

August 5: Dedication of St. Mary Major Basilica

First raised at the order of Pope Liberius in the mid-fourth century, the Liberian basilica was rebuilt by Pope Sixtus III shortly after the Council of Ephesus affirmed Mary's title as Mother of God in 431. Rededicated at that time to the Mother of God, St. Mary Major is the largest church in the world honouring God through Mary. Standing atop one of Rome's seven hills, the Esquiline, it has survived many restorations without losing its character as an early Roman basilica. Its interior retains three naves divided by colonnades in the style of Constantine's era. Fifth-century mosaics on its walls testify to its antiquity.

St. Mary Major is one of the four Roman basilicas known as patriarchal cathedrals in memory of the first centres of the Church. St. John Lateran (November 9) represents Rome, the See of Peter; St. Paul Outside the Walls, the See of Alexandria, allegedly the see presided over by Mark (April 25); St. Peter's, the See of Constantinople; and St. Mary's, the See of Antioch, where Mary is supposed to have spent most of her life.

One legend, unreported before the year 1000, gives another name to this feast: Our Lady of the Snows. According to that story, a wealthy Roman couple pledged their fortune to the Mother of God. In affirmation, she produced a miraculous summer snowfall and told them to build a church on the site. The legend was long celebrated by releasing a shower of white rose petals from the basilica's dome every August 5.

"From the earliest times the Blessed Virgin is honoured under the title of Mother of God, in whose protection the faithful take refuge together in prayer in all their perils and needs. Accordingly, following the Council of Ephesus, there was a remarkable growth in the cult of the People of God towards Mary, in veneration and love, in invocation and imitation..." (Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 66).

AUGUST 2021

Prayer from Taizé

Right at the depth of the human condition, lies the longing for a presence, the silent desire for a communion. Let us never forget that this simple desire for God is already the beginning of faith.

Prayers of Intercession for our parish

- Let us pray that, as we have celebrated the solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul recently, we may be inspired by their example, and supported by their prayers, to help bring others to Jesus Christ in hope and joy.
- Let us pray that, as we go out on our mission to help others hear the call of God, we may have faith in His wisdom and grace and do not get overwhelmed on the way.
- Let us pray, that as the holiday season begins, we use the period for rest and renewal so finding our way to restored energy for mission in the parish.

Some tweets by Pope Francis

- Only the love of Jesus can transform our life, heal our deepest hurts and set us free from the vicious circles of disappointment, anger and constant complaint.
- How do we prevent conflicts? No people, no social group, can single-handedly achieve in peace, prosperity, security and happiness. None. The lesson learned from the recent pandemic is the awareness that we are a global community, all in the same boat.
- As the Good Shepherd, Jesus consoles his shepherds. If you remain close to the Lord, to the bishop, among yourselves, and to the people of God; if you maintain God's style - nearness, compassion and tenderness - you need not be afraid: everything will go well.
- Loving contemplation, typical of the most intimate prayer, does not need many words. A gaze is enough. It is enough to be convinced that our life is surrounded by an immense and faithful love that nothing can ever separate us from..

August 30: St. Jeanne Jugan (1792-1879)

Born in northern France during the French Revolution—a time when congregations of women and men religious were being suppressed by the national government, Jeanne would eventually be highly praised in the French academy for her community's compassionate care of elderly poor people.

When Jeanne was three and a half years old, her father, a fisherman, was lost at sea. Her widowed mother was hard pressed to raise her eight children (four died young) alone. At the age of 15 or 16, Jeanne became a kitchen maid for a family that not only cared for its own members, but also served poor, elderly people nearby. Ten years later, Jeanne became a nurse at the hospital in Le Rosais. Soon thereafter she joined a third order group founded by St. John Eudes (August 19).

After six years she became a servant and friend of a woman she met through the third order. They prayed, visited the poor and taught catechism to children. After her friend's death, Jeanne and two other women continued a similar life in the city of Saint-Sevrans. In 1839, they brought in their first permanent guest. They began an association, received more members and more guests. Mother Marie of the Cross, as Jeanne was now known, founded six more houses for the elderly by the end of 1849, all staffed by members of her association—the Little Sisters of the Poor. By 1853 the association numbered 500 and now had houses in England.

Abbé Le Pailleur, a chaplain, had prevented Jeanne's re-election as superior in 1843; nine years later, he had her assigned to duties within the congregation, but would not allow her to be recognized as its founder. He was removed from office by the Holy See in 1890.

By the time Pope Leo XIII gave her final approval to the community's constitutions in 1879, there were 2,400 Little Sisters of the Poor. Jeanne died later that same year, on August 30. Her cause was introduced in Rome in 1970, and she was beatified in 1982 and canonized in 2009.

Prayers from Iona

The Prayer of Thanksgiving

We offer you praise, dear God,
And hearts lifted high,
For in the communion of your love
Christ comes close to us
And we come close to Christ.

Therefore with the whole realm of nature around us,
With earth, sea and sky,
We sing to you.

With the angels of light who envelop us,
With Michael and the host of heaven,
With all the saints before and beside us,
With Columba and Brigid, Patrick and Margaret,
with brothers and sisters, east and west,
We sing to you.

And with our loved ones,
Separate from us now,
Who yet in this mystery are close to us,
We join in the song of your unending greatness.

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Almighty God, Redeemer:

Even as with our bodies, so also with our souls.

Redeemer, Christ:

Sunshine and storm, mist and greyness
eddy round our inner lives.

But as we trace the pattern, looking back,
we know that both darkness and light
have been of Thine ordaining
for our own soul's health.

Thy constant care in all, and everywhere
is manifest.