

February - Calendar / Feast Days

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February 1: St Brigid



St. Brigid is renowned for her hospitality, almsgiving and care of the sick. She was born c. 454. When she was young, her father wished to make a very suitable marriage for her but she insisted in consecrating her life to God. Others followed her example and this led her to found a double monastery in Kildare. She died in 523 and devotion to her is widespread not only throughout Ireland but in several European lands. The St. Brigid's Cross, in legend used by Brigid to explain the Christian faith, remains a popular sign of God's protection.

Prayer to St Brigid

Brigid, you were a woman of peace.
You brought harmony where there was conflict.
You brought light to the darkness.
You brought hope to the downcast.
May the mantle of your peace cover those
who are troubled and anxious,
And may peace be firmly rooted in our hearts
and in our world.
Inspire us to act justly and to reverence all God has made.
Brigid, you were a voice for the wounded and the weary.
Strengthen what is weak within us.
Calm us into a quietness that heals and listens.
May we grow each day into greater wholeness in mind, body and spirit.
Amen.

A Prayer to St Brigid of Faughart

Brigid, patroness of the Irish and woman of deep faith
We salute you as with Patrick you helped the Irish come to faith in Jesus.
Your love for the Master drove you to be an apostle of the faith.
Your compassion for the poor and sick knew no boundaries.
People recognised in your heart the Light of the world.
Your love for all creation drew wild creatures to trust you.
You were always a woman of action more centred on people than bricks and stones.
A woven cross of reeds helped a dying man grieve for his sins
resulting in forgiveness and reconciliation.
Encircle us with your cloak of charity and help us all find
a renewed faith in Jesus our common Master.
Help us reach out to the Christ we meet daily in the faces of those in need
who approach us for comfort,
Help us to seek their blessing upon us as we wash their feet and try to bind their wounds.
Mary of the Irish show a mother's protective care to all
who call upon you in need.
Help us always to care for our beautiful planet Mother Earth.
Brigid of Faughart, pray for us. Amen.

Amen

May the blessing of light be on you, light without and light within.
May the blessed sunlight shine upon you and warm your heart till it glows like a great
peat fire, so that the stranger may come and be warmed and also a friend.
And may the light shine out of your eyes, like a candle set in the window of a house,
bidding the wanderer to come in out of the storm.
And may the blessing of the rain be on you – the soft sweet rain;
May it fall upon your spirit so that all the little flowers may spring up, and shed their
sweetness on the air. And may the blessing of the great rains be on you, may they beat
upon your spirit and wash it fair and clean, and leave there many a shining pool where the
blue of heaven shines, and sometimes a star.
And may the blessing of the earth be on you – the great round earth;
May you ever have a kindly greeting from them you pass as you're going along the roads.
May the earth be soft under you when you rest upon it, tired at the end of a day, and may
it rest easy over you when, at the last, you lie out under it.
May it rest so lightly over you that your soul may be off from under it so quickly
and up and off, and on its way to God.
And now may the Lord and Our Lady bless you and bless you kindly Amen.

February 2: The Presentation of the Lord

The Feast of the Presentation of the Lord is celebrated 40 days after Christmas Day. The Gospel of Luke recalls Mary and Joseph taking the child Jesus for his first visit to the Temple in Jerusalem. This feast is also known as Candlemas because of the tradition of blessing and distributing candles at Mass and holding a candlelight procession on this day. These practices are drawn from Simeon's words in the gospel for this feast, in which he prophesies that the child Jesus will become

“a light for revelation to the Gentiles”.



The Fourth Joyful Mystery of the Rosary

The Presentation in the Temple.

We observe the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, honouring Jesus Christ's presentation in the Temple when he was a young child.

The Lord had told Simeon, a devout and upright man, he would meet the Messiah before his death. When Simeon receives Jesus, he blesses him, and prophesies Jesus' future as Saviour, proclaiming him the Light of the world.

The Gospel of Luke explains that the old prophet Simeon and the prophetess Anna were at the Temple that day (see Luke 2:22-38). They, like many others, had spent their lifetime

waiting, longing for a Messiah, and the Holy Spirit had revealed to Simeon that he would not die until he had seen the Saviour. Among all the children and mothers coming into the Temple, Simeon recognized Jesus as the Christ Child. He held Jesus and exclaimed this hymn of thanksgiving, "Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in sight of all the peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel" (Luke 2:29-32). The hymn has traditionally been termed the *Nunc Dimittis*.



Pope John Paul II connected the feast day with the renewal of religious vows. In the Roman Catholic Church, the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple is the fourth Joyful Mystery of the Rosary.

February 3: Saint Blaise

On this day the Church gives a "Blessing of the Throats" in honour of St. Blaise. From the eighth century St. Blaise has been invoked on behalf of the sick, especially those afflicted with illnesses of the throat.

A physician of Sebaste in Cappodocia, where he was later named Bishop, St. Blaise was martyred about the year 320. He is venerated as a patron to protect us against diseases of the throat, mainly because of the story told that he cured a boy choking from a fishbone.

As a doctor Blaise went into every home, at all hours of the day and night, knew both the rich and poor of the neighbourhood, comforted, cured, and advised all. As a bishop, he did the same thing. It was said that people had to look for him in the prisons, in the caves with hermits, in the mountains and the valleys, so fast were his steps to search out and to help each person who needed help.

Blessing of the Throats

It is customary in many places to bless the throats of the faithful with two candles tied together with a red ribbon to form a cross. The rite of the blessing of throats may take place before or after Mass.



The candles are placed around the throat of whoever seeks the blessing and the formula used is: "Through the intercession of St. Blaise, bishop and martyr, may God deliver you free from every disease of the throat, and from every other disease. In the name of the Father and of the Son, + and of the Holy Spirit. R. Amen."

February 8: St Josephine Bakhita

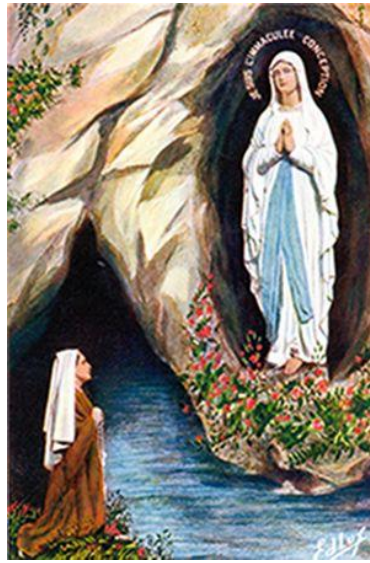


St Josephine Bakhita, 1868-1947, a native of Sudan, was brought as a slave to Italy where she became a Christian and joined the Canossian Sisters, an international missionary congregation.

Prayer to St. Josephine Bakhita

**O St. Josephine Bakhita, assist all those who are trapped in a state of slavery;
Intercede with God on their behalf so that they will be released
from their chains of captivity.
Provide comfort to survivors of slavery and
let them look to you as an example of hope and faith. Amen**

February 11: Our Lady of Lourdes



Our Lady of Lourdes is a title of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Lourdes, which is located in the southeast of France, is a place of pilgrimage. A pilgrimage is a special type of journey people go on which helps them to pray and reflect. Each year millions of people travel to Lourdes as pilgrims. In Lourdes, those who are sick experience the care of volunteers who go there in their hundreds every year to look after the pilgrims who need someone to care for them. Many young people work as volunteers in Lourdes. Lourdes is famous because some people who have visited there have been cured of their illnesses, and many of those who have not been cured have felt much better after visiting Our Lady's shrine.



When people go to Lourdes, they recall the appearance of Our Lady to fourteen-year-old Bernadette Soubirous. The first apparition was on 11 February 1858. Bernadette said that

Mary was dressed in white, with a blue sash and yellow roses at her feet. She held rosary beads on her arm. Mary appeared eighteen times to Bernadette. Bernadette asked Mary who she was and Mary replied, 'I am the Immaculate Conception.' Bernadette realised that it meant that Mary was born without original sin. Our Lady also told Bernadette to tell the priests in Lourdes that they were to build a chapel there and to encourage pilgrims to visit Lourdes. On one of her visits to Bernadette, Our Lady told Bernadette to dig in the dirt and to find and drink the water from the stream. Bernadette did as Mary asked and, after several attempts, she was able to find the water.

The water continued to flow and it still does so to this day. Many who are sick bathe in baths of water from the stream that Bernadette found, and some have been physically healed, while the majority have experienced spiritual healing or a sense of feeling more at peace with their situation. People bring holy water home from Lourdes to give to their friends.

For pilgrims to Lourdes, Mary's universal message is that she accompanies people all through life, leading them closer to her son, Jesus.



In 1992, Pope John Paul 11 established that the

World Day of the Sick

be held on the

11 February

Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes.

Let us pray:

Our Lady of Lourdes, pray for us.

Our Lady of Lourdes, pray for the sick.

Our Lady of Lourdes, pray for all who care for the sick.

The message of Pope Francis for World Day of the Sick 2024

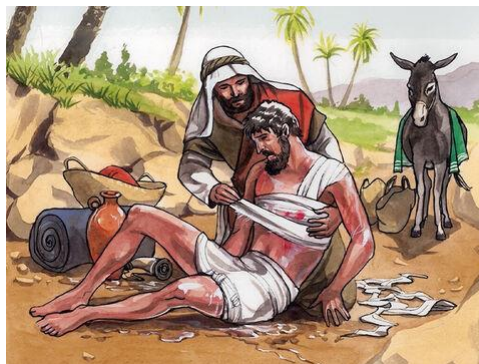
***“It is not good that . . . be alone —
Healing the Sick by Healing Relationships”***

In his message for the 2024 commemoration of the World Day of the Sick, held on 11 February, Pope Francis explores the fundamental importance and healing power of our relationships with others and with God.

The theme chosen by Pope Francis for World Day of the Sick for this year is “It is not good that man should be alone—Healing the Sick by Healing Relationships,”

Pope Francis points out that the Covid-19 pandemic and ongoing wars have isolated many people. Yet, he says, even countries living in peace and enjoying greater resources have a large number of people who face solitude and even abandonment due to old age and sickness. Our “throwaway cultures” exalt productivity and individualism at the cost of those unable to produce an economic gain.

The Pope therefore invites everyone to offer compassionate and loving closeness to those who are ill, following the example of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37).



The best therapy for those who are ill, he adds, is to offer them our love and communion, despite the pace of our own frenetic lives.



February 14 Ash Wednesday



Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent. We receive ashes as a reminder that we are beginning our Lenten journey. Lent is a 40-day season of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving that begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Thursday. It is a period of preparation to celebrate the Lord's Resurrection at Easter. During Lent, we seek the Lord in prayer; we serve others by giving alms; and we practice self-control through fasting.

Every Lent is a new beginning.

Lent gives us the opportunity to refresh our faith.

Like the springtime, it is a time of growth and renewal. It is time to take stock, and to reflect on our lives as followers of Jesus and to prepare our hearts
For renewing our Baptismal promises at Easter.

The Lenten good works of

“Praying, Fasting and Almsgiving”

help to keep us focused on what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

Lenten prayer

Dear God, During Lent help us to keep our eyes on Jesus. Help us to spend more time talking and listening to you. Help us to share what we have with others and be sorry for times we have done wrong.
Amen

