

April 3: St. Benedict the African (1526-1589)

Benedict held important posts in the Franciscan Order and gracefully adjusted to other work when his terms of office were up.

His parents were slaves brought from Africa to Messina, Sicily. Freed at 18, Benedict did farm work for a wage and soon saved enough to buy a pair of oxen. He was very proud of those animals. In time he joined a group of hermits around Palermo and was eventually recognized as their leader. Because these hermits followed the Rule of St. Francis, Pope Pius IV ordered them to join the First Order.

Benedict was eventually novice master and then guardian of the friars in Palermo— positions rarely held in those days by a brother. In fact, Benedict was forced to accept his election as guardian. And when his term ended he happily returned to his work in the friary kitchen.

Benedict corrected the friars with humility and charity. Once he corrected a novice and assigned him a penance only to learn that the novice was not the guilty party. Benedict immediately knelt down before the novice and asked his pardon.

In later life Benedict was not possessive of the few things he used. He never referred to them as "mine" but always called them "ours." His gifts for prayer and the guidance of souls earned him throughout Sicily a reputation for holiness. Following the example of St. Francis, Benedict kept seven 40-day fasts throughout the year; he also slept only a few hours each night.

After Benedict's death, King Philip III of Spain paid for a special tomb for this holy friar. Canonized in 1807, he is honoured as a patron saint by African-Americans.

APRIL 2022

Prayer from Taizé

God of love, we are disconcerted by the violence in our world, and especially now by the acts of war in Ukraine. Enable us to stand in solidarity with those who suffer, and who live today in fear and anxiety. Sustain the hope of all those, in this beloved part of the world, who seek justice and peace. Send the Holy Spirit of peace to inspire the leaders of nations and all humanity.

Prayers of Intercession for our parish

- Let us pray that that people will have rich conversations, form faith-based friendships and bring each other closer to Christ through their participation in the 'Seriously, God?' Lenten Spiritual Campaign.
- Let us pray that by participating in the Seriously, God? Lenten Spiritual Campaign, our community are growing together and becoming closer to one another as they explore the theme in their small groups.
- Let us pray that the 24 hours for the Lord will have restored many people through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, bringing a deep healing, and offering compassion and peace which we can share with others

Some tweets by Pope Francis

- Often, like Peter in Luke 5, 1-11, we experience the disappointment of trying so hard and not seeing the desired results. But it is precisely that empty boat, the symbol of our incapacity, that becomes the pulpit from which Jesus proclaims the Word.
- Jesus asks us to immerse ourselves compassionately in the lives of those we meet as He has done with us. God is love and love is humble, it does not exalt itself, but descends like the rain that falls to the earth and brings life.
- What is the secret of a blessed life, a happy life? Recognizing Jesus as the living God. For it is not important to know that Jesus was great in history. What matters is the place I give him in my life.

April 13: St. Martin I (d. 655)

When Martin I became pope in 649, Constantinople was the capital of the Byzantine empire and the patriarch of Constantinople was the most influential Church leader in the eastern Christian world. The struggles that existed within the Church at that time were magnified by the close cooperation of emperor and patriarch.

A teaching, strongly supported in the East, held that Christ had no human will. Twice emperors had officially favoured this position, Heraclius by publishing a formula of faith and Constans II by silencing the issue of one or two wills in Christ.

Shortly after assuming the office of the papacy (which he did without first being confirmed by the emperor), Martin held a council at the Lateran in which the imperial documents were censured, and in which the patriarch of Constantinople and two of his predecessors were condemned. Constans II, in response, tried first to turn bishops and people against the pope.

Failing in this and in an attempt to kill the pope, the emperor sent troops to Rome to seize Martin and to bring him back to Constantinople. Already in poor health, Martin offered no resistance, returned with the exarch Calliopas and was then submitted to various imprisonments, tortures and hardships. Although condemned to death and with some of the torture imposed already carried out, Martin was saved from execution by the pleas of a repentant Paul, patriarch of Constantinople, who was himself gravely ill.

Martin died shortly thereafter, tortures and cruel treatment having taken their toll. He is the last of the early popes to be venerated as a martyr.

The breviary of the Orthodox Church pays tribute to Martin: "Glorious definer of the Orthodox Faith...sacred chief of divine dogmas, unstained by error...true reprover of heresy...foundation of bishops, pillar of the Orthodox faith, teacher of religion.... Thou didst adorn the divine see of Peter, and since from this divine Rock, thou didst immovably defend the Church, so now thou art glorified with him."

Good Friday

Christ on the Cross - Elizabeth Jennings

Forgive them, Father, forgive them
Father who is in my heart. How frightened she who stands,
My mother with my friend. The soldiers too,
help me to forgive them who have nailed my hands.
It seems such ages ago.

I talked in the temples. O the streams where John,
Another, poured the fountain on my head.
Father, I tell my mother that a son,
My friend shall care for her when I am dead.
I am so dizzy on

This wood. The waters flow but now from me.
I have been chosen. Father, I am you
Who breathed, then sapped the great man-offered tree.
Father, forgive now me.

Simon of Cyrene - Ann Lewin

It wasn't what I'd planned -
My pilgrimage to join the Passover
Ended cross-carrying, glad
My sons weren't witness to my shame.

But the man, bleeding in pain -
His dignity impressed: no cursing,
But forgiving words absorbing cruelty.
Although I had the cross, it seemed
He had the weight, almost as though
World's pain bore down on him.
What should be memory of shame
Stays with me as turning point of love;
I felt compelled to go not just a mile,
But on an endless journey into life.