

CHRIST THE KING PARISH

First Sunday Supplement:

Saints of the Month: February 2018



February 1: St. Brigid of Ireland

A few years after St. Patrick arrived in Ireland, a little girl named Brigid was born. Her father was an Irish lord named Dubthac and her mother was named Brocca. As Brigid grew up, she deepened her love for Jesus. She looked for him in the poor and often brought food and clothing to them. It has been said that one day she gave away a whole pail of milk. Then she began to worry about what her mother would say. She prayed to the Lord to make up for what she had given away. When she got home, her pail was full again.

Brigid was very pretty. Her father thought that it was time for her to marry. However, she had decided in her heart to give herself entirely to God. She did not want to marry anyone. When she learned that her beauty was the reason young men were attracted to her, she made an unusual request to God. She asked that her beauty be taken from her. God granted her request. Seeing that his daughter was no longer pretty, Brigid's father gladly agreed when Brigid asked to become a nun.

The girl did follow her call to religious life. She even started a convent so that other young women could become nuns, too. It seems that after she consecrated her life to God in the convent, a miracle happened. Brigid became beautiful again! She reminded people of the Blessed Mother because she was so lovely and gentle. Some called her the "Mary of the Irish." St. Brigid died in 525.



Reflection: This saint wanted to give herself entirely to God. Is there an area in your life that you are keeping from God? What would it be like if you gave it to him?

February 4: St. Jane Valois

St. Jane was the daughter of King Louis XI of France. She was born in 1464. Since the king wanted a son, he was very disappointed when Jane was born. He did not even want his little daughter to live at the palace because she was deformed. When the princess was just five years old, she was sent to live with other people. Despite the way she was treated by her own father, Jane was good and gentle with everyone. She was convinced that Jesus and Mary loved her. Jane also believed that the Lord would use her to do good in his name. And she was right.

When she grew up, Jane decided that she did not want to marry. She had given herself to Jesus and his Blessed Mother. But her father ignored her personal choice. He forced her to marry the duke of Orleans. Jane was a devoted wife for twenty-two years. After the duke became king, however, he sent Jane to live by herself in a far-off township. The queen did not let herself become resentful. Instead, she exclaimed: "God be praised! He has permitted this that I may serve him better than I have up until now."

Jane lived a prayerful life. She practiced penances and acts of kindness. She gave all her money to the poor. She even started an order of sisters called the Sisters of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. She spent the rest of her life joyfully for Jesus and his Mother. St. Jane died in 1505. She was proclaimed a saint by Pope Pius XII in 1950.



Reflection: Let us pray for the gift of seeing hardships as opportunities to strengthen our faith in Christ, and may we respond to every hardship by giving it an eternal value.

February 7: Blessed Giles Mary

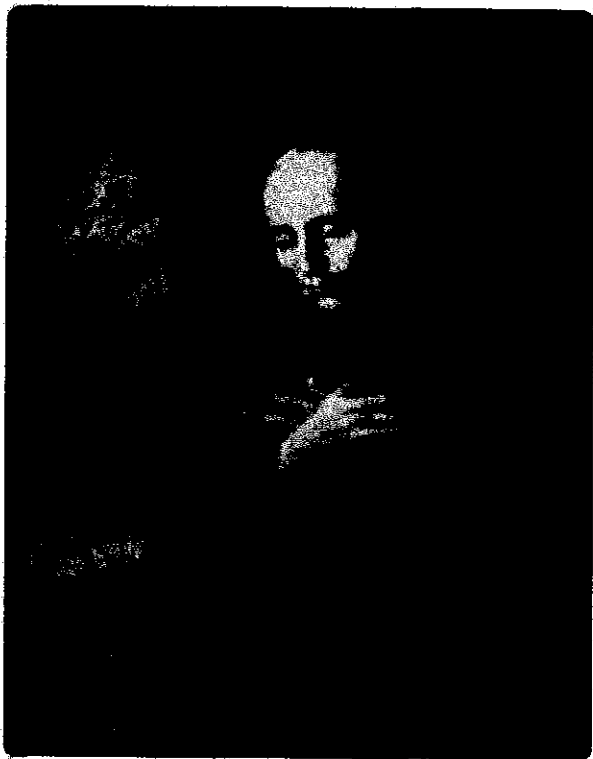
His complete name as a religious was Brother Giles Mary-of-St.-Joseph. Brother Giles Mary was born near Taranto, Italy, in 1729. As a child he learned rope-making and was good at his trade.

When he was twenty-five, Giles became aware of a call from the Lord to enter a religious order and give his life to God. Giles entered the Friars of St. Peter Alcantara in Naples. And what extraordinary things did he do to be proclaimed "blessed"? He was singled out for such an honor because of two virtues that guided his whole religious life. The virtues were simplicity and humility.

Brother Giles Mary tried to approach each day with an attitude of wanting to serve God. He was grateful for his calling and it showed. Brother Giles walked up and down the halls where he

lived. He was the porter. He opened the door promptly and with a smile every time a visitor pulled the rope that rang the bell. He took gentle care of the poor, the homeless, the ill who came to that door. He was given the responsibility of distributing the food and alms that his community could spare. Brother Giles Mary loved to do that. No matter how much he gave to needy people, so much remained for others. He knew it was St. Joseph who did this. After all, St. Joseph had once taken such good care of Jesus and Mary. Brother Giles Mary spread devotion to St. Joseph throughout his whole religious life.

After a life of faithfulness to God and his chosen vocation, Brother Giles Mary-of-St.-Joseph died on February 7, 1812. He was declared "blessed" by Pope Pius IX in 1888.



Reflection: *How does my life reflect a spirit of generosity and trust in God's providence for me?*

February 8: St. Jerome Emiliani

Jerome was born in 1486, the son of a noble family of Venice, Italy. He was a good soldier and was put in command of a fortress high in the mountains. While defending this post from an invasion by some troops of Maximilian I, he was taken prisoner and thrown into a dungeon.

Chained in that miserable prison, he began

to regret the careless way he had been living. He was sorry that he had thought so little about God. He was sorry for wasting several years in immoral living. Jerome promised the Blessed Mother that he would change his life if she would help him. His prayers were answered and he escaped to safety. It is said that Jerome, with a grateful heart, went straight to a church. He hung his prison chains in front of Mary's altar.

The young man eventually became a priest. He was devoted to works of charity. His special concern was for the many homeless orphan children he found in the streets. He rented a house for them, and gave them clothes and food. He instructed them in the truths of the faith.

St. Jerome started a religious congregation of men called the Company of the Servants of the Poor. They would care for the poor, especially orphans, and would teach youth. He did all he could for the peasants, too. He would work with them in the fields. St. Jerome would talk to them of God's goodness while he worked by their side. He died while caring for plague victims in 1537. He was proclaimed a saint by Pope Benedict XIV in 1767.

St. Jerome Emiliani was a gift to the people of his time and to all the Church. By totally turning his life around, he became an image of the love of God. He gave hope to those who were poor and abandoned. In 1928, Pope Pius XI named him the patron saint of orphans and homeless children.

Reflection: *St. Jerome was truly an image of the love of God. How can we witness to our love for God?*



February 12: St. Meletius

Meletius was called to shepherd the Church in the fourth century. The Roman persecutions were over and Constantine had recognized Christianity as a legal religion in 315. What, then, could have made Bishop Meletius' ministry so difficult? Storm clouds had gathered within the Church. Some considered themselves Catholic, some Arian. The Arian heresy denied that Jesus is divine. Some people believed the error because things were not so clear then.

Bishop Meletius loved the Church and was true to Jesus. He believed that Jesus is God and realized that the Church would have to speak up clearly about who Jesus is. Meletius became the bishop of Antioch in 361. The Arians were not pleased. For twenty years, Meletius was a patient, loving bishop. But his life was made difficult by people who did not accept him. He often had to go into hiding because other men were claiming to be the bishop of his diocese. But St. Meletius was the true bishop and would patiently return as soon as possible. When Emperor Valens died in 378, the Arians stopped their persecution.

In 381, the famous Council of Constantinople, a large Church meeting, was called. The bishops wanted to talk about important truths of our faith. Bishop Meletius opened the Church Council meetings and directed the sessions. Then, to the sadness of all the bishops, he died right there at one of the meetings. Great saints like John Chrysostom and Gregory of Nyssa attended his funeral along with all the bishops at the Council. The people of Constantinople poured in to the church as well. St. Gregory of Nyssa delivered the funeral homily. He spoke of a meek, Christ-like bishop whom everyone loved. And he was right: everyone who loved the Church loved St. Meletius.

St. Gregory spoke of Bishop Meletius' calmness and radiant smile, his fatherly voice and gentle touch. St. Meletius died on February 12, 381.



Reflection: *"It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." (Galatians 2:20)*



February 16: St. Onesimus

Onesimus lived in the first century. He was a slave who robbed his master and ran away to Rome. In Rome he went to see the great apostle, St. Paul, who was a prisoner for his faith. Paul received Onesimus with the kindness and love of a good father. Paul helped the young man realize he had done wrong to steal. But more than that, he led Onesimus to believe in and accept the Christian faith.

After Onesimus became a Christian, Paul sent him back to his master, Philemon, who was Paul's friend. But Paul did not send the slave back alone and defenseless. He "armed" Onesimus with a brief, powerful letter. Paul hoped his letter would set everything right for his new friend, Onesimus. Paul wrote to Philemon: "I plead with you for my own son, for Onesimus. I am sending him back to you. Welcome him as though he were my very heart."

That touching letter is in the New Testament of the Bible. Philemon accepted Paul's letter and Paul's advice. When Onesimus returned to his master, he was set free. Later, he went back to St. Paul and became his faithful helper.

St. Paul made Onesimus a priest and then a bishop. The former slave dedicated the rest of his life to preaching the Good News that had changed his life forever. It is believed that during the persecutions, Onesimus was brought in chains to Rome and stoned to death.

Reflection: What area of my life needs the healing of forgiveness and acceptance?

February 19: St. Barbatus

Barbatus was born in Benevento, Italy, in 612. He was given a Christian upbringing and was good and devout. He took his faith seriously and especially liked to read the Bible. As soon as he was old enough, he was ordained a priest. Later he was made a pastor. But his life as a pastor was not easy. Some people did not like him to tell them how to live. St. Barbatus was encouraging them to lead better lives. He reminded them to be sorry for their sins. Some of the people were angry. They persecuted him and finally forced him to leave.

The young priest felt bad. He went back to Benevento where he had been born. He was received with great joy. There were challenges in that city, too. Many converts to Christianity still kept pagan idols in their homes. They found it hard to destroy their good luck charms. They believed in magic powers. St. Barbatus preached against such superstitions. But the people hung on to their false gods. The saint warned them that because of this sin, their city would be attacked by enemies and it was. Afterward, the people gave up their error and peace returned. St. Barbatus was made bishop. He continued his work to convert his people. He died on February 29, 682, at the age of seventy.

Reflection: *Each human heart was created by God to be united with him in heaven. What does it feel like to be loved by God?*

February 20: St. Eucherius

St. Eucherius was born in Orleans, France, in the eighth century. He received a Christian upbringing and education. A sentence from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians made a big impression on him: "This world as we see it is passing away" (1 Corinthians 7:31). It made Eucherius realize that our lives on this earth are very short. He realized that heaven and hell last forever. He decided to seek the joys of heaven by living for God alone.

In 714, St. Eucherius left his rich home and entered a Benedictine abbey. There he spent seven years in close union with God. After the death of his uncle, the bishop of Orleans, in 721, Eucherius was chosen to take his place. Eucherius was then only twenty-five and he was very humble. He did not want to leave his beloved abbey. With tears, he begged to be allowed to remain alone with God in the monastery. But finally, he gave in for love of obedience. Eucherius became a holy, wise bishop. He did much good to his priests and people.

A powerful political figure, Charles Martel, used to take some of the Church's money to support his wars. Because Bishop Eucherius told him that was wrong, Charles had him taken prisoner. He was exiled first to Cologne, then to a fort near Liege. But the governor in whose charge Martel had placed the bishop was moved by Eucherius' meekness toward his enemies. Some time later, the governor quietly released the bishop from prison and sent him to a monastery. Here the saint spent all his time peacefully in prayer until his death in 743.

Reflection: *Today, we might consider reflecting on the words of St. Paul, which made a big impression on St. Eucherius: "This world as we see it is passing away" (1 Corinthians 7:31).*

February 22: Chair of St. Peter

St. Peter was the prince of the apostles and the first pope. Jesus said to him, "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18). After Jesus went back to heaven, St. Peter preached the Gospel. He guided the small but growing Christian community. At first, Peter labored in Jerusalem and in Antioch, two big cities of the east. Later, he went to preach the Gospel in Rome, the capital of the world. What chance did Peter have to perform his great task for the Lord? His Master had been crucified but then had risen. Who would believe that? The evils of pagan Rome would drown his voice no matter how dedicated he may be. But the Holy Spirit was alive in Peter. He courageously took up the ministry Jesus had left him. Never again would Peter deny his Lord. Never again would Peter put his own personal well-being before the good of the Church.

The feast of St. Peter's Chair at Rome reminds us that St. Peter started the Christian community in that city. The special chair is a symbol of the authority that was given to him by Jesus. Kings of old sat on thrones and ruled. Peter's chair is a symbol of his authority from Jesus to rule the Church.

St. Peter was martyred for the faith, but down through the ages there has always been a bishop of Rome. He is the pope. The pope rules the whole Church, as St. Peter did, in Jesus' name. We call the successor of St. Peter the Holy Father.

Reflection: Take a moment today to offer thanks to God for all the good that is done through the leadership of the Church.

February 23: St. Polycarp

Polycarp was born between the years 75 and 80. He became a Christian when the followers of Jesus were still few. In fact, Polycarp was a disciple of one of the original apostles, St. John. All that Polycarp learned from St. John he taught to others. Polycarp became a priest and then bishop of Smyrna in present-day Turkey. He was Smyrna's bishop for many years. The Christians recognized him as a holy, brave shepherd. Christians in Polycarp's time faced persecution and death under Emperor Marcus Aurelius. Someone betrayed Polycarp to the authorities. When his captors came to arrest him, he invited them first to share a meal with him. Then he asked them to let him pray a while. The judge tried to force Bishop Polycarp to save himself from death by cursing Jesus. "I have served Jesus all my life," answered the saint, "and he has never done me any wrong. How can I curse my King who died for me?" The soldiers tied St. Polycarp's hands behind his back. The old bishop was then placed on a burning pile. But the fire did not harm him. One of the soldiers then stabbed a lance into his heart. And so, in the year 155, Polycarp died a martyr. He went to be forever with the Divine Master he had served so bravely.

Reflection: "For eighty-six years I have served Jesus Christ and he has never abandoned me" -St. Polycarp

February 25: St. Caesarius of Nazianzen

Caesarius lived in the fourth century in present-day Turkey. His father was the bishop of Nazianzen. At that time bishops and priests could marry. Caesarius' brother is St. Gregory of Nazianzen, the close friend of St. Basil. Besides being a saint, Gregory is an important writer from the early Church. His books are still read today.

Both Caesarius and Gregory received an excellent education. But while Gregory wanted to be a priest, Caesarius wanted to be a medical doctor. Both went to the schools that would help them accomplish their goals.

Caesarius completed his studies in medicine at Constantinople. He soon became a well-known and trusted physician. In fact, Emperor Constantius, who lived in Constantinople, wanted Caesarius to be his personal physician. Caesarius thanked the emperor but gently refused. He wanted to go back to Nazianzen, his home city.

Some time later, however, Caesarius was again called to serve the emperor at Constantinople. This time it was the man known to history as Julian the apostate. An apostate was someone who gave up his Christian faith. This man had several official orders against the Christians. He was willing to exempt Caesarius, however, since he was such a good doctor. Julian tried to coax the doctor into giving up his faith. Caesarius was offered positions, bribes and privileges. Caesarius' father and brother advised him to refuse the offers. They suggested he return home to practice medicine.

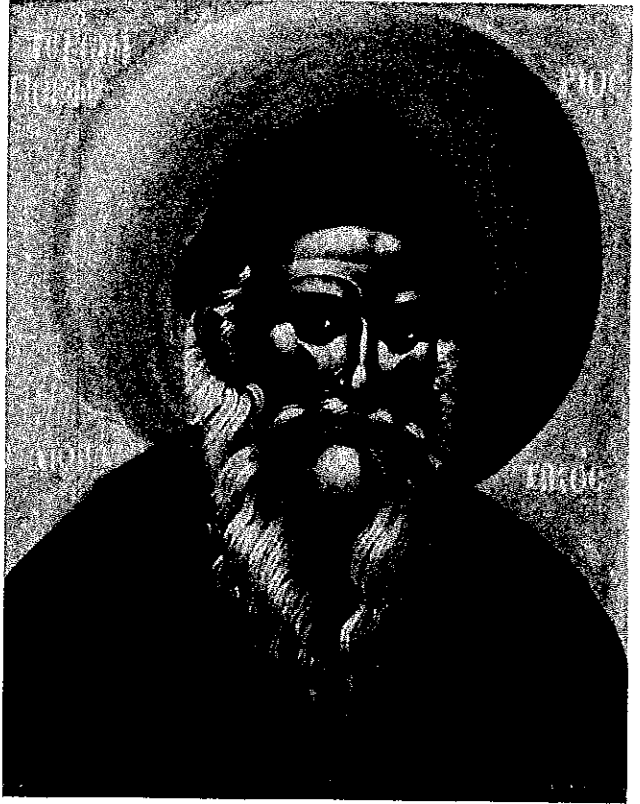
In 368, Caesarius was almost killed in an earthquake. He escaped unharmed but was badly shaken by the incident. He felt that God was telling him to live a life of prayer away from the noise and flattery of the court. Caesarius gave away his possessions to the poor. He began to live a quiet, prayerful life. St. Caesarius died shortly after in 369. The homily at his funeral was preached by his brother, St. Gregory.



Reflection: How do I see my particular vocation as a way of serving and loving God in his people?

February 26: St. Porphyry

Porphyry was born in the fifth century to wealthy, noble parents. He left his family when he was twenty-five. Porphyry went to Egypt to enter a monastery. After five years, he made a trip to Jerusalem. He wanted to visit the places where Jesus had actually been while he was on earth. Porphyry was very impressed by the Holy Land. His love for Jesus made him more deeply aware of the sufferings of the poor. At home in Thessalonica he had never known what it was like to be poor. Now he still owned all that his parents had left him. But not for long. He asked his friend Mark to go to Thessalonica and sell everything for him. After three months, Mark returned with the money. Porphyry then gave it away to those who really needed it.



At the age of forty he became a priest and was given care of the relics of the true cross of Jesus. Porphyry was then made bishop of Gaza. He worked generously to lead the people to believe in Jesus and to accept the faith. But his labors were slow and required heroic patience. The majority of inhabitants at that time were locked into pagan practices and superstitions. Although Porphyry was able to stop many of these practices, he had enemies who made him suffer greatly.

Others who were Christians loved and admired him deeply. They prayed and sacrificed for him. They begged the Lord to preserve him. Bishop Porphyry spent many years strengthening the Christian community. He proclaimed all that Christianity stood for. He died in 420.

Reflection: Have I trusted God in all my undertakings, believing that he watches over me? Are there some parts of my life still controlled by fear?

February 28: St. Romanus and St. Lupicinus

These French saints were brothers who lived in the fifth century. As a youth, St. Romanus was admired by everyone for his goodness. He had a great desire to become a saint. Since he saw that in the world it was too easy to forget about God, Romanus decided to live as a hermit. First, he asked the advice of a holy monk, and then he started off. He took a book with him. It was *The Lives of the Fathers of the Desert* by Cassian. He also took seeds to plant and a few tools. With these supplies, he went into the forests of the Jura mountains between Switzerland and France. Romanus found a huge fire tree and settled beneath it. He spent his time praying and reading his book. He also planted and cared for his garden, quietly enjoying nature. Soon afterward, his brother Lupicinus joined him. Romanus and Lupicinus were very different. Romanus was hard on himself. However, he was kind and gentle and full of understanding with others. Lupicinus was hard and severe with himself and usually the same with others. Yet he meant well. The two brothers understood each other and got along fine.



Many men came to join them. They wanted to be monks, too, so they built two monasteries. Romanus was the abbot of one and Lupicinus was the abbot of the other. The monks lived simple, hard lives. They prayed much and made sacrifices cheerfully. They performed penances to strengthen themselves in their vocation. They worked very hard farming to grow their food and kept silent all the time. They chose to live like this because their main concern was growing close to God. Their lifestyle helped them toward their spiritual goal.

St. Romanus died in 460. His younger brother, St. Lupicinus, died in 480.

St. Romanus and St. Lupicinus were both saints, even though they had different personalities.

Reflection: *God invites people of all different personalities to greater friendship with him. What must I do to develop a loving relationship with Jesus?*

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