



Coloma Catholic Life.



Day for Life – 20th June



Bishop John Sherrington, the Lead Bishop for Life Issues for the Church in England and Wales, has written to his brother bishops about this year's *Day for Life*.

Day for Life is an annual celebration of the intrinsic value and dignity of every human person from conception to natural death.

Message

We celebrate *Day for Life* on Sunday 20 June 2021. This day, inaugurated by Saint John Paul II, presents an opportunity to pray for the gift of life from conception to natural death, to raise awareness of the precious gift of life, and to support the work of protecting life in its most vulnerable stages through the annual collection. This assists pro-life organisations who raise awareness, engage in parliamentary work and pastoral outreach.

Global Pandemic

The fragility of life and the reality of death has been brought into sharp focus during the Covid-19 pandemic. In the UK alone, more than 126,000 people have died from Covid-19. Yet in the face of such suffering and death, we have also witnessed the extraordinary dedication of healthcare professionals and their loving care for the sick and dying. We too have each made sacrifices for the greater good during this pandemic. These acts of heroic love are a powerful testimony to the fundamental dignity of the



Pope Francis

Prayer Intention for June:

The Beauty of Marriage.

'Let us pray for young people who are preparing for marriage with the support of a Christian community: may they grow in love, with generosity, faithfulness and patience.'

Video:

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2021-06/pope-francis-june-2021-prayer-intention-beauty-marriage.html>

Tweet: 'How often we leave the Lord in a corner, at the bottom of the boat of life, to wake him only in a moment of need! Let us ask for the grace of a faith that never tires of seeking the Lord, of knocking at the door of his heart.'

Liturgical Year

Week: 12th of Ordinary Time, Year B
Colour: Green

human person and to the respect owed to each life, particularly through proper care and love in the last moments of life.

Assisted Dying

Against this backdrop of loving care, we are now faced with the very real threat of the legalisation of ‘assisted suicide’ in our country. It is not a question of ‘if’ this challenge will come, it is now a question of ‘when?’ There is now a Private Members Bill in the House of Lords on so-called ‘Assisted Dying’ and it is only a matter of time before the issue is back in the House of Commons.

This year’s theme for *Day for Life* focuses on assisted suicide and the respect owed to life. The online resources are produced to inform Catholics about this threat to life and to share with people our response to such a threat: a true compassion as the just response to the immense value of the human person.

(From Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England & Wales)

Resources can be found here: <https://www.dayforlife.org>

Summertime 2021



Southwark is pleased to announce that this annual activity for young people is back and commend it to boy and girl altar servers aged 10 - 15 years within Southwark Diocese.

The Summertime 2021 Altar Servers' Summer break will take place at the Oratory School in Reading and will open with Mass celebrated by Archbishop John Wilson. Activities will include talks, discussions, prayer, daily Mass, as well as sport, Thorpe Park and Swimming.

A coach will be provided from St Anselm’s, Dartford and the cost of £165 covers all board and lodging, a visit to Thorpe Park and swimming.

For more details please contact Fr Stephen Boyle, Chaplain to the Guild of St. Stephen. Email: dartford@rcaos.org.uk

[Summertime 2021 Application Form](#)

Religious Festivals

Midsummer Solstice, 21st June



Solstice, or Litha means a stopping or standing still of the sun. It is the longest day of the year and the time when the sun is at its maximum elevation.

This date has had spiritual significance for thousands of years as humans have been amazed by the great power of the sun. The Celts celebrated with bonfires that would add to the sun's energy, Christians placed the feast of St John the Baptist towards the end of June and it is also the festival of Li, the Chinese

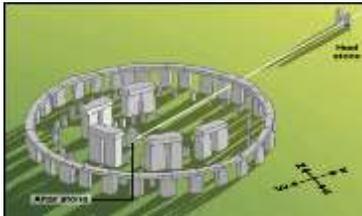
Goddess of light.

Like other religious groups, Pagans are in awe of the incredible strength of the sun and the divine powers that create life. For Pagans this spoke in the Wheel of the Year is a significant point. The Goddess took over the earth from the horned God at the beginning of spring and she is now at the height of her power and fertility.

For some Pagans the Summer Solstice marks the marriage of the God and Goddess and see their union as the force that creates the harvest's fruits. This is a time to celebrate growth and life but for Pagans, who see balance in the world and are deeply aware of the ongoing shifting of the seasons it is also time to acknowledge that the sun will now begin to decline once more towards winter.

Summer Solstice rituals

When celebrating midsummer, Pagans draw on diverse traditions. In England thousands of Pagans and non-Pagans go to places of ancient religious sites such as Stonehenge and Avebury to see the sun rising on the first morning of summer. Revellers typically gather at Stonehenge, the ancient stone circle in Wiltshire, to see the sun rise. The Heel Stone and Slaughter Stone, set outside the main circle, align with the rising sun.



The remains of Stonehenge lie on a sacred site dating back 5,000 years, predating the Druids. It is believed to have been used as an astronomical calculator, as certain stones align with key dates in the seasons.

At dawn on 21 June - the summer solstice - the central Altar stone aligns with the outer Heel stone and the rising sun.

Saints of the Week

St Aloysius Gonzaga, Religious – 21st June.

Born into an aristocratic family in 1568, St. Aloysius Gonzaga was destined to succeed his father's noble position. As such, he was enrolled in a boot camp at age 5 (where he gained a certain vocabulary much to his mother and tutor's dismay). In addition to witnessing the political turmoil, depravity and violence of Renaissance society, Gonzaga also lived through the murder of his two brothers.



But Gonzaga's life began to change when he started to develop a relationship with the Lord after he started to suffer from kidney problems around age 8. Suddenly, he had plenty of time available for spiritual reading and prayer. The following year, Gonzaga took a vow of chastity. He also became greatly inspired by reading about Jesuit missionaries to India and found himself drawn to that vocation.

After Gonzaga made known his calling to serve as a missionary priest, those closest to him tried to dissuade him. Seeing the futility of their attempts to steer him away from priesthood, Gonzaga's family thought they could convince him to stay away from a religious order with the promise to secure his advancement as a bishop. None of that seemed attractive or tempting to him. Instead, he renounced his inheritance and set out to serve Christ and the Church in the Society of Jesus. Of course, Gonzaga knew there was a greater inheritance awaiting him: "It is better to be a child of God than king of the whole world," he said. Interestingly, Gonzaga was encouraged and supported by two great saints: St. Charles Borromeo (1538-1584) — from whom Gonzaga received his first holy Communion — and St. Robert Bellarmine. The latter was Gonzaga's own Jesuit confrere, but more importantly, an influential spiritual father and confessor.

Gonzaga gradually came to know the connection between love and suffering, which is bound up in Christ's cross. "He who wishes to love God does not truly love him if he has not an ardent and constant desire to suffer for his sake," he said. Gonzaga's ill health worsened not long after he joined the Jesuits in 1585. He was burdened by other ailments, in addition to kidney disease, including recurring headaches and difficulty

sleeping. In 1590, he received a vision from St. Gabriel the Archangel, in which he learned he would die within the year ahead.

The next year a plague struck Rome. Despite his own infirmities, Gonzaga was quick to offer help to the epidemic's victims. Carrying them off the streets and to the hospital established by the Jesuits, Gonzaga brought consolation and comfort to the sick and dying. Not only did he bathe and care for the sick, but he did his best to tend to their spiritual needs as well. He was forbidden by superiors from continuing the work after many of his Jesuit confreres were afflicted by the disease.

Later, Gonzaga was allowed to minister at a hospital for those without infectious diseases, or so it was thought. After serving a man who turned out to be suffering from the plague, Gonzaga took ill himself. Although it appeared he might recover, his fever and cough worsened, and his health steadily deteriorated over the course of several weeks. The Jesuit scholastic Gonzaga lived what St. Robert Bellarmine taught: "The school of Christ is the school of love."

St. Robert Bellarmine assisted Gonzaga spiritually in his last trial, regularly bringing him the sacraments. He recalled that Gonzaga did not fear death, but that "he longed to be freed from his flesh and to come to Christ." Gonzaga died on June 21, 1591, with the name of Jesus on his lips.

Bellarmino worked to promote his disciple's beatification, which came just 14 years after Gonzaga's death, extolling his virtues, especially his patience and humility. Their bodies rest near each other in the Roman church of St. Ignatius of Loyola.

Sts. John Fisher, Bishop and Thomas More, martyrs – 22nd June.



St John Fisher was born in Beverley, in Yorkshire, in 1469. He studied theology at the University of Cambridge, and had a successful career there, finally becoming chancellor of the University and bishop of Rochester: unusually for the time, he paid a great deal of attention to the welfare of his diocese.

He wrote much against the errors and corruption into which the Church had fallen and was a friend and supporter of great humanists such as Erasmus of Rotterdam; but he was greatly opposed to Lutheranism, both in its doctrine and in its ideas of reform.

He supported the validity of King Henry VIII's marriage to Catherine of Aragon, and for this he was briefly imprisoned. When the King had divorced Catherine, married Anne Boleyn, and constituted himself the supreme Head of the Church in England, John Fisher refused to assent. He was imprisoned in the Tower of London on a charge of treason, and on 22 June 1535, a month after having been made a Cardinal by the Pope, he was executed. He was so ill and weak that he had to be carried in a chair to the place of execution.

He was the only bishop to oppose Henry VIII's actions, on the grounds that they were a repudiation of papal authority, but even so he avoided direct confrontation with the other bishops, not holding himself up as a

hero or boasting of his coming martyrdom: *I condemn no other man's conscience: their conscience may save them, and mine must save me.*

St Thomas More was born in London, the son of a judge, and himself became an eminent lawyer. He married twice and had four children. He was a humanist and a reformer, and his book, *Utopia*, depicting a society regulated by the natural virtues, is still read today.

Thomas More was a close friend of King Henry VIII. As a judge, he was famous for his incorruptibility and impartiality, and he was made Lord Chancellor – the highest legal position in England – in 1529.

When Henry VIII demanded a divorce from Catherine of Aragon, Thomas More opposed him. He resigned the chancellorship in 1532 and retired from public life; but he could not retire from his reputation, and so it was demanded that he take an oath to support the Act of Succession, which effectively repudiated papal religious authority. He refused and was imprisoned in the Tower of London. After the execution of John Fisher, he was tried on the charge of high treason for denying the King's supreme headship of the Church, found guilty, and sentenced to death. He went to his execution, on 6 July 1535, with a clear conscience and a light heart; he told the spectators that he was still "the king's good servant – but God's first," and carefully adjusted his beard before he was beheaded.

He wrote a number of devotional works, some of the best of them while in prison awaiting trial. He fought his fight without acrimony, telling his judges that he wished that "we may yet hereafter in Heaven merrily all meet together to everlasting salvation."

St Etheldreda, Abbess – 23rd June.

Etheldreda (Æthelthryth, Ediltrudis, Audrey) (d.679), queen, foundress and abbess of Ely. She was the daughter of Anna, King of East Anglia, and was born, probably, at Exning, near Newmarket in Suffolk. At an early age she was married (c.652) to Tondberht, ealdorman of the South Gyrwas, but she remained a virgin. On his death, c.655, she retired to the Isle of Ely, her dowry. In 660, for political reasons, she was married to Egfrith, the young king of Northumbria who was then only 15 years old, and several years younger than her. He agreed that she should remain a virgin, as in her previous marriage, but 12 years later he wished their marital relationship to be normal. Etheldreda, advised and aided by Wilfred, bishop of Northumbria, refused. Egfrith offered bribes in vain. Etheldreda left him and became a nun at Coldingham under her aunt Ebbe (672) and founded a double monastery at Ely in 673.



Etheldreda restored an old church at Ely, reputedly destroyed by Penda, pagan king of the Mercians, and built her monastery on the site of what is now Ely Cathedral. After its restoration in 970 by Ethelwold it became the richest abbey in England except for Glastonbury.

Etheldreda's monastery flourished for 200 years until it was destroyed by the Danes. It was refounded as a Benedictine community in 970.

Etheldreda died c.680 from a tumour on the neck, reputedly as a divine punishment for her vanity in wearing necklaces in her younger days; in reality it was the result of the plague which also killed several of her nuns, many of whom were her sisters or nieces. At St Audrey's Fair necklaces of silk and lace were sold, often of very inferior quality, hence the derivation of the word tawdry from St Audrey. 17 years after her death her body was found to be incorrupt: Wilfred and her physician Cynefrid were among the witnesses. The tumour on her

neck, cut by her doctor, was found to be healed. The linen cloths in which her body was wrapped were as fresh as the day she had been buried. Her body was placed in a stone sarcophagus of Roman origin, found at Grantchester and reburied. For centuries, Etheldreda's shrine was the focus for vast numbers of medieval pilgrims. It was destroyed in 1541, but a slate in the Cathedral marks the spot where it stood.

The Birthday of St John the Baptist – 24th June



“Dies natalis” means “birthday” or “anniversary” in Latin. For early Christians, “dies natalis” referred to a martyr’s date of death and its subsequent commemoration in the Church’s liturgy, most typically through the assigning of a feast day. Most saints, martyrs or otherwise, are commemorated on, or near, the date of their death, the date their body was transferred to its final resting place, or on another significant date in their lives—date of ordination, coronation as pope, consecration as nun, etc.

Besides Christ Himself, only two saints’ birthdays are commemorated liturgically: The Virgin Mary’s on September 8, exactly nine months after the Feast of her Immaculate Conception; and Saint John the Baptist’s on June 24. Mary and John were both sanctified, or made holy, before they first opened their eyes to the light or ever gulped a mouthful of fresh air. A long span of years did not turn them into saints. God made them holy from the start. So, their lives are commemorated from the start, from their birthdays.

Only the Gospel of Saint Luke tells the details of John’s birth. John’s mother and father were Elizabeth and Zechariah. They were beyond the age for having children. Zechariah, a priest who served in the Temple in Jerusalem, was told one night by the Archangel Gabriel that Elizabeth would give birth to a boy they must name John. Zechariah was dumbfounded. Literally, when he disbelieved this annunciation, he was rendered speechless until the child’s birth. When his speech was finally restored, a torrent of praise gushed out in the canticle known as the Benedictus. It is prayed as part of the Breviary every single day at morning prayer by hundreds of thousands of priests and nuns the world over.

The celebration of the nativity of John the Baptist is perhaps the oldest liturgical feast day in all Christendom, much older than the Feast of Christmas itself. It was at one time celebrated with three distinct Masses—vigil, dawn, and daytime—just like Christmas still is. The beheading of John, celebrated on August 29, is of equally ancient origin. The oldest liturgical books even, incredibly, indicate that there was once a liturgical commemoration of the conception of John the Baptist celebrated nine months prior to his birth, on September 24. This feast is placed three months after the Annunciation, on March 25, because that gospel scene tells us that Elizabeth, John’s mother, was six months pregnant at the time. Three more months take us to June 24. Three related feast days line up beautifully: March 25, the Annunciation; June 24, the birth of John the Baptist; December 25, the birth of Christ. John’s birth foretells Christ’s birth. Although the historical chronology may not be exact, the dates show the theological interconnection among the three feasts.

All parents are naturally curious to discover the sex of their child in utero. Some allow themselves to be told the sex. Others wait in suspense. Elizabeth and Zechariah were told by a winged messenger of God Himself that they would have a boy. That little boy grew to be a man, a great man, who accepted death rather than swallow his words criticizing the powerful Herod Antipas. John ran ahead of Christ, clearing the ground so that the Lord’s pathway would be clear. This forerunner baptized the Christ, preached and prophesied like the Christ, fasted and prayed like the Christ, and died for the truth like the Christ. But he did not rise from the dead like the Christ.