

## Grapevine Prayer Diary Integrated Notes for April

Our lives are rooted in Easter (or 'Pascha' as it is called in Greek and Latin with Aramaic and Hebrew in the background), the Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (Who is at once both Second Adam and our True God), His Passing Over from death to life – now, celebrated as a moveable Feast which can fall on any Sunday of the solar year from 22 March to 25 April, and, so, more often falls in April than in March. In Israel the lunar calendar Feast of Passover then, on that first Easter, fell together with the seven-day solar week in a special way, so that we now celebrate Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday. The Church has continued to work with both lunar-calendar-based moveable feasts and solar-calendar-based fixed feasts.

A learned priest was asked in an interview in 2017 for some Lenten advice and answered, "along with an examination of conscience and Confession, spend each day with a different saint, reading a brief biography of each in the Catholic Encyclopaedia or in the Oxford Dictionary of Saints" – two of the bases of our monthly notes, here. So, we can easily attend to our exemplary sisters and brothers in the Body of Christ who have gone before, even while the great 'moveable' days related to Easter properly overshadow each saint's 'dies natalis', day of birth out of old earthly into new life, made possible by the Resurrection, which are more quietly attended to in relation to those greater days, when they coincide.

Among the less familiar 'moveable' days in the west are those connected with the Passion of Our Lord and the 'Arma Christi' (the 'Arms of Christ'), one name given to *the Instruments of the Passion*, the Holy Cross, Lance, Nails, and Crown of Thorns. These begin even before Lent, just after Septuagesima, and some are local – or even fixed, with, for example, a Feast of the Crown of Thorns kept on the Monday after Passion Sunday (the second before Easter) but by the Dominicans always on 24 April.

1 (in the East; 2, 3, 9, or 10 in the West): Mary of Egypt, a prostitute in Alexandria for 17 years from the age of 12; curious about a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, she 'worked her way' there on shipboard, but found herself mysteriously unable to enter a church, and praying, heard a voice tell her to pass over the Jordan to find rest: she did, living as a hermit in the desert for the rest of her life.

3: Richard of Chichester (1253), chancellor first of Oxford University and later to St. Edmund of Abingdon (1240: 16 Nov.) when he became Archbishop of Canterbury. After the death of St. Edmund, he became a priest (1242) and was soon elected Bishop of Chichester (1244), though church and state politicking delayed his taking full possession of that See for two years. He proved a model reforming bishop, strict with his clergy, promoting lay education and reverent liturgical celebration, generous in his charities, stern and merciful to sinners. He died in Dover while preaching a new Crusade to reopen the Holy Land to pilgrims.

4: Ambrose (397), born in Trier as son of the Praetorian Prefect of Gaul, had, in 374, been for four years Governor of Aemilia and Liguria with his seat at Milan, when, appealing for peace at the assembly convoked to elect the successor to the recently deceased occupant of the See, an Arian heretic, he was himself acclaimed bishop, though not yet baptized – and all was sorted out within a week (with 7 Dec., the day of his consecration, being his feast in the Roman and Eastern calendars). He defended orthodoxy against influential pagans and Arians alike, and was a great influence on St. Augustine, whom he baptized in 386. In 390, the Emperor Theodosius I submitted to his call to do public penance for the deaths of thousands in reprisal for the murder of the Governor of Salonika during rioting. He taught his people to sing hymns which he wrote himself, some of which are still

sung today, and Attwater says, 'He was the first teacher in the West successfully to make extensive use of hymns as a popular means of divine praise and of fostering right belief.'

Also, St. Isidore (636), who was educated by his oldest brother, St. Leander (c. 600: 27 Feb.) – a monk who befriended St. Gregory (604: 12 Mar.) while both were on missions to Constantinople, and who later became Archbishop of Seville, under whom another older brother, St. Fulgentius (after 619: 14 Jan.), became a Bishop. His older sister, St. Florentina (c. 612: 20 June) became a nun, for whom St. Leander wrote a book on the monastic life. St. Isidore succeeded St. Leander as Archbishop, ruling for 36 years, completing the work of converting the Visigothic rulers from the Arian heresy, and presiding over Councils which decreed the establishment of a cathedral school in every diocese. Noted for his charity to the poor, he is best known as a writer, among other things, completing the Mozarabic Missal and Breviary, writing a history of the Goths and Vandals, a book 'On the Wonders of Nature' which the Venerable Bede (735: variously 25, 26, 27 May) was translating into Old English at the time of his death, and, most influentially, his 'Etymologies', a sort of encyclopedia of the knowledge of his time. Dr. Farmer says he shares with St. Gregory the Great 'the unofficial title of "Schoolmaster of the Middle Ages".'

Also, St. Benedict (1589), who was the first-born child of Christopher and Diana who were both Christians and slaves, the descendants of slaves brought from Africa to San Fratello – a place named after St. Philadelphus (251: 10 May) – in Sicily. Christopher, responsible for supervising fields and flocks, never refused to help anyone in need – and so was falsely accused by jealous companions of wasting what he was responsible for. He and his wife lived as brother and sister – in part at the dread of any children being born slaves. Freed from the false accusation, they – and their first-born, should they have one – were also freed from slavery, and, in due time, St. Benedict was born, free. He followed his parents in doing good work and works of charity, and in patience when treated unjustly. On one such occasion, the leader of a group of independent Franciscan hermits, seeing this, said, 'before long you will hear great things of him', and invited him to join them, which he gladly did, becoming the cook of the group. When that leader died, St. Benedict was made his successor. When Pope Pius IV disbanded such independent communities, St. Benedict joined a monastery of the Order of Franciscan Friars Minor in Palermo, turning cook once more – though, yet again, he was later chosen their superior, and helped further reform the monastery. He subsequently became novice-master, and proved a healer as well, and was widely sought out as a religious counsellor, also after he once again returned to working in the kitchen. After his canonization in 1807, he came to be widely venerated in North America and in both Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking Latin America.

11 (also 18 Feb., 28 June, 10 Nov.): Leo I, 'the Great' (461), as deacon in Rome, corresponded with St. Cyril of Alexandria (444: 28 Jan., 9 Feb., 9 & 27 June) and St. John Cassian (435: 28/29 Feb., 23 July), who dedicated a treatise on the Incarnation to him. Sent by the Emperor to Gaul in 440 as peacemaker between two high officials, he there received word he had been elected Bishop of Rome. His letter (or 'Tome') on the Incarnation, sent to the Council of Chalcedon (451), met to consider Eutyches's teaching on it, became 'the basis of the council's declaration of orthodox doctrine on Christ's two natures' (Attwater) – of decisive importance ever since (though problematical for various 'non-Chalcedonian' Churches, such as the Coptic and Ethiopian, which, confessing the Nicene Creed, use a different theological language of how God and Man are One in Christ). The next year, he went in person to negotiate with Attila whose Huns had sacked Milan and were headed for Rome, persuading them to withdraw beyond the Danube. Sadly, his peacemaking skills did not prevail completely with Genseric and his Vandals in 455: they plundered the city for a fortnight, though he did prevail on

them not to destroy it or kill its inhabitants – however, they took many captive to Africa, to whom he was at least later able to send priests and alms. Hundreds of his letters and sermons survive. Dr. Farmer notes that, in *The Life and Times of St. Leo the Great* (1941), ‘Jalland described Leo’s character as one of indomitable energy, magnanimity, consistency, and devotion to duty.’

Also, St. Guthlac (714), of Mercian royal blood, who was a successful soldier from the age of 15, but gave it up at 24 to become a monk at Repton, a double monastery ruled by the Abbess Aelfrith. After a few years, he became a hermit in the Fens, something his sister St. Pega (719: 8 Jan.) did as well, giving her name to Peakirk (‘Pega’s church’). He became friends with some wild things, bore the thefts of crows and magpies, saying, ‘men ought to set an example of patience even to wild creatures’, but repelled demonic attacks with a scourge. Others settled near him, as disciples. When death approached, he sent for his sister, giving her his Psalter and scourge, which she later passed on to his disciples, who became the basis for a community which eventually became Crowland Abbey. He is the subject of a near-contemporary Latin life, and later Old English lives in prose and verse. Dr. Farmer says he ‘must be reckoned England’s most popular pre-Conquest hermit saint’ after St. Cuthbert (687: 20 Mar.).

16: Magnus (1116), son of a Viking ruler of the Orkneys, raided as a pirate until he converted to Christianity. King Magnus of Norway captured him and forced him to go along on further raids, but he defiantly remained in the ship, praying the Psalter, and later escaped to the court of King Malcolm of Scotland. He returned to the Orkneys to share the government with his cousin Haakon, but was murdered by him – according to the *Orkneyinga Saga* while praying for his murderers.

17 (also 14 July): Kateri Tekakwitha (1680) was the daughter of Tagaskouita, an Algonquin Christian woman, kidnapped in characteristic warfare between nations, and Kenneronkwa, a pagan chief of the Mohawks carrying her off. They and her younger brother were killed by smallpox when she was around four, and she left scarred, with impaired vision. Adopted by a paternal aunt and uncle, she became skilled and serviceable in farming, cooking, weaving, and working with leather and pelts. Trading with the Dutch, they were caught up in other characteristic warfare – between European nations, and successfully attacked and subdued by the French. During the treaty negotiations that ensued, when she was around 11, she made the acquaintance of French Jesuit missionaries, who were to be allowed continued access to their villages. In the words of Blanche Kelly, ‘From them she received her first knowledge of Christianity, but although she forthwith eagerly accepted it in her heart she did not at that time ask to be baptized.’ From around 13 on, she refused her family’s marriage plans for her. When she was around 18, the Jesuit Father Jacques de Lamberville visited her village, and she asked to be baptized – which she was, on Easter, 18 April 1676, taking the name ‘Catherine’ after St. Catherine of Siena (1380: 29 & 30 Apr.): ‘Kateri’ in Mohawk. Serviceable as she was, thereafter ‘she practised her religion unflinchingly in the face of almost unbearable opposition’ (Kelly) – for example, being accused of witchcraft by some fellow villagers. So, in 1677 she was helped to move from what is now New York state to a mission near Montreal. There, saying ‘For a long time my decision on what I will do has been made. I have consecrated myself entirely to Jesus, son of Mary’, she took a vow of chastity on the Feast of the Annunciation, 1679. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI at her canonization, ‘There she worked, faithful to the traditions of her people, although renouncing their religious convictions until her death at the age of twenty-four.’

19: Alphege (or ‘Alfheah’) (1012), Archbishop of Canterbury and its first great martyr. St. Dunstan appointed him Abbot of Bath, after he had been some years a hermit. In 984, he became Bishop of Winchester for 20 years until raised to Archbishop of Canterbury, with King Ethelred asking him to

parley with Danish raiders in 994, with tribute payments as one result, but the conversion of Anlaf and his true promise never to come again to England 'with warlike intent' as others. Held prisoner in Greenwich by other Danes after they had besieged Canterbury for 7 months, he refused to pay the huge ransom demanded and forbade his people to do so, either – which so infuriated his captors that they murdered him. He was buried at St. Paul's, London, but after the Danish King Cnut became King of England as well in 1016, he had St. Alphege's body translated to Canterbury in 1023.

21: Anselm (1109), a Lombard, moved from staying with his mother's family in Burgundy to study with Lanfranc at Bec Abbey, Normandy, where he eventually became a monk (c. 1060), then prior, and wrote his prayerful and philosophical *Monologion* ('A Monologue on the Reason for Faith') and *Proslogion* ('Discourse', originally entitled 'Faith seeking Understanding'), before becoming Abbot (1078). He became closely associated with Lanfranc again, who had become Archbishop of Canterbury in 1070, whom the English clergy wanted him to succeed on Lanfranc's death in 1089. King William II waited four years before giving his consent, and St. Anselm, in England for the refoundation of Chester Abbey, accepted. Fourteen years of various disputes with William II and his successor, Henry I, followed, with St. Anselm in exile 1097-1100 and 1103-07. Meanwhile, he wrote *Cur Deus Homo?* ('Why did God become Man?'); represented the Pope at the Council of Bari (1098) by the shrine of St. Nicholas (6 Dec.), most of whose remains had been brought there in 1087; and obtained a resolution against the slave trade at the Council of London in 1102. Finally, he returned for the Council of London in 1107 where, in the words of William Kent, 'The King relinquished the claim to invest bishops and abbots, while the Church allowed the prelates to do homage for their temporal possessions', and St. Anselm remained in England, reforming clerical discipline, establishing the new see of Ely, and extended recognition of the 'primacy' of Canterbury.

23: George, martyred in Lydda (modern 'Lod', in Israel; named 'Georgiopolis' after him in the Sixth century), was widely venerated in East and West – including in England by the Seventh century – long before any legend was told about him being, like St. Daniel the Prophet (21 July), a dragon slayer. During the First Crusade, a vision of Sts. George and Demetrius (8 Oct.) as soldier saints preceded the fall of Antioch to the Crusaders and Richard the Lionheart put himself and his army under St. George's protection. Edward III founded the Order of the Garter under his patronage (with the badge of red cross on white ground associated with him from at least the 14<sup>th</sup> c.), Henry V invoked him as England's patron while fighting in France in 1415, and St. George's Chapel at Windsor was redeveloped by Edward IV, Henry VII, and Henry VIII, repaired at the Restoration, and further developed by Queen Victoria.

25: Mark as author of the Gospel is usually identified with the references to 'Mark' in the Second Letter to Timothy 4:11, Philemon 24, Colossians 4:10 (as "cousin of Barnabas"), 1 Peter 5:13 (called "my son") and the 'John Mark' of Acts 12:12, 25; 13:13; and 15:37-39. St. Clement of Alexandria and Papias both regard St. Peter as the source of his Gospel, calling St. Mark his 'interpreter'. Eusebius reports that St. Mark is supposed to have been sent to Egypt to preach the Gospel and to have established churches in Alexandria. His purported relics were brought from there to Venice in 829, and he became the patron of the city.

27: Zita (also 'Citha' and, in England, 'Sitha': 1272), born near Lucca, entered domestic service there – for the rest of her life – at the age of 12, in the household of a wealthy weaver. Attwater writes, 'She was intensely devout and punctilious in her work, qualities which did not commend her to her fellow servants, and her lavish gifts of food to the poor embroiled her with her employer.' Her inner peace, patience, and respect and love for all despite any injustices done to her, eventually won all

over, and she was given responsibility over all the affairs of the house, and the freedom and time to visit the sick and those in prison. Such was her popularity, that Dante refers to Lucca by her name in the *Divine Comedy*, and Dr. Farmer notes there were 'chapels in her honour as far afield as Palermo and Ely', with depictions in murals, stained glass, and roodscreen carvings surviving in Oxfordshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Somerset, and Devon.

29: Catherine of Siena (1380), the youngest of a large family, was early devoted to a life of penance and prayer and experienced visions; becoming a Dominican tertiary, she lived at home, but as a hermit for some years, before going forth to nurse the sick, serve the poor, and preach repentance. Disciples gathered round her, Dominicans, Augustinians, and lay folk, men and women, noble and simple, young and old, and they travelled together, calling for reform and repentance ; never having learned to write, she entered into dictated correspondence with Italian princes and republics , and churchman – including Pope Gregory XI, in respectful but outspoken letters urging him to return to Rome from Avignon and embark on reform of the clergy and the administration of the Papal States, while ardently supporting his call for a new Crusade. When war broke out between Florence and the Holy See, she tried to mediate and make peace, though unsuccessfully. Gregory returned to Rome, and conflict – and soon died. Urban VI was quickly elected, but within half-a-year, so was a rival Pope and the 'Great Schism' began. St. Catherine both took Urban to task for his harshness ,and supported him in letters to cardinals and various European rulers insistently appealing to them to do the same.

30 (and translation feasts 1 Feb., 13 May, 14 Nov.): Erconwald (693), founded two monasteries, ruling Chertsey himself, while his sister, St. Ethelburga (c. 675: 11 Oct.), was Abbess of Barking. St. Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury (690: 19 Sept.), consecrated him Bishop of the East Saxons (with a diocese extending over Essex and Middlesex, and with King Ina of Wessex also calling him 'my bishop') , with his see in London. He helped in the reconciliation of St. Theodore and St. Wilfrid (709: 12 Oct.) in 690. Of the three claimants to his remains, Barking (where he died), Chertsey, and London, the last prevailed and he was buried in the cathedral of St. Paul, which he had enlarged. His shrine survived the fire of 1087, his relics were translated in November 1148, February 1326, and in a later year, in May, with his shrine constantly enriched by canons and merchants until well into the Fifteenth century, with miracles reported there until it was pillaged under Henry VIII, and he reburied in an unmarked grave. Dr. Farmer describes him as London's most important diocesan between its first, St. Mellitus (later third Archbishop of Canterbury; 624: 24 April), and St. Dunstan (also later Archbishop of Canterbury; 988: 19 May) 'and its principal saint in the Middle Ages.'

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