

February 7: St. Colette (1381-1447)

Colette did not seek the limelight, but in doing God's will she certainly attracted a lot of attention.

Colette was born in Corbie, France. At 21 she began to follow the Third Order Rule and became an anchoress, a woman walled into a room whose only opening was a window into a church.

After four years of prayer and penance in this cell, she left it. With the approval and encouragement of the pope, she joined the Poor Clares and reintroduced the primitive Rule of St. Clare in the 17 monasteries she established. Her sisters were known for their poverty—they rejected any fixed income—and for their perpetual fast.

Colette began her reform during the time of the Great Western Schism (1378-1417) when three men claimed to be pope and thus divided Western Christianity. The 15th century in general was a very difficult one for the Western Church. Abuses long - neglected cost the Church dearly in the following century; the prayers of Colette and her followers may have lessened the Church's troubles in the 16th century. In any case, Colette's reform indicated the entire Church's need to follow Christ more closely.

Colette's reform movement spread to other countries and is still thriving today. In her spiritual testament, Colette told her sisters: "We must faithfully keep what we have promised. If through human weakness we fail, we must always without delay arise again by means of holy penance, and give our attention to leading a good life and to dying a holy death. May the Father of all mercy, the Son by his holy passion, and the Holy Spirit, source of peace, sweetness and love, fill us with their consolation. Amen."

Colette was canonized in 1807.

A prayer from Taizé

Eternal God, by sending Jesus you caused a new light to shine in the world. By giving his life, Jesus has placed this light in every human being. It does not dazzle, it is altogether inward - often we do not see it, but it never goes out. May the day come when its brightness brings all humanity together in your joy.

Prayers of Intercession for our parish

- Let us pray that as we start a New Year, the Holy Spirit will breathe new life in all areas of our lives, bringing us closer to Christ in hope and joy.
- Let us pray for those affected by the cost-of-living crisis and financial hardship. May our Warm Hub provide sanctuary and much needed support during these difficult times.
- In our Year of the Holy Spirit, let us pray that He will fill our hearts, our homes and our parish, bringing us closer to Christ in hope and joy.

Recent tweets by Pope Francis

- Let us pray together that the Lord might shake us from an individualism that excludes others, to awaken deaf hearts to the needs of their neighbour. Let us overcome the fear, the indifference that kills, the cynical disregard that condemns to death those on the fringes.
- Poor people are not "outside" our communities. They are brothers and sisters whose suffering we share, in order to alleviate their difficulties and marginalization, so that their lost dignity might be restored, and to ensure their necessary social inclusion.
- The lives of Jesus and the saints tell us that the seed of peace, in order to grow and bear fruit, must first die. Peace is not achieved by conquering or defeating someone, it is never violent, it is never armed.

February 20: Blesseds Jacinta and Francisco Marto (1910-1920; 1908-1919)

Between May 13 and October 13, 1917, three children, Portuguese shepherds from Aljustrel, received apparitions of Our Lady at Cova da Iria, near Fatima, a city 110 miles north of Lisbon. At that time, Europe was involved in an extremely bloody war. Portugal itself was in political turmoil, having overthrown its monarchy in 1910; the government disbanded religious organizations soon after.

At the first appearance, Mary asked the children to return to that spot on the thirteenth of each month for the next six months. She also asked them to learn to read and write and to pray the rosary “to obtain peace for the world and the end of the war.” They were to pray for sinners and for the conversion of Russia, which had recently overthrown Czar Nicholas II and was soon to fall under communism. Up to 90,000 people gathered for Mary’s final apparition on October 13, 1917.

Less than two years later, Francisco died of influenza in his family home. He was buried in the parish cemetery and then re-buried in the Fatima basilica in 1952. Jacinta died of influenza in Lisbon, offering her suffering for the conversion of sinners, peace in the world and the Holy Father. She was re-buried in the Fatima basilica in 1951. Their cousin, Lucia dos Santos, became a Carmelite nun and was still living when Jacinta and Francisco were beatified in 2000. Sister Lucia died five years later. The shrine of Our Lady of Fatima is visited by up to 20 million people a year.

The Church is always very cautious about endorsing alleged apparitions, but it has seen benefits from people changing their lives because of the message of Our Lady of Fatima. Prayer for sinners, devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and praying the rosary—all these reinforce the Good News Jesus came to preach.

The Witness of Four Older People from St Luke’s Gospel

Zaccariah

“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and redeemed his people. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of his servant David ... Salvation from our enemies and from the hand of those who hate us – to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath he swore to our father Abraham: to rescue us from the hands of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

Elizabeth (on hearing she was to have their longed-for child):

“The Lord has done this for me”.

And, when she met Mary at the Visitation:

“Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favoured that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leapt for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord had said will be accomplished!”

Simeon:

“Now, Master, you can let your servant go in peace, just as you promised; because my eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared for all the nations to see: a light to enlighten the pagans and the glory of your people Israel.”

Anna:

“She came by at that moment and began to praise God: and she spoke of the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem.”