

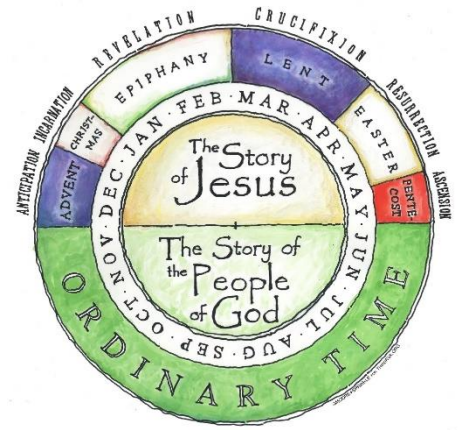
## Friday 8<sup>th</sup> September in the 22<sup>nd</sup> week of Ordinary Time

Liturgical colour: white and **gold**

Today is Marymas, the feast of the Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary

We've all heard of Christmas, but Marymas has been largely forgotten in this country. Marymas is an ancient festival honouring the birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is still celebrated with great joy in Kerala, Goa, Malta, and the Philippines.

With the birth of Mary, God's plan to save humanity through Jesus becomes a visible reality. The sin of Adam and Eve may have closed the gates of Paradise, but Mary's birth opened the doors to eternal life. Let us rejoice at the birth of Mary, the dawn of our salvation!



## Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> September in the 23<sup>rd</sup> week of Ordinary Time

Liturgical colour: **red**

Today is Holy Cross Day. On this day, in the year 335, the cross on which Christ was killed was first displayed for veneration.

When the Roman Emperor Constantine became a Christian, his mother Helena travelled to Jerusalem to locate Christ's tomb. Nearby, buried in the earth, were three crosses. Legend tells the tale of an ill woman being laid on each cross and how, on one of them, she was miraculously cured. This cross is now venerated as the True Cross of Christ, and its fragments have been sent all over the world. There are even fragments in two churches in Cambridge. Let us look upon a cross today – perhaps there is one in your classroom – and gives thanks to God. Although it was an instrument of torture, it is Christ's glory and his triumph! The cross may have ended his life, yet with it he ended death.

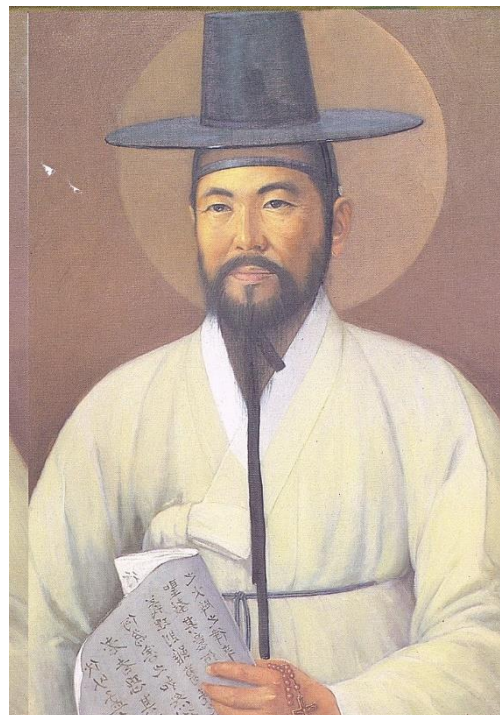


**Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2023 in the 24<sup>th</sup> week of Ordinary Time**

Liturgical colour: **red**

Today is the feast of the Korean saints, Andrew Kim Taegon, Paul Chong Hasang, and their companions who were all killed simply for being Christians.

In the 1700s, the dominant religion in Korea was Confucianism. When Christianity was brought to Korea from China, scholars were intrigued by this new religion preaching equality – very different from the hierarchical class structure in Korean society at the time. People flocked to it, but it was banned. In the 1800s, as it spread further, the rulers began killing any Catholic priests, or anyone sheltering them. St Andrew Kim Taegon was the first Korean-born Catholic priest. He was martyred at the age of 25. Today, about 30% of the population in Korea are Christian.



**Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> September in the 24<sup>th</sup> week of Ordinary Time**

Liturgical colour: **red**

Today is the feast of St. Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist

You may have seen in churches or in books a *tetramorph*: a single shape made up of four shapes. The four shapes fused together are the symbols of the four Evangelists – an angelic man, an ox, a lion, and an eagle. The Evangelists were the four men who wrote down separate accounts about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. They have special honour in the Church because they preserved for us the words of the Lord. St. Matthew's symbol in the tetramorph is the angelic man, although he was far from an angel before he met Jesus. He used to be a tax collector, taking money from his own people to fund the Roman occupation of Judea, until Jesus called him away from the false riches of the world to the true riches of Heaven.



## Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> September in the 25<sup>th</sup> week of Ordinary Time

Liturgical colour: white and **gold**

Today is the feast of Our Lady of Walsingham

In the village of Walsingham in Norfolk there are two shrines to Mary: an Anglican one and a Catholic one. They are both dedicated to Mary – Our Lady of Walsingham – who, in the year 1061, appeared to the Lady Richeldis, a Saxon noblewoman. The story tells how Mary instructed her to build in Walsingham a replica of the “Holy House” she shared with Joseph and Jesus in Nazareth. As Mary and Joseph welcomed Jesus into their house, let us welcome Jesus into our hearts and build him a house, not made with bricks, but built with faith, hope and love.



## Friday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2023 in the 25<sup>th</sup> week of Ordinary Time

Liturgical colour: white

Today is the feast of Michaelmas, also known as the feast of the Archangels Michael, Gabriel and Raphael.

Have you ever picked wild blackberries from a hedgerow? If you have, make sure you do it before Michaelmas. English folklore says that after this day the Devil spits on the blackberries and spoils them. Perhaps this is some petty revenge by the Devil against St. Michael the Archangel for casting him out of Heaven.

Michaelmas was a major feast in medieval England. The universities of Oxford and Cambridge name the first term of the academic year after this feast.

In the ancient middle east, churches were built on high places in honour of St. Michael. This tradition reached Europe, which is why there are two tidal islands called St. Michael's Mount in the English Channel: one off the coast of France, and one off the coast of Cornwall. St. Michael is the leader of God's armies against the powers of Hell. Are you fighting against evil? Why not invoke St. Michael with this prayer of Pope Leo XIII:

*Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle; be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray; and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan and all the evil spirits who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.*



## Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023 in the 25<sup>th</sup> week of Ordinary Time

Liturgical colour: white and **gold**

Today is the feast of St. Jerome, a 'Doctor of the Church'. He is the patron saint of translators and librarians.

Bad-tempered. Easily-offended. Sharp-tongued. St. Jerome did not seem an obvious candidate for sainthood. However, he was unfailingly honest of own failings, and never stopped trying to correct his faults. Yet no one could claim to love the Bible more than he. St. Jerome spent many years in the Holy Land finding the oldest and most reliable manuscripts of the Bible, and then learning Hebrew so he could read and translate them into Latin for the common person. For over a thousand years, St. Jerome's translation of the Bible was *the* Bible. Every translation into every other language was based on his one. That is why he is called a 'Doctor' (Latin for 'teacher') of the Church. So grab a Bible. Close your eyes. Open it up at random. What are the first words your eyes see? Is God speaking to you today?

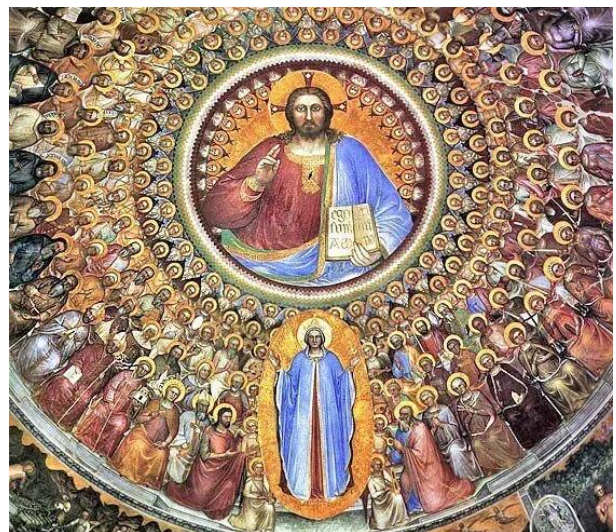


## Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> November 2023 in the 30<sup>th</sup> week of Ordinary Time

Liturgical colour: white and **gold**

Today is the feast of All Saints. Do you remember when, during lockdown, sports were played in stadiums without spectators? That must have felt very strange for athletes who were used to crowds cheering them on. Perhaps you feel that your life is being played out in front of an empty stadium? The Church's teaching about saints has other news for you! Your life is played out before a host of people who died before you, praying you on.

All Saints used to be known as the feast of All Hallows, which is where Halloween gets its name from. The day before All Hallows was called All Hallows' Eve (or 'evening') and this became shortened to 'Halloween'. This feast of All Saints is a time not just to remember holy people from the past, but to remember that God will everyone to be in heaven. There is a line in the Nicene Creed that says "**I believe in the communion of saints**". How are we in communion with the saints? Well, honouring them with this day is one way. Streets and towns named after saints also brings us into communion with them. Some churches are called 'All Saints'. We can also ask the saints – our friends in heaven – to pray for us, just as we might ask a friend on earth. The Church is not just a bunch of people on earth, but a host of people in heaven, too. Perhaps you have a saint's name. Why not find out something about this saint? Or perhaps you chose a saint's name at Confirmation. Look for inspiration in them, just as they were inspired by God.



**Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2023 in the 30<sup>th</sup> week of Ordinary Time**

Liturgical colour: **black**

Today is All Souls Day (also called the Commemoration of the Faithful Departed), when all those who have died are remembered by the Church. Around the world, many Christians will visit graves to pray, lay flowers and light candles. The Catholic Church makes available plenary indulgences for any who pray to God to have mercy on the souls of those who have died. In Mexico this day is a joyful occasion: altars are made at home, or on a grave, dedicated to their dear departed. They decorate them with photos, flowers, food, and sugar skulls.

We served the faithful departed when they were with us through acts of love and care. We can still serve them even though they have departed through our loving prayers, as we pray together:

**Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. Through the mercy of God, may they rest in peace. Amen.**



**Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2023 in the 30<sup>th</sup> week of Ordinary Time**

Liturgical colour: white and **gold**

Today is the feast of St. Martin de Porres, the first black saint of the Americas. He was born in Lima, Peru, in 1579, the son of a Spanish nobleman and a freed African slave. Because his father initially refused to acknowledge him, Martin grew up in poverty. However, even as a child he gave whatever he could to beggars. When, later on, his father did accept him, he was trained as a surgeon and then joined the Dominican religious order. Yet he was treated badly because of his mixed race heritage. He challenged this prejudice with wisdom and grace. Although Martin was a skilled surgeon, people believed his powers of healing to be miraculous. He was often so deeply in prayer that some people claimed to have seen him levitate. He considered all work sacred, however menial, which is why he is considered the patron saint of street-cleaners, as well as those of mixed race, public health workers, racial harmony, and social justice.



## Friday 10<sup>th</sup> November in the 31<sup>st</sup> week of Ordinary Time

Liturgical colour: white and **gold**

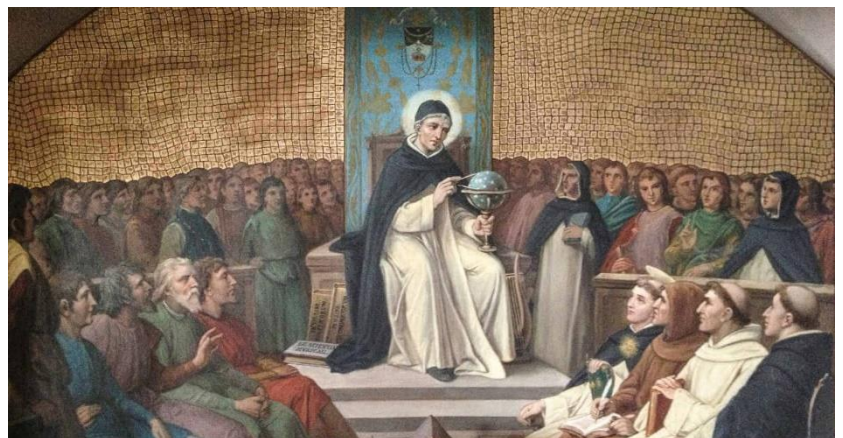
Wouldn't it be great to be called 'the Great'? Today is the feast of one of the greatest popes, Saint Pope Leo the Great (400-461). But was he really all that great? He was considered Great because he had to deal with great problems, and he dealt with them with greatness. Have you ever been given the job of preventing marauding armies from pillaging your city? Pope Leo was; and not just once, but twice. The first time, the Emperor gave him the task of persuading Attila the Hun to not sack Rome. It worked, and seemed like a miracle. The second time, Leo could only reach a compromise, but still managed to prevent lots of looting, although Rome was still invaded. Have you ever been given the job of solving an argument that has gone on for a 100 years? Pope Leo took on such a job, with great success. He wrote a 'Tome' explaining the nature of Christ – a subject that had been troubling the church for over a century – and it helped solve the argument. Leo's 'Tome' was only a short letter, but its words were so weighty it became known as 'Leo's Tome'. What words are especially important for you at this point in your life? Like Leo, do you have words that can turn away anger, and bring people together? Such words are always needed. Try and learn them.



## Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> November in the 32<sup>nd</sup> week of Ordinary Time

Liturgical colour: white and **gold**

Today is the feast of another great saint, St. Albert the Great, a German Dominican friar (1206-1280). He was called 'the Great' because he changed the way the Church viewed the world, and also because he was a living encyclopaedia, being an



expert in every branch of knowledge. He was fascinated with the natural sciences. In his time, the ancient Greek philosophy of Aristotle was rediscovered by the Crusaders' contact with the Muslim world. The question for the new Christian universities in Europe was: can non-Christian thought, like Aristotle's, teach Christians anything? Albert's answer was 'Yes'. He taught that reason and science were good in themselves. He taught that it was important for Christians to think systematically and logically, and they needed philosophy and science to do this. He taught at the new University of Paris, and influenced the whole Church with his teaching. Because of this he is known as a 'Doctor ('teacher') of the Church', and is the patron saint of scientists.

**Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> November in the 32<sup>nd</sup> week of Ordinary Time**

Liturgical colour: white and **gold**

Today is the feast of St. Gertrude the Great, (yes, yet another Great saint) who was a German medieval nun (1256-1302). She had ecstatic visions of Jesus, and was one of the first to write about his Sacred Heart. She wrote how she once had a vision on the feast of St. John the Evangelist. In her mystical ecstasy she rested her head on Jesus' breast, near the wound on his side. She could hear the beating of his Divine Heart. She asked St. John if he, too, felt the beating of Jesus' Divine Heart on the night of the Last Supper, and why he didn't tell the world about it in his Gospel. He answered saying that this detail had to be reserved for subsequent ages when the world, having grown cold, would need to rekindle its love for Christ's Sacred Heart.

Do you ever feel your heart growing cold towards God, your family, your friends? Warm it up in prayer with wishes of love and goodwill.



**Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November in the 33<sup>rd</sup> week of Ordinary Time**

Liturgical colour: **red**

Today is the feast of St. Cecilia, the patron saint of music. Even today, many concerts are held in her honour. She was a Roman martyr killed in one of the many persecutions of Christians by the Roman Empire in the year 230. As a young woman she was married against her will to a pagan, a man called Valerian. On her wedding night she gave him a nasty shock when she said to him that an angel told her that no man must touch her. Valerian said he would respect the angel's wish if he were allowed to see the angel. He duly was, and he never did touch Cecilia. Instead, he was baptised, and was later martyred with her. St. Cecilia is one of the most well-loved saints because almost everyone loves music. There is something spiritual and transcendent about all music. Have you ever listened to a song and felt taken outside of yourself? When was the last time you lost yourself in music?



## Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> December in the first week of Advent

Liturgical colour: white and **gold**

Today is the feast of St. Nicholas, the inspiration for Santa Claus ('**Sankt Nikolaus**' in German and 'Sinterklaas' in Dutch) and Father Christmas. St. Nicholas was a historical person. He was the bishop of Myra in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, and was present at the hugely important Council of Nicea which defined that God was a Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. When the heretic, Arius, stood up at the Council and said that God was not a trinity, St. Nicholas was so angry he slapped him! His feast day is the main day of gift-giving in many areas in Europe, although in the UK St. Nicholas has been replaced by Father Christmas. There are many legends of St. Nicholas's generosity, such as leaving gifts of gold in people's homes to rescue them from poverty. The harsher side of St. Nicholas hasn't gone away, though. In some countries' traditions he is accompanied by a horrifying beast called *Krampus*, who punishes children who have been naughty. One more pleasant tradition is for children to leave a shoe out the night before, and to wake up on the feast of St. Nicholas to find it filled with sweets or fruit. If you don't already follow this tradition, perhaps you could suggest it to your family for next year...

