

Prayers for the Week Ahead

WEEK BEGINNING 24TH AUGUST

Monday 24th August



St. Bartholomew

Saint Bartholomew, also known in the Gospels as Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, holds an honoured place in Catholic tradition as one of the original Twelve Apostles chosen directly by Jesus Christ. In the Gospel of Saint John, he is introduced to Jesus through the Apostle Philip, initially expressing scepticism about Jesus' humble origin by asking, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" However, upon meeting Jesus—who revealed that He had seen Nathanael sitting under a fig tree before Philip even called him—Bartholomew immediately recognized His divine identity, declaring, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." The Catholic Church honours him as a model of earnest faith, apostolic zeal, and open-hearted discernment, celebrating his feast day on 24 August.

Following the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ, Saint Bartholomew dedicated the remainder of his life to spreading the Gospel across the ancient world, bringing the faith to regions traditionally identified as India, Armenia, Mesopotamia, and Parthia. Catholic tradition holds that he converted countless souls to Christ, healed the sick, and even carried a Hebrew copy of the Gospel of Saint Matthew during his missionary travels. His tireless work culminated in Armenia, where he successfully converted King Polymius and many of his subjects. This conversion provoked the anger of pagan priests and the king's brother, Astyages, who ordered Bartholomew's arrest. Exhibiting supreme fidelity to Christ, Bartholomew endured a gruelling martyrdom—traditionally held to be flayed alive before being crucified—making his supreme sacrifice a lasting symbol of unwavering Christian commitment and witness for Catholic students today.



St. Louis became King of France (as Louis IX) at the age of 12. He was married and had eleven children, to whom he gave an excellent upbringing. He was noted for his spirit of prayer and penitence and for his love for the poor. He ran his kingdom not only to give peace to the people and economic stability but also for their spiritual good. He founded the Sorbonne and was a friend of St Thomas Aquinas. He was a member of the Order of Penitents of St Francis of Assisi, which later became the Franciscan Third Order and is now known as the Secular Franciscan Order (OFS).

Louis was trusted by his fellow-rulers in Europe and often asked to arbitrate in their disputes. He undertook two unsuccessful crusades to liberate Christ's burial-place and on the second of these he died, near Carthage, in the year 1270.

Prayer to St. Louis

St. Louis King of France, your father died when you were only twelve years old, but your holy mother ensured that you were brought up in the Faith and helped you begin on the path of serving God. As you grew to maturity, your Faith and holiness matured as well. You did all you could serve God through your office as King and to lead others to holiness. Pray for me, that I may do all I can to serve God worthily in my life. Pray that I may be as devoted a servant of God as you were.

St. Louis King of France, pray for us!

Amen.

Wednesday 26th
August



Saints Liberatus, Boniface
and Companions

We celebrate today the memory of a group of seven monks of North Africa who were martyred during the Christian persecutions of the late 5th Century. They had each chosen to live monastic life under the inspiration of Saint Augustine's early communities and chose, as well, to meet death together rather than deny their faith. They are the Liberatus, Boniface and Companions. In 484, some 34 years after the death of Saint Augustine, the Vandal king, Hunneric, issued a decree ordering the closure of all Christian monasteries and the consignment of all monks and nuns to the Moors.

The seven members of the monastery of Gafsa, Tunisia, founded under Augustinian inspiration, were taken prisoners. They were the Abbot Liberatus, Deacon Boniface, Subdeacons Servus and Rusticus and the lay monks Rogatus, Septimus and Maximus. They were taken to Carthage where efforts were made, in vain, to have them renounce the faith. The youngest, Maximus who was only 15 years old was particularly pressured to abandon his confreres and his Christian way of life, but refused, preferring to accept the same fate as the rest. They were then ordered to be burned alive. When it proved impossible to set the wood of their funeral pyre afire, they were clubbed to death.

Reflection

Saint Peter wrote: Let it not be as a murderer or a thief, a malefactor or a coveter of other men's goods that any of you suffer; but if it is for the name of Christian, let him be not ashamed, but glorify God in that name.

Thursday 27th
August



St Monica

The circumstances of St. Monica's life could have made her a nagging wife, a bitter daughter-in-law, and a despairing parent, yet she did not give way to any of these temptations. Although she was a Christian, her parents gave her in marriage to a pagan, Patricius, who lived in her hometown of Tagaste in North Africa. Monica's prayers and example finally won her husband and mother-in-law to Christianity. Her husband died in 371, one year after his baptism. Monica had at least three children who survived infancy. The oldest, Augustine, is the most famous. At the time of his father's death, Augustine was 17 and a rhetoric student in Carthage. Monica was distressed to learn that her son had accepted the Manichean heresy—"all flesh is evil"—and was living an immoral life. For a while, she refused to let him eat or sleep in her house. Then one night she had a vision that assured her Augustine would return to the faith. From that time on, she stayed close to her son, praying and fasting for him. In fact she often stayed much closer than Augustine wanted. At Easter 387, St. Ambrose baptized Augustine and several of his friends. Soon after, his party left for Africa. Although no one else was aware of it, Monica knew her life was near the end. She told Augustine, "Son, nothing in this world now affords me delight. I do not know what there is now left for me to do or why I am still here, all my hopes in this world being now fulfilled." She became ill shortly after and suffered severely for nine days before her death.

Reflection

Today, with Google searches, online shopping, text messages, tweets, and instant credit, we have little patience for things that take time. Likewise, we want instant answers to our prayers. Monica is a model of patience. Her long years of prayer, coupled with a strong, well-disciplined character, finally led to the conversion of her hot-tempered husband, her cantankerous mother-in-law and her brilliant but wayward son, Augustine.

Friday 28th August



St Augustine

This famous son of St. Monica was born in Africa and spent many years of his life in wicked living and in false beliefs. Though he was one of the most intelligent men who ever lived and though he had been brought up a Christian, his sins of impurity and his pride darkened his mind so much, that he could not see or understand the Divine Truth anymore. Through the prayers of his holy mother and the marvellous preaching of St. Ambrose, Augustine finally became convinced that Christianity was the one true religion. He was baptised, became a priest, a bishop and a famous Catholic writer. He became very devout and charitable, too. On the wall of his room, he had the following sentence written in large letters: "Here we do not speak evil of anyone." St. Augustine overcame strong heresies, practiced great poverty and supported the poor, preached very often and prayed with great fervour right up until his death. "Too late have I loved You!" he once cried to God, but with his holy life he certainly made up for the sins he committed before his conversion.

Prayer to St Augustine

Glorious Saint Augustine I boldly ask for your intercession confident in your boundless wisdom and compassion. May this devotion lead me to a life dedicated to the fulfilling the will of God that I may one day be deemed worthy of sharing His Kingdom with you and all the saints for all eternity. Amen.