Saint Catharine of Bologna

Saint of the Day for March 28

(September 8, 1413 - March 9, 1463)

Saint Catharine of Bologna’s Story
Some Franciscan saints led fairly public lives; Catharine represents the saints who served the Lord in obscurity.

Born in Bologna, Catharine was related to the nobility in Ferrara, and was educated at court there. She received a liberal education at the court and developed some interest and talent in painting. In later years as a Poor Clare, Catharine sometimes did manuscript illumination and also painted miniatures.

At the age of 17, she joined a group of religious women in Ferrara. Four years later, the whole group joined the Poor Clares in that city. Jobs as convent baker and portress preceded her selection as novice mistress.

In 1456, she and 15 other sisters were sent to establish a Poor Clare monastery in Florence. As abbess, Catharine worked to preserve the peace of the new community. Her reputation for holiness drew many young women to the Poor Clare life. She was canonized in 1712. The Liturgical Feast of Saint Catharine of Bologna is May 9.

Reflection
Appreciating Catharine’s life in a Poor Clare monastery may be hard for us. “It seems like such a waste,” we may be tempted to say. Through prayer, penance, and charity to her sisters, Catharine drew close to God. Our goal is the same as hers, even if our paths are different.
Women’s History Month in the United States grew out of a weeklong celebration of women’s contributions to culture, history and society organized by the school district of Sonoma, California, in 1978. Presentations were given at dozens of schools, hundreds of students participated in a “Real Woman” essay contest and a parade was held in downtown Santa Rosa.

A few years later, the idea had caught on within communities, school districts and organizations across the country. In 1980, President Jimmy Carter issued the first presidential proclamation declaring the week of March 8 as National Women’s History Week. The U.S. Congress followed suit the next year, passing a resolution establishing a national celebration. Six years later, the National Women’s History Project successfully petitioned Congress to expand the event to the entire month of March.

This year, the 2018 Women’s History Month programming is focused on the theme, “Nevertheless She Persisted”, a theme that easily describes the Catholic women saints of the Roman Catholic Church. This booklet is dedicated in honor of the Catholic women saints whose feast days are celebrated at the daily masses of St. Mary’s University. The following saints will be honored and included in the prayers of the faithful during the month of March.

All information on the Saints in this booklet has been taken from the Franciscan Media website “Saint of the Day” resource. https://www.franciscanmedia.org/source/saint-of-the-day

**Saint Catherine of Genoa**

**Saint of the Day for March 26**

(1447 – September 15, 1510)

Saint Catherine of Genoa’s story

Going to confession one day was the turning point of Catherine’s life. When Catherine was born, many Italian nobles were supporting Renaissance artists and writers. The needs of the poor and the sick were often overshadowed by a hunger for luxury and self-indulgence. Catherine’s parents were members of the nobility in Genoa. At 13, she attempted to become a nun but failed because of her age. At 16, she married Julian, a nobleman who turned out to be selfish and unfaithful. For a while she tried to numb her disappointment by a life of selfish pleasure.

One day in confession she had a new sense of her own sins and how much God loved her. She reformed her life and gave good example to Julian, who soon turned from his self-centered life of distraction. Julian’s spending, however, had ruined them financially. He and Catherine decided to live in the Pammatone, a large hospital in Genoa, and to dedicate themselves to works of charity there. After Julian’s death in 1497, Catherine took over management of the hospital.

She wrote about purgatory which, she said, begins on earth for souls open to God. Life with God in heaven is a continuation and perfection of the life with God begun on earth. Exhausted by her life of self-sacrifice, Catherine died September 15, 1510, and was canonized in 1737.

**Reflection**

Regular confession and frequent Communion can help us see the direction—or drift—of our life with God. People who have a realistic sense of their own sinfulness and of the greatness of God are often the ones who are most ready to meet the needs of their neighbors. Saint Catherine began her hospital work with enthusiasm and was faithful to it through difficult times because she was inspired by the love of God, a love which was renewed in her by the Scriptures and the sacraments.
Mary is the virgin-mother who fulfills Isaiah 7:14 in a way that Isaiah could not have imagined. She is united with her son in carrying out the will of God. (Psalm 40:8-9; Hebrews 10:7-9; Luke 1:38).

Together with Jesus, the privileged and graced Mary is the link between heaven and earth. She is the human being who best, after Jesus, exemplifies the possibilities of human existence. She received into her lowliness the infinite love of God. She shows how an ordinary human being can reflect God in the ordinary circumstances of life. She exemplifies what the Church and every member of the Church is meant to become. She is the ultimate product of the creative and redemptive power of God. She manifests what the Incarnation is meant to accomplish for all of us.

**Reflection**

Sometimes spiritual writers are accused of putting Mary on a pedestal and thereby, discouraging ordinary humans from imitating her. Perhaps such an observation is misguided. God did put Mary on a pedestal and has put all human beings on a pedestal. We have scarcely begun to realize the magnificence of divine grace, the wonder of God’s freely given love. The marvel of Mary—even in the midst of her very ordinary life—is God’s shout to us to wake up to the marvelous creatures that we all are by divine design.

**Saint Katharine Drexel**

**Saint of the Day for March 3**

(November 26, 1858 -March 3, 1955)

**Katharine Drexel’s Story**

If your father is an international banker and you ride in a private railroad car, you are not likely to be drawn into a life of voluntary poverty. But if your mother opens your home to the poor three days each week and your father spends half an hour each evening in prayer, it is not impossible that you will devote your life to the poor and give away millions of dollars. Katharine Drexel did that.

Born in Philadelphia in 1858, she had an excellent education and traveled widely. As a rich girl, Katharine also had a grand debut into society. But when she nursed her stepmother through a three-year terminal illness, she saw that all the Drexel money could not buy safety from pain or death, and her life took a profound turn.

Katharine had always been interested in the plight of the Indians, having been appalled by what she read in Helen Hunt Jackson’s *A Century of Dishonor*. While on a European tour, she met Pope Leo XIII and asked him to send more missionaries to Wyoming for her friend Bishop James O’Connor. The pope replied, “Why don’t you become a missionary?” His answer shocked her into considering new possibilities.

Back home, Katharine visited the Dakotas, met the Sioux leader Red Cloud and began her systematic aid to Indian missions. Katharine Drexel could easily have married. But after much discussion with Bishop O’Connor, she wrote in 1889, “The feast of Saint Joseph brought me the grace to give the remainder of my life to the Indians and the Colored.” Newspaper headlines screamed “Gives Up Seven Million!”
After three and a half years of training, Mother Drexel and her first band of nuns—Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored—opened a boarding school in Santa Fe. A string of foundations followed. By 1942, she had a system of black Catholic schools in 13 states, plus 40 mission centers and 23 rural schools. Segregationists harassed her work, even burning a school in Pennsylvania. In all, she established 50 missions for Indians in 16 states.

Two saints met when Mother Drexel was advised by Mother Cabrini about the “politics” of getting her order’s Rule approved in Rome. Her crowning achievement was the founding of Xavier University in New Orleans, the first Catholic university in the United States for African Americans.

At 77, Mother Drexel suffered a heart attack and was forced to retire. Apparently her life was over. But now came almost 20 years of quiet, intense prayer from a small room overlooking the sanctuary. Small notebooks and slips of paper record her various prayers, ceaseless aspirations, and meditations. She died at 96 and was canonized in 2000.

Reflection

Saints have always said the same thing: Pray, be humble, accept the cross, love and forgive. But it is good to hear these things in the American idiom from one who, for instance, had her ears pierced as a teenager, who resolved to have “no cake, no preserves,” who wore a watch, was interviewed by the press, traveled by train, and could concern herself with the proper size of pipe for a new mission. These are obvious reminders that holiness can be lived in today’s culture as well as in that of Jerusalem or Rome.

Annunciation of the Lord

Saint of the Day for March 25

The Story of the Annunciation of the Lord

The feast of the Annunciation, now recognized as a solemnity, was first celebrated in the fourth or fifth century. Its central focus is the Incarnation: God has become one of us. From all eternity God had decided that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity should become human.

Now, as Luke 1:26-38 tells us, the decision is being realized. The God-Man embraces all humanity, indeed all creation, to bring it to God in one great act of love.

Because human beings have rejected God, Jesus will accept a life of suffering and an agonizing death: “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15:13).

Mary has an important role to play in God’s plan. From all eternity, God destined her to be the mother of Jesus and closely related to him in the creation and redemption of the world. We could say that God’s decrees of creation and redemption are joined in the decree of Incarnation.

Because Mary is God’s instrument in the Incarnation, she has a role to play with Jesus in creation and redemption. It is a God-given role. It is God’s grace from beginning to end. Mary becomes the eminent figure she is only by God’s grace. She is the empty space where God could act. Everything she is she owes to the Trinity.
young women joining her. Her rented home in Paris became the training center for those accepted for the service of the sick and poor. Growth was rapid and soon there was the need for a so-called “rule of life,” which Louise herself, under the guidance of Vincent, drew up for the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul.

Monsieur Vincent had always been slow and prudent in his dealings with Louise and the new group. He said that he had never had any idea of starting a new community, that it was God who did everything. “Your convent,” he said, “will be the house of the sick; your cell, a hired room; your chapel, the parish church; your cloister, the streets of the city or the wards of the hospital.” Their dress was to be that of the peasant women. It was not until years later that Vincent de Paul would finally permit four of the women to take annual vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. It was still more years before the company would be formally approved by Rome and placed under the direction of Vincent’s own congregation of priests.

Many of the young women were illiterate. Still it was with reluctance that the new community undertook the care of neglected children. Louise was busy helping wherever needed despite her poor health. She traveled throughout France, establishing her community members in hospitals, orphanages and other institutions. At her death on March 15, 1660, the congregation had more than 40 houses in France. Six months later Vincent de Paul followed her in death. Louise de Marillac was canonized in 1934 and declared patroness of social workers in 1960.

**Reflection**

In Louise’s day, serving the needs of the poor was usually a luxury only fine ladies could afford. Her mentor, Saint Vincent de Paul, wisely realized that women of peasant stock could reach poor people more effectively, and the Daughters of Charity were born under her leadership. Today, that order—along with the Sisters of Charity—continues to nurse the sick and aging and provide refuge for orphans.

### Saint Mary Ann of Jesus of Paredes

**Saint of the Day for March 6**

(October 31, 1618 – May 26, 1645)

Saint Mary Ann of Jesus of Paredes’ Story

Mary Ann grew close to God and his people during her short life. The youngest of eight, Mary Ann was born in Quito, Ecuador, which had been brought under Spanish control in 1534. She joined the Secular Franciscans and led a life of prayer and penance at home, leaving her parents’ house only to go to church and to perform some work of charity. She established in Quito a clinic and a school for Africans and indigenous Americans. When a plague broke out, she nursed the sick and died shortly thereafter. She was canonized by Pope Pius XII in 1950.

**Reflection**

Francis of Assisi overcame himself and his upbringing when he kissed the man afflicted with leprosy. If our self-denial does not lead to charity, the penance is being practiced for the wrong reason. The penances of Mary Ann made her more sensitive to the needs of others and more courageous in trying to serve those needs.
Saints Perpetua and Felicity

Saint of the Day for March 7
(d. 203)

Saints Perpetua and Felicity’s Story

“When my father in his affection for me was trying to turn me from my purpose by arguments and thus weaken my faith, I said to him, ‘Do you see this vessel—waterpot or whatever it may be? Can it be called by any other name than what it is?’ ‘No,’ he replied. ‘So also I cannot call myself by any other name than what I am—a Christian.’” So writes Perpetua: young, beautiful, well-educated, a noblewoman of Carthage in North Africa, mother of an infant son and chronicler of the persecution of the Christians by Emperor Septimius Severus. Perpetua’s mother was a Christian and her father a pagan. He continually pleaded with her to deny her faith. She refused and was imprisoned at 22.

In her diary, Perpetua describes her period of captivity: “What a day of horror! Terrible heat, owing to the crowds! Rough treatment by the soldiers! To crown all, I was tormented with anxiety for my baby…. Such anxieties I suffered for many days, but I obtained leave for my baby to remain in the prison with me, and being relieved of my trouble and anxiety for him, I at once recovered my health, and my prison became a palace to me and I would rather have been there than anywhere else.”

Despite threats of persecution and death, Perpetua, Felicity—a slavewoman and expectant mother—and three companions, Revocatus, Secundulus and Saturninus, refused to renounce their Christian faith. For their unwillingness, all were sent to the public games in the amphitheater. There Perpetua and Felicity were beheaded, and the others killed by beasts.

Saint Louise de Marillac

Saint of the Day for March 15
(August 12, 1591 – March 15, 1660)

Saint Louise de Marillac’s Story

Born near Meux, France, Louise lost her mother when she was still a child, her beloved father when she was but 15. Her desire to become a nun was discouraged by her confessor, and a marriage was arranged. One son was born of this union. But Louise soon found herself nursing her beloved husband through a long illness that finally led to his death.

Louise was fortunate to have a wise and sympathetic counselor, Francis de Sales, and then his friend, the bishop of Belley, France. Both of these men were available to her only periodically. But from an interior illumination she understood that she was to undertake a great work under the guidance of another person she had not yet met. This was the holy priest Monsieur Vincent, later to be known as Saint Vincent de Paul.

At first, he was reluctant to be her confessor, busy as he was with his “Confraternities of Charity.” Members were aristocratic ladies of charity who were helping him nurse the poor and look after neglected children, a real need of the day. But the ladies were busy with many of their own concerns and duties. His work needed many more helpers, especially ones who were peasants themselves and therefore, close to the poor and able to win their hearts. He also needed someone who could teach them and organize them.

Only over a long period of time, as Vincent de Paul became more acquainted with Louise, did he come to realize that she was the answer to his prayers. She was intelligent, self-effacing, and had physical strength and endurance that belied her continuing feeble health. The missions he sent her on eventually led to four simple
Blessed Angela Salawa
Saint of the Day for March 12
(September 9, 1881 – March 12, 1922)

Blessed Angela Salawa’s Story
Angela served Christ and Christ’s little ones with all her strength. Born in Siepraw, near Kraków, Poland, she was the 11th child of Bartłomiej and Ewa Salawa. In 1897, she moved to Kraków where her older sister Therese lived. Angela immediately began to gather together and instruct young women domestic workers. During World War I, she helped prisoners of war without regard for their nationality or religion. The writings of Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross were a great comfort to her.

Angela gave great service in caring for soldiers wounded in World War I. After 1918, her health did not permit her to exercise her customary apostolate. Addressing herself to Christ, she wrote in her diary, “I want you to be adored as much as you were destroyed.” In another place, she wrote, “Lord, I live by your will. I shall die when you desire; save me because you can.”

At her 1991 beatification in Kraków, Pope John Paul II said: “It is in this city that she worked, that she suffered and that her holiness came to maturity. While connected to the spirituality of Saint Francis, she showed an extraordinary responsiveness to the action of the Holy Spirit” (L’Osservatore Romano, volume 34, number 4, 1991).

Reflection
Humility should never be mistaken for lack of conviction, insight or energy. Angela brought the Good News and material assistance to some of Christ’s “least ones.” Her self-sacrifice inspired others to do the same.

Felicity gave birth to a girl a few days before the games commenced. Perpetua’s record of her trial and imprisonment ends the day before the games. “Of what was done in the games themselves, let him write who will.” The diary was finished by an eyewitness.

Reflection
Persecution for religious beliefs is not confined to Christians in ancient times. Consider Anne Frank, the Jewish girl who with her family, was forced into hiding and later died in Bergen-Belsen, one of Hitler’s death camps during World War II. Anne, like Perpetua and Felicity, endured hardship and suffering and finally death because she committed herself to God. In her diary, Anne writes, “It’s twice as hard for us young ones to hold our ground, and maintain our opinions, in a time when all ideals are being shattered and destroyed, when people are showing their worst side, and do not know whether to believe in truth and right and God.”
Saint Frances of Rome

Saint of the Day for March 9

(1384 – March 9, 1440)

Saint Frances of Rome’s Story

Frances’ life combines aspects of secular and religious life. A devoted and loving wife, she longed for a lifestyle of prayer and service, so she organized a group of women to minister to the needs of Rome’s poor.

Born of wealthy parents, Frances found herself attracted to the religious life during her youth. But her parents objected and a young nobleman was selected to be her husband.

As she became acquainted with her new relatives, Frances soon discovered that the wife of her husband’s brother also wished to live a life of service and prayer. So the two, Frances and Vannozza, set out together—with their husbands’ blessings—to help the poor.

Frances fell ill for a time, but this apparently only deepened her commitment to the suffering people she met. The years passed, and Frances gave birth to two sons and a daughter. With the new responsibilities of family life, the young mother turned her attention more to the needs of her own household.

The family flourished under Frances’ care, but within a few years a great plague began to sweep across Italy. It struck Rome with devastating cruelty and left Frances’ second son dead. In an effort to help alleviate some of the suffering, Frances used all her money and sold her possessions to buy whatever the sick might possibly need. When all the resources had been exhausted, Frances and Vannozza went door to door begging. Later, Frances’ daughter died, and the saint opened a section of her house as a hospital. Frances became more and more convinced that this way of life was so necessary for the world, and it was not long before she requested and was given permission to found a society of women bound by no vows.

They simply offered themselves to God and to the service of the poor. Once the society was established, Frances chose not to live at the community residence, but rather at home with her husband. She did this for seven years, until her husband passed away, and then came to live the remainder of her life with the society—serving the poorest of the poor.

Reflection

Looking at the exemplary life of fidelity to God and devotion to her fellow human beings which Frances of Rome was blessed to lead, one cannot help but be reminded of Saint Teresa of Calcutta, who loved Jesus Christ in prayer and also in the poor. The life of Frances of Rome calls each of us not only to look deeply for God in prayer, but also to carry our devotion to Jesus living in the suffering of our world. Frances shows us that this life need not be restricted to those bound by vows.