

## May 12: St. Pancras (289-304?)

Saint Pancras was a Roman citizen who converted to Christianity, and was beheaded for his faith at the age of just 14 around the year 304. His name is Greek and literally means "the one that holds everything". He is, traditionally, the second of the Ice Saints - German farmers had a saying that three saints whose names are similar (Pancras, Servatz and Bonifatiz) were the "ice men" because it was often unseasonably chilly on their feast days, May 12, 13, 14.

Because he was said to have been martyred at the age of fourteen during the persecution under Diocletian, Pancras would have been born around 289, at a place designated as near Synnada, a city in Asia Minor, to parents of Roman citizenship. His mother Cyriada died during childbirth, while his father Cleonius died when Pancras was eight years old, whereupon Pancras was entrusted to his uncle Dionysius' care. They both moved to Rome where they converted to Christianity, and Pancras became a zealous adherent of the religion.

During the persecution of Christians by Diocletian, around 303 AD, he was brought before the authorities and asked to perform a sacrifice to the Roman gods. Diocletian, impressed with the boy's determination to resist, promised him wealth and power, but Pancras refused, and finally the emperor ordered him to be decapitated on the Via Aurelia, on May 12, 303 AD.

A Roman matron named Ottavilla recovered Pancras's body, covered it with balsam, wrapped it in precious linens, and buried it in a newly built sepulchre dug in the Catacombs of Rome. Pancras' head was placed in the reliquary that still exists today in the Basilica of San Pancrazio. Pope Gregory the Great gave impetus to the cult of Pancras, including his legend in *Liber in gloria martyrum* and sending Augustine to England carrying relics of the saint. This is why many of the nation's churches are dedicated to him; St Pancras Old Church is believed to be built on one of the oldest sites of Christian worship in England.

MAY 2022

## Prayer from Taizé

Christ Jesus, as we stand in silence before you, we let this burning prayer rise up to you: may weapons cease to be fired on the land of Ukraine! Receive in your love those who are dying from violence and war, console the grieving families, show your presence to those who are in anguish or who have had to take the road of exodus. Support those who desire peace and who are taking initiatives to stop the war.

## Prayers of Intercession for our parish

- Let us pray for the adults and young people who took part in the Alpha away day recently, that they opened their minds and their hearts to the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
- Let us pray that the joy of new life we receive from Christ's resurrection at Easter will flow through us to others so that they too may experience God's mercy and love.

## Some tweets by Pope Francis

- Climate change can be faced with a renewed sense of shared responsibility for our world, and an effective solidarity based on justice, a sense of our common destiny and a recognition of the unity of our human family in God's plan for the world.
- We are called to discover Christ in the poor, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to understand them and to welcome the mysterious wisdom that God wants to communicate to us through them.
- Saint Joseph, you who came from the periphery, help us change our vision and to take care of those persons who are discarded or are on the margins of society.
- Dear young friends! Be free and authentic, be the critical conscience of society. Be passionate about truth, so that, with your dreams, you can say: "My life is not captive to the mindset of the world: I am free, because I reign with Jesus for justice, love and peace!"

## May 18: Saint John I (470–526)

John the First was Pope from 523 until his death in 526. He was a native of Siena in Italy, and is the first pope known to have visited Constantinople while in office.

While a deacon in Rome, he is known to have been a partisan of the Antipope Laurentius, for in a libellus written to Pope Symmachus in 506, John confessed his error in opposing him, condemned Peter of Altinum and Laurentius, and begged pardon of Symmachus. He would thus be likely to be the "Deacon John" who signed the *acta* (ecclesiastic publication) of the Roman synod of 499 and 502; the fact the Roman church only had seven deacons at the time makes identifying him with this person very likely. He may also be the "Deacon John" to whom Boethius, the 6th-Century philosopher, dedicated three of his five religious tractates, or treatises, written between 512 and 520.

John was very frail when he was elected to the papacy as Pope John I. Despite his protests, he was sent by the Arian King Theodoric, who ruled the Ostrogoths from his capital in Ravenna, to Constantinople to secure a moderation of a decree against the Arians issued in 523 by the Emperor Justin I, ruler of the Eastern part of the Roman Empire in Byzantium. King Theodoric threatened that if John should fail in his mission, there would be reprisals against the orthodox, or non-Arian, Catholics in the West. John proceeded to Constantinople with a considerable entourage, where he was received honourably by the Emperor, who promised to do everything the embassy asked of him, with the exception of restoring to their original beliefs converts from Arianism to Catholicism.

Although John was successful in his mission, when he returned to Ravenna Theodoric had him arrested on suspicion of having conspired with Emperor Justin. John was imprisoned at Ravenna, where he died of neglect and ill treatment. His body was transported to Rome and buried in the Basilica of St. Peter.

## Our Lady

Mother of God! No Lady thou;  
Common woman of common earth!  
OUR LADY, ladies call thee now  
But Christ was never of gentle birth;  
A common man of the common earth.

For God's ways are not our ways.  
The noblest lady in the land  
Would have given up half her days  
Would have cut off her right hand,  
To bear the Child that was God of the land.

Never a lady did he choose,  
Only a maid of low degree  
So humble she might not refuse  
The carpenter from Galilee.  
A daughter of the people, she.

Out she sang the song of her heart  
Never a lady so had sung  
She knew no letters, had no art;  
To all mankind, in woman's tongue,  
Had Israelitish Mary sung.

And still for men to come she sings,  
Nor shall her singing pass away.  
"He hath filled the hungry with good things,"  
O listen Lords and Ladies gay!  
"And the rich he hath sent empty away".

*Caroline Sheridan (1779-1851)*

## A Splash of Colour

O God, save me from being  
A dull, grey person,  
And let the colours of your creation  
Pattern my life with your beauty.

*Kathy Keay*