



Prayers for the Week Ahead

WEEK BEGINNING 27TH MAY

Tuesday 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...

Wednesday 28th May



ST. BERNARD of MENTHON

Patron of Skiers
St. Bernard of Menthon

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 Menthon and the son of Count Richard of Menthon, 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...

Thursday 29th May



The Ascension of the Lord

Forty Days after the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Acts of the Apostles records Jesus' ascension into heaven. The ascension is an important Christian feast attesting and celebrating the reality of the God-Man Jesus Christ's returning to the Father, to return again in the future parousia. The Ascension is the final component of the paschal mystery, which consists also of Jesus' Passion, Crucifixion, Death, Burial, Descent Among the Dead, and Resurrection. Along with the resurrection, the ascension functioned as a proof of Jesus' claim that he was the Messiah. The Ascension is also the event whereby humanity was taken into heaven. Finally, the ascension was also the "final blow" so-to-speak against Satan's power, and thus the lion (Jesus) conquering the dragon (Satan) is a symbol of the ascension. Early Christian art and iconography portrayed the ascension frequently, showing its importance to the early Church.

Prayer:

Let us pray

[On this day of Ascension
as we watch and wait for Jesus' return] Father in heaven,
our minds were prepared
for the coming of your kingdom
when you took Christ beyond our sight
so that we might seek him in glory.
May we follow where he has led
and find our hope in his glory,
for he is Lord forever. Amen



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 Tavad 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...