

Saints of the Month

A selection of lives of the saints for October



St Therese of Lisieux



THE CHURCH UNION



The Society
under the patronage of Saint Wilfrid and Saint Hilda

1st October– St Therese of Lisieux

Born in 1873, St Therese of Lisieux is also known by the name she took when she became a nun, St Therese of the Child Jesus, or more affectionately as ‘The Little Flower’ – a name given to her because of how she lived her life, and she offers us a model of holiness for how we can live our lives too.

She was often sick as a child, but she felt called to the religious life, and after overcoming many obstacles she entered the Carmelite community at Lisieux in Normandy. She became a nun with the determination of becoming a saint. After six years she realised how small and insignificant she felt, and she saw the limitations of her own efforts. From this point she realised that she needed to ask for God’s help.

Through prayer she realised that her means of getting to heaven was by what she called “a little way”. She saw that what matters in life is not great deeds but great love. From this point she lived her life offering small acts of charity and care for others. She accepted criticism, even unjust ones, in silence and she smiled at her fellow nuns who were unpleasant to her. She wanted to show her love by scattering flowers, and these flowers (from which her affectionate “Little Flower” name comes from) are each little sacrifice, every glance or word and doing all of these actions for love. She wanted to give glory to God by being her beautiful self.

She died aged only 24. She lived her life as a cloistered nun, in obscurity, she never went on a mission, she didn’t found a religious community, she did not perform great works; but her ‘Little Way’ that she described in her autobiography *The Story of a Soul*, has inspired many Christians to live their lives in the pattern of St Therese, and to have ‘love’ as their vocation. In 2015, her parents were also canonised, becoming the first spouses in the Church’s history to be canonised as a couple.

St. Therese, Flower of fervour and love, please intercede for us.

Fill our hearts with your pure love of God.

Instill in us your little way of doing
ordinary things with extra-ordinary love.

Give us the heart of a child who wonders at life
and embraces everything with loving enthusiasm.

Teach us your delight in God's ways so that divine charity may blossom in our hearts.

With your confidence, we come before Jesus as God's children,
because you are our heavenly friend.

As we celebrate the Feast Day of your
homecoming in heaven, continue to
shower roses and grace upon us. Amen.

2nd October– Holy Guardian Angels

We might often pray that a Guardian Angel will watch over our children, but they are not just for children as the Church teaches that each one of us has a Guardian Angel.

Their role is to represent us before God, to watch over us always, to assist us in our prayer and to present our souls to God at our death. They guide and nurture us throughout our lives.

Angels are found throughout scripture, in both the Old and New Testaments, where they are seen as messengers and guides. In the book of Exodus (32:34), the Lord promises Moses that his angel will go before him. Psalm 91 speaks of angels guarding us, bearing us up that we do not dash our feet against a stone.

On this feast of the Holy Guardian Angels, ask your angel for their help, guidance and protection.

Angel of God
My guardian dear
To Whom His love
Commits me here
Ever this day
Be at my side
To light and guard
To rule and guide.
Amen.

My good Angel,
Thou comest from heaven;
God has sent thee to take care of me.
Oh, shelter me under thy wings.
Lighten my path, direct my steps.
Do not leave me,
stay quite near me
and defend me against the spirit of evil.
But above all come to my help
in the last struggle of my life.
Deliver my soul so that with thee it may praise,
love and contemplate the goodness of God
forever and ever.
Amen.

3rd October – St Thomas of Hereford

This saint, also known as St Thomas Cantilupe, was a much loved medieval saint and his shrine in Hereford Cathedral was a popular place of pilgrimage.

He lived a very colourful and varied life which involved being at the centre of political power and he was involved in a number of disputes and conflicts.

He was educated at Oxford, Paris and Orleans, and during his life he was Chancellor of Oxford University, Lord Chancellor of England and Bishop of Hereford from 1275 to 1282.

He was regarded as a good Bishop and visited the churches in his care regularly, as well as being a generous donor to charitable causes.

At the time of his death he was involved in an argument with the Archbishop of Canterbury, who had actually excommunicated him. Thomas died on the way to Rome as he had wanted to protest to the Pope about his excommunication, so he technically dies whilst being excommunicated from the Church, but after a Papal investigation he was duly canonised.

His shrine can still be visited in Hereford Cathedral. The base of his shrine survived the Reformation, and recently the upper part of the shrine has been restored to how it might have looked in its medieval heyday as a place of pilgrimage, where many miracles are recorded.

A prayer of St Thomas of Hereford

Teach us, O God,
to view our life here on earth as a pilgrim's path to heaven,
and give us grace to tread it courageously in the company of your faithful people.
Help us to set our affections on things above,
not on the passing vanities of this world,
and grant that as we journey on in the way of holiness
we may bear a good witness to our Lord,
and serve all who need our help along the way,
for the glory of your name. Amen

4th October – St Francis

St Francis is one of the best loved saints of the Church. He was born in 1181, his father was a prosperous silk merchant. He was given the name Giovanni, but his father changed this to Francesco – in honour of the business that he did with France.

As a young man he lived the high life that was typical of a wealthy young man at the time. But despite his brightly coloured clothes and lavish living, he became disillusioned with this way of life.

In 1202 he joined a military expedition and was taken prisoner. During his captivity an illness forced him to re-evaluate his life. On a pilgrimage to Rome he stopped to pray in the church of San Damiano where he had a mystical vision of Jesus as he prayed in front of an icon of the crucifixion. Jesus said to him “Francis, go and repair my house which as you can see is falling into ruins”. Francis took this to mean the church he was praying in and sold some of his father’s cloth to pay for the restoration. This displeased his father and Francis spent several months travelling around the area of Assisi as a beggar. In 1208, whilst at Mass, the Gospel from Matthew recounting the commissioning of the 12 disciples was read and Francis became inspired to devote himself to a life of prayer and poverty. Within a year he had 11 followers who travelled around preaching the Gospel. He set out to imitate Christ through emptying of himself, and to make poverty a holy way of life.

He was torn between a life devoted entirely to prayer and a life of active preaching. He chose the latter, but had times of retreat to spend time in silence with God. He never intended to found a religious order, but the Franciscan Order grew quickly and is still very recognisable with their brown habits.

He was never ordained a priest, but he was ordained a deacon, and he had a great reverence for the priesthood and their role in the celebration of the Eucharist and prayed fervently for priests. On the feast of the Holy Cross in 1224 he received the stigmata, the marks of the wounds of Jesus at his crucifixion and he died two years later.

O God, you ever delight to reveal yourself
to the childlike and lowly of heart:
grant that, following the example of the blessed Francis,
we may count the wisdom of this world as foolishness
and know only Jesus Christ and him crucified,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

5th October – St Faustina Kowalska

Faustina was born in Poland in 1905 and from an early age wanted to join a convent, but her parents did not let her. At the age of 16 she got a job as a housekeeper. When she was 19 she had the first of her visions of Jesus, whilst she was at a dance with her sister. In this vision she saw a suffering Jesus who instructed her to leave for Warsaw and join a convent. She headed to Warsaw, and approached many convents, but was turned away and judged on her poor appearance. Eventually she was accepted by the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady on Mercy, but on the condition that she could pay for her own habit. So, she continued to work as a housekeeper and saved money to pay for her habit and eventually joined the convent in 1926.

Five years later she had another series of visions of Jesus, in which he described himself as the 'King of Mercy'. In these visions he appeared in a white garment with blue and white rays coming from his heart, which symbolised the blood and water that flowed from his side at the crucifixion. Jesus asked Faustina to become the apostle and secretary of God's mercy. He told her to paint the image of him that she had seen with the inscription 'Jesus, I trust in you'. Faustina could not paint, and it was three years later that she was able to persuade the community to get an artist to paint the image that Jesus had requested. It took several attempts to get the image correct, and was first distributed in 1937, and this image of the Divine Mercy can be seen in many homes and churches.

The details of Faustina's conversations with Jesus can be found in her diary called 'Divine Mercy in my Soul'. The Sunday after Easter Sunday is now dedicated to the Divine Mercy and people are encouraged to pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy at 3:00 each day. More information on this can be found at www.thedivinemercy.org

O Jesus, eternal Truth, our Life, I call upon You and I beg Your mercy for poor sinners. O sweetest Heart of my Lord, full of pity and unfathomable mercy, I plead with You for poor sinners. O Most Sacred Heart, Fount of Mercy from which gush forth rays of inconceivable graces upon the entire human race, I beg of You light for poor sinners. O Jesus, be mindful of Your own bitter Passion and do not permit the loss of souls redeemed at so dear a price of Your most precious Blood. O Jesus, when I consider the great price of Your Blood, I rejoice at its immensity, for one drop alone would have been enough for the salvation of all sinners. Although sin is an abyss of wickedness and ingratitude, the price paid for us can never be equalled. Therefore, let every soul trust in the Passion of the Lord, and place its hope in His mercy. God will not deny His mercy to anyone. Heaven and earth may change, but God's mercy will never be exhausted. Oh, what immense joy burns in my heart when I contemplate Your incomprehensible goodness, O Jesus! I desire to bring all sinners to Your feet that they may glorify Your mercy throughout endless ages
(*Diary of Saint Faustina Kowalska*).

6th October – St Bruno

Born in Cologne about the year 1030, he was for many years a teacher at Rheims, and became Chancellor of the diocese, although he resisted attempts to make him a Bishop.

He felt called to live a more solitary life, and lived in a 'community' with six other hermits in a mountainous area called Le Grande Chartreuse. They build an oratory that was surrounded by individual cells, and roughly followed the Rule of St Benedict. At the start, they had no formal rule of their own but embraced a life of poverty, manual work, prayer and transcribing manuscripts. They only met for matins and vespers each day.

St Bruno's foundation became what we know today as the Carthusian Order, and the name Carthusian is taken from the Chartreuse area where Bruno founded the order.

Modern Carthusians live a life very similar to the life of St Bruno and his early companions. Each hermit, a monk who is or who will be a priest, has his own living space, called a cell. Traditionally there is a one-room lower floor for the storage of wood for a stove and a workshop as all monks engage in some manual labour. A second floor consists of a small room with an image of the Virgin Mary as a place of prayer and a larger room containing a bed, a table for eating meals, a desk for study, a choir stall, and a kneeler for prayer. Each cell has a high walled garden wherein the monk may meditate as well as grow flowers and vegetables. Next to the door is a small revolving compartment, called a "turn", so that meals and other items may be passed in and out of the cell without the hermit having to meet the bearer. Most meals are provided in this manner, which the hermit then eats in the solitude of his cell. There are two meals provided for much of the year: lunch and supper. The hermit spends most of his day in the cell: he meditates, prays on his own, eats, studies and writes, and works in his garden or at some manual trade. Unless required by other duties, the Carthusian hermit leaves his cell daily only for three prayer services in the monastery chapel, including the community Mass. Additionally, once a week, the community members take a long walk in the countryside during which they may speak. These are also communities of Carthusian nuns who live a life very similar to that of the monks.

There is a Roman Catholic Carthusian community at Parkminster in West Sussex.

O God, who called Saint Bruno to serve you in solitude,
grant, through his intercession,
that amid the changes of this world
we may constantly look to you alone.

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.

7th October – Our Lady of the Rosary

October is a month dedicated to our Lady and the praying of the Rosary, and today we celebrate Mary under the title ‘Our Lady of the Rosary’.

In praying the Rosary we focus on aspects of Jesus’ life; and these are known as ‘mysteries’. Traditionally we meditate on the Joyful, Sorrowful and Glorious mysteries which focus on the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus. In 2002, the Mysteries of Light were introduced that focus on Jesus’ ministry. The Rosary has been called a compendium of the gospel.

The main focus is on Jesus—his birth, life, death, and resurrection, but it also makes us aware that Mary was and is joined with her son in all the mysteries of his earthly and heavenly life. The prayers that make up the Rosary are the Lord’s Prayer, the Hail Mary and the Glory be. The Lord’s prayer reminds us that we pray in the way that Jesus taught us. The Hail Marys remind us to join with Mary in contemplating these mysteries. They also make us aware that Mary was and is intimately joined with her Son in all the mysteries of his earthly and heavenly existence. The Glory Bes remind us that the purpose of all life is the glory of the Trinity.

The rosary appeals to many. It is simple. The constant repetition of words helps create an atmosphere in which to contemplate the mysteries of God. We sense that Jesus and Mary are with us in the joys and sorrows of life. We grow in hope that God will bring us to share in the glory of Jesus and Mary forever.

Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord,
your grace into our hearts,
that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ your Son
was made known by the message of an Angel,
may, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
by his Passion and Cross
be brought to the glory of his Resurrection.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

9th October – St John Henry Newman

Canonised in 2019, St John Henry Newman is a very influential figure for Anglicans and Roman Catholics alike.

He was born in 1801, and in his early life he belonged to the Evangelical tradition of the Church of England. He was ordained deacon in 1824 and priest the following year and in 1826 became a tutor at Oriel College, Oxford, and was regarded as one of the brightest minds of his generation.

Newman was on a spiritual journey and was moving away from Evangelical theology to a more Catholic understanding of the Church and was one of the leaders of the Oxford Movement, and the writings of the Tracts for the Times. Newman's thinking about the Catholic nature of the Church developed until, in 1843 he preached his final sermon as an Anglican priest. It took a further two years for him to be received into the Roman Catholic Church on 9th October 1845. The consequences for Newman of this were great as he lost relationships with his family and friendships.

As a Roman Catholic priest, Newman established the Oratory in Birmingham, a community of priests and lay men bound by charity not vows who lived a life of prayer and service. Newman had a great influence on Roman Catholic thinking at the time, although this was not always without controversy, but he was also a dedicated pastor to the poor people of Birmingham. He was made a Cardinal in 1879.

Throughout his life he was a prolific writer of theology, letters, poems and hymns, and some of his poems and hymns are still some of our best loved hymns. We have an enormous amount to be thankful to Saint John Henry Newman for.

One of his famous quotes was 'to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often'. May St John Henry Newman pray for us, and may his example and teaching help us to change day by day to model ourselves more on Jesus.

O God, who bestowed on the Priest Saint John Henry Newman
the grace to follow your kindly light and find peace in your Church;
graciously grant that, through his intercession and example,
we may be led out of shadows and images
into the fullness of your truth.

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.

10th October – St Paulinus of York

Paulinus died on this day in the year 644.

He was a missionary and was a member of the mission sent by Pope St Gregory in England in the year 604. We don't know much about him for the next 20 years until in 625 he was consecrated a Bishop.

At this point he was in Kent and moved north to Northumbria to accompany the sister of the King of Kent who was due to marry Edwin, King of Northumbria. Paulinus did not think it was appropriate for a Christian to marry a pagan and so he set about the conversion of Edwin to the Christian faith, which he achieved.

Paulinus was the first Bishop of York, and during his time he baptised Hilda – who in due course would become St Hilda, and is now co-patron of The Society.

Towards the end of his life, Paulinus was also Bishop of Rochester.

God our Saviour,
who sent Paulinus to preach and to baptize,
and so to build up your Church in this land:
grant that, inspired by his example,
we may tell all the world of your truth,
that with him we may receive the reward
you prepare for all your faithful servants;
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.

12th October – St Wilfrid

Wilfrid was born around the year 633 to a noble family in Northumbria. He entered the religious life and studied at Lindisfarne, Canterbury, Gaul and Rome before returning to Northumbria in around 658 to become the Abbot of a new monastery at Ripon.

Having been appointed as Bishop of York, Wilfrid went to France to be consecrated. However, during his extended absence Chad became bishop in his place. Reinstated in 669 by the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Theodore of Tarsus, he arranged for Chad to become Bishop of the Mercians, giving him his estate at Lichfield as his see. Wilfrid restored Paulinus' cathedral in York, built a new stone church at Ripon, and founded a monastery at Hexham, where he built another stone church. He was concerned to enhance the music of the liturgy in his churches. In 678 Wilfrid was deprived of his see by the King of Northumbria. He travelled to Rome, where the Pope and a council meeting at the time ordered him to be restored to his see. This judgement was ignored, however, and in 680 or 681 he moved to Sussex, where he founded Selsey Abbey, which later became the episcopal see for Sussex (transferred to Chichester in 1075). He played a major role in converting the still largely pagan population to Christianity. Wilfrid was restored to the See of York from 686 but by 692 he had left for Mercia, where he served as Bishop of Leicester until 703. After a further visit to Rome, Wilfrid retired to Hexham, where he exercised episcopal and abbatial authority.

Wilfrid died in 709 or 710, while visiting Mercia. The *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* comments: "Wilfrid was one of the most cosmopolitan figures of his age: his monastic communities represent a network transcending English political boundaries...; his architectural, liturgical, and collecting interests mark him as among the foremost English patrons of the arts in the later seventh century... Such wide-ranging activities left a lasting impact, especially apparent in his missionary work."

With St Hilda, Wilfrid is co-patron of The Society and we pray for the work of work of the Bishops, priests and parishes of The Society.

Almighty God,
who called our forebears to the light of the gospel by the preaching of your servant
Wilfrid:

help us, who keep his life and labour in remembrance,
to glorify your name by following the example of his zeal and perseverance;
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.

13th October - St Edward the Confessor

Edward restored the crown to the House of Wessex after a period of Danish rule following the conquering of England in 1016 by Canute. Edward died in January 1066 and was succeeded by Harold, who would be defeated and killed in the same year by William the Conqueror at the Battle of Hastings.

Edward was the son of Ethelred 'the Unready' and spent some of his early life in Normandy after being driven out of England by the Danes.

His reign as King was predominantly a peaceful one and he was known for his piety.

His major building project was that of Westminster Abbey. However, the abbey we know today was rebuilt in 1245 in Edward's honour, and to house his shrine. The only parts of Edward's Abbey now visible are in the crypt.

He was a very popular saint in the medieval period and was regarded as one of the national patron saints until King Edward III adopted St George as the patron saint of England around the year 1350.

Sovereign God,
who set your servant Edward
upon the throne of an earthly kingdom
and inspired him with zeal for the kingdom of heaven:
grant that we may so confess the faith of Christ by word and deed,
that we may, with all your saints, inherit your eternal glory;
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.

15th October – St Teresa of Avila

Today we celebrate the feast day of a remarkable woman, who lived in a time of great change and upheaval and during her life was misunderstood, misjudged and opposed.

Born in Spain in 1515 she was challenged as to whether her vocation lay as a married woman or in the religious life, she chose the latter as she felt that as she was prone to sin it was the safest place for her, and she chose to live her life in a Carmelite convent. In her life in the convent she fell desperately ill with malaria, to the point that a grave had been dug for her. She recovered, although she was paralysed for three years and was never completely well again. She used her illness as an excuse not to pray, but a priest encouraged her to return to prayer. This was something that Teresa did over a period of time and from her writings we have a lovely description of prayer that feels very fresh and relevant to our lives today: *“prayer in my opinion is nothing else than an intimate sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with him who we know loves us”*.

Her writings, the Interior Castle and the Way of Perfection show her life as a mystic and the development of her understanding of God’s love for us. Teresa believed in obedience to God over penance, for her if you do something wrong, you should not punish yourself but change. Aged 43 she became determined to found a new convent and reform the Carmelite order, bringing it back to a life of prayer and poverty. She faced many difficulties and challenges in her work of reform, but her determination helped her to succeed.

A favourite story about St Teresa illustrates the intimate relationship that the saints have with God. When she was on one of her innumerable journeys across Spain, her horse threw her as she was crossing a river. Soaked to the skin she looked up to heaven and said, “If this is how you treat your friends, no wonder you have so few of them!” We should bring everything to God in our prayers, even our reproaches. For a reproach, in the end, is simply our way of offering up to God our incomprehension of what he is giving us.

Merciful God,
who by your Spirit raised up your servant Teresa of Avila
to reveal to your Church the way of perfection:
grant that her teaching may awaken in us a longing for holiness,
until we attain to the perfect union of love
in 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.

16th October – St Margaret Mary Alacoque

You might not have heard of this saint before, but if you have seen an image or statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus then you have St Margaret Mary Alacoque to thank.

She was born in the Burgundy area of France in 1647, and from an early age had a great devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. Aged 24 she became a nun and entered the Visitation Convent at Paray-le-Monial. She faced many trials to prove her vocation to the religious life, but she was described as being humble, simple and frank and above all kind and patient.

She had visions of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and he told her about the wonders of his love for humanity, and expressed his sorrow at the world's indifference to this love. Jesus told her that she was to spread this devotion to his Sacred Heart, as he wanted more people to know of his merciful love.

She faced adversity in trying to convince her religious superiors of the authenticity of these visions, but she succeeded and the devotion to the Sacred Heart was officially recognized by the Church 75 years later, and remains a very popular devotion to this day.

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 God, who in the Heart of your Son,
wounded by our sins,
bestow on us in mercy
the boundless treasures of your love,
grant, we pray,
that, in paying him the homage of our devotion,
we may also offer worthy reparation.
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.

17th October – St Ignatius of Antioch

We know very little about the life of this saints apart from what we can infer from his writings.

We know that he converted to Christianity at a young age and became Bishop of Antioch. He called himself Theophorus, which means ‘God-bearer’.

He lived in a time when Christianity was a persecuted religion and he was arrested. Normal practice was that persecuted Christians would be persecuted locally, but instead Ignatius was sent to Rome accompanied by 10 Roman soldiers as a guard. It is not clear why Ignatius was sent on this long and costly journey and scholars have debated the possible reasons for this, but have not come up with a conclusive answer.

During this journey his guard seems to have let him meet with Christians and allowed him to send six letters to nearby churches as well as one to St Polycarp. These writings are part of the treasury of the Church and they urge the churches to be faithful to God and to obey their Bishops. In the letters he warns them of the dangers of heresy, and provides them with the solid truths of the Christian faith.

It is likely that he was put to death by being thrown to the lions in Rome, some time in the 140’s although the exact date is not known.

Feed us, O Lord, with the living bread
and make us drink deep of the cup of salvation
that, following the teaching of your bishop Ignatius
and rejoicing in the faith
with which he embraced a martyr’s death,
we may be nourished for that eternal life
for which he longed;
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.

18th October – St Luke

Church tradition attributes the authorship of the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles to Luke.

His name is not mentioned in the Gospels, which indicated he was a later follower of Jesus and possibly a follower of St Paul and seems to have joined his company at Troas.

He is mentioned in Colossians (4:14) and is described here as the ‘beloved physician’, who sends his greetings to the church that St Paul is writing to. Paul also mentions Luke in his letter to Philemon (1:24) and the second letter to Timothy (4:11), which suggest that Luke was known to these churches.

Apart from these mentions, we know very little about his life. There is a tradition, dating from the 8th century, that states that Luke was the first icon painter and painted icons of the Virgin Mary with child, but this cannot be verified.

From the Gospel and Acts we know that forgiveness and God’s mercy to sinners is of importance to Luke. Only in Luke do we hear the story of the Prodigal Son welcomed back by the overjoyed father. Only in Luke do we hear the story of the forgiven woman disrupting the feast by washing Jesus’ feet with her tears. Throughout Luke’s gospel, Jesus takes the side of the sinner who wants to return to God’s mercy.

Almighty God,
you called Luke the physician,
whose praise is in the gospel,
to be an evangelist and physician of the soul:
by the grace of the Spirit
and through the wholesome medicine of the gospel,
give your Church the same love and power to heal;
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.

19th October – St Frideswide

Frideswide is the name of a Saxon princess and healer who became the Patron Saint of Oxford. Her name means 'Peace' (*frithes*) 'Strong' (*withe*) and the legend associated with Frideswide certainly lives up to her name.

The story tells of Frideswide as a young woman, having become a nun and vowed chastity to Christ, being propositioned by King Algar of Leicester. The King was determined to marry her despite her refusals and she fled the city to avoid him. After a lengthy chase and Frideswide's increasingly desperate attempts to stay hidden from Algar, Frideswide prayed to God for protection and God struck the King blind. Finally understanding the wrongness of what he had done, the King asked Frideswide for forgiveness and she granted it, after which his sight was restored. Frideswide went on to have a reputation as a healer and a beloved figure of great piety and prayerfulness.

She founded a monastery and the site of this is probably the present day Christ Church in Oxford, which is now the Cathedral of the Diocese of Oxford, and until the Reformation contained her shrine, you can still visit the remaining parts of the shrine in the Cathedral.

As well as being the patron of the city of Oxford, she is also patron saint of the University.

She died on 19th October in the year 735.

All-powerful God,
you choose those whom the world considers weak
to strengthen your people.

Through the intercession of St Frideswide
may we live lives worthy of you.

Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

22nd October – St John Paul II

In today's saint we celebrate one of the best known and loved figures of the 20th century.

Pope John Paul II, or Karol Wojtyla as he was known, was born in 1920 in Poland. During the war he was forced to work in a quarry and a chemical factory. The war had interrupted his studies for the priesthood, but he continued to study in an 'underground' seminary and was ordained in 1946. Following ordination he went to Rome to continue studying for his doctorate. On return to Poland he was involved in parish ministry as well as working in universities.

In 1958, the communist allowed him to be appointed as an assistant Bishop in Krakow, as they regarded him as a relatively harmless intellectual. Of course, they could not have been more wrong as during his time as a Bishop and Pope he is regarded as having helped to bring about the end of communist rule in Poland and the rest of Europe.

He was elected Pope in October 1978, and he was the first non-Italian Pope for 455 years. He was an immensely popular Pope and drew huge crowds to his Papal audiences. He worked hard with Heads of State and other political leaders and helped to improve the Roman Catholic Church's relationships with other Christian denominations as well as other faiths. He was also remarkably popular with young people and gave prominence to their place in the Church.

He was a very well travelled Pope and made pastoral visits to 124 countries. He wrote 14 encyclicals and 5 books. He canonized 482 saints and beatified 1,338 others.

During his final years he suffered from Parkinson's disease but continued to appear, even in his weakened state. At his inauguration Mass in 1978 he said in the homily that we should 'open wide the doors to Christ' – words that we would do well to hold on to today.

O God, who are rich in mercy
and who willed that Saint John Paul the Second
should preside as Pope over your universal Church,
grant, we pray, that instructed by his teaching,
we may open our hearts to the saving grace of Christ,
the sole redeemer of mankind,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

26th October – St Chad and St Cedd

St Chad in some calendars is celebrated on 2nd March, but is sometimes celebrated alongside Cedd, who was his older brother. This biography will focus on Cedd as there is so much that can be said on both of these saints.

Most of the information that we have on Cedd comes from Bede in his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*.

Cedd was the eldest of four brothers, all of whom became priests and Cedd and Chad became Bishops.

It is likely that in his early life Cedd was on Lindisfarne and received his education and formation from St Aidan.

In 653 he was sent to Mercia to evangelise the people there, but his mission made little headway. He was recalled and sent on a mission to the East Saxon kingdom and it was here that he was made a Bishop. As a Bishop he demanded personal commitment from his clergy and he was unafraid to confront the powerful.

Cedd founded many churches and monasteries and was appointed Abbot of the monastery at Lastingham in North Yorkshire, where he remained until his death. Whilst he was Abbot he maintained his vocation as a missionary Bishop and continued his widespread travel from the monastery preaching the Gospel.

O God, by whose untold mercy
blessed Cedd preached the good news of the unfathomable riches of Christ,
grant that through his intercession
we may grow in knowledge of you and,
bearing fruit in every good work,
faithfully walk in your presence,
in accord with the truth of the Gospel.
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.

28th October – St Simon and St Jude

Today we celebrate two saints on the same day. The reason why these saints are celebrated on the same day is because a church which had recently acquired their relics was dedicated to their memory in Rome on this day in the seventh century.

We know very little about them beyond what we learn about their calling as apostles in the New Testament.

Simon was the 11th apostle to be called by Jesus and is sometimes referred to as Simon the Zealot. In art, he is often represented with a saw, which is believed to be the instrument of his martyrdom.

Jude, is also called Judas or Thaddeus in the Gospels. He is not Judas Iscariot, but his name was shortened in English to Jude to remove the shame of the confusion with Judas Iscariot. He is the patron saint of lost or impossible causes.

It is Jude who, at the last supper (John 14:22), has this dialogue with Jesus:
Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?" Jesus answered him, "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

Almighty God,
who built your Church upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,
with Jesus Christ himself as the chief cornerstone:
so join us together in unity of spirit by their doctrine,
that we may be made a holy temple acceptable 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.