

June 9: St. Ephrem (306?-373)

Poet, teacher, orator and defender of the faith, Ephrem is the only Syrian recognized as a Doctor of the Church. He took upon himself the special task of opposing the many false doctrines rampant at his time, always remaining a true and forceful defender of the Catholic Church.

Born in Nisibis, Mesopotamia, he was baptized as a young man and became famous as a teacher in his native city. When the Christian Emperor had to cede Nisibis to the Persians, Ephrem, along with many Christians, fled as a refugee to Edessa. He is credited with attracting great glory to the biblical school there. He was ordained a deacon but declined, becoming a priest (and was said to have avoided episcopal consecration by feigning madness!).

He had a prolific pen, and his writings best illumine his holiness. Although he was not a man of great scholarship, his works reflect deep insight and knowledge of the Scriptures. In writing about the mysteries of humanity's redemption, Ephrem reveals a realistic and humanly sympathetic spirit and a great devotion to the humanity of Jesus. It is said that his poetic account of the Last Judgment inspired Dante.

It is surprising to read that he wrote hymns against the heretics of his day. He would take the popular songs of the heretical groups and, using their melodies, compose beautiful hymns embodying orthodox doctrine. Ephrem became one of the first to introduce song into the Church's public worship as a means of instruction for the faithful. His many hymns have earned him the title "Harp of the Holy Spirit."

He preferred a simple, austere life, living in a small cave overlooking the city of Edessa. It was here he died around 373.

JUNE 2021

Prayer from Taizé

Christ Jesus, you gave your life to open a path to God for us. You endured suffering to reach us fully, and now you share the joy of the resurrection. You assure us that we will never be alone, for the Holy Spirit lives in us, supporting us and inspiring us to follow in your steps. In the joys of life, as in its sorrows, you are present and you walk alongside every human being. Your love is for ever.

Prayers of Intercession for our parish

- Let us pray for our Alpha group - that they have been made stronger by their encounters with the Lord and that they feel ready to celebrate their experiences as they approach the end of their course.
- Let us pray for our parish, that together we feel inspired by God's Spirit to build on the foundations of prayer and community, and so move forward as one in mission.
- As we celebrate Pentecost, let us pray for our parish and for our confirmation candidates - that we are blessed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit and that we use these gifts to share our faith, bringing people to Christ in hope and joy.

Some tweets by Pope Francis

- The person who prays is like someone in love with the beloved in his or her heart, wherever they go. So we can pray at any moment, and during whatever happens every day: on the street, in the office, on public transport, through words and in the silence of our own hearts.
- Lord Our God, grant that we Christians may live the Gospel, and recognise Christ in every human being, so as to see him crucified in the sufferings of the abandoned and forgotten of our world, and risen in each brother and sister who makes a new start.
- Through recollection and silent prayer, hope is given to us as interior light, illuminating the challenges and choices we face in our mission. Hence the need to pray and, in secret, to encounter the Father of tender love..

June 13 St. Anthony of Padua (1195-1231)

The gospel call to leave everything and follow Christ was the rule of Anthony's life. Over and over again God called him to something new in his plan. Every time, Anthony responded with renewed zeal and self-sacrificing to serve his Lord Jesus more completely. His journey as the servant of God began as a very young man when he decided to join the Augustinians, giving up a future of wealth and power to be a servant of God. Later, when the bodies of the first Franciscan martyrs went through the Portuguese city where he was stationed, he was again filled with an intense longing to be one of those closest to Jesus himself: those who die for the Good News.

So Anthony entered the Franciscan Order and set out to preach to the Moors. But an illness prevented him from achieving that goal. He went to Italy and was stationed in a small hermitage where he spent most of his time praying, reading the Scriptures and doing menial tasks.

The call of God came again at an ordination where no one was prepared to speak. The humble and obedient Anthony hesitantly accepted the task. The years of searching for Jesus in prayer, of reading sacred Scripture and of serving him in poverty, chastity and obedience had prepared Anthony to allow the Spirit to use his talents. Anthony's sermon was astounding to those who expected an unprepared speech and knew not the Spirit's power to give people words.

Recognized as a great man of prayer and a great Scripture and theology scholar, Anthony became the first friar to teach theology to the other friars. Soon he was called from that post to preach to the heretics, to use his profound knowledge of Scripture and theology to convert and reassure those who had been misled. Anthony should be the patron of those who find their lives completely uprooted and set in a new and unexpected direction.

Here is a prayer/poem for us all by **John Masefield**:

O Christ who holds the open gate,
O Christ who drives the furrow straight,
O Christ, the plough, O Christ, the laughter,
Of holy white birds flying after,
Lo, all my heart's field red and torn,
And Thou wilt bring the young green corn
The young green corn divinely springing,
The young green corn forever singing;
And when the field is fresh and fair
Thy blessed feet shall glitter there.
And we will walk the weeded field,
And tell the golden harvest yield,
The corn that makes the holy bread
By which the soul of man is fed,
The holy bread, the food unpriced,
Thy everlasting mercy, Christ.

And from **St Thomas Aquinas**:

Almighty and everlasting God,
Behold we approach the sacrament
of thine only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.
As sick, we come to the Physician of Life:
As unclean, to the Fountain of Mercy:
As blind, to the light of eternal splendour:
As needy, to the Lord of Heaven and Earth:
As naked, to the King of Glory.

May all of us who share in the one loaf and the one cup, be united with each other in the fellowship of the one Holy Spirit. May communion in the holy Body and Blood of Christ bring judgement and condemnation upon none of us: but may we find grace and mercy with all the saints, who have been well-pleasing to Thee from all ages. (from the Liturgy of **St Basil the Great**)