



St. Joseph's Family Activities

August Saints and Celebrations

<https://www.theannunciation.org.uk/resources/>

Missionaries and Martyrs

Each saint is different and yet together they witness (martyr means witness) to Christ, not only in their words and the way in which they live, but very often in the way that they die. This month we see this very much in the different lives (and deaths) of these holy men and women. I was struck by this preface for saints used at Mass today how it sums up who the saints are and what they are to us. Take a moment to read this preface slowly.

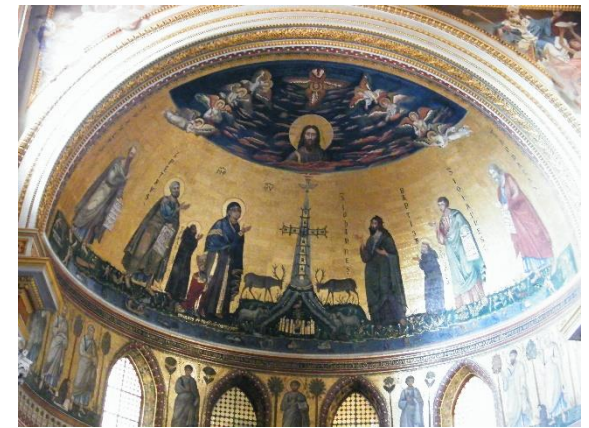
It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For you are praised in the company of your Saints and, in crowning their merits, you crown your own gifts. By their way of life you offer us an example, by communion with them you give us companionship, by their intercession, sure support, so that, encouraged by so great a cloud of witnesses, we may run as victors in the race before us and win with them the imperishable crown of glory, through Christ our Lord.

And so, with the Angels and Archangels, and with the great multitude of the Saints, we sing the hymn of your praise, as without end we acclaim: Holy.....

Note how the preface is address to the Father, as are most of the prayers at Mass. At Mass we are blessed by the Father and in return, praise Him through His Son our Lord Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit.

These activities still reflect the four dimensions of our faith, as in everything we do, we are either learning or proclaiming the faith, celebrating it in the liturgy and the sacraments, living it in the context of the family and community and praying it.



An image of the saints in heaven with Our Lady. I took this picture in Rome some years ago... Does anyone know which church it is incomes from?

There are three dimensions to the Church: those of us here on earth, journeying to the Father in Christ by the grace of the Holy Spirit; those in purgatory whose lives on earth have finished and who are being purified, and those in heaven, sharing in the divine life, for which we have all been created. For them, their joy is complete but because of that, they are eager for us to join them. Close to Our Lord, they intercede (pray) for us. The saints in heaven are more than the canonised saints the Church knows of, as the author of the Book of Revelation says, "I looked and saw a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, tribe and peoples and tongues..." (Rev.7:9).

The saints are our heroes. They come from all walks of life, from all around the world and all ages. We can always find a saint who inspires us and ask him or her to pray for us. So, celebrate your own saints' days, go to Mass if you can as there, the whole Church is united! We can't see the saints, but we join in with their praise in the Holy Holy Holy. Have something special to eat, light your baptism candle or another one if you don't have it, and regard the saints as special members of the family.

1st August: St Alphonsus Liguori (1696 - 1787)

Today we remember St. Alphonsus Liguori as the founder of the "Redemptorists" and order of priests with mission at its heart. He was born near Naples and was the eldest child of a large noble Neapolitan family. Alphonsus was very talented and wrote beautiful poems and hymns, including the most popular Christmas carol in Italy. His father wanted him to be a lawyer but after a while he realised that God was calling him to be a priest and went to the seminary to study for the priesthood. After being ordained at the age of 30, his first mission was to the young homeless people in Naples, his home city. Anxious to help them to help themselves, he set up "Evening Chapels," which were run by the young people themselves. Here, they could meet socially, to learn about their faith, study the Bible, and to pray. The chapels were very popular and by the time Alphonsus died, over 10,000 people were actively involved in them.

After leaving his hometown in 1729, Alphonsus began his missionary work in the wider kingdom of Naples where he found even poorer people than he had come across in the city of Naples. So, after much prayer, in 1732 he set up a missionary congregation to serve these really poor people. Its official name is the *Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer*, but they are popularly known as "the Redemptorists." The aim was simply to bring the message of Jesus Christ our Redeemer to all the poor and abandoned people. (Remember that education was not free in those days and so if families could not afford to send children to school and if they lived far from a church then they would not be able to learn about Jesus.)

Alphonsus loved the arts and realised that being creative is sharing in God's work of creation. He asked the same of his congregation and so they were able to bring the beauty of the creative arts to the poorest people who would never otherwise have been able to experience these things. Many of the poems and books that Alphonsus wrote are still in publication, including his reflections on the Stations of the Cross, an hour before the Blessed Sacrament and meditations on Mary. The "Spiritual Communion Prayer" that was popular during the Covid Crisis was written by him.

Alphonsus became a bishop in 1762 (aged 66) and retired in 1775 when he was 79 years old. He spent the last years of his life with his community in Pagani where he died on 1st August 1787, aged 91, a great age for that time. He was canonized in 1839, and proclaimed a Doctor of the Church in 1871. (A "Doctor of the Church" means an accepted teacher of the Church).

St. Alphonsus Liguori loved the arts, which include drawing, painting, and poetry.

Write a poem about Jesus, or Our Lady, here or may be a prayer to them. Send in anything if you wish.



St. Oswald was a man of prayer and even prayed for other people when he was dying. One thing that we can do, is to pray for other people when we are hurt or sick. This is called "offering up" our pain. So next time you have a hurt, a pain, instead of moaning say "Lord Jesus please use this pain to help someone who is in even more pain than me!"

3rd August St. Oswald (c.604 - 642)

St. Oswald was the youngest son of the pagan King Ethelfrid, Northumbria. When his father, the king, died in battle, Oswald escaped to Iona for safety. The monks there taught him about Jesus Christ and as he was baptised, becoming a fervent Christian.

When, in 633 Oswald returned to Northumbria to claim his father's kingdom, tradition says that he set up a wooden cross as his battle standard (instead of the usual flag). Before setting out, he said a prayer, dedicating himself and his people to God's protection. He met the Welsh King Cadwallon, not far from where the town of Hexham is now. Winning the battle, he was able to be king in Northumbria.

As King he wanted everyone to know about Jesus, so he invited the monks from Iona to begin the work of evangelisation. His kingdom was larger than Northumbria is today and included what is now some of southern Scotland. One of the monks who came was (St.) Aidan who worked hard to travel around teaching about Jesus and baptising. Oswald and Aidan became good friends and Oswald gave him Lindisfarne as his base. As often as he could, the king went with St. Aidan on his missionary journeys and acted as his interpreter (the Irish Aidan did not at first speak English).

Oswald was a man of great prayer and was also known for being generous to those in need. St. Bede tells the story that one day when he was eating his Easter celebratory meal a crowd gathered outside his castle, and so Oswald immediately shared out all his food. Sadly, after only eight years, Oswald himself was killed in battle at Oswestry (Oswald's tree) by Penda, the King of Mercia. As Oswald died, he was heard to be praying for those who would also die in battle that day.

After his death, his body was cut up, with his arm supposedly ending up in Peterborough and his head was buried at Bardney Abbey in Lincolnshire. During the Viking raids in the early 10th Century his head was taken to Durham Cathedral and placed in the same coffin as St. Cuthbert (Aidan's successor in Lindisfarne). As both bodies were found to be incorrupt, art traditionally portrays St. Cuthbert holding St. Oswald's head as in this image from the reredos at St. Joseph's in Malvern.

4th August St Jean-Baptiste-Marie Vianney, Curé of Ars (1786 - 1859)

St. Jean-Baptiste-Marie Vianney was born into a peasant farming family and was not very "clever." However, he really wanted to become a priest but struggled to learn Latin which was really important (as Mass was always celebrated in Latin in those days). However, he was eventually ordained because he was so devout as he spent most of his days praying.

When he was 32 years old, he was sent to a small and isolated village called Ars-en-Dombes, to be the parish priest. There were only 230 people living there but he set catechesis for the children and reaching out to the adults to get them to observe Sunday as a day of rest centred around Holy Mass.

As well as being a very good and uncompromising preacher, his fame was the way he heard confessions. It was said that he could see right into people's souls. People came from all around to go to confession to him and he would spend up to eighteen hours a day in the confessional. The tiny previously unknown village became a place of pilgrimage with people coming from far and wide to consult the wise Curé.

He hated all this fame though and was desperate to move somewhere he could spend more time in personal prayer alone with God. He tried to escape from the village, but his fame was such that he was compelled to stay. Eventually, on 4th August 1859, worn out and tired, his earthly life came to an end as his bishop gave him the last rites.

He was canonised in 1925 and made principle patron saint of all parish priests in 1929.

How can St. John Vianney inspire us?

- Write a prayer for your priest in the scroll below.
- We can make more use of the Sacrament of confession, recognising that it's an opportunity for Jesus to heal us of our sins and bad habits and reconcile us to His Father by the grace of the Holy Spirit.
- We can make use of the opportunity to go to adoration. The story goes that one day, St. John Vianney saw a man sitting at the back of the Church during Adoration and asked him what his prayer was. The man said, "Well, I sit and look at Jesus and He looks at me". What a wonderful description of being in the presence of Jesus during Adoration!
- St. John Vianney longed to escape the crowds and spend time alone with God. We don't have to pray in a church - we can pray anywhere - may be find a moment to be alone and be with God!

My Prayer for Fr....

6th August, The Transfiguration of the Lord

This is a beautiful feast which confirmed Jesus' divinity (that He is God as well as man), Jesus invited Sts. Peter, James, and John to go with Him up a mountain to pray. Whilst Jesus was praying, suddenly His clothes became all shiny and bright and He shone like the sun. Then Moses and Elijah (two people from the Old Testament) were seen talking to Jesus. In Luke's Gospel we learn that Jesus was talking about his death on the cross that he would suffer. Jesus was then covered with a cloud and a voice was heard saying "This is my Son, the beloved, listen to Him." When the cloud disappeared, only Jesus was to be seen. Jesus told the Apostles not to tell anyone until after He had risen from the dead, but the Apostles didn't know what He meant at that time. (Mk. 9:2-10).

Q: How does this event show us that Jesus is God? (A: Jesus shone with the glory of heaven/the Father said that Jesus is His Son.)

Q: What did Jesus mean about rising from the dead? (A: That He would rise from the dead after His crucifixion.)

Q: We "see" Jesus, we "hear" the voice of the Father, how do you think the Holy Spirit is represented in this story? (A: The cloud that covered Jesus.)

Q: All three Divine Persons are featured here. What other Gospel passages are all three Divine Persons mentioned? (A: The Annunciation [Lk.1:26-38], Jesus Baptism [Mt. 3:13-17 & parallels], when Jesus promises the Holy Spirit [Jn.14:15-17], Jesus' death in the Cross "Father into your hands I give my Spirit" [Lk. 23:46].)



This is part of a very famous painting by Raphael of Jesus' Transfiguration.

Q: Why do you think that Jesus' arms are spread out like they are? (A: Because Jesus was talking about His death with Moses and Elijah and this is the position He would have on the Cross).

Picture accessed from: <https://m.museivaticani.va/content/museivaticani-mobile/en/collezioni/musei/la-pinacoteca/sala-viii---secolo-xvi/raffaello-sanzio--trasfigurazione.html>

Q: Which figure is Moses and which is Elijah? (A: Moses is on the right holding the tablet of the Ten Commandments.)

Q: Why is Moses holding the Ten Commandments? (A: Because God gave us the Ten Commandments through Moses.)

Q: What is Jesus new Commandment? (A: Love one another as I have loved you [Jn. 13:34].)

Q: How can we do that today? (A: Open.)

8th August, St. Dominic (1170-1221)

St. Dominic was one of the most important medieval saints in Europe. He was born in Spain and accompanied his bishop (Diego de Azevedo) in a mission of the Gospel in France. Dominic and Diego rejected wealth and riches, which was unusual for respected bishops and priests of that time. Their main aim was to be able to explain the Gospel clearly and to help people to understand the truth of the Church's teaching about Jesus and the sacraments.

In 1216 Dominic founded the Order of Preachers. The main aim of his order was to build communities who would send preachers out, teaching the Gospel, relying completely on the donations of those who supported them. He emphasised the importance of prayer and good preparation for explaining the Gospel to people.

He said, "When those devout wise men entered the home of Mary, they found the child Jesus with His mother, and falling down on their knees they worshipped Him. When we enter a church, we too need to fall down on our knees and worship Jesus."

A contemporary of St. Dominic's said about him, that he used to pray by throwing himself outstretched upon the ground, lying on his face, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Bert Ghezzi, *The Times Book of Saints*, Harper Collins, 2000).

There are now hundreds of Dominican communities, some of men and some of women, around the world.



Dominicans wear white tunics with a black cloak and the many places called "Blackfriars" in this country, reflect former Dominican houses before the Reformation.

There are some famous Dominicans, such as one of the greatest teachers of the faith of the Middle Ages, St Thomas Aquinas, and also, a couple of hundred years later, a favourite of mine, blessed Fra Angelico, was a Dominican who taught with his paintbrush rather than with words.

What is Fra Angelico preaching about in this painting of the "Adoration of the Magi" on:

- Jesus
- Mary
- The wise men
- Joseph
- The world

<https://www.wikiart.org/en/fra-angelico/adoration-of-the-magi-1434>

Jesus is God as the wise men are kneeling and kissing His foot, so He must be God.
Mary wears blue meaning that she has been chosen by God (blue is a heavenly colour)
The wise men recognise the importance of worshipping Jesus and of giving him good things
St. Joseph (and Mary) have a halo which means that they are saints and now live in heaven with Jesus
The bare rocky mountains in the distance show us that the world is sinful but Jesus came to save us from our sins.

9th August, St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (1891 - 1942)

Edith Stein was born a practising Jewish family. Ahead of her time, for a woman, she wanted to study at university and was awarded a doctorate in philosophy. However, she was not allowed to lecture other students there because she was a woman.

After reading about the Carmelite Spanish nun, St. Teresa of Ávila she wanted to know more about the Catholic faith and eventually she became a Christian and was baptised on 1 January 1922. At first she found work teaching at a Catholic girls school and in the meantime studied Catholic philosophy., eventually getting a post as a lecturer in Munster. Even though Edith was a baptised Catholic, the Nazis still regarded her as one of the hated Jews and so she was forced to give up her job lecturing. As she had been so inspired by St. Teresa of Avila, Edith decided to become a Carmelite nun and took the name Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. (All Carmelites take the name "of..." something.) In order to be kept safe from the growing power of the Nazis, she was moved to the Netherlands. She continued to write about philosophy, and her work would later on influence the Pope St. John Paul II's own studies in philosophy.

As a result of the Dutch Bishops condemning Nazism in 1942 (during the second world war), the German Nazi authorities arrested all Jews who had become Christians, including Sr Teresa Benedicta. She was taken to Auschwitz where she was gassed on 9 August 1942.

The Jews are our older brothers and sisters in the faith.

They knew God before we as Christians did. Let us spend a moment praying for them that they too may come to know and love our Lord Jesus Christ.

10th August, St Laurence (d.258)

Like many early saints, there is not a lot known for sure about St. Laurence. The plain facts are that four days after Pope St. Sixtus II was martyred, his faithful deacon, Laurence, was also martyred.

One of the stories is that Deacon Laurence followed the Pope as he was being led to his death and said to him "where are you going without your deacon?" The pope turned and said "not to worry, you will be following me shortly." Immediately after the death of Pope St. Sixtus II, Laurence was arrested and as he was in charge of the Church's treasure, the Roman authorities demanded that he hand it over to them. Laurence said, "Give me three days to gather it all." He was allowed this and went about Rome gathering together all the poorest people who were being supported by the Church. Then coming to the Prefect he said "Here is the Church's treasure". The Prefect was so angry that he had a great big gridiron lit (like a giant barbeque) and Laurence was placed on it to be roasted to death. Apparently, he said after a while "I'm cooked on this side now, can you turn me over!" St. Laurence died, praying for the conversion of Rome and that people all over the world might come to love and know Jesus Christ.

This picture from the reredos at St. Joseph's, shows him wearing the deacon's dalmatic in red, the colour of martyrdom, holding a gridiron, the method by which he died and went to the Lord. We can also pray with him that one day, all people all over the world may come to know Jesus.



11th August, St Clare (1193/4 - 1253)

St. Clare is the founder of what was originally the women's "branch" of Franciscans, still known as the "Poor Clares." At the age of 18, Clare heard St. Francis of Assisi speak when he visited the church of San Giorgio in Assisi and was at once struck by the simplicity of his manner and his evident holiness. On Palm Sunday that year, she ran away from home to the Portiuncula where St. Francis and his community lived and declared her desire to join them. As they did not have a woman's community, Francis clothed Clare in a tunic of sackcloth tied around with a cord at the waist and placed her in a local Benedictine house.

Eventually, a number of "Poor Clare" communities were set up living the radical ideal of owning nothing, not even in common and relying totally on the goodwill of those around. Apart from a basic sackcloth habit, they did not even wear shoes and slept on the floor. They did not even own the properties where the communities were established.

Successive popes tried to moderate this suggesting that property in common was permitted (meaning that they shared the ownership of means to live). Clare resisted this all her life but after her death this was made a condition of the "rule" of the *Poor Clares*.

How can we be inspired by St Clare?

Most of us have too many things - our homes are full of things which we are convinced that we "need". Maybe we can give away some things to those who really do need them, or to a charity shop to sell them. Once we own things, we can rely on them rather on Jesus. Clare wanted to rely completely on Jesus and for 40 years as a "Poor Clare" He never let her down.

Two saints who were inspired by St Francis of Assisi...

14th August, St. Maximilian Kolbe (1894-1941)

Maximilian Kolbe was a Polish Franciscan priest who taught that Christians must do everything they can to get the message of Jesus' work of our salvation to as many people as possible. He urged people to use "modern" means of communication such through magazines and radio. When the Germans invaded Poland in 1939, his community sheltered thousands of refugees from the Germans, most of them Jews. However, in 1941 he was arrested and sent to the concentration camp at Auschwitz. He did not stop working and did everything possible to help his fellow captives, encouraging them and supporting them as best he could. One day, a prisoner escaped, and the camp authorities chose ten people to die by starvation as a warning to everyone else. One of the men chosen to die had a family, and Maximilian Kolbe offered to take his place. The offer was accepted, and he spent his last days comforting his fellow prisoners as one by one they all died in a tiny, cramped cell not big enough to stand up in. In the end, Maximilian was the last to die and was finally killed by a poisonous injection.

The man he saved was present at his canonisation.

WWJD - what would Jesus do? St. Maximilian Kolbe did what Jesus did - Jesus died for us, and St. Maximilian died instead of another man

Next time you see someone needing help, think, WWJD?

Then do what Jesus would do!

20th August, St Bernard of Clairvaux (1090 - 1153)

St. Bernard was the third of seven children and all but two were called "Bernard" their mother's father's name (I presume that they were addressed by their second names, otherwise it could be a bit confusing!) He was born in a castle near Dijon and all the boys were well educated and learned Latin. It was assumed that he, like his brothers would make his way in the world of chivalry, politics, but instead, he joined the newly established community at Citeaux which had been founded by (Sts.) Alberic, Robert and the Englishman, (St.) Stephen Harding. This community known as "Cistercians," had been founded on the Benedictine rule but a much stricter form of it. After three years, Bernard was chosen to go and found a new community of Cistercians and he took with him 12 men. From scratch they built a monastery near Champagne in a place which was then called "Wormwood". However, it soon became a place where the light of Christ seemed to shine out, so it was renamed "Clairvaux."

The Cistercians grew by sending out twelve monks to new locations to found "daughter houses" of the previous one. The first Cistercian community founded in England was Waverley Abbey near Farnham in Surrey, but far more famous are Rievaulx and Fountains Abbeys in Yorkshire. Cistercians tended to settle in isolated places away from towns and villages, whereas Benedictines tended to settle in or near towns and saw their mission as evangelisation to the community. This is why many former Benedictine monasteries survived in part as parish churches (as in Great Malvern) but the Cistercian houses were destroyed during the Reformation, as no one outside the community went to Mass there.

Bernard loved to spend time in prayer more than anything else, and this constant call to be with Jesus showed in the way he treated other people and the way he ran his community. At first, he was so passionate about living a strict and pure life, it was too much for his community who began to grumble and lose faith. Bernard soon that not everyone was called to that level of discipline, and he relaxed some of the rules. When he wasn't praying, Bernard was teaching and supporting his community and a lot of his sermons have survived. Bernard did not enjoy good health and was often so ill that everyone thought that he was going to die. However, he lived to the age of 63, a good age then. He was canonised in 1174, only 21 years after his death, and was declared a doctor of the Church in 1830.



Top: **Waverley Abbey**, Middle: **Rievault**, Bottom: **Fountains**.

If you go to a ruined church or Abbey, don't just admire the beauty of the ruins, but say a prayer for all those who once lived, prayed, and worked there.

Find the high altar if you can, and reflect that Jesus was truly there in that building on the altar in that spot, just as He is on the altar in our churches at Mass. Try to pause for a moment and imagine the monks coming in at the dead of night to sing their praises to God.



24th August, St Bartholomew, Apostle

Like most of the other Apostles, we don't know a lot of detail about St. Bartholomew. In St. John's Gospel he is referred to as "Nathaniel." Bar-tholomew means "son of Talmei" or "son of the farmer." It is probable that his real name was Nathaniel and "Bartholomew" was a nickname. Nathaniel was introduced to Jesus by his old friend Philip. In John's Gospel we read that Jesus called Philip, and Philip was so excited that he ran off to get Nathaniel, saying "We have found the one whom Moses and the prophets wrote about, Jesus of Nazareth!" Nathaniel, who knew that Nazareth was a bit of a out of the way place, said rather disparagingly, "Can any good come out of Nazareth?" Philip, not put off, replied, "Come and see."

He took his friend to meet Jesus, who looked straight at Nathaniel, saying, "Behold an Israelite in whom there is no deception, a totally true and honest man." Nathaniel, who had never met Jesus in his life before, was rather surprised to be greeted like this and asked Jesus, "How do you know me?". Jesus' answer was that He saw him "under the fig tree" which is a strange thing for us, but what it means, is that Jesus knew that he was a man of deep prayer. Because of his, Jesus prophesied that Nathaniel would see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending. In other words, that he would be a part of Jesus' great mission to the world. (c.f. Jn. 1:43-51).

We have no clear idea of where Bartholomew/Natahniel travelled to after Jesus' after the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. One early Church writer mentions him teaching in India and the Roman Martyrology says that he was martyred in Armenia. His relics were taken to Rome and enshrined in an island in the Tiber that had been used as a hospital, St. Bartholomew became known as the patron saint of the sick.

In the Middle Ages, there was a great big fair in London on his feast day which was a holy day - the St. Bartholomew's day fair. This is the origin of our late August bank holiday! (The word "holiday" comes from "holy day").

St. Philip was excited to share his new friendship with Jesus with his friends. Are we excited to do the same? Who can we speak to, about Jesus today?

27th August, St. Monica (331-387)

Monica a Christian lived in Thagaste in North Africa. She married a man called Patricius, who was not a Christian and who did not always treat her very nicely. However, he did not stop her from praying and practicing her faith. Monica had a number of children who were brought up as Christians and one of these was her rebellious but brilliantly clever son, Augustine. He did not pay attention to the Christian teaching that he had been taught as a child. However, every day, Monica prayed for Augustine and others in her family that they might come to know Jesus Christ.

Eventually, just before she died, Monica's prayers were answered, and Augustine was baptised and went on to become one of the most important teachers of the faith the Church has known. Also, her husband and mother-in-law were also converted and were baptised.

St. Monica gives hope to all those who pray hard for family members. God hears our prayers and answers them in his own good time. But we must not give up praying.

Make a family prayer tree:

Cut out a large tree shape from card and put it up somewhere that everyone can see. Then using post-its or labels, stick on the names of people in your family that you want to pray for.

Don't just pray for those who are sick, pray above all everyone becomes the person that God created them to be. And don't forget to pray for yourselves.


28th August, St. Augustine (354 - 430)

Augustine was born in Thagaste in North Africa of a Berber family and was the son of St. Monica. He was brought up a Christian but left the Church early and lived a rather dissolute life. Eventually, through the prayers of his mother and the teaching of St Ambrose of Milan, he was converted back to Christianity and baptized in 387, shortly before his mother's death.

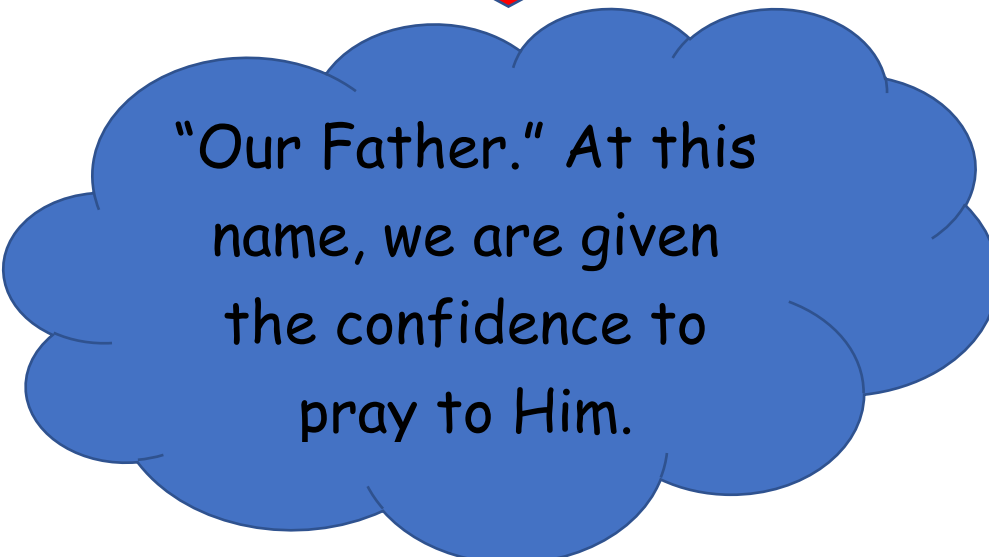
Augustine had been a brilliant and clever man and had many admirers in "secular" society. But after his conversion he returned home to Africa and led a life of poverty, living off only what he needed and nothing more. He was much happier then, than he had ever been. He became Bishop of Hippo and spent 34 years looking after his flock, teaching them, strengthening them in the faith and protecting them strenuously against the errors of the time. He wrote an enormous amount and his works contributed greatly to the Church's teaching and understanding of the mystery of Jesus Christ's work of our salvation (saving us from our sins and restoring us to the Father in Eternal Life).

He died in 430 and is a doctor of the Church for all his wealth of teaching.

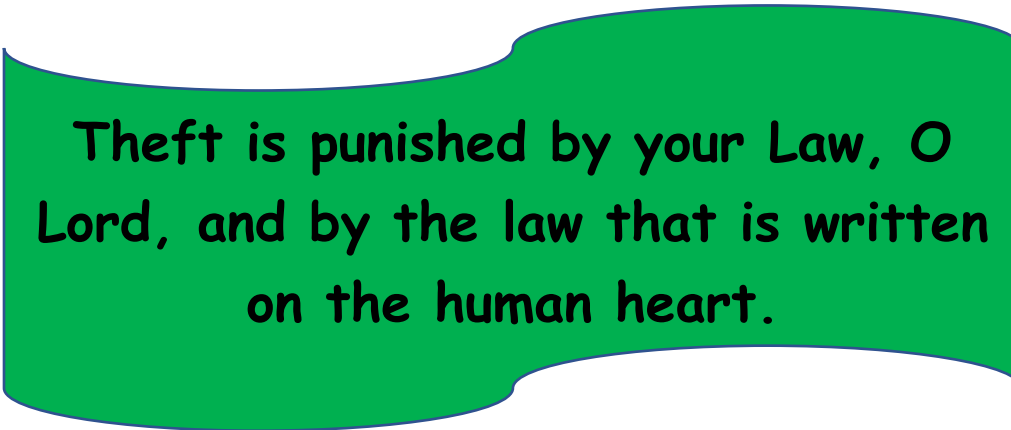
These are just some of the things that St. Augustine said. Cut them out and put them up on the fridge to remind you.



"Our hearts are restless until they rest in you O Lord"



"Our Father." At this name, we are given the confidence to pray to Him.



Theft is punished by your Law, O Lord, and by the law that is written on the human heart.

30th August, Sts. Margaret Clitheroe (1556-1586), Anne Line (1565-1601) and Margaret Ward (-1588)

These three remarkable women were all converts to the faith and all three were martyred because they refused to deny their Catholic Faith during the penal times. All three supported and hid priests in their homes and did their best to help them in their ministry.

St. Margaret Clitheroe lived all her life in York. Married at 15 to a butcher, John Clitheroe, they lived in "the Shambles" which is a name given to a street of butcher's shops. At the age of 18 she became a Catholic, and whilst she was in prison because she did not go to the Protestant church services, she taught herself to read. When she was released, she opened a small school for her own and her neighbour's children. John never became a Catholic but allowed his wife to practice her faith and to hide priests in their home which was illegal. Eventually, the secret hiding places were discovered and Margaret was arrested and put on trial. If she had pleaded guilty, her children would be destitute so Margaret refused to plead either guilty or not guilty, so she could not be tried. Instead, she was crushed to death under a heavy stone on the bridge crossing the River Ouse. Her house is now a lovely little chapel in the centre of York in the famous (now very elegant) Shambles. Mass is celebrated there, so if you are in or near York, do make a visit.

St. Anne Line became a Catholic when she was a teenager and because of this, her father "disinherited" her, that meant, declared that she was no longer his daughter. She married Roger line, also a convert who had been disinherited by his family for becoming a Catholic. Because of his faith, he was sent away from England (exiled) and sadly as he did not have good health, he soon died. Anne, left alone in London, had a "safe house" where she taught children the faith and hid priests from the authorities. She also sewed vestments for Mass, also an illegal activity. On the feast of Candlemas, 2nd February 1601 a large number of people were seen leaving her house after Mass, and Anne was arrested. At her trial, the prosecution could find no evidence for her hiding priests, and she was about to be declared "not guilty", but the Lord Chief Justice was not pleased. He demanded that the jury find her guilty, even if there was no evidence! She was condemned to be hanged the next day.

St. Margaret Ward was one of the victims of the persecution that followed the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. Catholics in England did not want King Philip of Spain to invade any more than the Protestants did, they just wanted freedom to go to Mass and to teach their children the faith. However, Queen Elizabeth was terrified of being assassinated by Catholics. After the Armada, many priests and lay people were rounded up, including Margaret Ward who had helped a priest to escape from prison by smuggling a rope into his cell in a basket of food. At her trial she was told that she could go free if she asked the queen's pardon and would go to the Protestant services and promised never to go to Mass again. But she refused and so was executed on 30 August 1588.

Let us pray for all Christians throughout the world who daily face persecution and death for their faith. Lord, have mercy on them all and give them courage. Give us courage also to be able to stand up for our faith in you in our very secular society.

31st August, St. Aidan (-651)

We have already been introduced to St. Aidan when looking at the life of St. Oswald (3rd August). Aidan led the community of monks to the kingdom of Northumbria to tell the people there about salvation in Jesus. Aidan was made bishop of Lindisfarne but unlike many bishops of those days, he preferred a life of poverty to a life of luxury and riches. If the king invited him to dine with him, he always took some priests with him so that they too could benefit from the king's food.

The monastery on Lindisfarne (Holy Island) was the epicentre of the Christianisation of the north of England and became a centre of learning for training English men for the priesthood.

We have seen how the king acted as Aidan's translator in his travels around the north of England. But King Oswald found Aidan to be a wise friend and adviser. After Oswald's death, Aidan continue his ministry under his successor, King Oswin.

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www.universalis.com

Fun Activity!

We began and ended this month with saints beginning with the letter A.

Can you find at least one Saint (or Blessed) for every letter of the Alphabet? Send me your list if you get most of them!

A _____

N _____

B _____

O _____

C _____

P _____

D _____

Q _____

E _____

R _____

F _____

S _____

G _____

T _____

H _____

U _____

I _____

V _____

J _____

W _____

K _____

X _____

L _____

Y _____

M _____

Z _____