

## JUNE

1 June

### SAINT JUSTIN, Martyr

Memoria.

Born of a pagan family in Nablus in Samaria at the beginning of the second century. He was a philosopher and on his conversion to the faith he wrote in defence of religion, though the only works now extant are his two *Apologies* and his *Dialogue* addressed to Trypho. He opened a school in Rome and he took part in public disputation. He suffered a martyr's death with his companions during the time of Marcus Aurelius, about the year 165.

From the Common of Martyrs: One Martyr, Paschal Time.

#### **Second Reading. Ch. 1-5**

*I have adopted the teachings of the Christians.*

**A reading from the Acts of the martyrdom of St. Justin and his companions.**

After the saints had been taken prisoner, they were led to the Roman prefect, whose name was Rusticus. When they had been brought before the court, Rusticus the prefect said to Justin: "Believe in the gods above all things and obey the princes". Justin replied: "We cannot be blamed or condemned for obeying the commands of the Saviour Jesus Christ".

"What doctrine do you hold?" asked Rusticus. Justin answered: "I have tried to become acquainted with all doctrines, but I have adopted the true doctrines, those of the Christians, even if they are not acceptable to those who hold false beliefs".

The prefect then said: "So those are the teachings which you accept, you wretch?" To which Justin replied: "Yes, I follow them according to the right rule of faith".

The prefect asked: "What is this rule of faith?" And Justin answered: "That which we profess concerning the God of the Christians, whom we believe to be from the beginning the one and only Creator and Maker of all creation, of things visible and invisible; and concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, whose coming among men was foretold by the prophets as the herald of salvation and the teacher of the blessed disciples. I realize that I am a mere man and that what I say is insignificant compared with the infinite greatness of God; but I recognize the force of prophecy in

what I affirm, since the coming was foretold of the one whom I have called the Son of God. And I know that the prophets in times past foretold his coming among men". At this Rusticus said: "So you are a Christian then?" And Justin replied: "Yes, I am a Christian".

The prefect then said to Justin: "Now listen to me. You are said to be a man of learning and you think you know which teachings are true. If you are flogged and executed, do you believe that you will go to heaven?" Justin replied: "I hope to receive God's gifts if I bear these sufferings. For I know that all who have lived good lives can look for the divine grace that is stored up for them until the end of the whole world".

The prefect said: "So you imagine that you are going to heaven and will receive some appropriate reward?" To this Justin replied: "It is not a case of imagining. I know; I am certain".

Rusticus said: "Let us come to the essential point, to what you must do. You must all sacrifice to the gods together". And Justin said: "No one in his right mind is going to turn away from the worship of the true God to worship false gods".

The prefect insisted: "Unless you do as you are told, you will be tortured without mercy". Justin said: "We have prayed that we may suffer for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ and in this way be saved. This will give us confidence and assure our salvation when we come to the judgement seat of our Lord and Saviour, who presides over a universal court more formidable than yours".

And all the other martyrs said the same: "Do what you like to us. We are Christians and we do not sacrifice to idols".

The prefect then passed sentence: "These men have refused to sacrifice to the gods and to obey the Emperor's commands. Let them be taken away and flogged, and then put to death in accordance with the law". The holy martyrs went out to the usual place of execution glorifying God. There they were beheaded and so won their martyr's crown professing their faith in the Saviour.

**Responsorial.** *Acts 20: 21, 24; Rom. 1: 16*

**R:** I have testified to the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and now I care nothing for any danger. \* I do not count my life precious compared with my work, which is to finish the course I run, the task of preaching which the

Lord Jesus has given me, in proclaiming the good news of God's grace, alleluia.

**V:** I am not ashamed of this gospel. It is an instrument of God's power, which brings salvation to all who believe in it, Jew first and then Greek.

**R:** I do not count my life precious compared with my work, which is to finish the course I run, the task of preaching which the Lord Jesus has given me, in proclaiming the good news of God's grace, alleluia.

**Concluding prayer.**

Lord God, in a wonderful way, through the folly of the cross, you taught your martyr, Saint Justin, the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ. Heed his prayer for us: dispel every deceiving error, and ground us firmly in the faith. We make our prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 June

**SAINTS MARCELLINUS AND  
PETER, Martyrs.**

Optional Memoria.

The account of the death of these two martyrs, who died in the persecution of Diocletian, comes from Pope Damasus who in turn obtained it from the executioner. They were beheaded in a wood and then buried in the cemetery called *The Two Laurels* on the Via Labicana. When peace came to the Church a basilica was erected over their tomb.

From the Common of Martyrs: Several Martyrs, Paschal Time.

**Second Reading. N. 41-42**

*Sharing in Christ's sufferings, they will also share in his consolation.*

**A reading from the *Exhortation to Martyrdom* of Origen, presbyter.**

If we have passed out of death into life by passing out of unbelief into faith, we should not be surprised if the world hates us. For no one who does not pass from death to life but remains in death can love those who have passed out of this dark house of death, as it could be called, to the building that is lit by the light of life, built up of living stones.

Jesus laid down his life for us, and so we should lay down our lives, I do not say for him, but for ourselves, or rather, I suppose, for those who are going to be built up by our martyrdom.

Christians, the time has come for us to boast. For we read: “That is not all we can boast about; we can boast about our sufferings. These sufferings bring patience, as we know, and patience brings perseverance, and perseverance brings hope, and this hope is not deceptive. So much has the love of God been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Rm. 5: 3-5).

If, as we share abundantly in Christ’s sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in consolation too, then let us except Christ’s sufferings gladly. Let us share in them abundantly, if we are looking for abundant consolation. And this is what those who mourn will receive, although not in equal measure. If the consolation were exactly equal for each people, then Paul would not have written: “As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so also our consolation abounds” (2 Cor. 1: 5).

Those who share in his sufferings will also share in consolation, in proportion to the sufferings that they share with Christ. You learn this from the apostle’s confident words: “You know that as you share in sufferings, you will also share in consolation”.

God said through his prophet: “In a time of favour I have answered you, in a day of salvation I have helped you” (Cfr. Is. 49: 8). What, then, could be a more favourable time than the day when we are led off under guard, paraded before the world, but triumphant rather than the objects of a triumph, and this because of our faithful service of God in Christ?

For Christian martyrs in the company of Christ completely overcome the principalities and powers; together with him they triumph over them; sharing in his sufferings they also share in the victories that he has won by his courage in suffering. What other day of salvation is there than the day that we depart from the world in this way?

But, I beg you, put no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God commend yourselves through great endurance. You should make your own the words: “What do I wait for now, except the Lord?”

**Responsorial.** *Eph. 6: 12, 14, 13*

**R:** Our fight is not against human foes, but against cosmic powers, against the authorities and potentates of this dark world, against the superhuman forces of evil in the heavens. \* Stand firm, I say, fasten on the belt of truth, alleluia.

**V:** Take up God's armour; then you will be able to stand your ground when things are at their worst, to complete every task and continue to resist.

**R:** Stand firm, I say, fasten on the belt of truth, alleluia.

3 June

**SAINT CHARLES LWANGA and  
HIS COMPANIONS, Martyrs.**

Memoria.

During the years 1885 to 1887 many Christians were killed in Uganda by the king Mwanga in hatred of religion. Some of those put to death served in the king's palace and some even were the king's personal attendants, and among these were Charles Lwanga and twenty-one of his companions, who were fervent Catholics. Because they would not acquiesce in the impure desires of the king some of them were killed by the sword while others were burned to death.

From the Common of Martyrs: Several Martyrs.

**Second Reading.**

*The glory of the martyrs is a sign of rebirth.*

**A reading from the homily of Pope Paul VI for the canonization of the Ugandan Martyrs.**

These African martyrs add a new page to that list of victorious men and women that we call the martyrology, in which we find the most magnificent as well as the most tragic of stories. The page that they add is worthy to take its place alongside those wonderful stories of ancient Africa, which we who live today, being men of little faith, thought we should never see repeated.

We think, for example, of those moving accounts of the Scillitan martyrs, of the martyrs of Carthage, of the martyrs of Utica, the 'white mass' of whom Saint Augustine and Prudentius tell us, of the Egyptian martyrs, of whom Saint John Chrysostom writes with such admiration, and of the martyrs of the Vandal persecution. Whoever would have thought that they would be followed today by new accounts of deeds no less brave and no less glorious?

We are familiar with the lives of the great saints, martyrs and confessors, of Africa, such as Cyprian, Felicity and Perpetua, and the great Augustine. Who would have imagined that one day we should be adding to that list those names that are so dear to us, the names of Charles Lwanga, Matthias Molumba Kalemba, and their twenty companions? Nor should we forget those others, of the Anglican communion, who died for the sake of Christ.

These martyrs of Africa have indeed laid the foundation of a new age. We should not dwell on the religious persecutions and conflicts, but rather on the rebirth of Christian and civil life that has begun.

For from the Africa that was sprinkled with the blood of these martyrs, the first of this new age (and, God willing the last, so sublime, so precious was their sacrifice), there is emerging a free and independent Africa.

The tragedy which bore them off is so extraordinary and so rich in significance that one finds there sufficient lessons for the moral formation of a new people, for the foundation of a new spiritual tradition. There are elements there capable of illustrating and promoting the change from the simple and rather primitive way of life to a new civilization. The old way of life was, of course, not entirely lacking in outstanding human qualities, but it was tainted, defective and, as it were, imprisoned within its own limitations. But in the new society there can be an awareness of the higher things of which the human spirit is capable and an effort to provide better conditions for social life.

### **Responsorial.**

**R:** God looks on, his angels look on, Christ, too, looks on as we struggle and strive in the contest of faith. \* What great dignity and glory are ours, what happiness to join battle in the presence of God, and to be crowned by Christ, the Judge!

**V:** Let us be armed with great determination and be prepared to face the combat, pure in heart, sound in faith, and full of courage.

**R:** What great dignity and glory are ours, what happiness to join battle in the presence of God, and to be crowned by Christ, the Judge!

5 June

**SAINT BONIFACE**

## **Bishop and Martyr**

Memoria

Born in England about the year 673. He became a monk in the monastery of Exeter, and in 719 he went to Germany to preach the faith. He had great success and was consecrated Bishop of Mainz and with the help of his companions he founded or restored dioceses in Bavaria, Thuringia and Franconia. He presided over a number of councils and promulgated laws. While he was engaged in the evangelization of Friesland he was killed by the pagans in the year 754, and his body was buried in the monastery of Fulda.

From the Common of Martyrs: One Martyr.

### **Second Reading. Letter 78**

*A watchful shepherd, guarding the flock of Christ.*

### **A reading from the letters of St. Boniface.**

The Church is like a great ship sailing the sea of the world and tossed by the waves of temptation in this life. But it is not to be abandoned – it must be brought under control.

As an example of this we have the Fathers of the past, Clement and Cornelius and many others in the city of Rome, Cyprian in Carthage and Athanasius in Alexandria. Living under pagan emperors, they steered the ship of Christ, that is the Church, his beloved spouse. And they did this by teaching, defending, working and suffering even to the shedding of their blood.

When I considered the example of these men and of men like them, I was filled with fear. Dread came upon me and trembling, and the darkness of my sins almost overwhelmed me. I should have been only too glad to give up the government of the Church which I had accepted, if only I could have found some support for this course of action in the example of the Fathers or in sacred Scripture.

Therefore, since this is the situation and since the truth may become wearied but cannot be overcome or deceived, I take refuge in my weariness in the one who spoke through Solomon: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths” (Prov. 3:5-6). And elsewhere: “The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe” (cfr Prov. 1:10).

Let us stand firm in doing what is right and prepare to face temptations, so that we may hope for support from the Lord and be able to say to him:

“Lord you have been our refuge from one generation to the next” (Ps. 89: 1).

Let us trust in the one who has laid this burden upon us. What we cannot bear on our own, let us bear with the help of the one who is all-powerful and who said: “My yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Mt. 11: 30)

Let us stand firm in battle on the day of the Lord, because days of distress and anguish have come upon us. Let us die, if God wills, for the sacred laws of our fathers, so that we may be worthy to share an eternal inheritance with them.

Let us not be dumb watch-dogs or silent spectators: let us not be hirelings that flee at the approach of the wolf. Let us be watchful shepherds, guarding the flock of Christ, preaching to great and small alike, to rich and poor, preaching all that God has decreed to men of all degrees and ages, in so far as God gives us the power. Let us preach in season and out of season, in the way that Saint Gregory has set out in his *Pastoral Rule*.

**Responsorial.** *1 Thes. 2: 8; Gal. 4: 19*

**R:** In our great longing for you, we desired nothing better than to offer you our own lives, as well as God’s gospel, \* so greatly had we learned to love you.

**V:** My little children, I am in travail over you afresh, until I can see Christ’s image formed in you,

**R:** so greatly had we learned to love you.

6 June

**SAINT NORBERT, Bishop**

Optional Memoria

Born about the year 1080 in the Rhineland. He became a canon of the cathedral of Xanten, but later underwent a conversion from his worldly life and adopted a regular rule of life and became a priest in 1115. He went through France and Germany and other places preaching the word of God, and with the help of companions who had joined him, laid the foundations of the Premonstratensian Order and set up a number of monasteries. In 1126 he was elected Archbishop of Magdeburg, in which position he carried out reforms in the religious life of the people and spread the faith among the pagans living nearby. He died in the year 1134.

From the Common of Pastors.



## **Second Reading**

*On equal terms with all men, small and great.*

### **A reading from “*The Life of St. Norbert*”**

Norbert is rightly numbered among those who were especially successful in putting the Gregorian reform into practise. In the first place he was at pains to establish a group of priests who would dedicate themselves to chastity and poverty, to the life counselled by the gospels and led by the apostles. He founded a society of men who were prepared to take on both the outward appearance and the adornment of the new man: the first in the form of the religious habit and the latter in the dignity of the priesthood, and who would undertake to follow the sacred scriptures and accept Christ as their leader. He used to recommend three things in particular: cleanliness at the altar and at the divine offices, the correction of excesses and failings at the chapter-meetings, and the care of the poor and hospitality towards them.

But to the priests who lived in community together imitating the apostolic way of life, he added a multitude of believers, laymen and women, in imitation of the early Church. So great was this multitude that many claimed that since the age of the apostles no one had won for Christ in such a short space of time so many who desired to embrace the state of perfection.

When he was made Archbishop, he gave his brethren the task of evangelizing the region of the Wends, which is the present-day Lusatia. He then attempted to reform the clergy of his diocese, in spite of popular rioting and disturbance.

Finally it was one of his principal concerns to maintain and improve the relations between the Holy See and the imperial court, while insisting on freedom in ecclesiastical appointments. As a result of this Pope Innocent II wrote to him: “The Apostolic See expresses its heartfelt thanks to you, its devoted son”, and the emperor made him arch-chancellor of the empire.

All these offices he carried out faithfully and fearlessly, so that people said: “Faith is Norbert’s great quality just as charity was Bernard of Clairvaux’s”. Apart from that he was very charming and easy to talk to; he had the gift of appearing on equal terms with everyone, great or small, and so was liked by all. Finally he was an eloquent preacher; when he preached the word of God vices were wiped out and virtues refined by the fire of his eloquence, and people with well-disposed minds were enlightened with

wisdom. He spent long hours meditating on divine truths and was fearless in spreading the knowledge of them.

**Responsorial.** *2 Tim. 4: 2,5; Acts. 20: 28*

**R:** Proclaim the message and, welcome or unwelcome, insist upon it; refute falsehood, correct error, summon to obedience, but do all with the patience that the work of teaching requires; \* face suffering, work to spread the gospel.

**V:** Keep watch over the flock of which the Holy Spirit has given you charge, as shepherds of the Church of God;

**R:** face suffering, work to spread the gospel.

9 June

**SAINT EPHRAEM**

**Deacon and Doctor of the Church**

Optional Memoria

Born of a Christian family in Nisibis about the year 306. He was ordained a deacon and worked both in his own country and at Edessa where he laid the foundation of the School of Theology. He lived a life of asceticism though at the same time he did not neglect the ministry of preaching; and he wrote a number of works to refute the errors in doctrine current at the time. He died in the year 373.

From the Common of Doctors of the Church.

**Second Reading.** *Sermon 3, 2.4-5*

*The divine ordering of the world is an image of the spiritual world.*

**A reading from the sermons of Saint Ephraem.**

O Lord, drive away the darkness from our minds with the light of your wisdom, so that enlightened in this way we may serve you with renewed purity. The beginning of the sun's passage through the sky marks the beginning of the working-day for us mortals: we ask you, Lord, to prepare in our minds a place where the day that knows no end may give its light. Grant that we may have within us this light, the life of the resurrection, and that nothing may take away our delight in you. Mark us with the sign of that

day that does not begin with the movement and the course of the sun, by keeping our minds fixed on you.

In your sacraments we welcome you every day and receive you in our bodies. Make us worthy to experience within us the resurrection for which we hope. By the grace of Baptism we conceal within our bodies the treasure of your divine life. This treasure increases as we eat at the table of your sacraments. Let us rejoice in your grace. We have within us, Lord, a memorial of you, which we receive at your spiritual table; may we possess the full reality in the life to come.

Let us appreciate the great beauty that is ours through the spiritual beauty that your immortal will arouse in our mortal nature.

Your crucifixion, Lord, was the end of your bodily life: help us to crucify our will to give birth to the spiritual life. May your resurrection, Jesus, fill our spirits with greatness: may we see in your sacraments a mirror in which we may be able to recognize the resurrection.

Your divine ordering of the world, O Saviour, is the image of the spiritual world: let us live in it as truly spiritual men.

Do not take away from our minds, Lord, the signs of your spiritual presence and do not withdraw from our bodies the warmth and delight of your presence. The mortal nature of our bodies is a source of corruption within us: let the outpouring of the spirit of your love wipe away the effects of mortality from our hearts. Grant, Lord, that we may hasten to our true home, and like Moses on the mountain-top, let us have a glimpse of it.

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. Sir. 47: 8, 9-10*

**R:** With his whole heart he sang hymns of praise to show his love for his Maker; \* he appointed musicians to stand before the altar and sing sweet music to the harp.

**V:** This he did that men should praise the holy name of the Lord and the sanctuary resound from morning to night;

**R:** he appointed musicians to stand before the altar and sing sweet music to the harp.

11 June  
**SAINT BARNABAS, Apostle**  
Memoria

Born in the island of Cyprus. He was one of the first converts in Jerusalem and preached at Antioch. He became a companion of Saint Paul and went with him on his first missionary journey, and he took part in the Council of Jerusalem. He returned to his native land to preach the gospel and there he died.

**Second Reading.** *Dis. 5:1,3-4*

*You are the light of the world.*

**A reading from the discourses of St. Chromatius on St. Matthew's Gospel.**

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house” (Mt. 5: 14-15). Our Lord called his disciples the salt of the earth, because with heavenly wisdom they restored the taste which men's hearts had lost through the action of the devil. Now he calls them the light of the world as well, because they have been enlightened by the one who is the true and eternal light and so themselves have become a light in the darkness.

Since he is himself the sun of justice, it is not without reason that he also calls his disciples the light of the world. He has spread the light of his knowledge throughout the world through them as through rays of light. For they have driven the darkness of error from men's hearts by showing them the light of truth.

We too have been enlightened by them, and from being darkness we have become light, as the apostle says: “For once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord: walk as children of light” (Ep. 5:8). And again: “You are not sons of the night nor of darkness, but you are sons of light and of the day” (1 Thes. 5: 5).

And in his epistle Saint John rightly states: “God is light” (1 Jn. 1: 5), and whoever remains in God is in the light, just as God himself is in the light. Because we have had the good fortune to be freed from the darkness of error, we should always walk in the light like sons of the light. And so the apostle says: “Among them you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life” (cfr. Phil 2: 15-16).

But if we do not do this, it will be clear that we are, so to speak, covering up and shading the essential light by our lack of faith. Thus, we should be rendering the light ineffective, to our own loss as well as the loss of others. And we know from scripture that due punishment was meted out

to the man who had been given the talent to engage in heavenly business and make a profit, but preferred to hide it, rather than gain interest by putting it in the bank.

Therefore, that shining light which has been lit for our salvation must always shine in us. For we possess the lamp of the heavenly commandments and of the spirit of grace, of which David said: “Your law is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (cfr. Ps. 118: 105). Solomon, too spoke of it: “Your commandment is a lamp” (cfr. Prov. 6: 23).

We must not, then, hide this lamp of the law and of faith but should always set it up on the Church, as on a lamp-stand, for the salvation of many. In this way we too may enjoy the light of truth itself and all who believe may be enlightened.

**Responsorial.** *Acts. 11: 23-24*

**R:** When Barnabas came to Antioch and saw the grace of God at work there, he was glad, \* for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.

**V:** He encouraged them all to hold fast to the Lord with resolute hearts,

**R:** for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.

13 June

**SAINT ANTONY OF PADUA**

**Priest and Doctor of the Church**

Memoria

Born in Lisbon in Portugal about the end of the twelfth century. He became a canon regular of Saint Augustine but after being ordained priest he joined the Friars Minor so that he might preach the gospel among the people of Africa. But it was in France and Italy that he exercised the ministry of preaching with great profit and brought many heretics back to the faith. He became the first theologian of his Order and wrote a number of sermons which are renowned for their doctrine and their gentleness. He died at Padua in the year 1231.

From the Common of Pastors, or of Deacons of the Church, or of Men Saints: Religious.

**Second Reading.** *1,226*

*Language comes alive when it speaks by deeds.*

**A reading from the Sermons of St. Antony of Padua.**

A person who is filled with the Holy Spirit speaks several languages. These several languages are the various ways of witnessing to Christ, such as humility, poverty, obedience and patience, with which we speak when we practise them towards our neighbour. Language comes alive when it speaks by deeds. Enough of talking; let actions speak. We are bloated with words and empty of works. That is why we are accursed by the Lord who cursed the fig tree on which he found no fruit but only leaves. It has been laid down as a law for the preacher, says Gregory, that he should practise what he preaches. It is useless for a man to boast that he knows the law, if his behaviour contradicts his teaching.

The apostles, for their part, spoke as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance (cf. Act 2: 4). Blessed is he who speaks under the influence of the Holy Spirit and not as his own human spirit suggests. There are some who speak from their own spirit: they pilfer the words of others and pass them off as their own, taking the credit to themselves. It is of these and others like them that the Lord speaks in Jeremiah: “Behold, I am against the prophets who steal my words from one another. Behold, I am against the prophets, says the Lord, who use their tongues and say ‘says the Lord’. Behold I am against those who prophesy lying dreams, says the Lord, and who tell them and lead my people astray by their lies and their recklessness when I did not send them or charge them; so they do not profit this people at all, says the Lord” (Jer. 23: 30-32).

Let us speak then as the Holy Spirit gives us utterance. Let us ask him humbly and earnestly to bestow his grace on us, so that we may fulfil the day of Pentecost by the perfection of our five senses and our observance of the Ten Commandments. Let us ask for a keen sentiment of contrition, and for fiery tongues to profess the true faith so that inspired and enlightened in the splendours of the saints, we may be found worthy to behold the Blessed Trinity, the one God.

**Responsorial.** *Cf. Hos 14: 6; Ps. 91: 13; Sir. 24:4*

**R:** The saint will blossom like the lily; \* he will flourish forever in the presence of our God.

**V:** He will be praised by all God’s people;

**R:** he will flourish forever in the presence of our God.

19 June  
**SAINT ROMUALD, Abbot**  
Optional Memoria

Born at Ravenna about the middle of the tenth century. He embraced the life of a hermit. For many years he went from place to place seeking true solitude, and built a number of small monasteries. He fought against the depraved morals of many of the monks at the time and by the exercise of virtue advanced along the path of perfection. He died about the year 1027.

From the Common of Men Saints: Religious.

**Second Reading.** *Chs. 31 and 69*

*Self-denial and the following of Christ.*

**A reading from *The Life of St. Romuald* written by St. Peter Damian.**

Romuald lived for three years in the neighbourhood of Parenzo. In the first year he built a monastery and established there an abbot and community. For the other two years he lived as a recluse within. Here the love of God raised him to such heights of perfection that, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he foresaw a number of future events and was also able, by the light of understanding, to penetrate many of the hidden mysteries of the Old and New Testament.

He was often so carried away in his contemplation of the godhead that he was overwhelmed with tears. Then, in the burning ardour of divine love, he would cry out: “Beloved Jesus, my beloved. Most sweet Lord, desire beyond all telling, joy of the saints, delight of the angels”, and other similar ejaculations. It is impossible for me to express in human language all that he would pour forth in sheer joy under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Wherever the holy man took his abode he would begin by erecting an oratory with an altar in his cell, and then, closing himself in, he would deny admission to all.

After dwelling thus in various places, when he realized that his end was approaching, he returned to the monastery which he has established in Val di Castro and there, confidently awaiting his imminent death, he had a cell built for himself with an oratory to which he might retire and await the end in the tranquillity of silence.

When the hermitage had been constructed and he was about to withdraw into it from the world, he began to be afflicted with ever-

increasing physical sufferings and to sink, not so much as it seemed into illness, as into the feebleness of extreme old age.

One day he began gradually to lose all physical strength and to be overwhelmed by the most acute suffering. The sun was now setting and he told the two brothers who were with him to go out and close the door of the cell behind them telling them to return to him at dawn on their way to Matins. Consumed by anxiety for him they went out reluctantly but did not immediately retire to rest. Fearful lest their treasured master might indeed be dying, they remained in concealment watching near the cell. For some time they stayed there listening anxiously and hearing neither movement nor any sound they realized what had happened, and thrusting open the door rushed into the cell. They lit a light and found the sacred body lying lifeless; his blessed soul had been taken up to heaven. So this pearl lay, as it were abandoned; it was destined later to fill a place of honour in the treasury of the great king.

**Responsorial.** *Deut. 2: 7; 8: 5*

**R:** The Lord your God has blessed you in everything you have undertaken; he has watched your journey through the vast wilderness; \* the Lord your God has been with you.

**V:** As a man disciplines his son, he has disciplined you;

**R:** the Lord your God has been with you.

21 June

**SAINT ALOYSIUS GONZAGA, Religious**

Memoria

Born in the year 1568 near Mantua in Lombardy, of the noble family of Castiglione. He was brought up piously by his mother and had a vocation to the religious life. He resigned his birthright to his brother and at Rome entered the Society of Jesus. While working among the sick in a hospital he was stricken by the plague and died in the year 1591.

From the Common of Men Saints: Religious.



**Second Reading. Acta Santa, June 5**

*I will sing forever the mercies of the Lord.*

**A reading from a letter of St Aloysius Gonzaga to his mother.**

It is my earnest prayer, most noble lady, that you may enjoy the grace of the Holy Spirit and his eternal consolation. When your letter reached me I was still in this region of death. But, my dear mother, we should at times long for heaven where we may praise the eternal God in the land of the living. I had lately hoped indeed that I would have completed this journey before now. If charity consists, as Saint Paul says, in weeping with those who mourn and rejoicing with those who rejoice, then you should derive immense joy, most noble mother, from the fact that God in his love and kindness for you is bestowing on me the one true joy and the assurance that I shall be free from the fear of ever losing it.

I confess, most noble lady, that when I consider the divine goodness which is as deep as the sea and as boundless, my mind seems to be lost and overwhelmed in its immensity. In return for how short and trifling a service does God summon me to eternal rest? How negligently have I sought the infinite joys of heaven to which he invites me! How remiss have I been in shedding those tears for which he is assuring me an eternal reward!

Consider again and again, most noble lady, this infinite mercy of God and be careful never to make little of it, as you undoubtedly would if you were to lament as though he were dead for one who is living in the sight of God. There he will give you the help of his intercession much more effectively than when he was still in this life.

Our separation will not be of long duration: we shall meet again in heaven. United in the assurance of our salvation, we shall together enjoy eternal happiness praising God with all the energy of our souls and extolling his mercy for ever as we share in the joys of eternity.

He takes from us that life which he gave us for a time for no other purpose than to restore it to us freed of all care and anxiety and to endow us with those benefits which have been the object of our hopes.

I have said all this in pursuance of my earnest hope that you, most noble lady, and all my family will regard my death as a joyful gift of God and that you will give me your maternal blessing as I cross this sea towards that shore where all my hopes are centred. I have said all this the more

readily because there is no other way in which I can express to you so clearly the love and filial reverence which I owe to you, my mother.

**Responsorial.** *Ps. 40: 13; 83: 11*

**R:** In my innocence, O Lord, you sustain me, \* you make me remain in your presence forever.

**V:** I preferred the last place in the house of God, rather than to dwell in the tents of the wicked;

**R:** you make me remain in your presence forever.

22 June

## **SAINT PAULINUS OF NOLA, Bishop**

Optional Memoria

Born at Bordeaux in France in the year 355. He rose high in public service, married and had a son, but wishing to embrace a more austere life he received baptism, gave up all his worldly goods and in 393 he began to live the monastic life at Nola in Campagna. He became Bishop of Nola where he did much to promote the veneration of Saint Felix of Nola, helping the pilgrims and doing what he could to relieve the misery of that time. He composed a number of poems which are outstanding for their literary quality. He died in the year 431.

From the Common of Pastors.

**Second Reading.** *Ep. 3 to Alypius 1, 5, 6*

*God's love is at work in all his children everywhere through the Holy Spirit.*

**A reading from the letters of St. Paulinus of Nola.**

The kindness you have shown me, my lord, is a mark of true charity, of genuine love. The letter which I received from you through my servant Julian on his return from Carthage revealed your outstanding virtues in such clear light that I had the impression that I was not discovering your love for the first time but had known it already. This is clearly because this love is inspired by him who has predestined us for himself from the beginning of the world and in whom we were formed before our birth – for it was he who made us and not we ourselves, he who has made what is to be. And so, formed by his foreknowledge and power so as to have one same will and one faith – or faith in the One – we were bound together by love before we knew each other; we were to know each other before seeing each other in the body, through the revelation of the Spirit.

This thought fills me with joy and I exult in the one Lord whose love is at work in all his children everywhere through the Holy Spirit whom he has poured out on all mankind, flooding his city with joy from his overflowing river. Over the citizens of this city he has appointed you leader, ‘among the leaders of his people’ (Ps. 112: 8), placing you on the seat of the apostles. It was his will to raise me too from my helplessness and distress and to bestow on me a similar honour. But I rejoice still more that God has given me a place in your heart and united me so intimately to you that I feel assured of your confidence and your love. The services which you have rendered, the gifts which you have given do not allow me to be hesitant or lukewarm in my love for you.

I do not want you to be in ignorance about me. I am a hardened sinner only recently brought from darkness and the shadow of death; only recently have I begun to breathe the air of life, and put my hand to the plough, and taken up the Lord’s cross. I ask the help of your prayers to carry it to the end. You will add a further reward to your merits if you lighten my burden by your prayers for me. The holy man who helps one in distress – I dare not speak of myself as a brother – will be exalted as a great city.

As a token of unity I am sending you this bread, which is a symbol of the unique total Trinity. If you deign to receive it, it will become a bread of blessing.

**Responsorial.** *Sir. 31: 8, 11, 10*

**R:** Blessed is the man who is found blameless and who does not go after gold nor place his trust in hoards of money. \* His fortune will be firmly based on the Lord.

**V:** He had the power to sin and has not sinned, to wrong another, and has not done it.

**R:** His fortune will be firmly based on the Lord.

Also 22 June  
**SAINT JOHN FISHER, Bishop**  
**and SAINT THOMAS MORE**  
**Martyrs**  
Optional Memoria

John Fisher was born in the year 1469. He studied theology at the University of Cambridge in England and was ordained priest. He was appointed Bishop of Rochester. His life was austere and he became an outstanding pastor of his flock, often visiting them. In addition he wrote against the doctrinal errors of the time.

Thomas More was born in the year 1477. He studied at the University of Oxford, married and had a son and three daughters. He was appointed Chancellor of the Kingdom. He wrote a number of works about civil affairs and in defence of religion.

They resisted the king, Henry VIII, on the question of resolving his marriage and on the king's orders they were executed in the year 1535, Fisher on 22 June and More on 6 July. While Fisher had been held in prison he had been created a cardinal of the Church of Rome by Paul III.

From the Common of Martyrs: Several Martyrs.

## **Second Reading.**

*With good hope I shall commit myself wholly to God*

**A reading from a letter of St. Thomas More written in prison, to his daughter.**

Although, Margaret, I know well that my wickedness has been such that I know myself well worthy that God should let me slip, yet can I not but trust in his merciful goodness that as his grace has strengthened me hitherto and made me content in my heart to lose goods, land, and life too, rather than swear against my conscience, and has also put in the king towards me that good and gracious mind that as yet he has taken from me nothing but my liberty with which, so help me God, his grace has done me so much good by the spiritual profit that I trust I take thereby, that among all his great benefits heaped on me so thick, I reckon, upon my faith, my imprisonment even the very chief. I cannot, I say, therefore mistrust the grace of God, but that either he shall conserve and keep the King in that gracious mind still, to do me no hurt, or else if his pleasure be that (for my other sins) I shall suffer in such a cause in sight as I shall not deserve, in his grace shall give me that strength to take it patiently, and peradventure somewhat gladly too, whereby his high goodness shall (by the merits of his bitter passion joined thereunto and far surmounting in merit for me all that I can suffer myself) make it serve for release of my pain in purgatory, and over that for increase of some reward in heaven.

Mistrust him, Meg, I will not though I feel myself faint. Yea, and though I should feel my fear even at point to overthrow me too, yet shall I remember how Saint Peter with a blast of a wind began to sink for his faint faith, and shall do as he did, call upon Christ and pray him to help. And then I trust he shall set his holy hand upon me, and in the stormy seas, hold me up from drowning. Yea, and if he suffer me to play Saint Peter further and to fall full to the ground and swear and foreswear too, which our Lord for his tender passion keep me from, and let me lose if it is so befall and never win thereby. Yet after shall I trust that his goodness will cast upon me his tender piteous eye, as he did upon Saint Peter and make me stand up again and confess the truth of my conscience afresh and abide the shame and the harm here of my own fault.

And finally, Margaret, this I know very well that without my fault he will not let me be lost. I shall therefore with good hope commit myself wholly to him. And if he suffer me for my faults to perish yet shall I then serve for a praise of his justice. But in good faith, Meg, I trust that his tender pity shall keep my poor soul safe and make me commend his mercy. And therefore, mine own good daughter, never trouble your mind, for anything that ever shall keep me in this world. Nothing can come but that which God wills. And I make myself very sure that whatever that be, seem it never so bad in sight, it shall indeed be best.

### **Responsorial.**

**R:** In the midst of their sufferings, these martyrs of Christ fixed their minds on heavenly things, praying: \* Lord, help us to bring your work in us to a perfect end, that we may appear blameless in your sight.

**V:** Look upon your servants and upon your own handiwork:

**R:** Lord, help us to bring your work in us to a perfect end, that we may appear blameless in your sight.

Or

### **Second Reading.** *Prologue c. 10*

*It is necessary to contemplate what is the love of the most sweet Jesus.*

**A reading from the “Letter to his sister on the compendium of the religious perfection” of Saint John Fisher, bishop and martyr.**

I desire, my sister Elizabeth, to write to you something which will help you to achieve the salvation of your soul and to make the love of piety and religion grow. But it is certain that, without a certain measure of fervour in divine love, you will never be able to enjoy the religious life, nor would you be able to do any duty of piety in a cheerful and pleasant way; on the contrary every good work which you propose would immediately bring you strain and boredom. That love in fact makes it possible for every work, even though in itself difficult and arduous, seem easy and pleasant to you, while even the most light toil becomes heavy and annoying when the soul which has to execute it is not lead towards what it has to do by any love and by no transport. And this is made evident by the lives of the hunters. It is much more difficult and tiring than the discipline of any type of monastic life. Yet there is nothing which sustains them so much in persevering in that toil as only the love and the ardent desire of following and capturing the prey. Blessed are those who have managed to find Christ in this life, or at least of breathing a little of his scent! In fact it is an “odour of life for life” (2 Cor. 2: 16). And the pious soul when it has breathed it once, immediately follows it enthusiastically.

It is necessary to contemplate what is the love of Jesus, your most sweet Bridegroom, how excellent, how stable, how secure, how durable, how much it is yearned for by many lovers and also with most ardent desires. Holy martyrs, men and women, whose number cannot be calculated with certainty, for love of him have poured out their own blood and suffered with strength and ardour all the torments, enormous and sought- after as they were. No threat of men managed to frighten them, no harshness of tortures could hold them back from following that love. For them the love of Christ was so dear and precious, that in comparison to it they judged all the goods, the honours and the pleasures of this life as nothing other than frivolousness.

Knowing therefore that this love has been so much appreciated by those whose lives was once so illustrious for the holiness on earth and whose glory now is so splendid in heaven, and that you also can acquire it at no other price than that of your love, how much diligence and how much toil do you not think that you should employ not only in order to acquire with care a thing which is so noble and precious, but also in order to conserve it with care, once it has been acquired?

**Responsorial.**

**R:** In the torments, the martyrs of Christ, looking towards heaven, implored: \* help us, Lord, to fulfil your works in a perfect way.

**V:** Assist your servants to bring to fulfilment the work of your hands;

**R:** help us, Lord, to fulfil your works in a perfect way.

24 June

**THE BIRTHDAY OF  
SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST**

Solemnity

**First Reading.** *Jer. 1: 4-10, 17-19*

*The vocation of the prophet.*

**A reading from the prophet Jeremiah.**

Now the word of the LORD came to me saying,

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."

Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth." But the LORD said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a youth'; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Be not afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD."

Then the LORD put forth his hand and touched my mouth; and the LORD said to me, "Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant."

But you, gird up your loins; arise, and say to them everything that I command you. Do not be dismayed by them, lest I dismay you before them. And I, behold, I make you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, its princes, its priests, and the people of the land. They will fight against you; but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, says the LORD, to deliver you."

**Responsorial.** *Jer. 1: 5, 9-10*

**R:** Before I formed you in the womb I knew you: before you were born I consecrated you. \* I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.

**V:** I am putting my words into your mouth: I am setting you over nations and over kingdoms.

**R:** I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.

**Second Reading.** *Sermon 293, 1-3*

*A voice crying in the wilderness.*

**A reading from the sermons of St. Augustine, bishop.**

The Church observes the day of John's birth as a holy day: none of the fathers is thus solemnly commemorated. We celebrate John's birth as we celebrate Christ's. I cannot let this feast pass without a sermon, and if I speak more briefly than the dignity of the subject demands, its very profundity gives you food for thought.

John's mother was old and barren while Christ's mother was young and a virgin. John's father was struck dumb for not believing that he would be born. The Virgin Mary believed and conceived Christ in faith. That is what we are to investigate and that is what I propose to talk about. But I have set out the mystery first so that if I find myself incapable of plumbing all the depths of it either for lack of time or lack of skill the Holy Spirit will enlighten you. His voice will make itself heard in your heart, without mine; for he is in your mind and heart, you are his temples.

John marks the frontier between the Old and the New Testament. The Lord speaks of him as a boundary line: "The law and the prophets are valid until John the Baptist" (Lk. 16: 16). He represents the Old Testament and at the same time introduces the New. His parents were old, in keeping with his first role; while yet in his mother's womb he was saluted as a prophet, in recognition of his second. Although he was not yet born at the time of Mary's visitation, he leaped in his mother's womb. His mission was made clear, even before he was born. He was revealed as Christ's precursor, before he so much as saw him. These divine mysteries transcend man's feeble understanding. When at last he was born and received his name, his father's tongue was loosened. Consider the symbolic significance of what happened.

Zachary fell silent and lost the power of speech until John, the Lord's precursor, was born and restored his speech. Is not Zachary's silence a



hidden prophecy, kept secret and, as it were, pent up before Christ could be proclaimed? His speech was restored at John's birth, his voice was made clear when he came as had been foretold. The restoration of Zachary's power of speech is like the rending of the veil of the temple when Christ was crucified. If John proclaimed himself, he could not have restored his father's speech. Zachary's tongue was loosened because a voice was born. When John was announcing our Lord's coming he was asked: "Who are you?" (Jn. 1: 19) He replied: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness" (Jn. 1: 23). John was a 'voice', but in the beginning the Lord was the Word. John was a voice for a time: but Christ, who in the beginning was the Word, is the Word in eternity.

**Responsorial.** *Lk. 1: 76-77*

**R:** You, little child, shall be called a prophet of God, the Most High. \* You shall go ahead of the Lord to prepare his ways before him.

**V:** You shall make known to his people their salvation through the forgiveness of all their sins.

**R:** You shall go ahead of the Lord to prepare his ways before him.

**Gospel.** *Lk. 1: 57-66, 80*

**A reading from the Gospel according to St. Luke.**

Now the time came for Elizabeth to be delivered, and she gave birth to a son. And her neighbours and kinsfolk heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they would have named him Zechari'ah after his father, but his mother said, "Not so; he shall be called John." And they said to her, "None of your kindred is called by this name." And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he would have him called. And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, "His name is John." And they all marvelled. And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke,

blessing God. And fear came on all their neighbours. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea; and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, "What then will this child be?" For the hand of the Lord was with him.

And the child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness till the day of his manifestation to Israel.

**Third Reading.** *Disc. 74*

*Birth source of life.*

**A reading from the “Discourse on the feast of St John the Baptist” of Hugo of St. Vittore.**

He will be called John and many will be glad at his birth” (cfr. Lk. 1: 13, 14). John signifies “grace of God”. Dearly beloved this name so holy, given to a very holy man, pre-announced with veneration by Gabriel, uttered by Elisabeth full of the Holy Spirit, communicated in writing by Zachariah, we must believe it, without possibility of doubt, chosen by God himself.

It was not in fact without reason that he received such a name he who shone before anyone else because of the grace, grace which sanctified him while he was still in the mother’s womb; he who at the voice of the Virgin exulted for the grace of the presence of Christ; he who while still a child, sustained by grace, renounced to the world, and entering into the desert, dedicated himself to God until the day of his manifestation to the people of Israel, dressed with a garment of camel skin, girded with a belt of skin, nourishing himself with locusts and wild honey and drinking water.

For a good reason he was called John he who showed his precursor and preacher of the heavenly grace of which Christ was immediately bearer and giver. For which thing John himself said: “I baptize you in water, that is in penance, but after me is coming the one who is more powerful than me, of whom I am not worthy to untie his sandals: He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Cfr. Mt 3: 11). In fact: Grace and truth have come from Jesus Christ (Jn. 1: 17).

Since therefore, brothers, we celebrate in the whole world a stately birth, let us also enjoy with all our heart in participating in what was written: “Many will be glad at his birth”. Many are glad at his birth as the facts rather than the words that are read show more, because the Christians

are glad, and as it is noted so also are the pagans. The poor are glad because they see the maturing of the harvest imminent; the servants are glad because they see that the end and the payment of their work is drawing near.

The good enjoy of the joy of the Holy Spirit, the wicked of the joys of the world. In fact the joy of the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, that of the eyes, and the pride of life. In the concupiscence of the flesh there is the joy of the vile things, in the concupiscence of the eyes that of the curiosity, in the pride of life the joy of vanity. He who becomes proud becomes empty.

This type of enjoyment is found only in the world of the reprobate, who rejoices in doing evil and exults in the perversion of the vice, they take pleasure in vanity and the false extravagances, the superstitious games, in the exercise of vices, in committing sins, they satisfy themselves with vintage wines and perfumes, they crown themselves with roses before getting rotten, and they want to leave signs of joy everywhere (cfr. Wis. 2: 6-9).

They enjoy the things in which the damned cry saying: We were far away from the way of the truth and the light of justice did not shine for us and the sun of intelligence did not rise for us.

We have become tired in the way of iniquity and perdition and we have not know the way of the Lord. What benefit has pride given us, and what advantage has the arrogance of the riches brought us? (cfr. Wis. 5: 6-8).

We enjoy therefore, dearly beloved, in this holy nativity of Saint John the Baptist a great joy. But may the joys of God not have for us the taste of those of the world, so that we may be able to merit arriving with this holy joy to the heavenly glory. May the Lord deign to grant it to us.

### **Responsorial.**

**R:** This is the upright precursor and the light that shines in front of the Lord. \* he in fact is that John who has prepared the way of the Lord in the desert, who has shown the Lamb of God and who has enlightened the minds of men.

**V:** John was in the desert, preaching a baptism of penance.

**R.** He in fact is that John who has prepared the way of the Lord in the desert, who has shown the Lamb of God and who has enlightened the minds of men.

25 June

**SAINT WILLIAM, Abbot**

Memoria

First hermit, then abbot, William (1085- 1142) founded different monasteries (among which Montevergine) characterized by a very rigorous rule of life. Ruggiero II, Norman king of Naples and Sicily, convoked him to his court, at Salerno, as his personal councillor.

**Second Reading.** *Leg. 3: 15; 6: 9-12; 11: 13-14; 17: 8-9, 18-20*

*Principles of religious life.*

**A reading from the words of Saint William, abbot, to his disciples.**

Being asked by the first disciples which norms of religious life he ordered them to observe; William answered: “It is my opinion, brothers, that working with our hands, we get food and clothing for ourselves and also for distributing to the poor and that, gathering together at certain determinate hours, we celebrate the divine offices.

I have told you and I will not get tired of repeating it to you: you have renounced to the goods of this age, you have chosen God for your inheritance, love only him, possess only him. Leave, I beg you, the goods of the ages to the secular; you, instead, prefer with all your hearts the spiritual goods to the earthly. If then – may it never be – you have fixed in your heart and are unmovable in that idea of money, know that with me you can never carry it out.

In truth our riches and our joys are the scourging and the disgrace, which is lost as soon as you give a hand to impatience. Where is that which the Lord says in the Gospel: “If someone strikes you on the right cheek, you show him the other as well” (Mt. 5: 39)?

Speaking to king Ruggiero II of Sicily, he expressed himself in this way: “I took care to exhort you frequently and I made efforts to recall to your memory to use the temporal goods and to preside over your kingdom in a way so as not to forget the eternal goods, to serve only Christ with all the affection of the heart, to not attribute anything to your strength, nothing

to your riches, nothing to your intelligence, nothing to your valour, but everything to God alone. It is he, in fact, the one for whom “the leaders command, and the magistrates emit just decrees” (Prv. 8: 15).

As up till now, with the help of the Lord, you were the defender and protector of equity and justice, for the future you will remain the patron still more diligently, if you can. I recommend to you the people of God subject to you; do not permit that any one in your kingdom do wrong to my brothers and to my sisters, so that, remaining in quiet, they can pray to God for the tranquillity and the peace of your kingdom.

**Responsorial.**

**R:** O saint William, you have done marvellous things in front of God; you have honoured him with your whole heart: \* Intercede for the sins of men.

**V:** Irreprehensible, true worshipper of God, enemy of every fault, persevering in good.

**R:** Intercede for the sins of men.

27 June

**SAINT CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA**

**Bishop and Doctor of the Church**

Optional Memoria

Born in the year 370. He entered a monastery, became a priest and then succeeded his uncle as Bishop of Alexandria in 412. He fought seriously against the teachings of Nestorius and took the lead at the Council of Ephesus. He wrote many works to explain and defend the Catholic faith. He died in the year 444.

From the Common of Pastors, or of Doctors of the Church.

**Second Reading. Ep. 1**

*The defender of the divine maternity of the Virgin Mary.*

**A reading from the letters of St. Cyril of Alexandria, bishop.**

It has amazed me that some people should be in doubt as to whether the holy Virgin should be called Mother of God. If our Lord Jesus Christ is God, how can the holy Virgin who bore him not be Mother of God? This is the belief that the divinely inspired disciples have handed down to us, even if they have not recorded the term. This is what we have been taught by the holy fathers. Indeed Athanasius, our father of famous memory, in his book on the holy and consubstantial Trinity, in the third discourse, calls the holy Virgin throughout Mother of God.

I must use his own words here, giving the passage word for word: “Sacred scripture has this feature of note, as we have often said, that in it there is a twofold profession concerning the Saviour: that he was always God, and is the Son, being the Word and reflection and wisdom of the Father; that later for us he took flesh of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and became man”.

Again, after other observations, he says: “There have been many holy men, men free of all sin. Jeremiah was consecrated by God before he was born, and John, while still in his mother’s womb, leaped for joy at the voice of Mary, Mother of God”. Athanasius is one who can be trusted: he would not say anything that is not in accord with sacred scripture.

Scripture says that the Word of God was made flesh, that is, that he was united to flesh which had a rational soul. The Word of God took to himself descent from Abraham and shared in flesh and blood, forming for himself a body from a woman, so that he should not only be God but should become man too and be regarded as one of our race because of his union with us.

Immanuel therefore is made up of two realities, divinity and humanity, as we must acknowledge. But the Lord Jesus Christ is one, the one true Son, who is both God and man. He is not deified as we are by grace, but rather is true God made manifest in human form for us. Saint Paul confirms this with the words: “When the fullness of time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law; to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons” ( Gal. 4: 4).

**Responsorial.**

**R:** Saint Cyril accomplished great things in the sight of God, and his teaching has spread throughout the world. \* May he intercede for us with the Lord our God.

**V:** He was a priest of the Lord, who meditated on his commandments day and night.

**R:** May he intercede for us with the Lord our God.

28 June

## **SAINT IRENAEUS, Bishop and Martyr**

Memoria

Born about the year 130. He was brought up at Smyrna, a disciple of Saint Polycarp, the bishop of that city. By the year 177 he was a priest at Lyons in France and shortly afterwards he was made bishop of that city. In his writings he sought to defend the Catholic faith against the errors of the Gnostics. Tradition has it that he was martyred about the year 200.

From the Common of Martyrs: One Martyr, or of Pastors.

**Second Reading.** *Bk. 4, 20, 5-7*

*God's glory is in living men; full life for men is in the vision of God.*

**A reading from the treatise *Against the Heresies* of St. Irenaeus, bishop.**

God's splendour is the source of life, those who see him share his life. Because he was beyond the reach of man's mind, incomprehensible and invisible, he made himself visible, intelligible and knowable so that those who see and accept him may possess life. Since it is impossible to live without life and the reality of life proceeds from God, sharing God's life means seeing God and enjoying his favour.

Those who see God therefore will live; they will be made immortal by this blessed vision and will attain to God himself. This, as I have said, is shown figuratively by the prophets who maintain that those who have his spirit within them and long for his coming, will see God. As Moses says in Deuteronomy: "On that day we shall see him; then God will speak to man and man will live" (cfr. Deut. 5: 24).

God sustains the universe in being. His nature and his greatness cannot be seen or described by any of the creatures he has made. But he is known to all of them. The Word proclaims to all that there is one God the Father who holds all things in being and gives being to all creation. It is written in

the gospel that no one has ever seen God, apart from his only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father: he has proclaimed the Father.

The Son has revealed the Father from the beginning for he was with the Father from the beginning. He it was who revealed to the human race at the appropriate time prophetic visions, various gifts, his own ministry and the glory of his Father, in an orderly sequence. Where order obtains, there is harmony: harmony implies an opportune moment and consequently the most profitable time.

Hence the Word was made the dispenser of the Father's grace for the benefit of man and for his sake he made these generous dispositions. He revealed God to man and raised man to God. He shielded the Father from human sight so that man would never undervalue God through familiarity but would always have something to strive towards. On the other hand he revealed God to man in many ways so that man would not fall away entirely from God and thereby cease to be. God's glory is in living men and full life for men is in the vision of God. If the revelation of God in this world gives life to all living creatures, much more will the revelation of the Father by the Word give life to those who see God.

**Responsorial.** *Mal. 2: 6; Ps. 88: 22*

**R:** The instruction he gave was true, and no word of injustice fell from his lips; \* he walked in harmony with me, and in honesty.

**V:** My hand shall be ready to help him and my arm to give him strength;

**R:** he walked in harmony with me, and in honesty.

29 June

**SAINTS PETER AND PAUL, Apostles.**



Solemnity.

**First Reading. Gal. 1: 15- 2: 10**

*Discussion between Peter and Paul.*

**A reading from the Letter of St. Paul to the Galatians.**

But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother. In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie! Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cili'cia. And I was still not known by sight to the churches of Christ in Judea; they only heard it said, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." And they glorified God because of me.

Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. I went up by revelation; and I laid before them (but privately before those who were of repute) the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, lest somehow I should be running or had run in vain. But even Titus, who was with me, was not compelled to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. But because of false brethren secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy out our freedom which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage -- to them we did not yield submission even for a moment, that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you. And from those who were reputed to be something (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality) -- those, I say, who were of repute added nothing to me; but on the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised (for he who worked through Peter for the mission to the circumcised worked through me also for the Gentiles), and when they perceived the grace that was given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised; only they would have us remember the poor, which very thing I was eager to do.

**Responsorial.** *Cf. Mt. 16: 18-19*

**R:** You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church and the powers of the underworld will not overcome it. \* To you I will give the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven.

**V:** Everything that you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and everything that you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

**R:** To you I will give the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven.

**Second Reading.** *Sermon 295, 1-2. 4.7-8*

*These martyrs saw what they proclaimed.*

**A reading from the sermons of St. Augustine, bishop.**

This day has been made holy by the martyrdom of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul. I am not here speaking of some unknown martyrs. “For their fame has penetrated every land and their message has reached the ends of the earth” (Ps. 18: 5). These martyrs saw what they proclaimed. They followed the path of integrity, professed the truth, and died for it.

The blessed Peter, foremost of the apostles, the passionate lover of Christ, heard his merits acknowledged: “I say to you that you are Peter” (Mt. 16: 18). He had himself declared: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mt. 16: 16). Christ replied: “I say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church” (Mt. 16: 18). He meant: “Upon this rock I will build the faith which you profess. Because you said to me, ‘you are the Christ, the Son of the living God,’ I will build my Church on you. For you are Peter”. Peter’s name is derived from the word for a rock and not vice versa. In the same way a Christian is named after Christ.

The Lord Jesus before his passion chose, as you know, certain disciples whom he called apostles. In a virtually unique way Peter represented the entire Church. In his capacity as representative of the whole Church, these words were fittingly addressed to him: “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 16: 19). It was not one man, but the whole Church, which received these keys. Peter’s prominence was acknowledged inasmuch as he stood for the one, universal Church when the Lord said to him, “I will give you” the power that was given to all. That you may understand that the Church received the keys of the kingdom of heaven, remember that the Lord said to all the apostles, “Receive the Holy Spirit”

and added immediately, “Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven, whose sins you shall retain, they are retained” ( Jn. 20: 22-23).

It was logical too for the Lord to entrust the care of the sheep to Peter after his resurrection. He was not, of course, the only disciple worthy of this responsibility. When Christ spoke to one, all were included. Peter was addressed first because he was the foremost apostle. Do not be dismayed, Peter. Answer once, twice, three times. Your confession of love must be proclaimed three times because your presumption was three times dashed by your fear. The knot you tied three times must be as often untied. Untie from love what you tied from fear. In spite of all the Lord three times entrusted his sheep to Peter.

One day is assigned for the celebration of the martyrdom of two apostles. But those two were one. Although their martyrdom occurred on different days, they were one. Peter went first, Paul followed. We celebrate the feast day which is made sacred for us by the blood of these apostles. Let us love their faith, their life, their trials, their passion, their profession, and their teaching.

### **Responsorial.**

**R:** O Paul, teacher of truth and apostle of the Gentiles, \* you are truly worthy of honour.

**V:** Through you, all nations have known the grace of God;

**R:** you are truly worthy of honour.

Or.

### **Second Reading.** *Disc. 82: 1,3-6*

*These are the holy fathers and the true shepherds.*

**A reading from the “Discourses” of St. Leo the Great, pope.**

Certainly the whole world, O dearly beloved, takes part as a community in the great solemnity, because the piety, which derives from a unique faith, wants that that which is commemorated as fulfilled for the salvation of all be celebrated in common exultation. But the solemnity of this day, other than the veneration that justly it earns in the whole world, must be celebrated with a special joy in our city, in order that in the place

where the glorious death of the princes of the apostles took place, on the day of their martyrdom the exultation may reach the highest point.

These are the men through whom the gospel of Christ shone for you, O Rome; and you who were master of error, have become the disciple of truth. These are your true fathers and your true shepherds, who in order to open for you the entrance to the kingdom of heaven have founded you much better and with greater fortune than those who lay the foundations of your walls. One of them, in fact, precisely the one who gave you your name, stained you with the killing of his brother. It has been these two apostles, instead, who have raised you up to such a glory that, having become a holy nation, an elected people, priestly and royal city and, because of the seat of Peter, capital of the world, you would have a more extensive dominion because of the divine religion rather than because of your earthly empire.

When the apostles in fact, having received the gift of the tongues, began to preach in the world the gospel and divided among themselves the various regions of the earth, to the blessed Peter, as the head of the apostolic college, was assigned the capital of the Roman Empire. And this so that the light of the truth, which had been revealed for the salvation of all the peoples, could spread with greater efficacy from the head in the whole of the rest of the body. Precisely in this city, O blessed Peter, you did not fear to come and while Paul, your companion in the apostolate who will be your companion also in glory, occupied himself with the development of the other churches, you advanced in this forest of savage beasts and in this distraught and deep ocean, showing a courage much greater than when you walked on the waves of the sea.

It is true that to infuse you with strength and confidence many miracles, charisms and prerogatives with which you were endowed, contributed: already in fact you had instructed the faithful coming from Judaism, you had already founded the Church of Antioch, where for the first time resounded the noble name of Christian. You had besides diffused the evangelical laws in Ponto, in Galatia, in Capadocia, in Asia and in Bitinia. Thus, without doubting the happy success of the work and knowing the limits of your age, you carried the glorious standard of the cross into the strong-hold of the Roman Empire. In this your entrance you were preceded by divine disposition both by the honour of power, as well as the glory of your future passion.

In this city Paul, your companion in the apostolate and vessel of election, doctor destined in a special way to the pagans, came to meet you. And he associated himself with you precisely in that time in which all traces of honesty, respect, liberty was disappearing under the tyranny of Nero. The fury of this man, consumed by the fire of all the vices, dragged him to such a point of madness, that he was the first everywhere to persecute atrociously the name Christian, believing foolishly that the grace of God could be suffocated by the killing of the faithful. But for them the death constituted the maximum gain, because the despising of this life destined to perish became for them a means of acquiring the eternal happiness.

Therefore: “Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his faithful” (Ps. 115: 15) and by no force of cruelty could the religion founded on the mystery of the cross of Christ ever be destroyed. The Church is not diminished by the persecutions: she grows on the contrary and the field of the Lord is clothed with always more abundant harvests, since the grains of wheat, while they fall to the ground, one by one, are reborn multiplied.

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. Mt. 5: 12*

**R:** O victors and friends of God, Peter and Paul, \* rejoice and exult, because great is your reward in heaven.

**V:** O princes of the Church, glorious leaders of her battles, soldiers of the heavenly palace and true luminaries of the world,

**R:** rejoice and exult, because great is your reward in heaven.

Or.

**Second Reading.** *Disc. 16*

*Our Lord has made these columns firm.*

**A reading from the “Discourses” of Saint Aelred, abbot.**

You know, brothers, how among all the apostles and martyrs of our Lord, these two for whom we celebrate this feast today seem to have a special dignity. Nothing strange in this, since they are the ones to whom the Lord has entrusted the holy Church in a completely special manner.

When in fact Saint Peter declared that the Lord was the Son of God, he replied: “You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church. To you I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 16: 18). It was again the

Lord who in a certain sense made Paul equal to him, as Paul himself said: “He who had acted in Peter in order to make him an apostle of the circumcised had also acted in me for the pagans” (Gal. 2: 8). They are the ones whom the Lord through the prophet had promised to the holy Church, saying: “To your fathers will succeed your sons” (Ps. 44: 17). The fathers of the holy Church are the holy patriarchs and prophets, who were the first to have taught the laws of God and who foretold the coming of our Lord. If before the coming of the Lord the prophets have ceased, it was because of the sins of the people.

And then our Lord came and in the place of the prophets he chose the holy apostles. In this way the prediction of the prophet was fulfilled: “To your fathers will succeed your sons”. Observe how he declares that the dignity of the apostles is greater than that of the prophets. While the prophets were in fact princes of only one people, dwelt in only one nation and in only one part of the earth, of the apostles he says: “You will make them princes over all the earth” (Ps. 44: 17). Which is the land, brothers, on which the power and the dignity of these apostles is not affirmed? They are the columns who, with the doctrine, prayer and the example of their patience, sustain the holy Church. It is our Lord who has made these columns firm. Before in fact they were very weak and they could not sustain either themselves or the others. And this answered to a marvellous plan of God. Because if they had always been strong, someone could have believed that they had found this strength in themselves. For this the Lord first wanted to show what they were by themselves and, afterwards, he fortified them so that it could be seen by all that their every strength came from God.

Besides, since they had to be fathers of the Church and doctors of the sick souls, they would not have known how to have compassion of the other’s sickness if first they had not had the experience in themselves. He therefore has made the columns of the earth, that is of the holy Church, firm (Cfr. Ps. 74: 4). So weak in fact was this column, that is Saint Peter, that it was enough for the voice of only one servant to make it fall! But afterwards, the Lord made him strong, above all when he addressed him three times with the question: Peter, do you love me? and he answered three times: “I love you”. And it is necessary to observe that the Lord, when Peter answered him: “I love you”, added immediately: “Feed my sheep”, as if to say: demonstrate the love that you have for me by feeding my sheep (cfr. Jn.

21: 15-17). For this, brothers, he who says that he loves God and does not want to feed his sheep is not sincere.

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. 1 Pet. 5: 10; Ps. 36: 33*

**R:** The God of every grace, who has called us to his glory in Christ Jesus, \* he himself will re-establish us, after a brief suffering, he will confirm us and he will make us strong and firm.

**V:** The Lord does not abandon his saints.

**R:** He himself will re-establish us, after a brief suffering, he will confirm us and he will make us strong and firm.

**Gospel.** *Jn, 21: 15-19*

**A reading from the Gospel according to Saint John.**

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." A second time he said to him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep.

Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you would; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go." This he said to show by what death he was to glorify God. And after this he said to him, "Follow me."

**Third Reading.** *Disc. 143: 4-5*

*First Christ died for the salvation of Peter,*

*Later Peter died to preach Christ.*

**A reading from the "Discourses on the gospel of St. John" of Saint Augustine, bishop.**

"In truth, in truth I say to you... when you will get old you will stretch out your hands, and another will tie the belt around your waist and take you

where you do not want to go. This he said in order to indicate with what kind of death he would have glorified God” (Jn. 21: 18-19). In this way this apostle encountered death, who though having denied Christ, loved him: raised up from the presumption, humiliated by the fault of denial but purified by the tears, having overcome the trial of the confession, he attained the crown through martyrdom.

Thus, animated by perfect love, he closed his life dying for the name of Christ, with whom he had promised to die for under the spur of a disordered hurry. Made strong by the Resurrection of the Lord, he will fulfil that which he had in a premature way promised in the time in which he was still weak. In fact it was necessary that first Christ should die for the salvation of Peter, so that Peter could then die in order to preach Christ. That which the human presumption began to demand was to overturn the order that the Word himself had disposed. Peter believed that he was able to give his life for Christ: he, who still needed to be freed, wanted to give his life for his liberator, while Christ had come to sacrifice his life for all those who belonged to him, among whom was also Peter.

This now has already taken place. Now we can face death for the Lord with the strength of the soul: with this true strength which is his gift, not with that false one which comes from our presumption. Now yes, we must not fear the loss of this life, because the Lord rising from the dead has preceded us with an example into the other life.

Now for you, O Peter, has arrived the moment of not being afraid anymore of the death, because he whose death you cried for, for love of whom you, dictated by human sentiments, wanted to prevent from dying for us, is alive. You had dared to want to precede the leader and you were afraid of the persecutor ; but now, that he has paid the price for you, is the moment to follow your redeemer, and to follow him completely, up to the death of the cross. You have heard the words of the one whom you already know to be truthful: that same one who foretold for you the denial, now predicts that you will suffer for him.

But first the Lord asks Peter what he already knows, and not only once, but a second and a third time, that is if Peter loved him. And as many times Peter is heard to answer, nothing else if not that he loved him; therefore for three times he does not entrust to him any other task but to feed his sheep. Thus to the triple negation corresponds a triple confession, so that the tongue will not have to serve love less than it had fear, and so that it should



not seem that the presence of imminent death had extorted more voice than the presence of the Word himself. Therefore to feed the flock of the Lord is the task of love, as to deny the shepherd had been a sign of fear.

Those however who feed the flock of Christ with the intention of binding it to themselves and not to Christ, show that they do not already love Christ, but themselves. They are pushed in fact by the desire for glory, of domination, of profit, and not by love which brings to obedience, to the desire of helping the others and of pleasing God. It is against these persons that the Apostle groaning deploras as those who search for their own interests and not those of Christ the voice of Christ is lifted up strongly and insistently. In fact, what does: “Do you love me? Feed my sheep”, signify (Jn. 21: 16) if not precisely this: If you love me, you will not want to feed yourself, but you will feed my sheep, as mine, and not as if they were yours. In them you must search for my glory, not yours; my government, not yours; my gain, not yours, so that you may not be numbered among those who belong to dangerous times, lovers only of themselves (cfr. 2 Tim. 1: 2), with all that which follows this source of evil.

With reason therefore the Lord says to Peter: “Do you love me?” and Peter answers: “Certainly, Lord I love you”; and to his answer Jesus repeats: “Feed my lambs” and this a second and a third time (Jn. 21: 15, 16).

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. Jn. 21: 15, 16*

**R:** Peter, do you love me? Certainly, Lord, you know that I love you. \* Feed my sheep.

**V:** Simon son of John, do you love me more than these others? Certainly, Lord, you know that I love you.

**R:** Feed my sheep.

30 June

## **THE FIRST MARTYRS OF THE SEE OF ROME**

Optional Memoria

In the first persecution against the Church, that of the Emperor Nero, after the city of Rome had been burnt in the year 64, many of the faithful suffered death after terrible tortures. Testimony to their

deaths is found in the writings of the pagan Tacitus (*Annales*, 15, 44) as well as in the letter to the Corinthians of Pope Saint Clement (cap 5-6).

From the Common of Martyrs: Several Martyrs.

**Second Reading.** *Ch. 5, 1-7, 4*

*Having suffered because of jealousy, they have become the greatest of examples.*

**A reading from the letter to the Corinthians, of Saint Clement I, pope and martyr.**

Leave the instances from the past and come to some of the heroes of more recent times. Take the noble figures of our own generation. Even the greatest and most virtuous pillars of our Church were assailed by envy and jealousy, and had to keep up the struggle till death ended their days. Look at the holy apostles. It was by sinful jealousy that Peter was subjected to tribulation, not once or twice but many times; it was in that way that he bore witness, ere he left us for his well earned place in glory. And Paul, because of jealousy and contention, has become the very type of endurance rewarded. He was in bonds seven times, he was exiled, he was stoned. He preached in the East and in the West, winning a noble reputation for his faith. He taught righteousness to all the world, and after reaching the furthest limits of the West, and bearing his testimony before kings and rulers, he passed out of this world and was received into the holy places. In him we have one of the greatest of all examples of endurance.

Besides these men of saintly life, there are many more of the elect who have undergone hardships and torment instigated by jealousy, and provides admirable object lessons for ourselves. There were women, hounded by jealousy to appear as Danaids and Dirces, who endured fearful and diabolical tortures; yet in spite of their bodily frailty they finished the race of faith unshaken, and received their noble reward. Jealousy has estranged wives and their husbands, confounding the saying of our father Adam that 'this is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh' (Cfr. Gen. 2: 23). Envy and jealousy have even overthrown great cities and uprooted mighty nations.

Now, all this is not being written as a warning to you alone, my dear friends, but for a reminder to ourselves as well, because we too are in the same arena and have the same conflict before us. So let us be done with

these barren and vapid fancies, and turn instead to the honourable, holy rule of our tradition, so that we can find out what is good and pleasing and acceptable in the sight of him who made us. Let us fix our thoughts on the blood of Christ; and reflect how precious that blood is in God's eyes, inasmuch as its outpouring for our salvation has opened the grace of repentance to all mankind.

**Responsorial, Rev. 7: 14**

**R:** For the sake of God, they submitted their bodies to torture \* and merited an eternal reward.

**V:** These are the people who have passed through the great ordeal and have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb

**R:** and merited an eternal reward.