



St. Joseph's Family Activities

September Saints and Celebrations

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The saints continue to reach out to us

We celebrate in the middle of the month, the feast of the exaltation of the Cross. It is as if the whole month is a gathering of holy men and women around the cross. This picture by Raphael shows Our Lady, St. John (standing) and St. Mary Magdalene and St. Jerome (kneeling) gathered around the Cross, with the angels in the heavenly sphere. This is a true picture of the Church, especially at Mass when we are gathered around the Cross in the presence of the angels and saints. St. Jerome was not there in person on the day Jesus died in Calvary, but he, like us, is at the foot of the Cross at every celebration of Holy Mass.

Each of the saints this month speak to us in different ways. Many people recall seeing St. Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa) on their televisions and there is a collection of her sayings to think about. St John Chrysostom was a wonderful teacher in his age, and I have adapted some of his saying to a more “family friendly” language. St. Robert Bellarmine was behind the first great Catechism of the Church and there are some sayings from the 1992 (2016 translation) of the Catechism of the Catholic Church to learn. St. Hildegard of Bingen has spoken to the world for a nearly a thousand years through her music and poetry and St. Matthew, the “pen” behind the Gospel of His name, continues to reach out to us in the sacred words of the Gospel.

Some saints inspire us more than others, but they all, through their different personalities and characters are saints because their lives were centred on our Lord Jesus Christ. They are now in the glory of heaven, praying for us that we too can follow their examples.

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.

The Mond Crucifixion by Raphael. This month we celebrate the exaltation of the Holy Cross and also the feast of St Jerome, who is the figure in grey at the foot of the cross, beating his breast. See why on the last page!



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.

3rd September, Pope St Gregory the Great (540-604)

Pope St. Gregory the Great was the first monk to be elected pope. He came from a wealthy but pious, Roman family who owned a lot of land in Sicily and in Rome. First Gregory went into what we would now call "local government" and at the age of 30, he became prefect of the city of Rome. Although he did this job well, he soon realised that in fact he wanted to serve God alone. He gave up all his wealth (he was one of the richest men in Rome by then) and turned his house into a monastery dedicated to St. Andrew. However, his talents could not be hidden, and he was soon ordained as one of Rome's seven deacons. (Originating from the seven deacons elected in Acts chapter 6, in the fourth century the Church in Rome was divided into 7 regions and each region was headed by an appointed deacon).

Then Gregory was sent to Byzantium (now Turkey) as the Roman ambassador, despite the fact that he did not speak the local language which was Greek! He took some of his fellow monks and there, they established a monastery, until he was called back to Rome by the Pope. He thought that he could now settle down in the monastery which he had founded. One day, Gregory saw some golden-haired boys for sale as slaves in the marketplace and was astonished at their fair skin and hair. (Remember, he was from the Mediterranean where most people have darker skin and hair to protect from the sun). He cried out that they must be angels, but the reply was that they are Angles (Angli) and were pagans. Shocked that such beautiful people did not know Jesus Christ, he decided that he would go with some of his monks to the land of the Angles (England) and tell the people there about Jesus.

The people of Rome were aghast that their great deacon had left them again, this time for some distant unknown pagan land and the Pope sent envoys to call Gregory back. Then there were a series of disasters in Rome; the Tiber flooded, and plague spread through the city. Even the pope died of the plague. Gregory was chosen as the next Pope on 3rd September 590, and immediately he began to reform the administration of the church estates, giving surplus money to the poor. He wrote a manual on the role of bishops which was translated into lots of different languages and was a very important book then. He respected Jews as our elder brothers and sisters in the faith and made sure that they were allowed to worship in their synagogues. Gregory had to deal with invasions of Lombards (Italy was not a single country then and so each of the different regions were different countries which were all trying to dominate the other ones).

However, all that political stuff meant that Gregory was not able to fulfil his dream of converting the Angles in person. As far as he was concerned, that was the most important thing and so, in 596 he sent Augustine, one of the monks of his own monastery, to go to the land of the Angles and tell them about Jesus Christ. (We looked at the story of St Augustine in the May issue). For the rest of his life, he was very supportive of this mission, sending extra help in 601.

St. Gregory was a humble man who did the best he could in the situation he was placed. He used all the gifts that God had given him to first, run Rome as a lay man and then to run the Church as Pope. He was the first pope to call himself "servant of the servants of God". This means that he recognised that he was there to serve all those who served God. As he died during Lent, the date of his election as pope is kept as his feast day.

God gives us lots of talents. How can we use them to serve other people as St. Gregory the Great did?



4th September, St Cuthbert (634? - 687)

This picture from St. Joseph's Malvern was used for the notes on St. Oswald whose head is being held. Now let's focus on the man who is holding the head; St. Cuthbert.

Cuthbert was a shepherd who, after a vision when he was out in the field, became a monk at Melrose Abbey in Scotland. He attended the great Synod of Whitby which settled the date that Easter was celebrated (according to the Roman Tradition, which was always on a Sunday, against the Celtic Tradition which was a weekday according to the Jewish Calendar). Cuthbert was made prior of Lindisfarne, but he really wanted to be a hermit so left the abbey to live alone on the Island of Inner Farne for a while. However as with Gregory the Great, talented men are needed to serve the Church and so he was called back to be bishop of Lindisfarne. When he was old and near death, he was allowed to go back to Inner Farne to live out his last few days in solitude, dying on 20th March 687. At first, he was buried in the abbey at Lindisfarne but when the Danes began to plunder the East Coast of Britain, his body was moved to a magnificent shrine in Durham Cathedral for safety. This was when St. Oswald's head was put into his safe keeping in the same tomb! This happened on 4th September 875 and as the date of his death is always in Lent, his feast is now kept on the date his body was moved.

St. Cuthbert was a man of deep prayer. In his prayer life he learned to do what God wanted him to do. When we listen to God and do what God wants us to do, God gives us the ability to do it.

One way of praying is called "lectio divina" (Holy reading) and it's about slowly reading a passage from the Bible a few times thinking, "What is God saying to ME here? Why don't you try it? Make the Sign of the Cross slowly and say, "Holy Spirit, what are you saying to me today?" Then, open one of the Gospels (or read the Gospel of the day) and read a few verses very slowly. Then think about what you have read. Did any word strike you? Any phrase? After a few moments, read the verses again. What comes to your mind this time? The same thing, or something else? Then read it again and think again. At this point you may want to share your thoughts with others. It's interesting as when you do this with others sometimes people pick the same word or phrase. I wonder why? What is the Holy Spirit saying? The more often we do this, the more we "tune in" to God and can hear Him above all the noise of the world around.



5th September, St Mother Teresa of Calcutta (1910 - 1997)

The person we know as "Mother Teresa" was born as Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu on 26 August in Macedonia and was baptised the next day. She always felt that God was calling her to a religious life and at first, when she was 18, she joined the Sisters of Loreto in Ireland. Quite often when people join religious orders, they are given a new name in honour of a saint (a bit like when we are confirmed we can choose a saint's name). Agnes was given the name Sister Mary Teresa, after St Thérèse of Lisieux (see the next edition for St. Teresa of Lisieux). Three years later, she was sent to Calcutta, India, to teach in the order's school there. Eventually she became the headteacher.

Calcutta was a city of great poverty and Sister Mary Teresa realised that God was calling her to do something really radical. After much prayer and reflection, in 1948 she left her convent to care for the poorest of the poor wherever she found them, in the streets, in the gutter and even dying in the middle of piles of rubbish. Sister Mary Teresa attracted the help of some of her former pupils and with them, she established a new congregation of religious sisters: "The Missionaries of Charity" in 1950. Many people around the world were inspired by the work of Mother Teresa and her sisters and all around the world other orders were established, involving men and women. One person who made the world aware of her work was British Broadcaster, Malcom Muggeridge and he wrote about Mother Teresa,

When I first set eyes on her, ... I at once realized that I was in the presence of someone of unique quality. This was not due to ... her shrewdness and quick understanding, though these are very marked; nor even to her piety and humility and ready laughter. **There is a phrase in one of the psalms that always, for me, evokes her presence: "the beauty of holiness" — that special beauty, amounting to a kind of pervasive luminosity generated by a life dedicated wholly to loving God and His creation.** This, I imagine, is what the halos in medieval paintings of saints were intended to convey.

Mother Teresa died on 5 September 1997 (the same day as Princess Diana) and was beatified by Pope John Paul II on 19 October 2003 and canonized by Pope Francis on 4 September 2016. On the next page are some quotes from her. Can you cut these out and display them in an interesting way? Maybe you can paste them around a picture of Mother Teresa? Please send me photos of what you have done with them.

"Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love."

"If you can't feed a hundred people, then feed just one."

"Every time you smile at someone, it is an action of love, a gift to that person, a beautiful thing."

"If you judge people, you have no time to love them."

"Live simply so others may simply live."

"Good works are links that form a chain of love."

"I want you to be concerned about your next-door neighbour. Do you know your next-door neighbour?"

"God doesn't require us to succeed; he only requires that you try."

"If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other."

"It is a kingly act to assist the fallen."

"I know God won't give me anything I can't handle"

. "Prayer is not asking. Prayer is putting oneself in the hands of God, at His disposition, and listening to His voice in the depth of our hearts."

"Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless."

Which is your favourite ?

8th September, the Birthday of Our Lady

On this day, the Church celebrates Our Lady's birthday. We don't know for sure when her birthday was, but it's important to recognise it as a special day. It's especially important as Mary, unlike all of us, was conceived and born without sin. Our heavenly Father knew that He was going to ask her to be Jesus' mother, but as sin separates us from God (and Jesus is God of course) Mary could not have any sin in her if she was going to be Jesus' mother. That is why the Angel Gabriel addressed her at the Annunciation as "Hail Full of Grace". We are only FULL of grace when we don't have any sin in us!

1. **Say the Hail Mary slowly and carefully.**
2. **Make a birthday card for Our Lady wishing her a very happy birthday.**
3. **Do something special for your own Mum as if you were doing it for Mary.**

9th September, St Peter Claver (1581 - 1654)

Peter Claver was a Jesuit who came from Catalonia (in Spain) who in 1610 he was sent to the "New World" to convert the pagans there. It was a long and tiring journey on board the big creaking ship, subject to the wind and the waves, and at last Peter and his companions landed in what is now the republic of Columbia. He finished off his studies at Cartagena and was ordained as priest in 1615. He was 34 years old.

This was just as the slave trade was beginning to take off. African people were brutally captured and shipped across the Atlantic to be sold to work for rich landowners in the New World. Fr. Peter Claver realised that these poor people needed help and so he threw himself into being "The slave of Negroes for ever". As soon as he saw a ship coming, he went to look after the "living freight" of hundreds of weakened, ill, and sick Africans who had been shut into yards on disembarking, before being sold. Fr. Peter went in with food, clothes, and medicines. He saw them as desperate human beings (which is what they were) realised that they needed love and care above everything else. He also realised that Jesus came for them just as much as He came for us, and so organised teams of catechists who spoke many languages to tell them about Jesus Christ, and to baptise them. As the slaves were sold and dispersed around the country, Fr. Peter did his best to keep in touch with as many as he could. He would tour around the slave plantations every spring, annoying the owners who thought that he was wasting the slaves' time.

Fr. Peter recognised the dignity of every person and as well as slaves. He took time to care for all the sick in hospitals, including lepers and also reached out to the traders and seamen who passed through Cartagena. In 1650 he became ill with the plague, and although he recovered, his body was weak, and he was in pain. Unable to move, he spent the next 4 years in his cell where he was almost forgotten. Finally, a successor was appointed by the Jesuits and Fr Peter was so delighted that he dragged Himself out of his cell to receive Holy Communion from him. Then he said to those around him that he was dying and collapsed into a coma. Suddenly everyone remembered the man who had served everyone, white, black, rich, poor, alike and rushed to his cell, convinced that he would become a saint and removed all his belongings as relics! He died on 8th September 1654 (Our Lady's birthday). St. Peter Claver was never forgotten again and even those who had been annoyed at his support for Negroes and all the "downtrodden" suddenly realised that there had been a saint in their midst.

Who works hard for the disadvantaged" today? Do you know anyone who supports refugees, volunteers at foodbanks, visits the sick in hospices, works to support the homeless, raises money for these causes? How can you be inspired by St. Peter Claver to do something for those whom Jesus loves just as much as He loves you?

13th September, St John Chrysostom (349 - 407)

"John, the golden mouth" is what his name means. He was given the nickname "golden mouth" because of the wonderful way in which he spoke about God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He was especially gifted in being able to clearly explain the Church's faith.

John was born in Antioch, the place where the followers of Jesus were first called Christians (Acts 11:26). After his ordination as a priest, John gave his life to being a preacher - telling people about Jesus and explaining the important teachings of the Church. Eventually, he was elected Patriarch of Constantinople (now Istanbul) and worked hard to encourage priests and lay people to live honest Christian lives. Being a Christian is not just about Sunday Mass, but about how we live the rest of the week as well!

Not everyone likes to be reminded about this and the Emperor twice sent him into exile (to live in another country). This second exile was only to Armenia (the next-door country) but the Emperor thought that it was not far enough away. John did as he was told and left to go even further away, but the journey was hard, and John became ill and died, worn out by his life working hard for Jesus Christ.

On the next side of the page are some of the things that St. John Chrysostom said, but with some words missing. Can you work out what is missing and fill the gaps?

Some of St John Chrysostom's "Golden words"

1. It is not possible to do anything really _ _ _ _ unless we enjoy the benefit of God's grace.
2. The Magi worshipped this body (of Christ) in the _ _ _ _ _ . You don't see Him in a manger but on an _ _ _ _ _.
3. The grace of the Holy Spirit has raised priests. It is through _ _ _ _ _ that the sacraments are accomplished through a power given by _ _ _.
4. When the priest says, "this is my body", this statement
_ _ _ _ _ the offerings... and Christ's
_ _ _ _ _ is complete on the altar in our church.

Missing words from the sentences above.

changes, sacrifice, good, priests, God, altar, manger,

Answers: 1. It is not possible to do anything really **good** unless we enjoy the benefit of God's grace. / 2. The Magi worshipped this body (of Christ) in the **manger**. You don't see Him in a manger but on an **altar**. / 3. The grace of the Holy Spirit has raised priests. It is through **priests** that the sacraments are accomplished through a power given by **God**. / 4. When the priest says "this is my body", this statement **changes** the offerings... and Christ's **sacrifice** is complete on the altar in our church.

14th September, The Exaltation of the Cross

Why would we be exalting - rejoicing in - an instrument of torture? We do first because we realise that something terrible has been transformed into the means of redemption (salvation) for the whole human race. This shows us that God who went through so much torture, pain and agony can bring good out of the most awful of situations.

Secondly, the Cross is a reminder that Christianity is not an abstract and spiritual religion. It is about God's intervention in the lives of every single human being. Jesus' death and Resurrection is a real historical event involving real people. As St Paul said, if we take away the cross, Christianity is irrelevant (I Cor. 1:23).

The Cross is the sign of our faith. We wear crosses or crucifixes (a crucifix has a figure on it); our churches have them, we have them at home, graves are often cross-shaped, church buildings are often cross-shaped, and crosses are used in intricate designs in church buildings.

Activity:

Below are some floor tiles from York Minster. Can you cut them out and make a cross-shape with them? May be stick them onto some card for display. Send in a photo of your design as there are lots of different ways in which the tiles can be arranged.



16th September, Sts. Cornelius (-253) and Cyprian (210-258)

These brave men lived (and died) during the Roman persecutions. The Romans at this time did not like Christians as Christians refused to sacrifice to the Roman gods. St. Cornelius became Pope in 251, but because he would not compromise his beliefs, the emperor Gallus sent him away (into exile) where he died.

St. Cyprian was bishop of Carthage (in North Africa) and had been a lawyer before he became a Christian. He was very brave and wrote a lot of letters encouraging other bishops and even Pope St. Cornelius to be brave and strong. He wrote to him,

"Words cannot express how great was the delight here when we heard of your brave deeds: how you stood out as leader declaration of faith. You led the way to glory, being foremost in your readiness to bear witness on behalf of all and encouraged your people to become a single witness. We cannot decide which we ought to praise, your own ready and unshaken faith or the love of your fellow Christians who would not leave you."

Bishop Cyprian was not free from persecution in North Africa, and in 258 he was put on trial for not sacrificing to the gods. The governor, a man called Galerius Maximus, urged Cyprian to compromise, but Cyprian would not and so the death sentence was given. Cyprian even ordered his supporters to pay the executioner! He knew, that by dying for Jesus, he would be in heaven with Him and that is what was the most important thing.

The letters between Cornelius and Cyprian tell us about the courage of the early Christians who recognised the beauty of a faith in Jesus Christ. They also recognised that we all need to be supported in our faith. We cannot grow in our faith alone!

On the other half of the page is a scroll - write a letter to someone (a friend or relative, or even an imaginary person, encouraging them to be strong in their faith, and to continue to pray and live as Jesus would want us to.

Dear.....

I want to encourage you to be strong in your faith in Jesus Christ.....

St Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621)

Robert was born in Montepulciano in the beautiful Tuscan hills in northern Italy. He became a Jesuit and was an excellent teacher of theology in Rome. He became a cardinal, but he is most famous for his writings and commentaries on the Psalms and Christ's Last words on the Cross. Most famous of all, is his work with St. Charles Borromeo on the Roman Catechism, or the Catechism of the Council of Trent which was published in 1566. This was the first Catechism for the whole Church (the second of which was published in 1992).

The famous "Penny Catechism" came out of the 1566 Catechism, and it used to be that before people made their First Holy Communion, they had to learn it all by heart. Nowadays we focus less on learning by heart, but more on understanding our faith. However, it's not a bad thing to learn some of our faith by heart! See if you can learn these statements from the 1992 Catechism* by heart! There is one from each of the four parts of the Catechism.

*The 1992 Catechism was published in French. It was published in English in 1994, 1999 and was revised in 2016 in the light of the new translation of the Mass.

God, infinitely perfect and blessed in Himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in His own blessed life. (CCC # 1)

In the Eucharistic sacrifice, the whole of creation, loved by God is presented to the Father through the death and Resurrection of Christ. (CCC # 1357)

Our moral life has its source in God who reveals His love to us. (CCC #2087)

Two saints on the 17th September!

St Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179)

Hildegard was born in Germany and when she was aged 17, she became a nun, entering the Benedictine Abbey at Disibodenburg. She lived there for about 35 years before founding her own abbey at Rupertsberg, near Bingen and was abbess there.

Hildegard was an amazing woman and as well as her two great loves: science and music, she was a deeply prayerful person and advised others both priests and the laity on how they could pray more deeply. Even Popes and kings turned to her for advice! She was very concerned that we all are aware of our sins and urged people to make use of the Sacrament of confession.

Hildegard used to study the natural world and in Germany she is regarded as the founder of the study of natural sciences and medicines. However, most people have heard of her because of her music. She wrote both the words (lyrics) and music for plays and for liturgies and there are more works of hers that have survived from the Middle Ages than from any other composer of her time.

Although she did not go through the normal process of canonisation, she has been regarded as a saint for centuries and in 2012, Pope Benedict XVI declared her a "doctor of the Church".

Why don't you look up some of Hildegard of Bingen's music on the internet?

The Holy Spirit is the living water "welling up to Eternal Life" in the heart that prays. (CCC # 2650)

20th September, St Andrew Kim Taegön, Paul Chong Hasang, and companions

Korea is unusual as unlike most of the rest of the world where missionaries were priests who went out to pass on the Good News of Jesus Christ, in Korea, this was different. No-one was allowed to enter the country and so none of the Koreans could hear about Jesus and His work of salvation. Nobody knows when, but at some stage, some diplomats came across some books about Jesus when they were in China and took them back, fascinated! They were converted and were baptised, but that was all as there were no priests to celebrate Mass or the other sacraments. As Christianity spread, sadly the authorities got wind of this new movement and started to persecute those who refused to offer sacrifices to their local gods. Nobody knows exactly how many Koreans were martyred, estimates think that it may have been over 10,000 were brutally killed because they were Christians.

Finally in 1794 a priest reached Korea and found a vibrant community of at least 4,000 Catholics who had never seen a priest. Sadly, the authorities heard about him, and he was executed in 1801. The same fate happened to the next two priests who arrived in Korea. About 1830 the Korean Catholics wrote to Pope Leo XII and asked him to do something to support them, and so he set up the "Prefecture of Apostolic Korea" which meant that Korea was officially recognised by the Church as missionary territory. Again, the authorities were having none of it and the first missionaries were quickly beheaded. However, that did not stop the Koreans who were desperate for priests. Korean men were sent secretly to other countries to train to be priests and in 1835, the first one to return as an ordained priest was Andrew Kim Taegön. Sadly, he was executed in 1836. He was not alone. His father was also executed as well as another lay person, St. Paul Chong Hassang. There are officially 103 Martyrs listed as today's saints, but we don't just celebrate the faith of those we know who were martyred in Korea, but also countless others, men women and children, unknown to us but not to God, who lost their lives to defend their faith in Jesus Christ.

Pope St John Paul II said at their canonisation in 1984, *"This fledgling Church, so young and yet so strong in faith, withstood wave after wave of fierce persecution. Thus, in less than a century, it could already boast of some ten thousand martyrs. The years 1791, 1801, 1827, 1839, 1846 and 1866 are forever signed with the holy blood of your Martyrs and engraved in your hearts."*

Even though the Christians in the first half century had only two priests from China to assist them, and these only for a time, they deepened their unity in Christ through prayer and fraternal love; they disregarded social classes and encouraged religious vocations. And they sought ever closer union with their Bishop in Peking and the Pope in faraway Rome."

Lookup where Korea is on the map. Note that it's currently divided into two with North Korea being the most secretive country in the world. Why don't you pray a decade of the Rosary for all persecuted Christians especially those secretly living out their faith in North Korea.

21st September, St. Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist.

St. Matthew was born in Capernaum and was one of the hated tax-collectors, when Jesus called him. Some people thought that he wrote an early version of his gospel in Aramaic, the language that Jesus spoke, a "first edition" which was then produced in Greek, which is the version that we now have.

St. Matthew wrote his Gospel for the Jews and so refers to the Scriptures (the Old Testament) a lot, to show that Jesus is the promised Messiah whom the Jews were expecting. He also uses Jewish phrases, such as "kingdom of Heaven" instead of "Kingdom of God," to avoid using the sacred word "God" in His texts.

Opposite is a painting by Caravaggio, called "the inspiration of St. Matthew".

Q: What is happening in the picture? (A: St. Matthew is being inspired to write his Gospel by the Holy Spirit - shown here as an angel.)

Q: How do we know that the angel/Holy Spirit is speaking to St. Matthew? (A: St. Matthew seems to be listing things to put in the Gospel.)

Q: Describe what St. Matthew looks like. Why has the artist shown him like this? (A: The artist has painted St. Matthew as a real person, not just as a pale holy person, to show that the Gospel is written by real men who were inspired by the Holy Spirit. St. Matthew wrote his Gospel from his own perspective as someone who came from and knew the Jewish culture.)

Q: What is St. Matthew wearing, and on his feet, and why? (A: The red-brown cloak bare feet are artistic signs of humility. Humility means that St. Matthew is relying on God's grace.)

Q: What is happening to the stool that St. Matthew is using? (A: It's falling off the edge of the picture, coming into our space, so to speak.)

Q: Why do you think the artist has done this? (A: It's a way of showing that the Gospel is for us - St. Matthew is not just writing for the people of His day but for all of us, in our time too.)

Look up something from St. Matthew's Gospel and write it in the banner here. Cut it out and put it up to share.



23rd September, St Pio of Pietrelcina (1887-1968) (Padre Pio)

"Padre Pio," as he was fondly known was actually baptised Francesco Forgione in the small town of Pietrelcina Italy. The young Francesco had a strong sense of faith as a small boy and at the tender age of five, he dedicated his life to God. He had a deep sense of the presence of God and loved Mass and spending time in prayer. He had such a closeness to Jesus all his life, that he thought that everyone did and was surprised to find people who did not share the same depth of feeling.

At the age of 15 he joined the Capuchin order and was given the religious name of "Pio" meaning "pious". Others noted his love of prayer. He was ordained at the young age of 23 years old and he loved nothing more than celebrating Mass. There was no such thing as a "quick Mass" when Padre (Fr.) Pio was celebrating as he often got so lost in meditation that Mass could take hours. Above all, he meditated on Christ's Passion; His death on the Cross. On being asked to shorten his Mass, he replied that he would like to, but could not because Mass was such an amazing experience that it was impossible not to dwell every moment.

For Padre Pio, life was just one prayer. There was never a time when he was not praying as he sought a deeper and deeper union with Jesus Christ. However, on being asked what he actually prayed he said, "The Rosary". He was also concerned to pray for the souls in purgatory and said, "we must empty purgatory with our prayers".

People came from far and wide to listen to his advice, and so often he told people that Jesus only wanted that their souls be made holy. He never enjoyed good health and was often bedridden, but he was not discouraged, offering all his pains to God as a personal sacrifice. When he was aged 31, he received the marks of the stigmata -that is, the wounds of Christ's crucifixion (holes in his hands, feet, and side). They were more than just marks but were deeply painful as he shared in Jesus' pain on the Cross. He was given many spiritual gifts which he humbly used for the glory of God and to help people to grow in faith. Many miracles were worked through his intercession (prayer).

Padre Pio worked hard, rising in the middle of the night to pray and spent the whole day either in prayer or ministering to other people. The prayer groups he established spread around the world and many of these "Padre Pio" groups are still going. In all his years as a capuchin, he rarely left his monastery and never took a holiday. He died on 23rd September 1968 aged 81 years old with his rosary in his hands and the names of Jesus and Mary on his lips. It was a few days after the fiftieth anniversary of his receiving the stigmata. St. Pio of Pietrelcina, pray for us.



Pray the Rosary for all the souls in Purgatory, and next time you are in pain, offer that pain too, for the souls in purgatory.

27th September, St. Vincent de Paul (1581-1660)

Vincent came from Gascony in France and was one of six children. He was ordained at the age of 20 and at first, he enjoyed the privileges that came with him being a chaplain to the rich Mme de Gondi, wife of the Count of Joigny and tutor to their children. One day he went to hear the confession of a peasant woman who was dying and he at once realised that the poorest people did not receive the same spiritual support that the rich had. Supported by Mme de Gondi, Vincent founded a congregation of priests for missionary work and organised groups of lay people (those who are not priests) to help and look after the poor. Today the SVP (society of St. Vincent de Paul) continues his work with those who are needy.

To do:

Think about how as a family you can help those who have less than you, e.g.:

- Sort out some toys and clothes that you no longer need and give them to a charity shop (if they are in good condition).
- Put some of your pocket money aside to buy some food for the food-bank.
- Think of another fundraising activity to help a recent appeal, such as those in Haiti.

Let us know what you did - and send photos!

Why don't you sing this good old song – may be members of the family can play it on a musical instrument!

Good King Wenceslas looked out,
on the Feast of Stephen,
When the snow lay round about,
deep and crisp and even;
Brightly shone the moon that night,
tho' the frost was cruel,
When a poor man came in sight,
gath'ring winter fuel.

"Hither, page, and stand by me,
if thou know'st it, telling,
Yonder peasant, who is he?
Where and what his dwelling?"
"Sire, he lives a good league hence,
underneath the mountain;
Right against the forest fence,
by Saint Agnes' fountain."

"Bring me flesh, and bring me wine,
bring me pine logs hither:
Thou and I shall see him dine,
when we bear them thither."
Page and monarch, forth they went,
forth they went together;
Through the rude wind's wild lament
and the bitter weather.

Sire, the night is darker now,
and the wind blows stronger;
Fails my heart, I know not how;
I can go no longer."
"Mark my footsteps, good my page.
Tread thou in them boldly
Thou shalt find the winter's rage
freeze thy blood less coldly."

Two saints who had compassion for the poor

28th September, St Wenceslaus (907 - 935)

We think of St. Wenceslaus at Christmas because of the song "Good King Wenceslas" about his actions of the feast of Stephen (26th December). However, his feast day is in September!

Wenceslaus was born into the Bohemian royal family, in what is now the Czech Republic, and was brought up as a Christian by his aunt. When he became king, he worked hard to promote order in his kingdom and said that people should be free to be Christians and live as Jesus taught. He showed this by example and although he was the king, he served the poor as much as he could.

Not everyone was happy about this and one day he was murdered by some men, paid by his brother, who wanted to be king. Wenceslaus was immediately acclaimed as a martyr and is the patron saint of the Czech republic today.

In his master's steps he trod,
where the snow lay dinted;
Heat was in the very sod
which the saint had printed.
Therefore, Christian men, be sure,
wealth or rank possessing,
Ye who now will bless the poor,
shall yourselves find blessing.

29th September, The Archangels.

Holy Michael gives his name to this time of year- it used to be called "Michaelmas". Today we celebrate the three great archangels:

St. Michael, who threw the devil out of heaven and is called upon to protect us in our faith, **St. Gabriel** who announced to Zechariah that Elizabeth would have a child (John the Baptist) and that Mary would be the mother of Jesus, Son of God. Finally, we read about **St. Raphael** in the book of Tobit in the Old Testament, where he healed Tobit of his blindness. Raphael means "God heals".



In this picture, the archangel Gabriel is announcing to Mary that he comes from God (notice the finger pointing up) and that she will bear the Son of God (notice the finger pointing across at Mary).



PRAYER TO ST. RAPHAEL

"O St. Raphael,
whose name means
'Remedy of God'
help us to be pure
in mind, heal us
of all ailments,
and protect us from
all evil which may
come our way."

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This is a very good prayer to learn by heart to say when tempted. St. Michael really does help us!

"Holy Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil; May God rebuke him, we humbly pray; And do thou, O Prince of the Heavenly Host, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan and all evil spirits who wander through the world for the ruin of souls. Amen."

30th September, St. Jerome (340-420)

Jerome whose real name was "Eusebius, Hieronymus Sophronius," was born in Dalmatia, which is now a region in Croatia, but was then under the rule of the Romans. He loved to study and went to Rome and there learned Latin and Greek.

His father had brought him up to pray regularly, but he had not been baptised, and in Rome, he mixed with the pagan culture and forgot the habits of his Christian upbringing. However, he was inspired by some Christian people to be baptised, but he hadn't really been "converted" and loved all the attention that he received as someone who was well educated respected. He travelled to Antioch and there became very ill and dreamed that he was dying. In his dream he arrived at the gates of heaven and was asked by Jesus whom he was, he replied that he was a Christian. "You are lying" came the reply, much to Jerome's shock. "Your heart is on the good things on earth, and where your heart is, there is your treasure." Recovering, Jerome at once changed his whole lifestyle and repented of his love of riches. He was always tempted by the good things in life and only by the grace of God was he able to moderate his desires.

Jerome Moved around the Mediterranean and in Rome he became secretary to Pope Damasus. In order to be as pure as possible for Jesus, Jerome lived as simply as possible, rejecting what most people called the "good things in life". As he moved in the circles of the rich, this made him some enemies, because they felt as if Jerome was criticising them. After Pope Damasus died, Jerome went to Bethlehem. Where he completed his translation of the Bible; the Old Testament from the original Hebrew and the New Testament from its original Greek. His translation of the Bible is called "The Vulgate" and it's the standard Latin translation still used by the Church today.

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Jerome was a forceful character who "rubbed people up the wrong way". He worked hard to control his temper all his life. In this detail from the "Mond Crucifixion" by Raphael, which was painted for a chapel dedicated to St. Jerome, he holds a stone in his right hand, for beating his breast. He is kneeling at the foot of the cross and although he was obviously not there in person when Jesus died on the cross, he is in our place at Mass. At every celebration of Holy Mass, we are at the foot of the cross, and at the beginning of each Mass, we too beat our breast when we say "Through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault" when we confess our sins.

