



Prayers for the Week Ahead

WEEK BEGINNING 2ND FEBRUARY

Monday 2nd February



The Presentation of the Lord

OFFICIAL

The Feast of the Presentation of the Lord commemorates the occasion when the Virgin Mary, in obedience to Jewish law, went to the Temple in Jerusalem both to be purified forty days after the birth of her son, Jesus, and to present him to God as her firstborn.

A prayer for the Feast of The Presentation of the Lord

*Almighty ever-living God,
we humbly implore your majesty
that, just as your Only Begotten Son
was presented on this day in the Temple
in the substance of our flesh,
so, by your grace,
we may be presented to you with minds made pure.
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.*

Tuesday 3rd February



St. Blaise

OFFICIAL

Blaise of Sebaste was a physician and bishop of Sebastea in historical Armenia who is venerated as a Christian saint and martyr. St. Blaise is the patron saint of wool combers and throat disease. According to the *Acta Sanctorum*, he was martyred by being beaten, attacked with iron combs, and beheaded. According to the *Acts*, while Blaise was being taken into custody, a distraught mother, whose only child was choking on a fishbone, threw herself at his feet and implored his intercession. Touched at her grief, he offered up his prayers, and the child was cured. Consequently, Saint Blaise is invoked for protection against injuries and illnesses of the throat.

In many places, on the day of his feast the blessing of St. Blaise is given: two candles (sometimes lit), blessed on the feast of the Presentation of the Lord (Candlemas), are held in a crossed position by a priest over the heads of the faithful or the people are touched on the throat with them.

A prayer to St. Blaise

O glorious Saint Blaise, who by your martyrdom did leave to the Church a precious witness to the faith, obtain of us the grace to preserve within ourselves this divine gift, and to defend, without human respect, both by word and example, the truth of that same faith, which is so wickedly attacked and slandered in these our times. You who did miraculously restore a little child when it was at the point of death by reason of an affliction of the throat, grant us thy mighty protection in like misfortunes; and, above all, obtain for us the grace of Christian mortification together with a faithful observance of the precepts of the Church, which may keep us from offending Almighty God. Amen.

Wednesday 4th February



St. Joseph of Leonessa

Joseph was the third of eight children born to John Desideri, a wool merchant, and Serafina Paolini. His parents died when he was 12 years old, and he was raised and educated by his uncle Battista Desideri, a teacher in Viterbo, Italy. Desideri arranged a marriage for Eufranio with a local noble family, but the young man felt a call to religious life. Worry over his vocation, and fear of hurting his uncle, made Eufranio sick and he returned to Leonessa, Italy to recover. There he met, and was greatly impressed by, a group of Capuchin monks. When Eufranio told his uncle of his desire to join them, Desideri insisted that he continue his studies. Eufranio agreed, and moved to Spoleto, Italy to do so, but kept in contact with the monks. Following a novitiate year in which the monks did everything to test and dissuade the young man, he joined the Capuchin Franciscans on 8 January 1573 at age 18, taking the religious name Joseph. Suffered through several self-imposed austeries including fasting three days a week and sleeping on bare boards. He was ordained at Amelia, Italy on 24 September 1580. Joseph was a missionary to Muslim Pera near Constantinople (modern Istanbul, Turkey), receiving his commission on 1 August 1587. He became chaplain for 4,000 Christian galley slaves. He often offered to take the place of a slave who was being worked to death, but the authorities never accepted. Ministering to prisoners in a remote camp, he once got home late, and was forced to sleep outside the walls of his assigned area; he was charged with being a spy for being in the wrong place, and spent a month in jail. He preached to any who would listen, brought lapsed Christians back to the Church and converted Muslims. Joseph repeatedly sought an audience with the Sultan; he planned to ask for a decree of religious freedom. His forceful methods led to his being arrested and condemned to death for trespassing on royal property. He was hung by hooks over a smoky fire for three days and he was freed (legend says by an angel), and returned to Italy, in autumn 1589. There he resumed his vocation of wandering preacher to small villages throughout the country. He preached to and for the poor, and spread the teachings of the Council of Trent. Joseph helped establish hospitals, homeless shelters, and food banks. He ministered in prisons, to the sick, and the poor. With his crucifix in hand, he would wade into gang fights and brawls, praying, and preaching peace and good sense.

Thursday 5th February



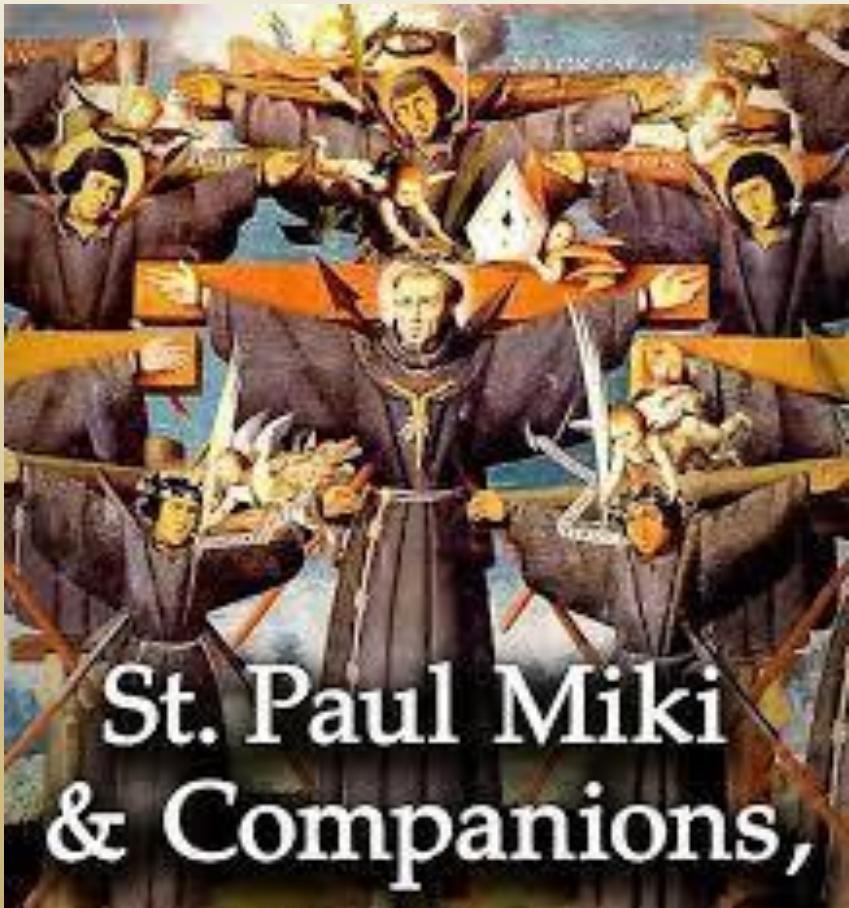
St. Agatha

St. Agatha, also known as Agatha of Sicily, is one of the most highly venerated virgin martyrs of the Catholic Church. It is believed that she was born around 231 in either Catania or Palermo, Sicily to a rich and noble family. Agatha decided that she wanted to remain a virgin from a young age, however a high ranking diplomat wanted to marry her and tried to get her to change her mind by having her imprisoned. Agatha remained true to her convictions and faith despite the challenges she faced. The diplomat, Quintianus had her tortured and sexually assaulted when he still refused to marry him. St. Agatha is the patron saint of Sicily, bellfounders, breast cancer patients, Palermo, rape victims, and wet nurses. She is also considered to be a powerful intercessor when people suffer from fires

Reflection

Saint Agatha, you suffered sexual assault and indignity because of your faith and purity. Help heal all those who are survivors of sexual assault and protect those women who are in danger. Amen

Friday 6th February



St. Paul Miki & Companions,

St. Paul Miki and
his companions

Nagasaki, Japan, is familiar to Americans as the city on which the second atomic bomb was dropped, immediately killing over 37,000 people. Three and a half centuries before, 26 martyrs of Japan were crucified on a hill, now known as the Holy Mountain, overlooking Nagasaki. Brother Paul Miki, a Jesuit and a native of Japan, has become the best known among the martyrs of Japan. While hanging upon a cross, Paul Miki preached to the people gathered for the execution: "The sentence of judgment says these men came to Japan from the Philippines, but I did not come from any other country. I am a true Japanese. The only reason for my being killed is that I have taught the doctrine of Christ. I certainly did teach the doctrine of Christ. I thank God it is for this reason I die. Ask Christ to help you to become happy."

When missionaries returned to Japan in the 1860s, at first they found no trace of Christianity. But after establishing themselves they found that thousands of Christians lived around Nagasaki and that they had secretly preserved the faith. Beatified in 1627, the martyrs of Japan were finally canonized in 1862.

Reflection

Today, a new era has come for the Church in Japan. Although the number of Catholics is not large, the Church is respected and has total religious freedom. The spread of Christianity in the Far East is slow and difficult. Faith such as that of the 26 martyrs is needed today as much as in 1597. Lord we ask you to help all those who suffer as a result of religious persecution. Help them to be strong and remain faithful to the Lord. Amen.