

SAINT OF THE DAY



APRIL

April 1: *St. Hugh of Grenoble*

St. Hugh was born in France in 1053. His youthful piety and intelligence was such that he was elected Bishop of Grenoble when he was twenty-seven. He was chosen to help bring out the reforms of Pope Gregory VII, who personally ordained Hugh. He worked to bring about a new zeal in the clergy and a spirit of devotion in the laity. Even when he wished to resign and become a monk, the Pope insisted he continue his good work with the people. St. Hugh also helped St. Bruno found the Carthusian Order in 1084 by giving him land for his monastery. St. Hugh died in 1132 after serving as a bishop for over fifty years.

April 2: *St. Francis of Paola*

St. Francis of Paola led a life of holiness from a very young age. His parents prayed for the intercession of St. Francis of Assisi so that they might have a child. Their son Francis was born in 1416 and they vowed that he should become a Franciscan. Through the good example of his parents, Francis became a holy child. He spent time in a friary and went on pilgrimage to holy sites in Italy. However, when he was fifteen he became a hermit in a secluded cave. Eventually, others wished to join him and so he founded the Hermits of St. Francis of Assisi, later called the Minim friars. This new order focused on a life of humility and prayer. Francis' reputation for holiness was so great the even the King of France asked for his counsel. He died in France in 1507 when he was ninety-one.

April 3: *St. Irene, Martyr*

St. Irene lived in Macedonia during the 3rd century. Her sisters, Agape and Chionia, were brought before the local governor because they had refused to eat food which had been offered in sacrifice to a pagan god. They were martyred and Irene was at first spared their fate. However, Irene was discovered with Christian books in her home. The governor burned the books and tried to persuade Irene to renounce her faith. She refused and was martyred in 304. Often, St. Irene is depicted in Christian art dressing the wounds of St. Sebastian.

April 4: *St. Isidore of Seville, Bishop and Doctor*

St. Isidore, born in Spain in 560, was a great writer and scholar. He grew up when Spain was ruled by the Visigoths, who subscribed to the Arian heresy. St. Isidore's whole family worked to convert the Visigothic rulers to Catholicism. When St. Isidore became Bishop of

Seville in 600, he continued to work with the Visigoths to help them towards conversion. Through his work, the Arian heresy ended in Spain. St. Isidore also promoted education, helped form the first representative government in Spain, established seminaries, and attempted to compile a book of universal knowledge. He died in 636 and is considered the last ancient Christian scholar. Because of his vast knowledge and love of learning, St. Isidore of Seville was designated the patron of the internet.

April 5: *St. Vincent Ferrer*

Before St. Vincent Ferrer was born in 1350, his father had a dream in which a Dominican friar told him his newborn son would be famous. Vincent grew up humble and prayerful, entering the Dominicans when he was eighteen. He memorized the Bible and became a professor of theology. He spent many years traveling all over Europe, preaching and converting many souls. He died in France in 1419.

April 6: *St. Sixtus I, Pope*

Pope Sixtus I was the seventh pope. He reigned for a period of ten years during the early 2nd century, around 120AD. Although little is known about his personal life, he instituted a few liturgical practices still in use today. These include the priest reciting the *Sanctus* with the people during Mass. He also decreed that only priests can touch the sacred vessels. It is unsure whether or not Pope Sixtus I was a martyr and his date of death is not known.

April 7: *St. John Baptist de la Salle*

Born in France in 1651, John Baptist de la Salle was named a canon of Rheims Cathedral when he was eleven. He later went to college and entered seminary when he was nineteen. However, when both of his parents passed away within one year, he was forced to go home to educate his siblings. Eventually, he was ordained a priest in 1678. It was then that he began to help found schools for the poor. He believed that an education affirmed the dignity of every person. To do this, he needed to confront the class structure in France that kept the rich and poor separated. He began a community of teachers, which today is known as the Christian Brothers. The Christian Brothers' schools taught religious and secular subjects in the language of the students. St. John Baptist de la Salle also involved parents in the education of their children. St. John Baptist de la Salle died in 1719 and is the patron saint of teachers.

April 8: *St. Julie Billiard*

By the time she was seven years old in 1758, Julie Billiard had memorized the catechism. She was allowed to make her First Communion and Confirmation earlier than other children. At the age of fourteen, she made a vow of chastity. Illness left her paralyzed and confined to her bed, but she continued to pray, teach the catechism to the local children, and sew altar cloths. After the French Revolution in 1803, Julie founded the Sisters of Notre Dame, dedicated to caring for poor children, and especially giving a Christian education to girls. The new order grew, and Mother Julie founded fifteen convents before passing away in 1816.

April 9: *St. Acacius of Amida, Bishop*

St. Acacius was the Bishop of Amida during the early 5th century in ancient Mesopotamia (which is present-day Iran). He felt compassion for thousands of Persian prisoners of war being held by the Roman Empire. Encouraging the local clergy to offer charity and alms to the suffering prisoners, St. Acacius sold the precious gold and silver sacred vessels of his church. He used the money to buy food and clothing for over seven thousand prisoners. This act of charity so impressed the Persian emperor Bahram V that he ended Christian persecutions in the Persian Empire.

April 10: *St. Fulbert of Chartres, Bishop*

Fulbert of Chartres' early life is largely unknown. He was born during the middle of the 10th century and eventually became a teacher. He taught at Cathedral schools, first in Rheims and later in Chartres where he taught the future King Robert II of France. He became bishop there and oversaw the early construction of the new Cathedral of Chartres. This cathedral still stands today, and is one of the largest Gothic cathedrals in the world. St. Fulbert also wrote poetry and hymns, many of which demonstrate his devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. He is responsible for instituting the Feast of the Nativity of Mary, which falls on May 31. St. Fulbert died in 1028.

April 11: *St. Stanislaus, Bishop and Martyr*

St. Stanislaus was elected Bishop of Krakow, Poland in 1072. He became an important figure in Polish politics, and tried to use his influence to spread Christianity in Poland. However, St. Stanislaus often had conflicts with the king, Boleslaw the Bold. He finally excommunicated the king in 1079. Angered, the king killed St. Stanislaus while he was celebrating Mass. He is honored as a martyr and is the patron of Poland.

April 12: *St. Teresa of Jesus of Los Andes*

St. Teresa of Jesus of Los Andes was the first person from the country of Chile to be canonized. Often known by the name Juanita Solar, she was born to a wealthy family in 1900 in Santiago. As a little girl, she read *Story of a Soul* by St. Therese of Lisieux and desired to emulate the humility and selfless love of St. Therese. From that moment, young Juanita worked hard to conquer her own selfishness and stubbornness. When she made her First Communion at the age of 10, she began to experience a mystical interior conversation with God. At the age of 14, she vowed to become a Carmelite nun and continued to mold her life to be more Christ-like. After a few years, she entered a small monastery in Los Andes in 1919 and took the name Teresa of Jesus. Only eleven months later, at the age of 19, she died as a novice from typhus.

April 13: *St. Martin I, Pope and Martyr*

Nothing is known of St. Martin before he became Pope Martin I in 649. One of his first acts was to convene a Lateran Council in order to address the problem of a heresy called Monothelism. The council reprimanded the Emperor of Constantinople for not doing more to stop this heresy. The emperor was so angered by this, that he had Pope Martin kidnapped and imprisoned in Constantinople. He suffered terrible conditions in prison for a few months and then was exiled to the Crimea. He died there of hunger in 655, and is considered a martyr.

April 14: *St. Lydwina*

St. Lydwina grew up in the Netherlands during the 14th century. She suffered from a terrible ice-skating accident when she was sixteen years old, which left her paralyzed and in constant pain for the rest of her life. Despite this suffering, she devoted her life to the Eucharist and to prayer. She was given to ecstatic visions of Heaven and Purgatory, and

many legends say she lived on the Eucharist for over twenty years. She died when she was fifty-three in 1433, and Thomas à Kempis wrote a biography of her life.

April 15: *St. Anastasia, Martyr*

St. Anastasia was one of the earliest Christian martyrs. She was a noble Roman, possibly part of the Imperial family. A student of St. Peter and St. Paul when they came to Rome, she secretly buried Christians who had been martyred. Her work was discovered during the persecutions by Emperor Nero. She was arrested and martyred in 68AD.

April 16: *St. Bernadette Soubirous*

Bernadette Soubirous was a poor French girl born in 1844. Because of her poverty and poor health, she struggled in school. In 1858m during the time that she was still studying for her First Communion, Bernadette saw a vision near a cave of a beautiful lady in a white dress who held a rosary. Over the next several months, Bernadette saw the lady seventeen more times. The lady asked Bernadette to pray for sinners and to build a chapel where she stood. While some people believed Bernadette, she was questioned by many others who doubted her. When she asked the lady her name, she said, "I am the Immaculate Conception." Thousands of people came to the town of Lourdes to visit the spot. Many miraculous healings occurred in the water that flowed from the spot where Our Lady appeared. Bernadette chose to live a quiet life as a nun and entered the Sisters of Charity. She died in 1879. Over 200 million people have made pilgrimage to Lourdes since 1858.

April 17: *St. Stephen Harding*

No one knows the date of St. Stephen Harding's birth, but it was likely around 1060AD. He came from England, but traveled to France as a young scholar and remained there for the rest of his life. At first, he did not wish to become a monk and chose instead to focus on scholarship. However, after staying at an abbey run by St. Robert of Molesme, Stephen changed his mind. In order to pursue a stricter religious life, he formed a new monastery near Citeaux with St. Robert and St. Alberic. Their monastery struggled for the first few years, until St. Bernard of Clairvaux brought thirty new monks in 1112. Under St. Stephen's management, Citeaux Abbey began to grow. In 1119, he wrote the *Charter of Charity*, a document that has become central to the Cistercian Order. St. Stephen also helped form Cistercian principals on simplicity, especially with regard to architectures. Because of all this, he is considered one of the co-founders of the Cistercian Order. He died in 1134.

April 18: *St. Apollonius the Apologist, Martyr*

Apollonius lived in 2nd century Rome, and was an important citizen and well-educated man. He may even have been a senator. When he was accused of being a Christian, he was allowed to go before the senate to defend himself. Rather than renounce his faith, he read a prepared statement which was a long defense of Christianity. He used reason and logic to make his case. Although many were impressed with his intelligence and bravery, he was still condemned and martyred in 185AD.

April 19: *St. Timon, Deacon*

Timon is mentioned in the Act of the Apostles as one of the Seven Deacons chosen to be ministers in Jerusalem (Acts 6:5). The Seven Deacons, a group that included the first martyr St. Stephen and St. Philip the Evangelist, worked to evangelize Jerusalem immediately following the Ascension of Jesus into Heaven.

April 20: *St. Agnes of Montepulciano*

Agnes was born in 1268 in the Tuscan town of Montepulciano. Her love of Jesus was so great, that she was given special permission by the Pope to enter a Dominican monastery of contemplative nuns when she was only nine years old. She was made abbess of her community by the time she was twenty. Throughout her life, Agnes was known as a miracle worker, had a strong devotion to the Eucharist, and lived a life of deep prayer. Many people in the community came to her for advice, and she helped to settle family disputes. Agnes died in 1316.

April 21: *St. Anselm of Canterbury, Bishop and Doctor*

St. Anselm was a Benedictine monk and philosopher in 11th century England. Early in his life, his strict father refused to allow him to enter the monastery, and so St. Anselm lived the easy life of a wealthy nobleman. However, when he left home to travel in Europe he felt the call to monastic life once again and entered a monastery in France. Twenty years later, he was abbot of Bec Abbey. Under his leadership this abbey became a center for learning. When Anselm visited England on business in 1093, he elected Archbishop of Canterbury, the highest position in the Church in England. He spent a lot of time arguing with King

William and King Henry while trying to maintain the independence of the Church. For this, he was twice exiled from England. He helped outlaw slavery and promoted celibacy for priests. Throughout all of this, St. Anselm was an important theologian and philosopher. He died in 1109.

April 22: *Blessed Maria Gabriella Sagheddu*

Maria Gabriella Sagheddu, born on the island of Sardinia in 1914, had a stubborn spirit. However, when her younger sister died, she joined a youth group called Catholic Action to help deepen her faith. She taught catechism to children. By the time she was twenty, she decided to become a Trappist nun. The abbess of her monastery encouraged her to pray for the unity of all Christians in the Church. Maria made a vow to God to offer herself as a spiritual sacrifice for Christian unity and immediately became sick with tuberculosis. During her illness, she spent hours meditating over chapter 17 of the Gospel of John in which Jesus prays for unity. She died a year later in 1939 and is the patron of ecumenism.

April 23: *St. George, Martyr*

Although we know very few facts about the life of St. George, many legends and stories exist about his heroic deeds. St. George was a soldier in the army of the Roman Empire, probably born around 280AD. In 302, the Emperor Diocletian proclaimed all Christians in the army should be arrested. Soldiers were forced to make sacrifices to the Roman gods to prove their loyalty. St. George publicly proclaimed his Christian faith in front of other soldiers and was arrested. Diocletian tried to persuade him to renounce his faith, but he refused and was martyred. St. George is often pictured as slaying a dragon, which comes from a legend in which St. George is said to have killed a dragon to protect a young maiden. However, the dragon simply represents the evil and danger George faced in his martyrdom. By not renouncing his faith, St. George conquered that evil. St. George is one of the Fourteen Holy Helpers.

April 24: *St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen, Martyr*

Mark Roy, born in 1577 in the German town of Sigmaringen, took the name Fidelis when he entered the Capuchin order 1610. He was an educated man, having worked as a lawyer before taking his vows. He was known to be a persuasive preacher. He preached all over Switzerland, where many Calvinist Protestants lived during that time. By his example of

charity and his preaching, he converted many to the Catholic faith. He gained many enemies because of this, and he martyred by Calvinist soldiers in 1622.

April 25: *St. Mark the Evangelist, Apostle and Martyr*

St. Mark was one of the early disciples of Jesus and the author of the Gospel of Mark. In the first years after the Ascension of Jesus, Mark traveled to Rome with the apostle Peter as an interpreter and wrote down many of Peter's sermons. This formed the basis of Mark's gospel, which he wrote in Greek in order to convert the Gentiles to Christianity. Later, in 49, St. Mark went to North Africa and founded the Church of Alexandria. He became the first bishop there and is considered the founder of Christianity in Africa. In art, St. Mark is symbolized by a winged lion. While we do not know when he died, St. Mark is believed to have been martyred near Alexandria.

April 26: *Our Lady of Good Counsel*

The Feast of Our Lady of Good Counsel began with an icon of Mary found in an Augustinian church in Genazzano, Italy in 1467. The icon, painted on a sheet of incredibly thin plaster, appeared to be suspended in mid-air. Devotion to this image of Our Lady of Good Counsel grew, and many miracles were reported. By 1753, Pope Benedict XIV approved the veneration for the faithful, called the Pious Union of Our Lady of Good Counsel. In 1893, Pope Leo XIII sanctioned the use of the White Scapular of Our Lady of Good Counsel for the faithful. Pope Pius XII dedicated his pontificate to the care of Our Lady of Good Counsel in 1939. This devotion has widely spread in the United States.

April 27: *St. Zita of Lucca*

St. Zita, born to a poor family in Lucca, Italy in 1212, became a servant when she was twelve years old. She worked very hard, but rather than praise she received only suffering. Other servants were cruel to her, and her employers beat her. She bore all this with patience and humility, and continued to love all. Eventually, her loving spirit won over all those who had abused her. Zita became head of the household and helped bring about a spiritual conversion of the family for whom she worked. She died in 1272 after serving the Fatinelli family for forty-eight years.

April 28: *St. Gianna Molla*

St. Gianna Molla was a mother, wife and pediatrician who gave her life to protect her unborn child. She was born in Italy in 1922 and became a doctor in 1949. She married Pietro Molla in 1955 and they had three children. Gianna remained active as a pediatrician while caring for her children. In 1961, she became pregnant with her fourth child. She learned she had a tumor and was advised to have an abortion or risk losing her own life. Insistent that the life of her child be placed above her own, Gianna refused the abortion. On April 21, 1962, she gave birth to a healthy girl. However, there were complications and St. Gianna died seven days later. St. Gianna Molla was canonized by St. John Paul II in 2004, and her husband and children attended the ceremony. She is the first female physician and working mother to be canonized. St. Gianna is exalted specifically because of the heroic virtue she demonstrated as a wife and mother.

April 29: *St. Catherine of Siena, Virgin and Doctor*

Catherine Benincasa was born into an enormous family of twenty-five children. She was born in 1347 in Siena, Italy and had a vision of Jesus when she was just five years old. By the time she was seven, she made a vow of chastity. However, when she was sixteen, Catherine's parents wished her to marry. She refused, cut off her hair, and began a severe fast. Her parents relented and allowed her to become a Third Order Dominican. She had many visions of Jesus and began to gain attention. She used this attention to call for a reform of the clergy, for peace between neighboring communities, and eventually to help return the pope to Rome. Catherine wrote letters to public figures constantly, 300 of which have survived. She fasted to the point where she only consumed the Eucharist and continued to have mystical experiences. In 1380, when she was thirty-three, she suffered a stroke and died in Rome.

April 30: *St. Pius V, Pope*

St. Pius V became pope during a very turbulent time. Many people were leaving the Catholic Church to become Protestants. He was elected pope in 1566 when he was sixty-two years old. During his six year papacy, Pius V declared St. Thomas Aquinas to be a doctor of the Church. He also published the Catechism, the Roman Missal and revised the Breviary in accordance with the Council of Trent, and promoted Christian art and music. He is also known for excommunicating Queen Elizabeth I and for his role in the Inquisition. Since he had begun his religious life as a Dominican, he continued to wear his simply Dominican habit under his papal robes. He died in 1572.
