

# SAINT OF THE DAY



# MARCH

## **March 1:**        *St. David of Wales, Bishop*

St. David, the son of King Sant of Wales, was born around 500. We know nothing about his early life. He eventually became a priest and a student of St. Paulinus. He founded monasteries throughout Wales, which were known for their strict rules about food, work and study. He was considered a good teacher and converted many Welsh pagans. He eventually was made an archbishop and participated in two synods. He died in 589 and a church was built over his grave. Today, this is the site of St. David's Cathedral.

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## **March 2:**        *St. Agnes of Bohemia*

Born into a family that includes many saints, St. Agnes was the daughter of the king of Bohemia. She was born in 1211. When she was three years old, her aunt, St. Hedwig of Andechs, started her education at a Cistercian convent. Throughout her childhood, she was betrothed to various royal men for political reasons. Eventually, she refused them all. With the help of Pope Gregory IX, she founded a hospital and enlisted the newly founded Franciscans to run it. Later, St. Claire of Assisi sent five Poor Clare nuns to found a new monastery with St. Agnes. She spent the rest of her life there as a Franciscan Poor Clare nun and was revered for her acts of charity. She died in 1282.

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## **March 3:**        *St. Katharine Drexel*

St. Katharine Drexel was raised right here in Philadelphia. She was born in 1858 to an extremely wealthy family. The Drexel home was opened to the poor three days a week. From a young age, Katharine was shown what it means to be compassionate and charitable toward the poor. During a trip to Italy in 1886, Pope Leo XIII encouraged her to become a missionary and devote herself to God. She followed the Pope's advice and donated her large inheritance to charity. In 1891, she took her first vows and established the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. She worked to change racial attitudes towards African Americans and American Indians. The sisters worked to provide education and care to these under-served communities. St. Katharine established many missions for American Indians throughout the United States. During her life, she was known for her love of the Eucharist, her work promoting equal education for all, and her desire to reach out to the poor and oppressed of society. She died in 1955 and was canonized by St. John Paul II in 2000.

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## **March 4:**      *St. Casimir*

St. Casimir, born in 1458, was the son of the wealthy and powerful King Casimir IV of Poland. As a royal prince, Casimir was expected to take an active interest in the governing of the country. However, he had a strong devotion to God and chose to give up many of the luxuries of royal life. He wore plain clothes, spent hours in prayer, and slept on the floor. He was a dutiful son, even leading a military campaign to Hungary at his father's command. Still, St. Casimir devoted himself to charity towards the poor. He fell ill and died in 1484, when he was twenty-three. St. Casimir is the patron saint of Poland.

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## **March 5:**      *St. John-Joseph of the Cross*

St. John-Joseph was born in 1654 on the beautiful island of Ischia, near Naples, Italy. Although he was from a noble family, he chose to embrace a life of poverty. At the age of sixteen, he entered a strict order of the Franciscans based on the reforms of St. Peter of Alacantra. St. John-Joseph lived his life in constant fasting and prayer, always desiring to perform the lowliest tasks in the monastery. Known for performing healing miracles, many sick people came to him for help. He died in Naples in 1734.

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## **March 6:**      *St. Colette*

The parents of St. Colette had prayed for many years to have a child. In 1381, her mother considered it a miracle when she gave birth to a daughter at the age of 60. Orphaned by the time she was a teenager, St. Colette felt called to a strict religious life. She became an anchoress, and lived in a tiny cell next to a church in Corbie, France. Several dreams led her to believe God was calling her to reform the Poor Clare order. She founded several communities in France, now called the Colettine Poor Clares. St. Colette died in 1447.

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## **March 7:**      *Ss. Perpetua and Felicity, Martyrs*

Saints Perpetua and Felicity were early Christian martyrs. Perpetua was a twenty-two year old Roman noblewoman, with a newborn child. Felicity was her slave, and was pregnant at the time of her arrest. The story of their martyrdom is one of the earliest accounts, and is partially written by Perpetua herself. Her father begged her to give up her faith, but she refused again and again. The slave Felicity gave birth to a daughter while in prison. Two days later, both women were brought into the arena with others to be martyred. They faced

their deaths with joy and calm, converting many who saw them. They died in 203. Perpetua's story of her imprisonment is the earliest example we have of a female Christian author.

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### **March 8:**      *St. John of God*

St. John of God mysteriously disappeared from his loving home in Portugal when he was eight years old in 1503. His mother died of grief and his father became a Franciscan. John spent his childhood as a homeless orphan. He eventually worked as a shepherd on a farm and later became a foot soldier in the army. For many years, he was unsure of his vocation in life. He had a vision of the Infant Jesus and began to devote his life to God. St. John founded a hospital and slowly, others began to join his work. This group of followers became the Order of Hospitallers. He died in 1550. Today, the Brothers Hospitallers of St. John of God is entrusted with the medical care of the pope.

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### **March 9:**      *St. Dominic Savio*

Dominic Savio, born in 1842, was a student of St. John Bosco. At a very young age, St. Dominic displayed habits of prayer and of helping others. He was allowed to receive his First Communion when he was seven, which was five years earlier than the usual age of twelve at that time. When he was eight, he wrote a list of promises to God, including a promise to accept death rather than sin. Desiring to become a priest, he settled at the school run by St. John Bosco in Turin, Italy. Although his health started to fail, he grew in holiness day by day. He died in 1857 when he was fifteen. St. John Bosco soon wrote *The Life of Dominic Savio*, which spread devotion to the young man. St. Dominic Savio was canonized for a life of heroic virtue by Pope Pius XII in 1954.

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### **March 10:**      *St. John Ogilvie, Martyr*

St. John Ogilvie, born in 1579, was a Scottish noble and raised as a Calvinist. However, his education in France exposed him to Catholicism. He converted when he was seventeen and later joined the Jesuits in 1610. He returned to Scotland and his ministry brought many back to the Church. Because of this, he was arrested and convicted of the crime of converting Protestants to the Catholic faith. This was considered high treason. He was martyred in 1615 at the age of thirty-six.

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## **March 11:**     *St. Teresa Margaret Redi*

Although she was the daughter of an Italian count, St. Teresa Margaret Redi chose to give up her comfortable life. Born in 1747, she was educated by Benedictine nuns. She was a quiet, prayerful person, who was deeply influenced by her parents' piety and charity. Desiring a life of contemplation, she became a Discalced Carmelite nun when she was seventeen. She grew in holiness and sanctity, yet she always worked to focus attention on God rather than her personal virtues. She died suddenly in 1770 when she was just twenty-two years old.

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## **March 12:**     *St. Serafina*

St. Serafina lived her short life entirely within the small Italian town of San Gimignano. She was born in 1238 to a noble but poverty-stricken family. She was charitable, kind and only left her home to attend Mass. She was a beautiful child, however when she was ten years old she was stricken with a horrible disease that left her body disfigured. St. Serafina was constantly in pain, but offered her suffering to God. When both of her parents died, her condition declined, and she had a vision of St. Gregory the Great. He told her she would be in heaven on March 12. She died on that day in 1253 when she was fifteen.

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## **March 13:**     *St. Euphrasia*

St. Euphrasia was born at the court of Emperor Theodosius I in 380. After her father's death, she moved to a monastery in Egypt with her mother. She made a vow consecrating herself to Christ when she was seven. Several years later, Theodosius requested Euphrasia return to court and marry. She refused and offered up all her property to the poor. Remaining at the monastery, she often spent hours moving heavy stones from place to place as a form of penance. She died in 410.

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## **March 14:**     *St. Matilda*

St. Matilda was Queen of Germany for seventeen years and used her high status to provide charity to the poor. She was born in 895 and raised in a convent where her grandmother was abbess. She married young in 909. Ten years later her husband became King Henry I.

In 936, the king died and his crown passed to her son Otto. She devoted her time to giving money to charity, which greatly displeased her son. Renouncing her inheritance, she retired to a monastery that she had founded. The rest of her life was spent devoted to prayer. She died in 968.

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### **March 15:**     *St. Louise de Marillac*

St. Louise de Marillac co-founded the Daughters of Charity with St. Vincent de Paul. She was the daughter of a wealthy French courtier and was educated at Dominican convent. She was rejected as a nun, agreed to an arranged marriage and had one son. She was a devoted wife and mother, and spent much of her time organizing charity to the poor. However, she continued to feel a call to religious life. When her husband died in 1625, she sought out spiritual advice from St. Francis de Sales. She ordered her daily life as though she was a nun, while she still cared for her son. Eventually, she helped St. Vincent de Paul form a group of women dedicated to living and working alongside the poor, aiding hospitals in ministering to the sick, all the while keeping to a life of prayer and contemplation. The Daughters of Charity grew quickly and still thrive today. St. Louise de Marillac died in 1660.

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### **March 16:**     *St. Abban*

St. Abban was a missionary in Ireland who was born in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. His father was the king and wished his son to succeed him. However, St. Abban's desire to do God's work was evident. His father sent him to be educated by his uncle, St. Ibar. St. Abban made a pilgrimage to Rome, but returned to eastern Ireland. He founded many churches and monasteries. He died in 620.

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### **March 17:**     *St. Patrick, Bishop*

St. Patrick is one of the most well-known saints in the Catholic Church. He lived in Roman-occupied Britain during the 5<sup>th</sup> century. When he was sixteen, he was kidnapped and sold as a slave in Ireland. He worked as a shepherd and spent much of his captivity in prayer. He escaped after six years and made his way home. Later, he had a vision in which he was called back to Ireland to convert the pagan people. He became a bishop and began his work in Ireland. St. Patrick became known for using local customs to better explain Christian truths. Legend tells us that he used a shamrock, a sacred plant to the pagan Irish, to help explain the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. He died in 460 after converting thousands.

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## **March 18:**     *St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Bishop and Doctor*

St. Cyril was born into a world in which Christianity was finally made a legal religion in the Roman Empire in 313. His role in the Church was to help define and defend the doctrine that Jesus was divine and one in being with the Father. Those who believed the heresy that Jesus was only a man were called Arians. St. Cyril wrote many letters against this heresy. He also wrote about God's loving and merciful nature. As Bishop of Jerusalem, he was actively engaged in teaching new converts to the faith and was beloved as a gentle pastor to his flock. He died in 386.

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## **March 19:**     *St. Joseph, Husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary*

All that we know about St. Joseph, the husband of Mary and foster-father of Jesus, comes from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. He was a carpenter from Nazareth who was betrothed to Mary. When he learned that Mary was with child, he wished to quietly divorce her without cruelty. Yet when an angel came to him in a dream and told him about Jesus, he followed the will of God without any questions. This tells us of the heroic nature of his faith and obedience to God in all things. St. Joseph devoted his life to caring for and protecting Mary and Jesus. It is believed he died before Jesus began his public ministry. Because of his beautiful faith, St. Joseph is the patron saint of the universal Church.

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## **March 20:**     *St. Maria Josefa of the Heart of Jesus*

Born in Bilbao, Spain in 1842, St. Maria Josefa wanted nothing more than to be a nun. She first joined the Servants of Mary, but soon felt called to devote herself exclusively to caring for the sick. In 1871, she founded the Institute of the Servants of Jesus and began her ministry among the sick both in hospitals and in their homes. Her goal was to heal and comfort her patients both physically and spiritually. Many women joined her so that at the time of St. Maria Josefa's death in 1912, there were 43 houses and over 1,000 nuns in the Servants of Jesus. Today, the order thrives with nearly 100 homes in 16 countries.

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## **March 21:**     *St. Serapion, Bishop*

Although his name is not well known, St. Serapion wrote the Sanctus, or Holy, Holy, recited during each Mass. He was a 4<sup>th</sup> century bishop of Thmuis, Egypt. A friend to St. Antony, St. Serapion at first chose the life of a simple monk. However, he was a brilliant scholar and writer and put his talents to work as a bishop. He wrote a small book describing the various rites and prayers used in Christian life called the *Sacramentary of Serapion*.

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## **March 22:**     *St. Nicholas Owen*

During a time when priests were hunted like criminals in England, St. Nicholas Owen put his talent as a carpenter to work building hiding places for priests. Born in 1550, Nicholas traveled throughout England to the homes of Catholic families. He built hidden compartments for priests to hide in if the house was searched by the authorities. By doing this, he saved the lives of many priests, helping them to continue their ministry in secret. St. Nicholas was arrested in 1606, along with several Jesuits, and died soon after in prison. He is one of the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales.

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## **March 23:**     *St. Turibius of Mogrovejo, Bishop*

Much of St. Turibius' amazing life can be measured in big numbers—such as the 450,000 square miles of his diocese that he traversed on foot three times, or the 500,000 people he personally baptized or confirmed. He was born in Spain in 1538 and began his career as a professor of law. However, he was ordained a priest and sent to Peru where he was named Archbishop of Lima. Unlike many of his predecessors, St. Turibius worked hard to ensure the rights of the native Indian population, who often suffered under Spanish rule. He also built roads, schools, churches, hospitals and convents. In 1591, he founded the first seminary in the Western hemisphere. He died in 1606.

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## **March 24:**     *St. Aldemar the Wise*

Born in Italy in 985, St. Aldemar was a Benedictine monk and noted spiritual director. He came to the attention of Princess Aloara, who asked him to serve as the spiritual director for a convent she founded in Capua. After performing many miracles there, St. Aldemar was



reassigned to Monte Cassino, angering the princess to the point where an attempt was made on his life. He fled to another part of Italy and founded several monasteries.

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### **March 25:**    *Annunciation of the Lord*

The Solemnity of the Annunciation celebrates the day that the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and told her she would conceive a son by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:26-38, Matthew 1:18-21). Despite being amazed by all she heard, Mary's response was, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord, may it be done to me according to your word." Mary's courageous "yes," which is also called Mary's "fiat," demonstrates her joyful obedience to God's will in her life. Because of this, God became one of us in the person of Jesus. The Annunciation reminds us all that by accepting God's will in our lives, in big ways and small, we can change the world.

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### **March 26:**    *St. Margaret Clitherow*

St. Margaret Clitherow could have led a peaceful, quiet, happy life in England with her family. Instead, she chose to give her life for what she knew to be right. She was born in 1556 to a Protestant family and married John Clitherow when she was fifteen. She converted to Catholicism three years later. For the next twelve years, she held secret Masses in her home, hid priests in her attic, and helped her young son get to France so he could attend the seminary. She was arrested in 1586 and convicted of aiding Catholic priests. She refused to plead in order to protect her children and because of this she was martyred by much suffering. Even Queen Elizabeth I was disturbed by the news of Margaret's death since women were supposed to be saved from execution. St. Margaret Clitherow is one of the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales.

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### **March 27:**    *St. Matthew of Beauvais, Martyr*

St. Matthew of Beauvais was a French knight who lived during the 10<sup>th</sup> century. When Pope Urban II preached the First Crusade to free the Holy Land, St. Matthew immediately joined the cause. In 1098, he was captured by the Saracens and martyred after he refused to denounce his Christian faith.

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### **March 28:**    *St. Conon of Naso*

St. Conon was a Basilian monk in Naso, Sicily. He made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. While praying in Jerusalem, he had a vision of a priest that he knew who was being suffocated by a snake. He went out to find the man and tell him what he saw. The man confessed that he was stealing money from his parish. At the urging of St. Conon he repented his sins and gave all the money to the poor. St. Conon died in 1236 at the age of ninety-seven.

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### **March 29:**    *St. Bertold of Mount Carmel*

St. Bertold hoped to gain glory for Christ by participating in the Crusades. During the 12<sup>th</sup> century, he joined the army and fought the Saracen at Antioch. However, while he was there, he had a vision of Christ, who denounced the immoral behavior of the soldiers. St. Bertold left and went to Mount Carmel and began to live as a hermit. He wanted to like the prophet Elijah. Over time, a community formed around him and it may be that this small group formed the original Carmelite Order. St. Bertold died in 1195.

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### **March 30:**    *St. John Climacus, Abbot*

St. John Climacus was the 6<sup>th</sup> century abbot of an important monastery on Mt. Sinai. Although he began his religious life as a hermit, he eventually went on to become a famous scholar of the scriptures. He wrote a book for his monks to help them lead a better life called *The Ladder of Perfection*. This is an important work on how to achieve Christian perfection. St. John Climacus died in 606.

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### **March 31:**    *St. Benjamin, Martyr*

In 5<sup>th</sup> century Persia, the Christians and Persians tried to live together in peace. However, one day a Persian temple was burned and because of this many Christians were persecuted. St. Benjamin was a deacon who was arrested and imprisoned for a year. He was released from prison and told to never speak about his faith in public again. This Benjamin could not do. He immediately went out into the streets and began to preach. For this reason, he was martyred in 424.

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