

SAINT OF THE DAY



MAY

May 1: *St. Joseph the Worker*

St. Joseph was the earthly father of Jesus Christ and the husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In this feast day today, we remember St. Joseph's role as a worker and provider for his family. He was a carpenter by trade, an important and useful job in the growing Roman Empire of the 1st century. It is likely that Jesus would have helped Joseph in his work as a child and young man. Pope St. John Paul II wrote, "Human work, and especially manual labor, receive special prominence in the Gospel...At the workbench where he plied his trade together with Jesus, Joseph brought human work closer to the mystery of the Redemption" (*Redemptoris Custos*, IV.22).

May 2: *St. Athanasius, Bishop and Doctor*

St. Athanasius spent his life in service to the Church working to combat heresy. Born in Alexandria, Egypt, Athanasius was raised in a Christian family and highly educated. By the time he became a priest in his early twenties, he distinguished himself as a brilliant theologian at the first Council of Nicea in 325. That same year, he became Bishop of Alexandria. He focused his efforts on stopping the Arian heresy—a heresy which stated that Jesus was not fully divine. This struggle defined the forty-six years of his time as bishop, and he was exiled five times by his enemies. Throughout all this, he spread the Gospel wherever he could and wrote of the virtues of monastic life. He died in 373.

May 3: *Sts. Philip and James (the Lesser), Apostles*

Philip and James were two of the Twelve Apostles. Philip was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and was called to be a disciple (John 1:43). It was Philip who told Jesus they could not feed five thousand people with just a few loaves and fishes (John 6:7). Tradition holds that Philip helped spread Christianity to Greece and Syria and was likely martyred there. James the Lesser is mentioned very little in the Gospels. However, he wrote the first Christian epistle, the *Epistle of James*, and may have been the first Bishop of Jerusalem.

May 4: *St. Florian, Martyr*

St. Florian was a 3rd century Roman soldier living in the area of present-day Austria. He was a high-ranking commander and was in charge of fire-fighting. During the reign of Emperor Diocletian in 304, army commanders were expected to enforce the law against Christians.

Florian, a Christian himself, refused to do this. An investigator came and ordered Florian to make a sacrifice to the Roman gods and he refused. He was martyred and the woman who retrieved and buried his body was miraculously cured of her illness. St. Florian is the patron saint of fire-fighters.

May 5: *St. Angelo, Martyr*

St. Angelo was born to Jewish parents in Jerusalem in 1185. Prior to his birth, his parents received a vision of Our Lady and she promised them two sons. They converted to the faith and had twin boys, Angelo and John. Both boys entered the newly formed Carmelite Order as young men. John remained on Mt. Carmel as a hermit, while Angelo traveled throughout the Middle East, preaching and converting souls. In 1220 he was sent to Sicily, and large crowds gathered to hear him preach and witness miracles. There, he preached against a knight living in sin. This knight attacked him in the church and St. Angelo died four days later after forgiving his attacker.

May 6: *Blessed Henryk Kaczorowski, Martyr*

Henryk Kaczorowski lived and died during turbulent times in Poland. He was born in 1888 in a Russian-controlled town in Eastern Poland. He became a priest in 1914 in the midst of World War I. By the time he earned his doctorate in moral theology in 1922, Poland was once again a free and independent nation. He devoted the next eighteen years of his life to prayer, writing, and teaching. In 1939, he was rector of the seminary in Wloclawek. When the Nazis invaded Poland, they arrested many Catholic religious and intellectual leaders. Father Kaczowski was arrested in November of 1939 and sent to the concentration camp Dachau. He continued to minister to his fellow prisoners and was killed in 1941. In 1999, Blessed Henryk Kaczowski was named one of the 108 Martyrs of World War II.

May 7: *St. Rose Venerini*

Rose Venerini devoted her life to the education of young women. Born in Viterbo, Italy in 1656, Rose was given a good education by her father. At the age of seven, she vowed to devote her life to God. As a teenager, after the death of her fiancé, Rose entered a Dominican monastery. However, after only a few months she was forced to return home to care for her family. She began to gather women at her home to pray the rosary. It was then she realized how poorly women were educated, both spiritually and intellectually. Under

the guidance of some Jesuit fathers, Rose opened the first Italian public school for girls in 1685. Slowly, other towns invited her to open schools. By 1716, Pope Clement XI praised Rose's work. The community of teachers Rose created became known as the Venerini Sisters. At the time of her death in 1728, St. Rose Venerini had opened forty schools.

May 8: *St. Magdalene of Canossa*

Magdalene of Canossa was born in a palace to one of the wealthiest and most prominent families in Italy. Despite this, her childhood was full of sadness after the death of her father in 1779 and the abandonment by her mother just two years later. She tried to find balance between charitable works and the duty of running the palace. She even received Napoleon as guest during the French Revolution. More and more, Magdalene became drawn to the poor and suffering in the streets. By 1808, she broke with her life of wealth, sold her possessions, and moved to the slums of San Zeno with the goal of spreading the love of Jesus everywhere she could. She formed the Daughters of Charity, often called Canossian Sisters, and spent the rest of her life in service to the poor. She died in 1835. Today, there are nearly 3,000 Daughters and Sons of Charity continuing her mission.

May 9: *St. Beatus of Lungern*

Beatus was a 1st century convert to Christianity. He was born in England, and may have been ordained a priest by St. Peter the Apostle in Rome. Beatus was then sent as a missionary to Switzerland. There, he preached and converted the many mountain tribes living in the Alps. Towards the end of his life, he retreated to a cave near Lake Thun and lived as a hermit. He died of old age in 112AD.

May 10: *St. Damien of Molokai*

Joseph de Vuester was born in 1840, the son of Belgian farmers. He joined the Congregation of the Sacred Heart and chose the name "Damien". These missionaries were responsible for the Catholic faith on the Hawaiian Islands. He spent eight years traveling by horseback and by canoe to serve the people. The Bishop asked for a volunteer priest to go to the island of Molokai, a place for people dying of leprosy. There were no health care facilities, no law enforcement, and no priests on Molokai. The people were in desperate need of help. Father Damien volunteered, knowing he would not be allowed to leave the island. Molokai took on a whole different meaning after he arrived. It became an island of Christian love. He

labored for eighteen years until his death. Father Damien eventually contracted leprosy and died on April 15, 1889 at the age of forty-nine. He was canonized by Pope Benedict XVI on October 11, 2009.

May 11: *St. Odilo of Cluny*

St. Odilo was a 10th century French monk who was instrumental in the growth and reform of monasticism. Born in 962, he became a monk when he was twenty-nine. He soon became Abbot of Cluny and headed a large network of monasteries. Under his leadership, in which he promoted a life of poverty, learning, charity, prayer and penance, many more monasteries joined with Cluny. Odilo helped institute the feast of All Souls Day. At the time of his death in 1048, the Cluny reform movement included sixty-five monasteries.

May 12: *St. Pancras, Martyr*

Pancras was born in 289 in an area of Greece called Phrygia. His mother died in childbirth and his father died when he was eight years old. His uncle adopted him and they moved to Rome. There, they both converted to Christianity. When the Emperor Diocletian began persecuting Christians in 303, Pancras was brought before him and asked to make a pagan sacrifice. Pancras refused, even though he was offered wealth. Despite his young age of fourteen, he was martyred.

May 13: *Our Lady of Fatima*

In Portugal in 1917, the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to three children several times starting on May 13. Throughout her apparitions, which lasted until October 13, Our Lady asked the children to pray the rosary and to devote themselves to her Immaculate Heart. The Church tells us that the true message of the visions at Fatima is an “urgent call to conversion and penance” which “draws us to the heart of the Gospel” (*The Message of Fatima*, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith).

May 14: *St. Matthias, Apostle*

When Judas betrayed Jesus, the Apostles only numbered eleven. After Jesus' Ascension, they sought out another worthy person to take his place. Peter insisted that the new Apostle be a man who had been a disciple from the beginning and had accepted Christ's teaching about the Eucharist. They nominated Matthias and Joseph called Barsabbas. After prayer, they cast lots and Matthias was chosen (Acts 1:23-26). Although little else is known about his life, he is thought to have spread the Gospel in Judea and later in the area where the country of Georgia is now. He was martyred and buried there.

May 15: *St. Isidore the Farmer*

Isidore was an 11th century Spanish farmer raised in a pious Christian family. He married a woman named Maria and they had one son. Despite their poverty, they shared what they had with those even less fortunate than themselves. Isidore went to Mass every day before beginning his work in the fields. His fellow workers reported seeing angels working alongside Isidore. His son died while still a child and Isidore and Maria felt that it was God's will that they live chastely for the rest of their lives. Isidore died peacefully in 1130 and is the patron of farmers.

May 16: *St. Brendan the Voyager*

St. Brendan's Christian faith inspired in him both the love of Jesus and of prayer, as well as a sense of adventure. He was born in southwest Ireland in 484 and was ordained a priest in 512. He lived life as a monk and helped to build new monasteries. Sometime in 530, Brendan was inspired to set out on a voyage in search of the Island of Paradise. Many stories surround this voyage, and it is thought that he was looking for the Garden of Eden. He set out on boat with 60 companions and traveled for seven years. They discovered a beautiful island and experienced many miracles along the way. Because of the voyage of St. Brendan, many people were converted. He spent his later years traveling throughout the British Isles founding churches and monasteries. He died in 577 and is the patron of sailors.

May 17: *St. Giulia Salzano*

Born in 1846 in Italy, Giulia Salzano grew up in the Royal Orphanage of Naples run by the Sisters of Charity. As a teenager she worked as a catechist, a job which she grew to deeply

love. She developed a strong devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. After many years of teaching, she founded the Congregation of the Catechetical Sisters of the Sacred Heart in 1905. The sisters of the order devoted their lives to the catechesis of children. St. Guilia died in 1929 and was canonized in 2010.

May 18: *St. John I, Pope and Martyr*

Pope St. John I began his religious life as a deacon. He was very involved in the various synods and councils that occurred during the end of the 5th century. He was elected pope in 523 and reigned for three years. During this time, he was caught up in the political fights between the Arian King Theodoric and the Byzantine Emperor Justin I. King Theodoric sent Pope John to visit Constantinople and ask Emperor Justin to lessen the strict policies against the Arians. Pope John was successful, but King Theodoric had him arrested on suspicion of treason. The pope was imprisoned in Ravenna, Italy and died from neglect in 526.

May 19: *St. Dunstan, Bishop*

St. Dunstan, born in England in the early 10th century, loved to learn. He was educated by Irish monks, loved to play the harp and was an accomplished metal worker. In 943, he became a monk and hermit and continued to study and learn. He was the silversmith of the abbey and also oversaw the copying and illustrations of manuscripts. St. Dunstan became abbot and began to rebuild the monastery and re-establish Benedictine monastic practices. He was often the closest advisor to the king. By 960, he had risen to be Archbishop of Canterbury. Together with King Edgar, he worked to reform monastic life and revitalize the faith of the English people. Eventually, Dunstan retired to Canterbury and spent his final years in prayer and work. He died in 988.

May 20: *St. Bernardine of Siena*

St. Bernardine was born in Siena, Italy in 1380. When the plague hit the town in 1400, Bernardine organized a group of young men to work at the hospital to care for the sick. This work led him to join the Franciscan Order. 1404 he began preaching in public squares throughout Italy in order to draw attention to need for a stricter morality in the people. Over the next thirty years, Bernardine's fame as a preacher grew and his words inspired people to give up their wealth, make peace with their neighbors, and devote themselves to

charitable works. He also helped spread devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus. He died in 1444.

May 21: *St. Christopher Magallanes, Martyr*

St. Christopher Magallanes was a martyr of the Cristero War in Mexico. Born on a farm in 1869, he became a priest in 1899. After working as a school chaplain, he then became the parish priest in his home town of Totatiche. In 1915, he opened a seminary in his parish after the Mexican government shut down other seminaries. When the Cristero Rebellion began, Fr. Magallanes preached against taking up arms against the government. Despite his wish for peace, he was accused of being a part of the rebellion in 1927. He was arrested on his way to say Mass. A few days later he was executed with St. Augustin Caloca.

May 22: *St. Rita of Cascia*

St. Rita was born Italy in 1381. Although she had wanted to join a convent, she was married when she was just twelve years old and had two children soon after. Sadly, her husband was an angry, violent man and Rita suffered because of this. However, Rita strove to be an example of love and humility in her home and raised her children in the Catholic faith. Rita's husband was killed by an enemy family and her sons died from illness. Wishing to join a convent, Rita was required to make peace between her husband's family and the family that killed him. This difficult task completed, Rita became an Augustinian nun when she was thirty-six. She lived a life of quiet prayer until her death in 1457. St. Rita of Cascia is the patron of lost causes.

May 23: *St. Julia of Corsica, Martyr*

St. Julia was kidnapped from Carthage and was sold as a slave in 439. She was taken to Corsica. She became a servant in the house of a merchant named Eusebius, but continued to practice her Christian faith. Every hour that she was freed from her duties, Julia spent in prayer and fasting. While traveling with Eusebius, they came upon a group making a sacrifice to a pagan God. Julia denounced their actions. The group took Julia and said they would free her if she also made a sacrifice. When she refused, the crowd killed her.

May 24: *St. Joanna*

St. Joanna is a biblical figure, the wife of Chuza, the steward of King Herod Antipas. Joanna was a disciple of Jesus, and Luke tells us that she gave hospitality to Jesus and the Apostles (Luke 8:3). From this point on, it is likely that Joanna became part of a group of devoted women close to Jesus and his Apostles. Joanna, together with Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James, are the first witnesses to the resurrection when they find the empty tomb (Luke 24:10).

May 25: *St. Bede the Venerable, Priest and Doctor*

Often called the “Father of English History,” St. Bede is known as a great writer and historian. He was born in England in ca. 673, but we know very little about his personal life. He was educated at a monastery and was ordained a deacon when he was 19. This early age for ordination shows that Bede was exceptional. After he became a priest, Bede wrote educational books and eventually began to write about history, theology, science and music. His most famous book, *An Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, was a history of England from 55AD up to St. Bede’s own time. This book remains the most important source about the spread of Christianity in ancient England. St. Bede died in 735.

May 26: *St. Philip Neri*

St. Philip Neri chose to give up a life in his uncle’s successful business to devote his life to God and work with the poor. He was born in Florence in 1515 and moved to Rome in 1533 after discerning his vocation. He studied, ministered to the poor, and walked throughout Rome engaging people in discussions in the hopes of leading them toward holiness. He also began a series of weekly meetings which featured prayer, Scripture reading, hymns, lectures on the saints, and musical recitals. These meetings became called the Oratory. In 1575, St. Philip organized the Congregation of the Oratory as a community of secular priests. Today, there are many Oratories throughout the world. St. Philip Neri died in 1595.

May 27: *St. Augustine of Canterbury, Bishop*

St. Augustine is considered the founder of the Christian church in England. Born some in time the 6th century in Rome, he began his religious life as a monk. In 595, Pope St. Gregory the Great sent Augustine to England as a missionary. He converted King Aethelberht of

Kent, along with thousands of his subjects. They were all baptized together on Christmas Day in 597. Augustine was consecrated as the first Archbishop of Canterbury and helped establish Roman bishops in London and Rochester. He died in 604.

May 28: *St. Bernard of Menthon*

St. Bernard of Menthon devoted his life to mission work in the Alps mountain range. He was born in France in 1020. After becoming a priest, he became concerned of the pagan practices of the people living in the mountains. He traveled the ancient mountain paths for 42 years, often confronting extreme weather and dangerous passes. He founded two hospices high up in two passes frequently used by pilgrims going to Rome. He established monks there to minister to the pilgrims and to rescue anyone trapped in the mountains. They used large dogs to aid in their work, and today these dogs are called St. Bernard dogs. St. Bernard died in 1081. The St. Bernard monks and dogs still live and work in the alpine hospices today.

May 29: *St. Ursula Ledóchowska*

Born to a Polish family in Austria in 1865, Julia Maria Ledóchowska became an Ursuline nun in 1886. She was given the name Ursula Maria. She opened a home for women attending the university in Krakow called St. Catherine House. At that time, Russia controlled Krakow and had outlawed Catholic institutions. Because of this, St. Ursula wore regular clothes instead of a religious habit. Eventually, the Russians forced St. Ursula to leave and settle in Sweden. She was finally able to return to Poland in 1920. Together with 40 other women, she founded the Congregation of the Ursulines of the Agonizing Heart of Jesus (the Grey Ursulines). St. Ursula died in Rome in 1939.

May 30: *St. Joan of Arc*

Joan was born in 1412 during the Hundred Years' War in France. Her home village was in an area controlled by the English at that time, although the villagers remained loyal to the French crown. When Joan was twelve, she had a vision of St. Michael, St. Catherine and St. Margaret and reported that they told her she must drive the English out of France. She spent four years trying to meet French military leaders. Finally, after predicting the outcome of a battle, she disguised herself as a man and met with King Charles VII. She was allowed to dress as a knight and travel with the army on an expedition to Orleans. Despite

the many dangers, Joan miraculously led the army in several victories. She was captured by the English in May of 1430 and put on trial for heresy. Although she defended herself well at the trial, she was condemned to death and burned at the stake. She was 19 when she died. Joan was declared innocent in 1456.

May 31: *Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary*

Today we celebrate the visit Mary paid to her cousin, Elizabeth. The *Gospel of Luke* tells us that, “When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, ‘Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.’” (Luke 1:39-42). Mary responds with a prayer of thanksgiving known as the *Magnificat*, or the Canticle of Mary (Luke 1:46-55). This special moment in the Bible has been celebrated since medieval times. It helps to remind us the joy and grace bestowed upon Mary and Elizabeth for place their trust in the Lord and obeying His will in all things.
