

January - Calendar / Feast Days

January 1, Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God



This holiday is a celebration of Mary's motherhood of Jesus. It is a reminder of the role she played in the salvation of humankind.

Today's Feast of Mary, the Mother of God, is a very appropriate way to begin a new year. This celebration reminds us that the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, is also our Heavenly Mother. Therefore, perhaps our ideal motto for the New Year 2023 could be "Through Mary to Jesus!"

This is an occasion to renew our devotion to Mary, who is also Mother of the Church because she is our spiritual mother — and we are the Church. The solemnity shows the relationship of Jesus to Mary. It is a perfect example of how we should venerate Mary under all of her titles. The Church puts the feast of this solemnity on the first day of the New Year to emphasize the importance of Mary's role in the life of Christ and of the Church. We commemorate the various saints on different days of the year, but Mary is the most prominent of them all. She has a special role and mission given to her by God. As Mother of our Redeemer and of the redeemed, she reigns as Queen at the side of Christ the King. She is a powerful intercessor for all of our needs here on earth. In celebrating her special feast day, we acknowledge this great gift for the Church

and world; we call on her to be actively involved in our daily life; we imitate her virtuous life as a great inspiration; and we cooperate with all the graces we receive through her.

January 1, World Day of Peace



The Church also observes this day as the World Day of Peace and invites us to pray specially for peace in the world. Every year on January 1, the Holy Father marks the World Day of Peace with a special message inviting all people to reflect on the important work of building peace.

The **World Day of Peace** is an annual celebration by the Catholic Church, dedicated to universal peace, held on 1 January, the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God.

January 6, Epiphany of the Lord



The Feast of the Epiphany is celebrated on January 6. This feast commemorates the visit of the wise men to worship the baby Jesus. Tradition tells us that their names were Caspar, Melchior and Balthassar. The men were astrologers who were looking for the star that would lead them to the promised Messiah. This

was prophesied in the Book of Micah. According to the Gospel narratives, the wise men brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh with them. These gifts were very meaningful. Gold was a precious and expensive gift, and showed how important Jesus was. Frankincense is a sweet perfume which was often burned in the temple to worship God. It was a sign that Jesus should be worshipped. Myrrh was used to keep things fresh, and it was used by the women to anoint Jesus' body when he died. By bringing it as a gift to Jesus, the wise men foretold his suffering and death.

January 7, The Baptism of the Lord



The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord is observed annually. It falls on the Sunday after January 6, so this year the date is January 8. It commemorates the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan by John the Baptist. Jesus is anointed with the Holy Spirit and his power. He is proclaimed Messiah.

He now goes about doing good, working the signs that make him known as the Servant of God. He is the one who brings good news to the poor and tells of salvation.

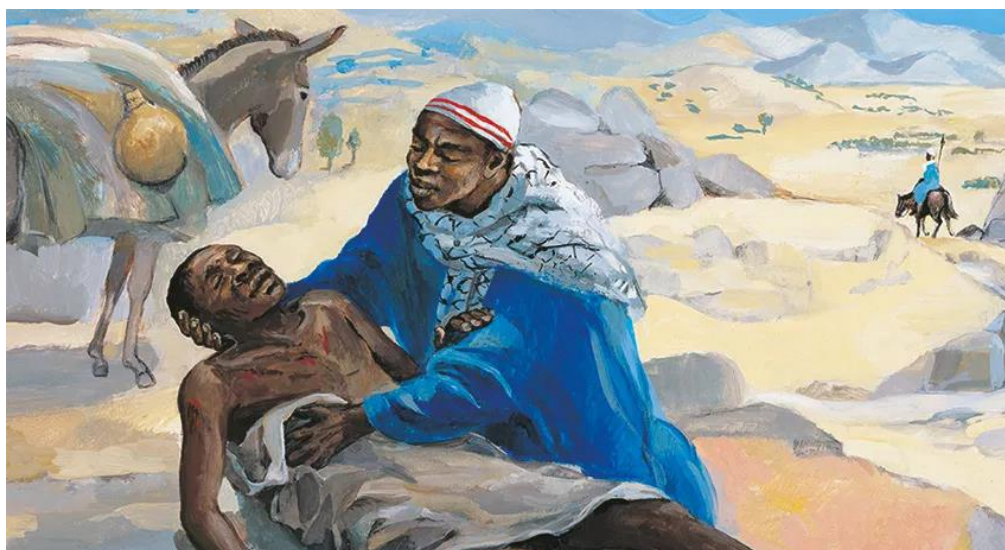
We are invited to not only think about the baptism of the Lord Jesus but also of our own baptism.

- How often do I think of my baptism and what it means in my daily life?
- Do I see myself as God's beloved son or daughter?
- Can I think of a recent example of when I was a light to those around me?

"Baptism is the door of the spiritual life and the gateway to the sacraments."

Thomas Aquinas

Week of January 18 – 25 - Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

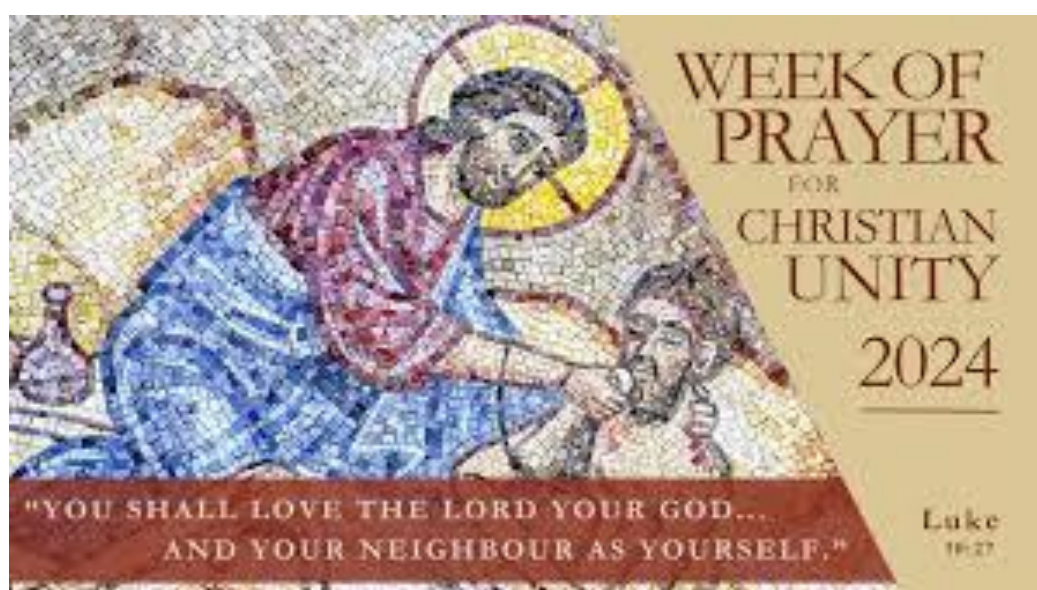


The annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity will place 18-15 January 2024.

The theme for the 2024 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is:

‘You shall love the Lord your God... and your neighbour as yourself’ (Lk 10:27).

We are being invited to live the divine call to love God and our neighbour as ourselves. As we renew our commitment to this call, may this love strengthen our unity as Christians.



January 24, St. Francis de Sales



Francis de Sales was born in 1567 and died in 1622. He lived in France and came from a large family. He had twelve brothers and sisters. His father wanted him to be a lawyer, but Francis knew God was calling him to be a priest and serve others. He was ordained in 1593. He is the patron saint of writers because he wrote many letters and books about having faith in God.

Trust in God

He was a kind and caring person who shared God's love with others. Francis de Sales taught people to trust in God. He said, "Have no fear for what tomorrow may bring. The same loving God who cares for you today will take care of you tomorrow and every day." We should have peace in our hearts because we know that God is with us.

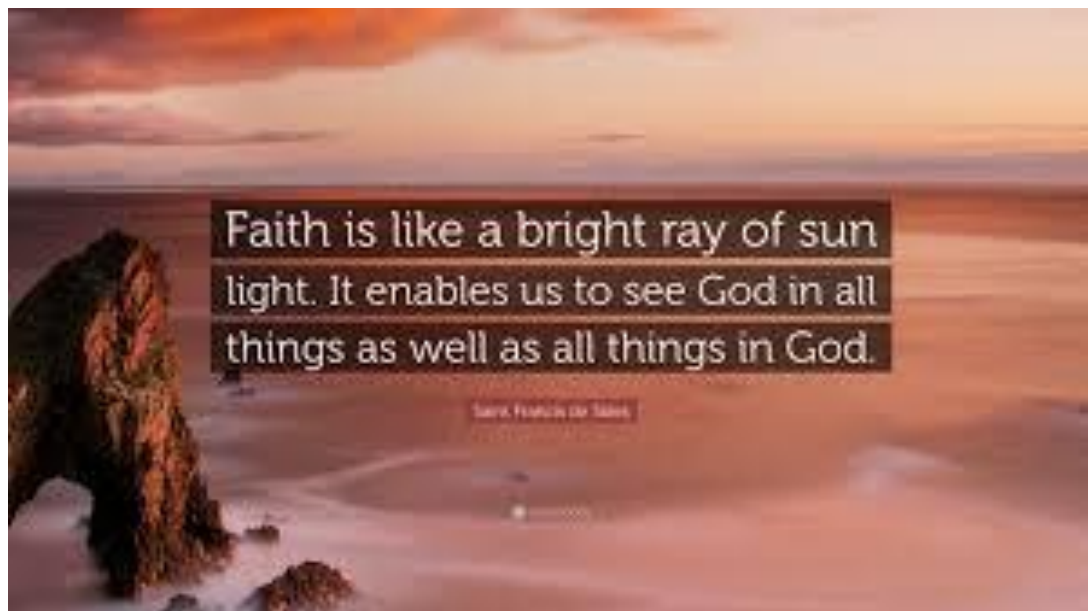
Pray always

Francis de Sales encouraged people to pray. He said that prayer is a conversation with God. Through prayer, we speak to God and God speaks to us. He knew it was important to be people of prayer. As he said, "Prayer is for everyone." The life of this saint reminds us to pray always.

Be patient

Francis de Sales said: "Have patience with all things, but chiefly have patience with yourself." He knew that we sometimes worry about mistakes we've made and judge ourselves harshly. But God created us and loves us just as we are. These words of St. Francis de Sales speak to our lives today. His meekness and

sunny disposition won for him the title of “Gentleman Saint.” He is the patron saint of writers, editors and journalists. Some St. Francis de Sales quotes:



January 25, Conversion of St. Paul



On January 25, we celebrate the Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul the Apostle. His radical transformation is demonstrative of the extraordinary redemptive power of the Gospel. As a zealous Jewish scholar, he had persecuted countless Christians – including the first martyr for Christ, Stephen.

**After his encounter with Christ, however,
Paul became an unstoppable force for the kingdom of God.**

Paul's Conversion to Christianity

One day, Saul was “breathing murderous threats against the disciples of the Lord,” and decided to go down to Damascus to see if he could find incriminating evidence to arrest the Christians there (Acts 9). However, God had other plans for him:

On his journey, as he was nearing Damascus, a light from the sky suddenly flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” He said, “Who are you, sir?” The reply came, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Now get up and go into the city and you will be told what you must do.” The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, for they heard the voice but could see no one. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him to Damascus. For three days, he was unable to see, and he neither ate nor drank. – Acts 9:3-9

After this incident, God spoke to a believer named Ananias, asking him to find Saul, lay hands on him, and restore his sight. Ananias was reluctant to do so at first, as he knew Saul's history of persecuting Christians. However, God urged him, saying, “Go, for this man is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before Gentiles, kings, and Israelites,” (Acts 9:15). He then did as God commanded, restoring Saul's sight – and baptizing him.

After his conversion, Saul changed his name to Paul. Saul then began proclaiming the gospel in Damascus and beyond, inaugurating a life of dedicated ministry.

Paul would go on to significantly mould the Mediterranean's early Christian communities, traveling and writing countless letters of spiritual guidance and insight. Paul's ministry is set apart from other apostles because of his message that the gospel is for Gentiles and Jews alike. He is thought to be the author of 13 books in the New Testament – more than any other biblical writer.

Few Bible stories are as thrilling as Paul's road to Damascus conversion. Through the power of Christ, a man who had been a hate-filled villain became a love-filled hero. By submitting himself completely to Jesus, Paul was able to spread the gospel throughout the known world.

Paul's life-changing experience on the Damascus Road led to his baptism and instruction in the Christian faith. He became the most determined of the apostles, suffering brutal physical pain, persecution, and finally, martyrdom.

He revealed his secret of enduring a lifetime of hardship for the gospel:

**"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."
(Philippians 4:13)**

January 27, St. Angela de Merici



St. Angela de Merici, 1470-1540, founder of the Ursulines, devoted herself to Christian education based on love, kindness and firmness, and concern for the individual.

**"You will accomplish more by kind words and a courteous manner
than by anger or sharp rebuke . . ."**

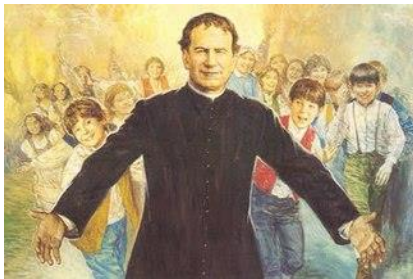
St. Angela de Merici

January 28, St. Thomas Aquinas



St. Thomas Aquinas was born in Italy in 1224 and died in 1274. Thomas was taught that Christian revelation and human knowledge are aspects of a single truth and cannot be in conflict with one another. One of the greatest theologians, he is patron of schools, universities, students and booksellers.

January 31, St. John Bosco



St. John Bosco 1815 – 1888 born in Piedmont, founded the Salesians to educate boys for life. He also became involved in publishing catechetical material for youth. He is a patron saint of youth and of catholic publishers.

John Bosco (16 August 1815 - 31 January 1888) who was popularly known as Don Bosco was an Italian Roman Catholic priest, educator, and writer. He worked in Turin, where the population suffered from illnesses because of industrialization and urbanization. He dedicated his life to the education of street children, juvenile delinquents, and other youth. He developed teaching methods based on love rather than punishment, a method that became known as the Salesian Preventive System.

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Catholic Schools' Week 2024.

Catholic Schools Week 2024 – Communities of Service



Catholic Schools Week will take place from
Sunday 21 to Saturday 27 January 2024
on the theme of
Catholic Schools as Communities of Service.

Christian service puts faith into action.

In Catholic schools, as we study and look to Jesus Christ as our role model and teacher, we come to a greater understanding of the depth of Christian service.

Jesus served every person regardless of creed, background, faith, social status or age.

He put faith into action by showing all those around him how our Heavenly Father is compassionate, courageous and forgiving.

Jesus didn't just talk about His faith; He lived it.

We are called by faith to go into the world to share the love of God with all those we meet.

Each person, at every age, is called to become Christ for another by serving every person with a humble heart and with a generous spirit.

For Catholic Schools Week, we will contemplate our schools as communities of service under the following themes:

- Service in Our Community of Friends
- Service in Our School Community
- Service in Our Family Community
- Service in Our Local Community
- Service in Our Faith Community

The resources will reflect on these features within the overarching theme and will make use of scriptural reflection on prayer, action, student voice, and concern for our common home.

<https://catholiceducation.ie/catholic-schools-week-2024-communities-of-service/>

Laudate 2024



We hope that you have been enjoying the Laudate 2024 repertoire and are looking forward to the celebrations during Catholic Schools Week 2024. The venues and dates for Laudate 2024 are as follows:

Church of Our Lady of Victories, Ballymun Road

Laudate Festival Night on Tuesday 30 January at 7.00-8.15 p.m.
Rehearsal on Thursday 18 January at 12.00-1.30 p.m.

Church of St Therese, Mount Merrion

Laudate Festival Night on Wednesday 31 January at 7.00-8.15 p.m.
Rehearsal on Tuesday 16 January at 12.00 - 1.30 p.m.

Please continue to promote the **Laudate 2024 Festival** in your local community – the celebrations are ticketless and entry is free for all.

Participating in Laudate is a wonderful way to celebrate
Catholic Schools Week.