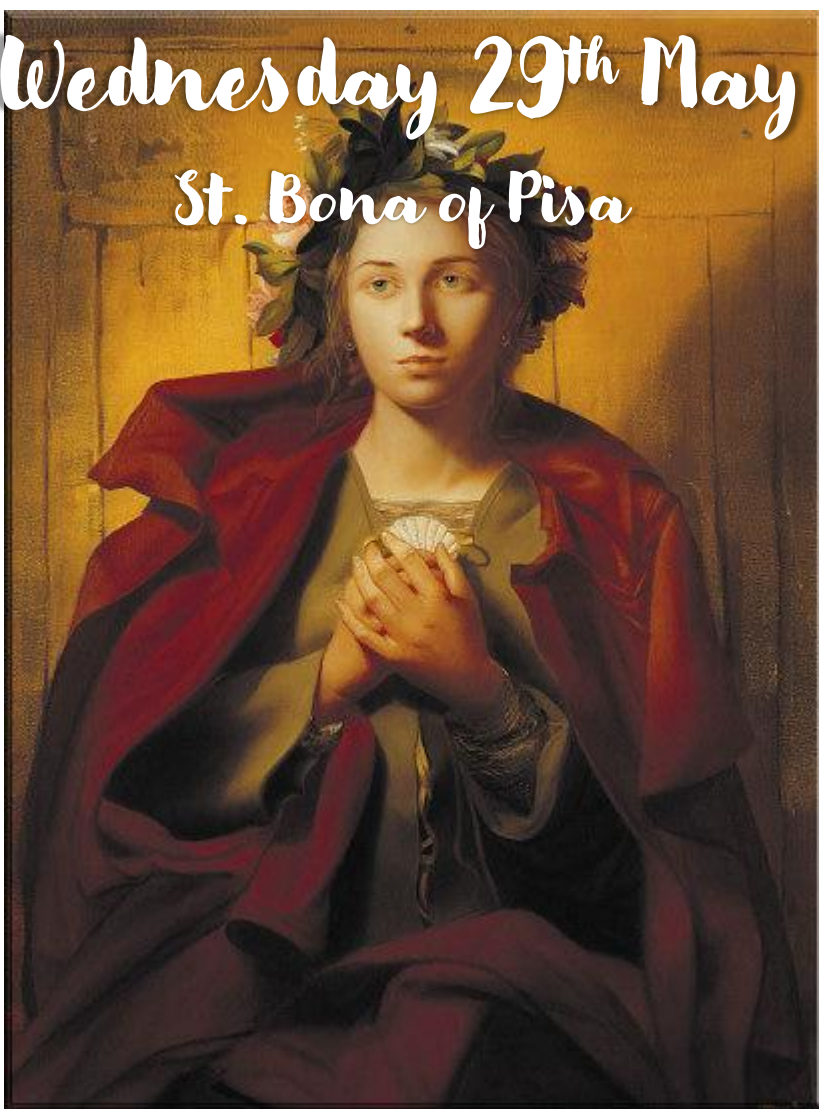
Bernard of Montjoux was probably born in Italy. He became a priest, was made Vicar General of Aosta, and spent more than four decades doing missionary work in the Alps. He built schools and churches in the diocese but is especially remembered for two Alpine hospices he built to aid lost travelers in the mountain passes named Great and Little Bernard, after him. The men who ran them in time became Augustinian canons regular and built a monastery. The Order continued into the twentieth century. He was proclaimed the patron saint of Alpinists and mountain climbers by Pope Pius XI in 1923. He is sometimes fallaciously referred to as Bernard of Menton and the son of Count Richard of Menton, which he was not. His feast day is May 28th.

Bernard became patron and protector of skiers because of his four decades spent in missionary work throughout the Alps.

Hail Mary...

Wednesday 29th May

St. Bona of Pisa



St. Bona of Pisa was born in 1156 in Pisa, Italy. She was the child of a single mother. She was told that her father had vanished during a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. As a child she was very pious. In a vision while praying before the crucifix, Jesus reached out his hand and touched her. By the age of ten she had become an Augustinian tertiary. (A tertiary is a lay member of a monastic order).

In another vision she learned that her father was still alive and fighting in the Crusades in Jerusalem. St. Bona decided to make a trip to Jerusalem to find her father. After finding him she returned home, only to be captured by pirates on the Mediterranean Sea! Countrymen came to her rescue and she eventually arrived home safely.

St. Bona was appointed the official pilgrimage guide by the Knights of St. James. She made nine trips to Spain and Santiago de Compostella, always leading a group of pilgrims. On her final trip she became very ill. She died at the age of 51 after returning home from the pilgrimage.

Pope John XXIII named her the patron saint of flight attendants, travel guides, couriers and travellers.

Hail Mary...

Thursday 30th May

St. Joan of Arc

Burned at the stake as a heretic after a politically-motivated trial, Joan was beatified in 1909 and canonized in 1920. Born of a fairly well-to-do peasant couple in Domremy-Greux southeast of Paris, Joan was only 12 when she experienced a vision and heard voices that she later identified as Saints Michael the Archangel, Catherine of Alexandria, and Margaret of Antioch.

During the Hundred Years War, Joan led French troops against the English and recaptured the cities of Orléans and Troyes. This enabled Charles VII to be crowned as king in Reims in 1429. Captured near Compiègne the following year, Joan was sold to the English and placed on trial for heresy and witchcraft. Professors at the University of Paris supported Bishop Pierre Cauchon of Beauvais, the judge at her trial; Cardinal Henry Beaufort of Winchester, England, participated in the questioning of Joan in prison. In the end, she was condemned for wearing men's clothes. The English resented France's military success—to which Joan contributed.

On this day in 1431, Joan was burned at the stake in Rouen, and her ashes were scattered in the Seine River. A second Church trial 25 years later nullified the earlier verdict, which was reached under political pressure.

Remembered by most people for her military exploits, Joan had a great love for the sacraments, which strengthened her compassion toward the poor. Popular devotion to her increased greatly in 19th-century France and later among French soldiers during World War I. Theologian George Tavard writes that her life “offers a perfect example of the conjunction of contemplation and action” because her spiritual insight is that there should be a “unity of heaven and earth.”

Joan of Arc has been the subject of many books, plays, operas and movies.

Hail Mary...

Friday 31st May



Today's feast commemorates the visit that Mary, already pregnant with Jesus, made to her older cousin, Elizabeth, who was pregnant with the future John the Baptist. If we read today's Gospel (Luke 1:39-56) we can hear of the exchange between Mary and Elizabeth, the words of which from the Blessed Virgin Mary are the basis of the great prayer 'The Magnificat'.

Reflection

There is no false humility in Mary's tremendous prayer. There is the true humility in knowing that all that is being accomplished in her is being accomplished by God, "for the Mighty One has done great things for me." ^[SEP] Mary makes no effort to minimise this greatness. She accepts it - fully, joyfully and expectantly. Her great song of praise is a glorious expression of Mary's hope.

I ask you, Lord, to give me Mary's confidence and generosity of spirit. I ask not just to listen to your voice and do your will, but to do it joyfully and fearlessly. I want to answer your call with an exultant "Yes!" secure in the knowledge that as I move into the unknown my journey will be made radiant by your transfiguring presence.

Hail Mary ...

Saturday 1st June



St. Justin, Martyr

Saint Justin (100-165 AD) is known for his writings defending Christianity. He was an early Christian apologist, and is regarded as the foremost interpreter of the theory of the Logos in the 2nd Century. Most of what is known about the life of Justin Martyr comes from his own writings. He was born at Flavia Neapolis (in Old Testament times Shechem, now Nablus) in Palestine. Justin suffered martyrdom alongside some of his students at Rome under Marcus Aurelius when Rusticus was prefect of the city (between 162 and 168).

Prayer

O God, who through the folly of the Cross wondrously taught Saint Justin the Martyr the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ, grant us, through his intercession, that, having rejected deception and error, we may become steadfast in the faith.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.