

# SAINT OF THE DAY



# FEBRUARY

## **February 1:** *St. Brigid of Ireland*

St. Brigid is one of the patron saints of Ireland. She was born in the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> century and it is believed she may have been slave. Her mother was a Christian and instructed Brigid in the faith. Holy from a young age, she became a nun early in her life. She founded the famous monastery at Kildare, with one institution for men and one for women. Kildare grew quickly, and St. Brigid promoted learning and artistic work, such as the illumination of manuscripts and metal work. She performed many miracles and healings during her long life.

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## **February 2:** *Presentation of the Lord*

Mary and Joseph presented the newborn Jesus at the Temple forty days after his birth, according to Jewish law. They sacrificed a pair of turtledoves, according to the custom of the poor. At the temple, they met Simeon, a man whom God had promised would not die until he saw the Savior. Upon seeing Jesus, Simeon prayed, "Lord, now let your servant go in peace; your word has been fulfilled" (Luke 2:29). Simeon also prophesied to Mary, "A sword will pierce your soul, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (Luke 2:34-35). The presentation of Jesus in the temple is the Fourth Joyful Mystery of the Rosary.

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## **February 3:** *St. Blaise, Bishop and Martyr*

St. Blaise's feast day is remembered today as the day of the Blessing of the Throats. He was a bishop and likely a doctor living hidden in the hills of Armenia to escape the persecution of Christians at the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. There, many people and wild animals came to him for healing. We bless throats on this day because of the story that St. Blaise healed a young boy with a fish bone caught in his throat. Eventually, he was discovered by hunters who brought him before the governor. He was martyred for his Christian faith.

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## **February 4:** *St. Jeanne of Valois*

Jeanne of Valois was a princess, the second daughter of King Louis XI of France. Born in 1464, she was betrothed to marry the Duke of Orleans when she was just an infant. She married him when she was just twelve years old. Born with a physical deformation, Jeanne was devoted to the Virgin Mary. However, when her husband became King Louis XII of France, he wanted to annul their marriage for political reasons. She fought the annulment

at first, but eventually accepted it and retired to a convent. Eventually, she founded an order of Franciscan nuns called the Order of the Annunciation, devoted to imitating the life of Mary. St. Jeanne died in 1505.

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### **February 5:** *St. Agatha, Virgin and Martyr*

Born in Sicily, St. Agatha was an early Christian martyr and one of the seven women mentioned in the Canon of the Mass. In 251, when Agatha was likely twenty years old, she was arrested and accused of being a Christian by a Roman prefect who wanted to marry her. She had dedicated her virginity to God and had refused him. She was questioned and tortured for a long time. However, she received visions of St. Peter and always remained steadfast in her faith. Eventually, she died in prison.

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### **February 6:** *St. Paul Miki and Companions, Martyrs*

Paul Miki, born in 1562, was from a wealthy Japanese family. He went to a Jesuit school and eventually joined the order in 1580. An eloquent preacher, he converted many to Catholicism. Because of this, he was arrested by the emperor of Japan along with 25 others. In 1597, they were marched on foot 600 miles from Kyoto to the city of Nagasaki. There, they were crucified. St. Paul continued to preach even while dying on the cross. He forgave his executioners before he died.

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### **February 7:** *Blessed Pius IX, Pope*

Pius IX was the longest-reigning Pope in the history of the Church, serving for thirty-one years. He was born Giovanni Ferretti in 1792 in Italy. He was ordained in 1819 and initially was not allowed to say Mass alone because of epileptic seizures. Made Archbishop of Spoleto in 1827, he worked to quell uprisings, visited the jails, aided priestly formation, and helped the poor. He was made a cardinal in 1839 and elected to the papacy in 1846, taking the name Pius to honor Pius VIII, who had helped him early in his priesthood. As pope, Pius IX, he defined the dogma of Mary as the Immaculate Conception. In 1868, he called the First Vatican Council, which declared the doctrine of papal infallibility. By the time he died in 1878, the Papal States no longer existed and Italy was a unified nation. He was beatified by St. John Paul II in 2000.

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## **February 8:** *St. Josephine Bakhita*

St. Josephine's life began happily with her family in Sudan, Africa in 1869. Tragically, she was kidnapped by Arab slave traders when she was just seven. They named her Bakhita, which means "lucky." She spent the next twelve years sold from owner to owner, suffering cruel treatment. In 1888, Bakhita was serving an Italian family as a nanny. They left her and the child at a Canossian convent in Venice. There, she first learned about Jesus. She refused to leave the convent, and because Italian law did not recognize slavery, she was allowed to stay. Baptized as Josephine Margaret, she became a Canossian sister in 1896. She spent the remaining 45 years of her life in the convent in Schio, where she was beloved for her smile and gentle nature. Her holiness was well known during her life. She often said she would kiss the hands of her kidnappers and slave masters because without those terrible events, she would never have become a Christian. She died in 1947 and was canonized St. Josephine Bakhita in 2000.

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## **February 9:** *Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich*

Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich was an Augustinian nun living in Germany in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Born in poverty, she received little education but was drawn to prayer from a young age. By the time she joined the Augustinians in 1802, she was having mystical experiences during prayer, including visions. In 1813, she suffered the stigmata and was confined to bed for the rest of her life. Her visions, in which she witnessed the terrible suffering of Jesus during his Passion, were written down in a book called *The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, which remains popular to this day. Since the book was written by a poet who simply interviewed her, rather than by her own hand, she was beatified in 2004 based only on her personal piety.

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*(NOTE: Two options exist for February 10<sup>th</sup> - St. Scholastica or St. José Luis Sánchez del Río.)*

## **February 10:** *St. Scholastica*

St. Scholastica was the twin sister of another famous saint, St. Benedict. Born in 480 in Nursia, Italy, we know little about her early life except that she was dedicated to God at a young age. It is said she had a strong influence on the holiness of her brother. When he founded his monastery at Monte Cassino, she settled nearby with a group of nuns who lived under his guidance. St. Scholastica and Benedict would meet once a year throughout their lives. In 543, she prayed that God would intervene to prevent Benedict from leaving. A rain storm came and Benedict stayed. She died three days later and Benedict had a vision of her soul in the form of a dove flying to heaven.

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## **February 10:**        *Saint José Luis Sánchez del Río*

Born in Mexico in 1913, Blessed José Luis Sánchez del Río lived in a time when it was very dangerous to be a Catholic. While the Mexican government made laws persecuting Catholics, those faithful to the Church began to resist and fight for their rights. They called themselves Cristeros, and their motto was “¡Viva Cristo Rey!” or “Long live Christ the King!” Jose wanted to go with his brothers, who joined the Cristero army. He begged his mother, saying he wanted to go to Heaven soon. She allowed him to serve the army as a flag-bearer. During a battle in 1928, he was captured and convicted of treason. Before his death, he wrote his mother: “I die happy because I die beside Our Lord...To die for God gives me joy.” He forgave his killers and died shouting “¡Viva Cristo Rey!” He was fourteen years old.

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## **February 11:**        *Our Lady of Lourdes*

Our Lady appeared to a fourteen year old girl named Bernadette Soubirous in 1858 in a grotto in Lourdes, France. Bernadette saw Our Lady eighteen times from February 11 to July 16. During the visits of Mary, miraculous things happened. Water flowed from a spring that welled up in the grotto after Bernadette dug in the earth. This spring continued to flow until it was producing 32,000 gallons of water daily. This water continues to flow even today. Our Lady told Bernadette that she was the “Immaculate Conception.” The dogma of the Immaculate Conception had recently been proclaimed by the Church. Today over two million people every year travel to Lourdes, France to pray in the church built on the site of the apparition, wash in the bath flowing from the spring, and sing in the procession. There the people envision Our Lady of Lourdes as she appeared to Bernadette dressed in white, with a blue sash, holding a rosary and with yellow roses at her feet.

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## **February 12:**        *St. Febronia, Virgin and Martyr*

Like many Christians persecuted by the Emperor Diocletian, St. Febronia was offered her freedom if she renounced her faith. Diocletian’s nephew, Lysimachus, wanted to marry her. He even was secretly drawn to Christianity because of his love for Febronia. Yet St. Febronia refused to give up both her faith and her virginity. She was martyred in 305 when she was twenty-one. Lysimachus was so moved by her suffering that he converted to Christianity after her death. St. Febronia is known as a Holy Virgin Martyr and is one of the 140 saints whose statues line St. Peter’s Square.

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## **February 13:**      *St. Catherine de Ricci*

The Italian saint Catherine de Ricci showed a desire for a life of prayer at such a young age, that her father placed her in a convent for education at the age of six in 1528. She joined the Dominicans when she was fourteen. Recognized early on for both her holiness and her leadership skills, she was made prioress at the age of twenty five. As head of the convent, she was responsible for all aspects of life for the nuns. Her advice and counsel was sought by some of the most important Church figures of the time, including three men who eventually became popes and St. Philip Neri. She engaged in penance, received the stigmata, and fasted all the time. She died in 1590 after suffering a long illness.

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## **February 14:**      *Sts. Cyril and Methodius*

Cyril and Methodius, brothers from Greece, were responsible for spreading Christianity to the Slavic people. They were born in early 9<sup>th</sup> century to a prominent Christian family. After careers in government and teaching, they both became monks. They wanted to be missionaries and went to what is now Ukraine to preach the Gospels. As missionaries they were unique because they preached in the local language rather than Greek or Latin. St. Cyril also developed an alphabet to write down the language, and this Cyrillic alphabet is still used today. Cyril died in Rome in 869 while Methodius continued his work until his death in 885. They are credited with the spread of Orthodox Christianity in the East.

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## **February 15:**      *St. Claude de la Colombiere*

St. Claude was a 17<sup>th</sup> century French Jesuit priest. He was born in 1641 and educated at a Jesuit school. He entered the order in 1658, but he wrote that he was not very drawn to the life of a priest. After teaching for 15 years, he had a spiritual conversion after undergoing the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. He became a noted preacher and was the spiritual director to St. Margaret Mary Alcoque. In 1676 he went to England to serve as the chaplain to the Duchess of York. He converted many Protestants, but he was imprisoned due to false accusations of plotting to kill the king. He was banished from England and died in France due to the suffering he experienced in prison in 1682

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## **February 16:**      *Blessed Joseph Allamano*

Founder of the Consolata Missionaries, Blessed Joseph Allamano was a student of St. John Bosco and nephew of St. Joseph Cafasso. He was born in Italy in 1851 and was ordained at the age of twenty-two. He became rector of a large Marian shrine in Turin, Our Lady Consolata. His strong devotion to Mary led him to found the Consolata Missionaries in 1901 and sent priests to spread the Gospel in Kenya. Ten years later, he added the Consolata Sisters to minister to women and children. He died in 1926.

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## **February 17:**      *Seven Holy Founders of the Servite Order*

Florence, Italy was ruled by powerful noble families. In 1226, seven young noblemen from these families joined together to form a confraternity devoted to Mary. Several years later, they experienced a vision of Mary on the Feast of the Assumption. All seven chose to withdraw from the world and devote their lives to poverty and prayer. They established themselves as the Servants of Mary, or Servites, and lived under the Rule of St. Augustine. It is one of the five original mendicant orders and still thrives today all over the world. The last of the seven men, St. Alexis, died in 1310.

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## **February 18:**      *Blessed Fra Angelico*

Fra Angelico was one of the most important painters of the Italian Renaissance. We know nothing of his early life. He joined the Dominicans sometime between 1410 and 1417, and was given the name Fra Giovanni (Brother John). He was trained to illuminate manuscripts, but his artistic talent was so great that he soon painted frescos, altarpieces and canvas paintings. He received commissions from some of the most important people in Florence and Rome, including the pope. He was called “Fra Angelico” because of both the beauty of his paintings and the angelic quality with which he lived out his life as a Dominican friar. He died in 1455 in Rome.

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## **February 19:**      *St. Conrad*

Born in 1290, St. Conrad was from a noble family in Italy and married a wealthy woman. However, his life changed forever when he accidentally set a brush fire while hunting. The fire quickly spread to nearby fields and forest. A peasant man was captured, tortured and confessed to setting the fire. Conrad came forward just before the peasant was to be

executed. He sold all his wealth to pay for the damage and he and his wife separated to devote their lives to penance and prayer. St. Conrad became a Franciscan hermit and was widely known for his holiness. He died while praying in 1351.

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## **February 20:**      *Blessed Francisco and Jacinta Marto*

Francisco and Jacinta Marto, together with their older cousin Lucia Santos, received several apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Fatima, Portugal. Born in 1908 and 1910, they were tending sheep in 1917 when they saw the Virgin Mary several times. She gave them messages for the world. The children suffered at the hands of the authorities, who did not believe them. They continued to pray and do penance in order to bring more souls to Jesus. They had a strong devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Francisco died in 1919 at age eleven from the Spanish flu. Jacinta died of the same illness in 1920 when she was nine. They were beatified in 2000 and Jacinta is the youngest non-martyr to be beatified. Today, Fatima is one of the most important Marian sites in the world.

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## **February 21:**      *St. Peter Damian, Bishop and Doctor*

St. Peter Damian came from a large family living in Italy in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Orphaned at a young age, he suffered at the hands of an older brother, another brother named Damian took care of Peter and educated him. He added “Damian” to his name to thank him. A brilliant student, he was soon a respected professor. However, in 1035 entered a poor monastery. He spent years working to reform the monastic system, focusing on poverty, penance and prayer. After attending a synod in 1047, St. Peter Damian encouraged Pope Gregory VI to promote more reforms to prevent the clergy from becoming worldly. He went on to work with later popes to continue these reforms. He wrote many letters, sermons and books. He died in 1072 and was created a Doctor of the Church in 1828.

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## **February 22:**      *Chair of St. Peter, Apostle*

The Feast of the Chair of St. Peter is a special day to celebrate the unity of the Church. St. Peter was placed at the head of the Church by Jesus Christ. The chair, or *cathedra*, that St. Peter used during his first services in Rome has long been venerated as a relic. Today, we still use the word *cathedra* to refer to the chair where the bishop sits during Mass. The church where the chair is placed is called a *cathedral*. This helps us to remember that the



pope and the bishops he appoints uphold an unbroken line of earthly authority from St. Peter to today.

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## **February 23:**      *St. Polycarp, Bishop and Martyr*

Polycarp was an early Christian Bishop who lived during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. He was born in 69 and is believed to have known many people who witnessed Christ's death and resurrection. He was converted to Christianity by St. John the Apostle, who consecrated him as Bishop of Smyrna. Polycarp wrote the *Letter to the Philippians*, which is one of the earliest surviving Christian texts. He is an important figure in the early Church because of his direction connections to some of the Apostles. He was martyred around 155. St. Irenaeus wrote a detailed account of what happened in *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*.

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## **February 24:**      *St. John Theristus*

The word "theristus" means "harvester." St. John Theristus was a Benedictine monk, born in Italy in 1049. His mother had been captured by invaders and brought to the island of Sicily. There, she gave birth to her son John. As a child, John managed to escape their captors and return to Calabria, Italy. After he became a monk, he helped to miraculously harvest the local crops before they could be destroyed by a bad storm. This saved the local town from starvation. From then on, he was called Theristus. St. John Theristus died in 1129 of natural causes.

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## **February 25:**      *St. Walburga*

Walburga, born in 710, came from a good English family and was educated in a convent. She eventually joined the nuns and stayed cloistered for twenty-six years. Then she left to travel to Germany with her brothers to help her uncle, St. Boniface, convert the pagan Franks. Her exceptional education allowed her to write an account of that time, as well as a biography of her brother, St. Willibald, who traveled throughout Palestine. It was uncommon for women to be able to read or write during that time, and St. Walburga is considered the first female author of England and Germany. She spent the rest of her life in a monastery in Germany and died in 779.

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## **February 26:**      *St. Anne Line*

Despite knowing that her family would reject her, Anne Line converted to Catholicism as a very young woman. She was born in England in 1567, at a time when being Catholic was outlawed. In 1586, she married Roger Line, also a young Catholic convert. Her husband was arrested at Mass and banished. Anne spent her time helping a Jesuit priest run a house to hide other priests from the English authorities. In 1601, the house was raided by soldiers and Anne was imprisoned. After a quick trial, she was martyred with two others. St. Anne Line is considered one of the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales.

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## **February 27:**      *St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother*

St. Gabriel was given the name Francesco Possenti when he was born to a large Italian family in 1838. Smart, fun-loving, and handsome, his father hoped he would have a career in government. During a procession featuring an icon of the Virgin Mary, Gabriel felt she called him to a life away from the world. He entered the Passionist Congregation in 1856 and was given the name Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother. He had a deep devotion to the sorrows of Mary and worked hard to follow the Passionist Rule perfectly. Soon after he began his novitiate, he was diagnosed with tuberculosis. He prayed for a slow death so that he could prepare his soul. On the day of his death, witnesses reported his joyful face and that he stretched out his arms as though to greet someone. He died peacefully in 1862, before he was able to be ordained. When Pope Benedict XV canonized St. Gabriel in 1920, he declared him the patron saint of Catholic youth.

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## **February 28:**      *St. Jadwiga of Poland*

St. Jadwiga is the only woman ever the reign a nation as king, rather than queen. She was born into the Hungarian royal family in 1373. Highly educated, she was fluent in six languages. Her father died in 1382, and Jadwiga was crowned King of Poland in 1384 when she was just ten years old. Two years later she married Jagiello of Poland. While her young age meant she had little power, she engaged herself with the affairs of her country as much as she could. St. Jadwiga was also known for her piety and charity towards the poor. Once, her husband tried to stop her from giving food to some beggars, but when he checked her apron it was miraculously filled with roses instead of food. She often prayed before a large crucifix in Wawel Cathedral. That same cross is hung above her relics today. She died after giving birth in 1399.

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