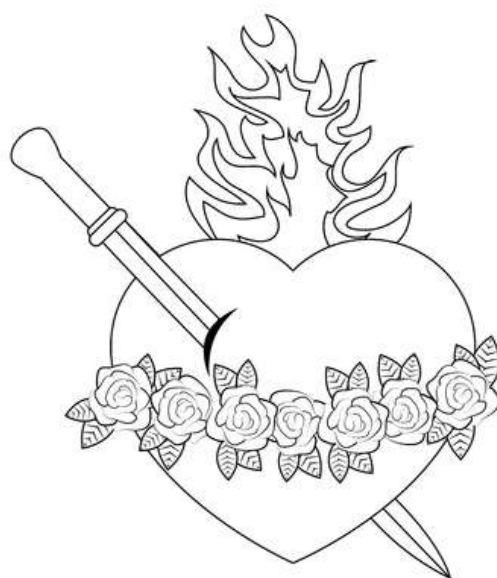
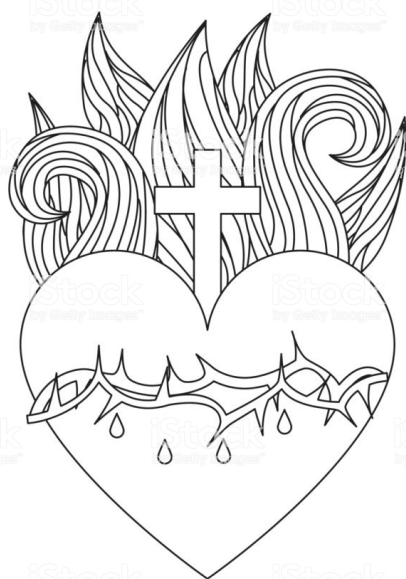


Saints and Feasts of the Month

A selection of lives of the saints and feast days

for June 2020



1st June – Mary, Mother of the Church

This is a new feast day, inaugurated by Pope Francis in 2018, to be celebrated on the Monday after Pentecost Sunday.

Although it is a new feast day of the Church, the title ‘Mother of the Church’ has been given to Our Lady since at least the 4th century when it was used in the writings of St Ambrose.

This feast resonates with Jesus giving Mary to be our mother as he was dying on the cross (John 19:27), and it is this incident which we hear in today’s Gospel reading. It also reminds us that Mary was present in the upper room on the day of Pentecost.

On this day we remember that Mary as Mother of the Church is our role model in how we should live our lives of prayer, but also lives that care for each other. Pope John Paul II put it beautifully when he wrote; *“Mary embraces each and every one in the Church, and embraces each and every one through the Church”*.

O God, Father of mercies,
whose Only Begotten Son, as he hung upon the Cross,
chose the Blessed Virgin Mary, his Mother, to be our Mother also;
grant, we pray,
that with her loving help,
your Church may be more fruitful day by day,
and exulting in the holiness of her children,
may draw to her embrace all the families of the peoples.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

3rd June – St Charles Lwanga and his companions

Charles Lwanga was born on 1st January 1860 in Uganda. He was a page in the court of King Mwanga.

King Mwanga was threatened by Anglican and Catholic missionaries as he felt that they were trying to bring about colonisation and introduce a foreign power. He insisted that they renounce their Christian faith or face death. These persecutions began in 1885 with the massacre of a group of Anglican missionaries.

The King was also a paedophile and abused many of the boys and young men in his court. Charles Lwanga was horrified by this abuse and the treatment of Christians and became a convert to Catholicism, and was baptised. He protected many boys in the court from the King. Charles was baptised on the evening of the martyrdom of a fellow member of the King's entourage who was beheaded for criticising Mwanga's immoral acts. Charles Lwanga and others in the court refused to participate in the King's abuse, and when they were asked to renounce their faith they refused. They faced death by being burnt alive. Alongside Charles, 12 Catholic men and boys and 9 Anglicans were burnt. As he endured his death Charles urged his persecutors to repent and become Christians.

This was not the end of the persecutions in Uganda and many more Christians suffered at the hands of King Mwanga.

Charles Lwanga and his companions were martyred on 3rd June 1886.

We pray today for all Christians in Uganda and all victims of child abuse.

O God, who have made the blood of Martyrs
the seed of Christians,
mercifully grant that the field which is your Church,
watered by the blood
shed by Saints Charles Lwanga and his companions,
may be fertile and always yield you an abundant harvest.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

5th June – St Boniface

Boniface was born in the year 675 in Crediton, Devon and given the name Wynfrith or Winfrid.

From his early teens he went to a monastery in Hampshire and after many years of teaching and studying, he was ordained to the priesthood at the age of 30.

He was given the name Boniface by Pope Gregory II, who sent him to be a missionary in Friesland (now northern Holland), and the name Boniface means maker of good deeds.

Boniface was indeed a maker of good deeds as he went about his missionary work in Germanic lands. He was made a bishop, and he was responsible for establishing monasteries and convents and well and putting in place a system of churches and the organisation of new dioceses. He guided the early church in Germany and established its structures, helping the church to co-exist with the monarchy. His influence of European history was huge, and this went beyond the conversion of people to Christianity.

He was also a key influence on the education and literature of his time, and many of his writings and letters still exist. He wrote about the importance of standing firm in the strength and the hope of God – these words still ring very true in our world today.

Boniface was martyred by pagans on Pentecost Sunday (5th June) 754 as he was reading to a group of new converts.

God our redeemer,
who called your servant Boniface
to preach the gospel among the German people
and to build up your Church in holiness:
grant that we may preserve in our hearts
that faith which he taught with his words and sealed with his blood,
and profess it in lives dedicated to your Son
Jesus Christ our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

7th June – Trinity Sunday

This is a feast that is deeply rooted in English Christianity. Thomas Becket was consecrated as Archbishop of Canterbury on the Sunday after Pentecost. One of his first acts was to say that the anniversary of his consecration should be held as a new festival in honour of the Holy Trinity. The observance spread from Canterbury throughout Western Christendom.

Trinity Sunday is an unusual feast as it celebrates a doctrine in contrast to other feasts that celebrate an incident in Jesus' life or one of the saints. This central doctrine to our faith is also a challenging and abstract one – and preaching on Trinity Sunday is something that many clergy fear!

But today we are not celebrating an abstract theological doctrine for its sake alone or as a mental exercise; we are celebrating a relationship, or rather a series of relationships beginning with the communion of the three persons of the Godhead, and expanding to the relationship between the Triune God and all of creation. We are celebrating the encounter of the eternal God with humankind both in an beyond time.

Almighty and everlasting God,
you have given us your servants grace,
by the confession of a true faith,
to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity
and in the power of the divine majesty to worship the Unity:
keep us steadfast in this faith,
that we may evermore be defended from all adversities;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

9th June – St Columba

Columba lived from 7th December 521 to 9th June 597.

Columba was born and educated in Ireland. In 563 he travelled to Scotland with 12 companions to evangelise Scotland.

The island of Iona was made over to him by a kinsman and it may have been this family member who had invited him to come to Scotland in the first place. On this island, Columba founded an Abbey and Iona remains a place of pilgrimage to this day.

Columba, and his companions spread the Christian faith throughout Scotland. Columba also had significant diplomatic skills, which assisted him in his mission.

He was also a man of great learning and 12 of the hymns he wrote still survive. He also transcribed over 300 books.

Almighty God,
who filled the heart of Columba
with the joy of the Holy Spirit
and with deep love for those in his care:
may your pilgrim people follow him,
strong in faith, sustained by hope,
and one in the love that binds us to you;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

11th (or 14th) June – Corpus Christi

Corpus Christi (translated as Body of Christ from the Latin) occurs on the Thursday (or Sunday) after Trinity Sunday, and celebrates the real presence of the body and blood of Jesus in the Eucharist.

On Maundy Thursday we celebrate the Last Supper and the institution of the Eucharist, and on that day we celebrate the Eucharist in a sombre atmosphere as we lead into Good Friday. The feast of Corpus Christi celebrates the Eucharist and Jesus' gift to us in a way that we can focus on the Blessed Sacrament.

This feast was proposed by St Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century, and he wanted a feast that would express this joy of receiving the body and blood of Jesus in the Eucharist. Many of the texts of the Eucharist on this day and the hymns that are sung were composed by Aquinas.

In recent months we have not been able to attend the Eucharist or receive Holy Communion, and we long to be able to celebrate the Eucharist together once this situation has passed.

Lord Jesus Christ,
we thank you that in this wonderful sacrament
you have given us the memorial of your passion:
grant us so to reverence the sacred mysteries
of your body and blood
that we may know within ourselves
and show forth in our lives
the fruits of your redemption;
for you are alive and reign with the Father
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

13th June – St Anthony of Padua

Born to a wealthy family in Lisbon, Portugal, on 15th August 1195, he entered an Augustinian priory at the age of 15.

Following his ordination, he was named as Guestmaster and was placed in charge of hospitality in the monastery. A group of Franciscan Friars arrived and he was attracted to their simple lifestyle. The Franciscan order was new and had only been founded 11 years before. He sought permission to leave the Augustinian order and join the Franciscans and on joining this new order he took the name Anthony.

He set out for missionary work in Morocco, but was taken ill and set sail back to Portugal. His boat was blown off course in a storm and landed in Sicily instead, and from there travelled to Tuscany. A group of Dominican Friars came to visit and Anthony was asked to preach, and to speak of whatever the Holy Spirit told him to speak of. He tried to object, but he delivered an eloquent and moving sermon. The news of this reached Francis of Assisi, who entrusted the education of new Friars to Anthony.

Anthony had a treasured book of the psalms that also contained his notes for teaching. When a novice decided to leave, he stole the book. When Anthony discovered it was missing, he prayed that the book would be found or returned. The repentant thief returned the book and also re-joined the Franciscan order. For this incident, Anthony is regarded as the patron saint of lost things.

Anthony was a simple but resounding teacher and preacher of the faith. His sermons were full of gentleness and he preached the Gospel lovingly and with courage.

Almighty ever-living God,
who gave Saint Anthony of Padua to your people
as an outstanding preacher
and an intercessor in their need,
grant that, with his assistance,
as we follow the teachings of the Christian life,
we may know your help in every trial.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

16th June – St Richard of Chichester

Born near Droitwich, Worcestershire, in 1197 Richard was orphaned in early life. He was educated in Oxford and he taught there before spending time teaching and studying in Paris and Bologna. He returned to England in 1235 and was appointed Chancellor of Oxford.

Following on from this he became chancellor of Canterbury, and he shared the Archbishop's (a former tutor) ideals for clerical reform and supported the rights of the Pope – even against the King. This led to the Archbishop being exiled and Richard went with him.

Richard was ordained in 1243 and became Bishop of Chichester in 1244, but his election hit problems with King Henry III and there followed a period of dispute between the King and the Bishop.

As Bishop he expected discipline amongst his clergy, and this was a discipline that he lived by himself. He ate a very simple diet and has been a vegetarian since his days at Oxford. He also wore a hair shirt and refused to eat off silver.

We pray today for his successor, Bishop Martin Warner and the Diocese of Chichester.

This prayer is ascribed to Richard of Chichester:

Thanks be to thee, my Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits thou hast given me,
for all the pains and insults thou hast borne for me.
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know thee more clearly,
love thee more dearly,
and follow thee more nearly, day by day.
Amen.

19th June – The Sacred Heart of Jesus

Statues or pictures of the Sacred Heart of Jesus are found in many homes and churches. It is an image that shows God's boundless and passionate love for us.

It is a devotion that arose in medieval times, as people meditated on the wounds of Jesus brought about by his passion, and the Carthusian monks had a particular devotion to this. The devotion to the Sacred Heart in its more modern form was spread by St Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647 – 1690). She was a French nun who had visions of Jesus, where Our Lord showed her his Sacred Heart. During these visions he told her of his love for humanity, and wanted people to have a devotion to his Sacred Heart.

The symbolism of the Sacred Heart shows a heart that is often surrounded by light, showing the divine light that shines from the heart of Jesus. There is a wound in the heart where the lance was thrust into the side of Jesus on the cross. The heart is surrounded by the crown of thorns, showing how his heart is wounded by our sins. It is then surmounted by a cross and flames of fire which show the transformative power of God's love.

O most holy Heart of Jesus, fountain of every blessing,
I adore you, I love you and will a lively sorrow for my sins.
I offer you this poor heart of mine.
Make me humble, patient, pure, and wholly obedient to your will.
Grant, good Jesus, that I may live in you and for you.
Protect me in the midst of danger; comfort me in my afflictions;
give me health of body, assistance in my temporal needs,
your blessings on all that I do, and the grace of a holy death.
Within your heart I place my every care.
In every need let me come to you with humble trust saying,
Heart of Jesus, help me.
Amen.



20th June – The Immaculate Heart of Mary

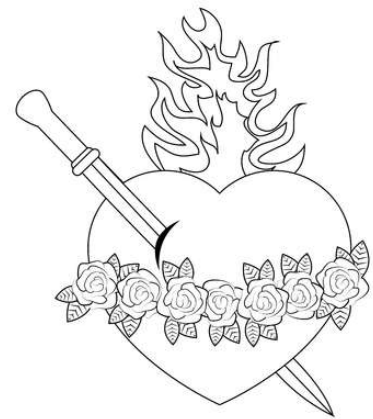
Following on from yesterday's feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, today we celebrate the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Whereas the Sacred Heart shows God's overflowing love for humanity, the Immaculate Heart of Mary shows her love for Jesus and God and gives us a model for how we should love God.

In the Immaculate Heart we see Mary's joys and sorrows, and her inner life that we should model our lives on.

The devotion to Mary's heart began in Medieval times with St Anselm of Canterbury and St Bernard of Clairvaux, but was made more popular by St John Eudes in the 17th century who spread the devotion throughout France.

In the symbolism of the Immaculate Heart we see Mary's virginal love for the Father, her maternal love for Jesus and her compassionate love for all people. The image of her heart is surrounded by light, symbolising the woman clothed with light from Revelation 12:1. Her heart is pierced with a sword, a reminder of Simeon's prophecy about the sorrows she would suffer (Luke 2:35). Surrounding her heart is a circle of roses, the roses symbolise her purity, but the roses pierce her heart which show her sorrow for our sins. Above her heart are flames, showing her love for God; and sometimes a lily, which again, symbolise her purity.

Immaculate Heart of Mary,
full of love for God and mankind,
and of compassion for sinners,
I consecrate myself to you.
I entrust to you the salvation of my soul.
May my heart be ever united with yours,
so that I may hate sin,
love God and my neighbour,
and reach eternal life with those whom I love.
May I experience the kindness of your motherly heart
and the power of your intercession with Jesus
during my life and at the hour of my death.
Amen.



22nd June – St Alban

St Alban is the first British martyr. He lived in the 3rd century in the Roman city of Verulamium, close to the modern day city of St Albans which takes his name.

One day he gave shelter to a stranger fleeing from the persecution that Christians were facing in Britain. This stranger was a Christian priest, now known as Amphibalus. While sheltering the priest, Alban was inspired by how important faith was to the priest and asked to be taught more about Christianity.

It was not long until the Roman authorities caught up with Amphibalus. However, Alban's new-found faith would not allow him to let the authorities arrest the priest. Instead, Alban exchanged clothes with Amphibalus and was arrested, allowing the priest to escape.

Alban refused to renounce his beliefs and declared, "I worship and adore the true and living God who created all things." The enraged judge ordered Alban to be scourged, thinking that a whipping would shake his heart, but Alban bore these torments patiently and joyfully. When the judge realised that the tortures would not shake his faith, he gave orders for Alban to be beheaded.

Upon this ruling, Alban was led out of Verulamium and up the hillside where he was beheaded.

His grave on this hillside quickly became a place of pilgrimage. This story of an ordinary man, doing an extraordinary thing has endured and continues to inspire to this day.

Eternal Father,
when the gospel of Christ first came to our land
you gloriously confirmed the faith of Alban
by making him the first to win a martyr's crown:
grant that, following his example,
in the fellowship of the saints
we may worship you, the living God,
and give true witness to Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

23rd June – St Ethelreda

Ethelreda was born in 636, probably near Newmarket in Suffolk. She was daughter of the King of East Anglia and one of four daughters – all of whom founded abbeys.

In early life Ethelreda had taken a vow of perpetual virginity, but was married in 652. However, her husband respected her vow. He died 3 years later and she retired to the Isle of Ely. Five years later she married again for political reasons, this time to the King of Northumberland. He had respected her vow of virginity for the first 12 years of their marriage, but after this wished for normal marital relations. Ethelreda refused, and left her husband to become a nun at Coldingham. The following year she founded a monastery in Ely.

The monastery at Ely was founded in an old church that had been destroyed on what is now the site of Ely Cathedral. It flourished for 200 years until it was destroyed by the Danes. It was refounded as a Benedictine community in 970 and became a very wealthy abbey.

Ethelreda died in 679 from a tumour on the neck. It was reputedly a divine punishment for her vanity in wearing necklaces in her younger days. In reality it was the result of the plague which also killed several of her nuns. Her shrine became a place of pilgrimage for many centuries. Ethelreda was sometimes known as St Audrey. Throughout the Middle Ages, a festival, "St. Audrey's Fair", was held at Ely on her feast day. The exceptional shodiness of the merchandise, especially the neckerchiefs, contributed to the English language the word "tawdry", a corruption of "Saint Audrey."

Eternal God,
who bestowed such grace upon your servant Etheldreda
that she gave herself wholly to the life of prayer
and to the service of your true religion:
grant that we, like her,
may so live our lives on earth seeking your kingdom
that by your guiding
we may be joined to the glorious fellowship of your saints;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

24th June – The birth of St John the Baptist

John the Baptist was a contemporary of Jesus who was known for his preaching and his baptising of Jesus Christ. He was born through the intercession of God to Zachariah and Elizabeth, who was otherwise too old to bear children. According to scriptures, the Angel Gabriel visited Elizabeth and Zachariah to tell them they would have a son and that they should name him John. Zachariah was sceptical and for this he was rendered mute until the time his son was born and named John, in fulfillment of God's will. When Elizabeth was pregnant with John, she was visited by Mary, and John leapt in her womb. This revealed to Elizabeth that the child Mary carried was to be the Son of God.

John began public ministry around 30 AD, and was known for attracting large crowds across the province of Judaea and around the Jordan River. When Jesus came to him to be baptised, John recognized him and said, "It is I who need baptism from you. Jesus told John to baptise Him anyway, which he did, whereupon the heavens opened, and the Spirit of God was seen like a dove. The voice of God spoke, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." John instructed his followers to turn to Christ, calling Him the "Lamb of God".

Following his baptism of Christ, John's popularity grew so much that he alarmed King Herod. Herod ordered him arrested and imprisoned. John spoke with Herod on several occasions and condemned his marriage to his half-brother's wife. This condemnation would be his downfall as King Herod promised to grant a wish to his daughter. In revenge for John the Baptist's condemnation of her mother's scandalous marriage to Herod, she asked for John's head. King Herod reluctantly obliged. John the Baptist died sometime between 33 and 36 AD. His important is shown in that he had two feast days in the calendar, today's of his birth and the fast of his beheading.

Almighty God,
by whose providence your servant John the Baptist was wonderfully born,
and sent to prepare the way of your Son our Saviour
by the preaching of repentance:
lead us to repent according to his preaching
and, after his example,
constantly to speak the truth, boldly to rebuke vice,
and patiently to suffer for the truth's sake;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

27th June – St Cyril of Alexandria

Cyril, recognised as a great teacher of the Church, was born in Alexandria, Egypt around 376. His early ministry contained impulsive, often violent, actions. He pillaged and closed the churches of the Novatian heretics—who required those who denied the faith to be re-baptised—participated in the deposing of Saint John Chrysostom, and confiscated Jewish property, expelling the Jews from Alexandria in retaliation for their attacks on Christians.

Cyril's importance for theology and Church history lies in his championing the cause of orthodoxy against the heresy of Nestorius, who taught that in Christ there were two persons, one human and one divine.

The controversy centred around the two natures in Christ. Nestorius would not agree to the title “God-bearer” for Mary. He preferred “Christ-bearer,” saying there are two distinct persons in Christ—divine and human—joined only by a moral union. He said Mary was not the Mother of God but only of the man Christ, whose humanity was only a temple of God. Nestorianism implied that the humanity of Christ was a mere disguise.

Presiding as the pope's representative at the Council of Ephesus in 431, Cyril condemned Nestorianism and proclaimed Mary truly the “God-bearer”—the mother of the one Person who is truly God and truly human. In the confusion that followed, Cyril was deposed and imprisoned for three months, after which he was welcomed back to Alexandria.

Besides needing to soften some of his opposition to those who had sided with Nestorius, Cyril had difficulties with some of his own allies, who thought he had gone too far, sacrificing not only language but orthodoxy. Until his death, his policy of moderation kept his extreme partisans under control. On his deathbed, despite pressure, he refused to condemn the teacher of Nestorius.

O God, who made the Bishop Saint Cyril of Alexandria
an invincible champion of the divine motherhood
of the most Blessed Virgin Mary,
grant, we pray,
that we, who believe she is truly the Mother of God,
may be saved through the Incarnation of Christ your Son.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

29th June – Saints Peter and Paul

Today we celebrate the joint feast of the two great Apostles, Peter and Paul.

St. Peter and St. Paul are two of the most well-known saints and are often spoken of as the two men most responsible for spreading the Christian message in the days of the early church.

As to why they are celebrated on the same day, legend has it that they were executed on the same day under the command of Emperor Nero and buried in Rome. (Although historical accounts cite Peter being martyred in 64 AD and Paul in 67 AD.)

Because of his Roman citizenship, Saint Paul was beheaded. St. Peter was reportedly crucified upside down because he said he was not worthy to be sacrificed in the same manner as Christ.

June 29, the Church celebrates the feast day of both men, and as early as 258 AD, there is evidence of an already-lengthy tradition that both Saint Peter and Saint Paul were celebrated on the same day.

In a sermon in the year 395, St. Augustine of Hippo said of Saints Peter and Paul:

“Both apostles share the same feast day, for these two were one; and even though they suffered on different days, they were as one. Peter went first, and Paul followed. And so we celebrate this day made holy for us by the apostles’ blood. Let us embrace what they believed, their life, their labours, their sufferings, their preaching, and their confession of faith.”

Almighty God,
whose blessed apostles Peter and Paul
glorified you in their death as in their life:
grant that your Church,
inspired by their teaching and example,
and made one by your Spirit,
may ever stand firm upon the one foundation,
Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.