

St. Jeanne D'Arc



1412-1431

Feast Day:
May 30

Jeanne D'Arc was born in a small French village. When Jeanne was a teenager, angels and saints appeared to her. The angels and saints told Jeanne to help the king of France in the war against England.

Jeanne led her troops to victory. The French were on their way to winning the war with Jeanne's help.

Some French people were mad about this. Even though they were French, they wanted England to win. They arrested Jeanne and put her in jail. They threw her in an iron cage. They put chains on her neck, hands, and feet.

At her trial, they asked Jeanne tricky questions to try to confuse her. They tried to get Jeanne to say she was a witch, and that her visions of saints were bad.

Even though Jeanne had helped him, the French king did nothing to help her.

Jeanne was convicted of witchcraft and heresy (speaking against the Church) and burned alive. She was 19 years old.

Thirty years later, a Church court said that her trial had been unfair. Jeanne was declared innocent of all crimes.

St. Francis of Assisi



1181-1226

Feast Day:
October 4

Francis was born into a rich Italian family. He had an easy life and had lots of friends.

Francis decided to fight in the Crusades. He was on his way to join the fight when God told him in a dream to return home. He obeyed and went home. Another day he was praying in a chapel. Christ spoke to Francis from the crucifix. Jesus said, “Francis, repair my church.” Francis again did exactly what Jesus said. He started fixing the chapel’s walls and roof. Then he followed Christ’s commands from the Bible, giving what he had to poor people and telling them about God’s love.

Many men joined Francis. They also gave away their possessions. They begged when they needed food. They gave whatever they did not need to poorer people.

The Crusades continued. Francis tried to make peace with the Sultan who was fighting the Christians. The Sultan liked Francis, but the war continued.

While praying one evening, Francis received the stigmata (wounds like the ones Jesus received on the Cross). He died several weeks later. Religious men all over the world today continue to live according the rules of St. Francis. They are known as Franciscans.

St. Augustine



354-430

Feast Day:

August 28

Augustine was born on the northern coast of Africa. His mother was St. Monica. She spent her life sharing Jesus with her family.

Augustine was very bright. His parents sent him to the best schools. He read great books. He became a popular speaker and teacher.

But Augustine was living a wicked life. His mother and the Bishop of Milan, St. Ambrose, kept trying to help Augustine see that God's mercy had no limits. Finally Augustine was converted to Christianity. He became a priest. Later he was made Bishop of Hippo.

Augustine became one of the most important Christian writers ever. He wrote about how all of us want to be with God. He wrote about love. He said the Church should always show mercy. He wrote about how we need God's grace.

During Augustine's life, the city of Rome was destroyed. Many people were scared. But Augustine helped people see that Christians' true home was Heaven.

Augustine died when he was 75. He wrote hundreds of sermons and many important books. He gave hope to countless people. He is a Doctor of the Church. This is a very special title that means his writings helped form Catholic doctrine.

St. Teresa of Ávila



1515-1582

Feast Day:
October 15

Teresa was born in a part of Spain called Ávila. When she was younger, she enjoyed being with friends and having fun. She wanted to love Jesus, but she worried she wasn't good enough.

Teresa's father sent her to a convent (a place where nuns live). But the convent was a bad place. The sisters there did not take their religious vows seriously.

Teresa prayed for almost 20 years. She felt like Jesus wasn't answering her. She almost gave up. But a priest encouraged her to keep trying. Then she finally started to feel like God was listening. When she prayed, she would start to cry. She would feel like she couldn't hear, see, smell, or even touch anything. Sometimes her body would even levitate (rise up off the ground). She didn't like it when these things happened to her where people could see.

But a lot of people were interested in what she had learned from God about praying. She wrote books, most famously *Inner Castle*, about what she had learned. Teresa decided to start a new convent. Her convent would be focused on prayer and living simply. A lot of young ladies joined.

Long after she died, Pope Paul VI named her a Doctor of the Church. This is a very special title that means her writings helped form Catholic doctrine.

Bl. Chiara Luce Badano



1971–1990

Feast Day:
October 29

Chiara was born in a small Italian village. In kindergarten, she started saving her money so she could give it to people who were going to help people in Africa. She gave her best toys to poor children. At school, she gave her snacks to poor classmates.

When Chiara was nine, she joined a Catholic group that brought Christians around the world together. She also enjoyed tennis, hiking, swimming, singing, dancing. School was hard for Chiara, but she kept trying. When Chiara was 16, she went on a retreat in Rome. She became even more devoted to Jesus.

One day she felt pain her shoulder while she was playing tennis. The pain continued and doctors told her she had cancer in her bones. Cancer is a deadly and painful disease that doctors cannot always fix.

Chiara offered her pain to Jesus. She prayed, “It’s for you, Jesus; if you want it, I want it too.” She cheered other patients, her doctor, parents, and friends with her joyfulness. She gave all her money to charity. As she grew more sick, she told her mother not to be sad for her. She died in October 1990. She was 18 years old.

St. Josemaría Escrivá



1902–1975

Feast Day:

June 26

Josemaría was born in a Spanish Catholic family. One winter day, he saw footprints of bare feet in the snow. He saw a monk walking in the snow to the church. Josemaría decided he wanted to suffer for God too and do whatever God wanted. He wanted to answer God’s call every day, so he became a priest.

Fr. Escrivá moved to Madrid, the capital of Spain. There, he got people together to help him care for poor people and sick people. When he was 26, he founded a group called Opus Dei. Opus Dei means “the work of God.” Its members work to share Jesus’ love with others. The first members were students he knew.

Opus Dei spread to many countries throughout the world. Opus Dei projects include schools, hospitals, and retreat centers.

Fr. Escrivá journeyed through Europe and Latin America speaking about God’s love. He told them they could be holy every day at school, with their families, and at work. He was devoted to Our Lady. He hung a picture of her in all his rooms. He was sitting before a picture of her when he died.

St. Maximilian Kolbe



1894-1941

Feast Day:
August 14

Raymund Kolbe was born in Poland. He entered a Franciscan monastery when he was 16. There he received the name Maximilian. He was ordained a priest in 1919. He taught men who were preparing to be priests, and opened a religious community in Poland. He traveled to Japan and to India and opened communities there too.

When he returned to Poland, the Nazis had invaded the country. The Nazis were rounding up Jews and putting them in death camps. Fr. Kolbe organized a shelter for thousands of Polish people who had nowhere to go. In 1941, the Nazis raided the shelter. They took Fr. Kolbe and his companions to a death camp. Fr. Kolbe wrote a letter to his mother, telling her not to worry about him.

Life in the prison was very hard for Fr. Kolbe, but he always put the other prisoner's needs ahead of his own. The guards beat and tortured him. But he wouldn't ask for medical help until all his fellow prisoners had been treated. Though he was suffering, Fr. Kolbe helped the other prisoners. He would ask each one, "I am a Catholic priest. Can I do anything for you?" He heard their confessions. He told them about God's love.

One day a prisoner escaped. The guards said that 10 prisoners would be starved to death as a punishment. The guards choose 10 men. One of the men cried out in grief for his wife and children. Fr. Kolbe stepped forward and volunteered to take the man's place. Fr. Kolbe was put in a cell with the other 9 men. He prayed and read the Psalms with them. After two weeks of hunger and thirst, Fr. Kolbe was still alive. The Nazis injected poison into Fr. Kolbe's arm and he died.

The man Fr. Kolbe saved survived the war.

St. Thérèse of Lisieux



1873-1897

Feast Day:
October 1

Thérèse Martin was born in Alençon, France. Her mother died when she was only 4. She was a sensitive little girl. She would cry if people spoke to her harshly. Then she would feel even worse because she had cried.

Two of her sisters were nuns. Thérèse also received a call to religious life. She was too young to join the convent, but she did not give up. She even asked the Pope for special permission to enter the convent when she was in Rome. She was able to enter the convent. Thérèse spent her days in prayer, away from other people and the world.

Even as she grew older, Thérèse liked being little. She knew that Jesus wanted the little ones to come to Him. Jesus Himself had become a child! So Thérèse wanted to stay little. Thérèse also wanted to be holy. She wrote: “In in spite of my littleness, I can aim at being a saint.” St. Thérèse is known for her idea of the “Little Way.” The Little Way means seeking to show God’s love in ordinary, everyday things.

In 1896 Thérèse became sick. She died less than a year later. She was only 24. St. Thérèse was little, but her writings and ideas about God’s love were big. Pope John Paul II named her a Doctor of the Church.

St. Gianna Beretta Molla



1922–1962

Feast Day:
April 28

Gianna was born into a Catholic Italian family. She had twelve siblings. When she was 20, she went to a city in Italy called Milan. She went there so she could go to school to become a doctor. When she graduated, she opened an office. Her patients were children.

When she was 33 she got married. She and her husband had four children. While Gianna was pregnant with their fourth child, Gianna grew very sick. Gianna had a tumor growing in her womb near her unborn daughter. A tumor is a growth of bad cells in the body. Some tumors are very serious, like Gianna's was. The tumor had to be removed.

Gianna had to decide what to do. Some of the ways the doctors would treat her would have killed her baby. Gianna did not want that to happen. She asked her doctors to take out the tumor, but protect her baby.

The doctors took out the tumor, but Gianna was still sick. She knew that her doctors might have to decide between saving her, or saving her baby. She told her family she wanted her doctors to save her baby if they had to choose. Finally her little girl was born. Gianna lived for one more week and then she died. She was 39 years old.

St. Monica



331–387

Feast Day:
August 27

Monica was born in Northern Africa. Her parents gave her in marriage to a pagan man, Patricius. Monica loved Patricius even though he sometimes said mean things to her and lost his temper. Patricius and Monica had three children.

Monica was Christian, and she wanted her husband and children to be Christian too. She asked God to help her husband resist sin. She was patient and loving. After they had been married almost 20 years, her husband converted to Christianity and was baptized. He died one year later.

Monica's son Augustine went away to school. He started living a wicked life. She prayed for her son to believe in Jesus and be good. When Augustine went to Italy, Monica followed him. She introduced him to the bishop. They prayed for Augustine and taught him more about Jesus.

Monica learned to pray more simply. She gave what she had to the poor. She was grateful to God when Augustine converted to Christianity. Monica and Augustine were both happy. Monica told her son, "There was indeed one thing for which I wished ... and that was that I might see you a Catholic Christian before I died."

St. Thomas More



1478-1535

Feast Day:

June 22

Thomas More was born in London. He went to good schools, and impressed his teachers. One of his teachers said he spoke Latin as easily as he spoke English!

More became a successful lawyer. He was also a great speaker and great writer (he penned *Utopia*, *The Sadness of Christ*, and more). He served in Parliament, which makes laws for England. Later he became a helper to the King of England, King Henry VIII.

The king wanted to divorce his wife. He tried to use the Bible to say divorce was okay. But More knew that the king was wrong. The king decided to break England away from the Catholic Church and start his own church. The king told More he had to stop being Catholic and be loyal to him. More said no. The king put More in jail. He took away More's property. The king even took More's writing materials so he wouldn't be able to send letters to his family. Finally the king had More beheaded.

More's last words were: "I die the good King's servant, but God's first."

St. Paul



Died 67 A.D.

Feast Day:

June 29

Paul was a Jew and a Roman citizen who lived around the time of Jesus.

For years, Paul made trouble for Christians. He thought Christianity was false. He traveled to Damascus, a city in Syria, to go after Christians. On his way a light shone from heaven. Paul fell to the ground.

A voice said: “Why do you persecute me?”

Paul asked, “Who are you?”

The voice answered, “I am Jesus.”

Then Paul believed that Jesus is God. When Paul stood up, he could not see. God sent Ananias, a Christian man, to Paul. Ananias miraculously healed Paul’s eyes and baptized him.

Right away, Paul preached the Gospel to everyone. He worked miracles and started Christian churches in many cities. Some Romans who hated Christianity ordered Paul to be beaten and put in jail. An earthquake shook the prison doors open. But Paul did not try to escape. Instead he stayed and preached to the guard. He baptized the guard and his family.

Paul traveled to many different parts of the world. Everywhere he went, he preached the Gospel. When returned to Rome, he was accused and out in jail again. The Roman emperor had Paul beheaded.

Paul wrote fourteen letters to the people he converted to Christianity. These letters are in the Bible.

St. Pope John Paul II



1920–2005

Feast Day:
October 22

Karol Wojtyla was born in Poland. When he was a young man, a lot of evil things were happening in Europe. The Nazis were sending Jews, Catholics, and many other people to camps. At the camps those people were tortured and killed. Karol secretly went into seminary (a school that prepares men to be priests). He was made a priest soon after World War II ended.

But even though the war had ended, people in Poland were suffering. They were not free under a communist government. Fr. Wojtkla was made Bishop of Krakow (Poland) in the 1960s. When he was elected Pope, he chose the name John Paul II. He helped people of Poland free themselves from the Communist party. Pope John Paul II also tried to help England come back to Catholicism.

Pope John Paul II founded World Youth Day. On World Youth Days, young Catholics from all over the world come together to be with the Pope and attend Mass he offers for them.

He wrote many important essays and books that helped people learn more about God. He died in April 2005. Thousands of people came to his funeral.

St. Peter



Died 64 A.D.

Feast Day:

June 29

Simon was a fisherman who lived around the time of Jesus. His brother Andrew introduced him to Jesus. Jesus called Simon and Andrew to be Apostles. Jesus told Simon, “You are Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church.”

Jesus warned Peter that he would deny Jesus. Peter promised he would not. While Peter waited for Jesus outside the courthouse, people asked Peter if he knew Jesus. Peter lied and said he did not know Him. Peter remembered what Jesus had told him and left, weeping.

Jesus was crucified and rose from the dead. He came to Peter saying to him, “Feed my sheep.”

Peter was the first Apostle to preach and to work miracles in Jesus’ name. Peter was put in jail, but an angel freed him. He continued to preach to everyone. With St. Paul’s help, Peter led the first Church council in Jerusalem. He wrote two letters that are in the Bible.

The Roman Emperor ordered Peter to be crucified. But Peter asked to be crucified upside down. He said he was not worthy to die as Jesus did. His relics are in St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome.

Bl. Miguel Pro Juárez



1891-1927

Feast Day:

November 23

Miguel was born in Guadeloupe, Mexico. His family was devoutly Catholic. Miguel was called to become a priest.

While he was preparing, the government in Mexico started making bad laws. It became illegal to be Catholic. Churches had to close. Many priests were killed. Miguel and his classmates escaped. He was made a priest in 1925.

Even though it was dangerous, Fr. Pro wanted to return to Mexico. He got permission to go. He began helping people in secret. He would wear disguises to stay safe. Sometimes he would dress as a beggar. Other times he dressed as a businessman. He even dressed as a policeman to give Holy Communion to people in prison.

Someone told the police what Fr. Pro was doing. He was arrested. The government lied and said Fr. Pro had tried to kill the president of Mexico. Even though he was innocent, Fr. Pro was sentenced to death. He forgave his executioners, and prayed out loud for God to forgive them. His last words were “Viva Cristo Rey,” which means “Praise Christ the King!”

St. Stephen



Died 37 A.D.

Feast Day:
December 26

Stephen was a Jewish man who became one of the first Christians. He was full of wisdom and faith from the Holy Spirit. He took care of widowed women who became Christian. Stephen also worked miracles in Jesus' name.

Some Jewish men who hated Christianity tried to argue with Stephen. But they could not outsmart the wisdom he received from the Holy Spirit. They paid other men to lie and say that Stephen had said bad things about the Old Testament prophet Moses.

Stephen was brought to the Jewish court. Stephen defended himself by telling the story of Moses and other Old Testament prophets. Stephen said that the Ancient Jews had betrayed every Old Testament prophet, even though those prophets had tried to tell them about Jesus. Then when Jesus came, He was also betrayed and killed, including by the men who arrested Stephen.

The Jewish men were filled with rage. Then Stephen looked up. He saw Heaven. He saw Jesus standing at the right of God the Father. Stephen told the men what he saw, but they would not listen. They dragged him out of the city and threw stones at him until he died. Stephen prayed that Jesus would show mercy to his killers.

Bl. Teresa of Calcutta



1910-1997

Feast Day:
September 5

Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu was born in Yugoslavia. Her family was devoutly Catholic. She went to a convent (a place where nuns live) in Ireland when she was 18. There she received the name Teresa. She was quiet and shy. Very few people there understood her language.

Her community sent her to India. There she was a school teacher for many years. She learned to speak the local languages.

One day in 1946, Mother Teresa was on a train. On that train she received a call to serve “the poorest of the poor.” She started her own religious community to do this work.

Mother Teresa helped people throughout India. Even if they were extremely poor, or had very serious diseases, Mother Teresa showed them love. She helped people no one else would help.

Pope Paul VI and St. Pope John Paul II praised her work.

Women joined her communities in over 100 countries. She continued to help throughout the world even as her health got worse. She died in 1997.