SANCTI SCRIPTURAE SACRAE

Saints of the Bible

Apart from the Blessed Virgin and the Prophets, Holy Scripture is full of men and women whom the Church venerates as saints: those who received Christ, followed Him, stood at His Cross, buried Him, and first preached Him. Feasts follow the traditional Roman calendar and Martyrology.

"Therefore we also having so great a cloud of witnesses over our head…" — Hebrews 12:1

SPOUSE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

St Joseph

SCRIPTURE Mt 1–2; Lk 1–2

FEAST 19 Mar · 1 May

A just man of the house of David, chosen as virginal spouse of Mary and foster-father of the Son of God. Warned in dreams, he protected the Holy Family on the flight into Egypt and raised Our Lord at Nazareth. Tradition holds he died in the arms of Jesus and Mary.

Patron of: Universal Church, fathers, workers, a happy death

THE FORERUNNER

St John the Baptist

SCRIPTURE Lk 1; Mt 3, 11, 14; Jn 1

FEAST 24 Jun · 29 Aug

Son of Zachary and Elizabeth, sanctified in his mother's womb when Mary visited. He preached penance at the Jordan, baptised Christ, and pointed Him out: "Behold the Lamb of God." Beheaded by Herod Antipas for rebuking his unlawful marriage. Our Lord called him the greatest born of women.

Patron of: Baptism, the Knights of Malta, monks

PARENTS OF THE BAPTIST

Sts Zachary & Elizabeth

SCRIPTURE Lk 1

FEAST 5 Nov

An aged, childless priest and his wife, "both just before God." Zachary was struck dumb for doubting Gabriel, then sang the *Benedictus*. Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Ghost, greeted Mary with words now part of the Hail Mary: "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb."

Patron of: Expectant mothers, the childless

PARENTS OF OUR LADY · TRADITION

Sts Joachim & Anne

SCRIPTURE Protoevangelium of James

FEAST 16 Aug · 26 Jul

Not named in Scripture but honoured since the early Church. Tradition tells of their long childlessness, their prayer, and the birth of Mary, whom they presented in the Temple. Their names come from the 2nd-century Protoevangelium; their cult is ancient in East and West.

Patron of: Grandparents, mothers, Christian families

WITNESSES AT THE PRESENTATION

Sts Simeon & Anna

SCRIPTURE Lk 2:25–38

The just old man Simeon took the Child in his arms and sang the *Nunc dimittis*, still prayed every night at Compline, and foretold the sword that would pierce Mary's soul. The widow Anna, a prophetess who never left the Temple, gave thanks and spoke of Him to all awaiting redemption.

Patron of: The elderly, widows, perseverance in prayer

APOSTLE TO THE APOSTLES

St Mary Magdalene

SCRIPTURE Lk 8:2; Mk 16; Jn 20

FEAST 22 Jul

Freed by Christ of seven devils, she followed and served Him, stood beneath the Cross, and was the first to see the Risen Lord. Latin tradition (St Gregory the Great) identifies her with the penitent woman of Luke 7 and with Mary of Bethany; Provençal tradition places her last years at Sainte-Baume.

Patron of: Penitents, contemplatives, converts

THE HOUSEHOLD OF BETHANY

Sts Martha, Mary & Lazarus

SCRIPTURE Lk 10:38–42; Jn 11–12

FEAST 29 Jul (Martha)

Friends with whom Jesus loved to stay. Martha served, Mary sat at His feet and chose "the best part," and Lazarus was raised after four days in the tomb, a sign of the coming Resurrection. Tradition sends them to Provence; Lazarus is honoured as bishop of Marseilles (or, in the East, of Kition in Cyprus).

Patron of: Martha: cooks, housekeepers, hospitality

THE GOOD THIEF

St Dismas

SCRIPTURE Lk 23:39–43

FEAST 25 Mar

Crucified beside Christ, he rebuked his companion, confessed his guilt, and begged: "Lord, remember me when thou shalt come into thy kingdom." He received the only canonisation spoken by Our Lord Himself: "This day thou shalt be with me in paradise." His name comes from the apocryphal Acts of Pilate.

Patron of: Prisoners, the dying, repentant sinners

THE HOLY FACE · TRADITION

St Veronica

SCRIPTURE Sixth Station of the Cross

Pious tradition tells that a woman of Jerusalem wiped the face of Jesus on the road to Calvary, and His image remained on the cloth: the *vera icon*, "true image." The Veil of Veronica is venerated at St Peter's in Rome, where it is shown on Passion Sunday.

Patron of: Photographers, laundresses, devotion to the Holy Face

THE CENTURION AT THE CROSS

St Longinus

SCRIPTURE Mt 27:54; Jn 19:34

FEAST 15 Mar

Tradition gives this name to the soldier who opened Christ's side with a lance, from which flowed blood and water, and to the centurion who confessed: "Indeed this was the Son of God." Converted, he is said to have been martyred in Cappadocia. The Holy Lance relic is kept at St Peter's.

Patron of: Soldiers, those with eye ailments

WHO BURIED THE LORD

Sts Joseph of Arimathea & Nicodemus

SCRIPTURE Jn 3; 19:38–42; Mk 15:43

FEAST 17 Mar · 3 Aug

Two members of the Sanhedrin and secret disciples. Nicodemus came to Jesus by night and heard of being "born again of water and the Spirit." After the Crucifixion, Joseph boldly asked Pilate for the Body and laid it in his own new tomb; Nicodemus brought a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes.

Patron of: Undertakers, funeral directors

THE PROTOMARTYR

St Stephen

SCRIPTURE Acts 6–7

FEAST 26 Dec

One of the first seven deacons, "full of grace and fortitude." Accused before the Sanhedrin, he saw the heavens opened and Jesus standing at God's right hand. Stoned outside Jerusalem, he prayed for his killers as Saul of Tarsus looked on. The first to shed his blood for Christ.

Patron of: Deacons, stonemasons

SON OF CONSOLATION

St Barnabas

SCRIPTURE Acts 4, 9, 11–15

FEAST 11 Jun

A Levite from Cyprus who sold his field for the Church. He vouched for the newly converted Saul and travelled with him on the first missionary journey. Called an Apostle by St Luke, he is said to have been stoned to death at Salamis in Cyprus, holding St Matthew's Gospel.

Patron of: Cyprus, peacemakers

EVANGELISTS

Sts Mark & Luke

SCRIPTURE Acts 12; Col 4:14; 2 Tim 4:11

FEAST 25 Apr · 18 Oct

Mark, disciple of St Peter, wrote down Peter's preaching and founded the Church of Alexandria, where he was martyred; his symbol is the lion. Luke, "the most dear physician," companion of St Paul, wrote the Gospel and the Acts; tradition calls him the first painter of Our Lady. His symbol is the ox.

Patron of: Mark: Venice, notaries · Luke: physicians, artists

DISCIPLES OF ST PAUL

Sts Timothy & Titus

SCRIPTURE 1–2 Timothy; Titus; Acts 16

FEAST 24 Jan · 6 Feb

Paul's "beloved sons" in the faith, who received the Pastoral Epistles. Timothy, raised in the faith by his mother Eunice and grandmother Lois, became bishop of Ephesus and was martyred there. Titus organised the Church of Crete as its first bishop.

Patron of: Timothy: those with stomach ailments · Titus: Crete

TENTMAKERS AND HELPERS OF PAUL

Sts Aquila & Priscilla

SCRIPTURE Acts 18; Rom 16:3–5

FEAST 8 Jul

A Jewish couple expelled from Rome who welcomed Paul into their home and trade at Corinth. They instructed the eloquent Apollos "more diligently" in the way of God and hosted a church in their house. Paul says they "laid down their own necks" for his life.

Patron of: Married couples, catechists

THE FIRST FLOWERS OF THE MARTYRS

The Holy Innocents

SCRIPTURE Mt 2:16–18; Jer 31:15

FEAST 28 Dec

The baby boys of Bethlehem slain by Herod in his attempt to kill the newborn King. The Church honours them as martyrs, who confessed Christ "not by speaking, but by dying." Rachel weeping for her children, as Jeremias foretold.

Patron of: Babies, children, the unborn

MARY OF CLEOPHAS, SALOME, JOANNA, SUSANNA

The Holy Women

SCRIPTURE Lk 8:3; Mk 15:40; 16:1

Women who ministered to Christ from their means, stood by the Cross when most of the Apostles had fled, and came at dawn with spices to anoint His Body. The East honours them as the Myrrh-bearers; Salome was the mother of the Apostles James and John.

Patron of: Women's works of charity

Holy Ones of the Old Covenant

The Church has always honoured the just of Israel who awaited the Redeemer in the Limbo of the Fathers.

Abel

The first just man and first martyr; his sacrifice is named in the Roman Canon.

Melchisedech

King of Salem and priest of the Most High, who offered bread and wine (Gen 14).

Abraham

Our father in faith, named with Abel and Melchisedech in the Canon of the Mass.

Job

Model of patience in suffering, commemorated on 10 May in the Roman Martyrology.

Tobias

The faithful exile who buried the dead, healed by the Archangel Raphael.

The Holy Maccabees

Seven brothers and their mother, martyred for God's law (2 Mac 7) — 1 Aug.

Scripture and Tradition

Most of these saints appear by name in the Bible. A few (Joachim and Anne, Veronica, the name of Longinus and of Dismas) come to us from Sacred Tradition and the ancient liturgy, which the Church receives with the same reverence as the written Word.

Why honour them?

They are the first members of the Church Triumphant who walked with Christ in the flesh. Their example shows every state of life — fathers and mothers, penitents, soldiers, priests, and even a thief — made holy by meeting Him.