**Mary - Mother of Christ, Mother of the Church, Model the Lay Apostolate**

**Feast of the Assumption: August 15  
Feast of the Nativity of Mary: September 8**

Since the Virgin Mary's role in the mystery of Christ and the Spirit has been treated, it is fitting now to consider her place in the mystery of the Church. "The Virgin Mary . . . is acknowledged and honored as being truly the Mother of God and of the redeemer.... She is 'clearly the mother of the members of Christ' . . . since she has by her charity joined in bringing about the birth of believers in the Church, who are members of its head." "Mary, Mother of Christ, Mother of the Church."

Mary's role in the Church is inseparable from her union with Christ and flows directly from it. "This union of the mother with the Son in the work of salvation is made manifest from the time of Christ's virginal conception up to his death"; it is made manifest above all at the hour of his Passion.

After her Son's Ascension, Mary "aided the beginnings of the Church by her prayers." In her association with the apostles and several women, "we also see Mary by her prayers imploring the gift of the Spirit, who had already overshadowed her in the Annunciation."

### St. Jerome, Patron Saint ****Feast Day September 30**** (345-420)

Born in Aquilea, Dalmatia, Jerome was educated in Rome and became one of the great Church scholars. He had a dream telling him the way for him was through the gospels, and he devoted his life to studying the words of God. He became a hermit, studied Hebrew, Latin, Greek and Chaldaic, and wrote. He was ordained in Antioch and became secretary to Pope Damasus who directed Jerome to translate the scriptures from Greek into Latin. This job took him the rest of his life.

Jerome unlike other saints is frequently remembered for his bad temper. He was difficult to get along with, downright cantankerous. But he was brilliant - - St Augustine said of Jerome, "What Jerome is ignorant of, no mortal has ever known." When Pope Damasus died in 384 the saint lost his protector. He left Rome and traveled to Antioch.

Jerome wrote the "Vulgate" declared the official Latin test of the Bible for Catholics by the Council of Trent in the 16th Century, and used until the end of the 20th century. Pope John Paul II replaced it with the New Vulgate in 1979. Jerome also wrote many commentaries, which are sources of scriptural inspiration even today. St Jerome is best known as a scripture scholar and is a Doctor of the Church. He is the patron saint of librarians, students, as well as our church.

**St. Margaret of Scotland, Visit the Homeless**

**Feast Day June 10** (1045-1093)

In her position as queen, all Margaret's great influence was thrown into the cause of religion and piety. A synod was held, and among the special reforms instituted the most important were the regulation of the Lenten fast, observance of the Easter communion, and the removal of certain abuses concerning marriage within the prohibited degrees.

Her private life was given up to constant prayer and practices of piety. She founded several churches, including the Abbey of Dunfermline, built to enshrine her greatest treasure, a relic of the true Cross. Her book of the Gospels, richly adorned with jewels, which one day dropped into a river and was according to legend miraculously recovered, is now in the Bodleian library at Oxford. She foretold the day of her death, which took place at Edinburgh on the 16th of November on 1093, her body being buried before the high altar at Dunfermline.

**St. Helena, Give Drink to the Thirsty**

**Feast Day August 18** (250 - 330)

St. Helena was the mother of Constantine the Great. Born of humble parentage, St. Ambrose referred to her as an inn-keeper. She married Constantine Chlorus who eventually left her to re-marry. Constantine (junior) succeeded his father to the imperial court and summoned his mother Helena and conferred on her the title of Augusta. He ordered all to honor his mother of the sovereign and had coins struck bearing her effigy. Under her son's influence Helena became a devout servant of God. Helena is linked to the building of churches where the imperial court resided (Rome and Trier). In Palestine she brought homage and tribute to the King of Kings by having erected two churches one in Bethlehem near the Grotto of the Nativity and the other on the Mount of Ascension near Jerusalem.

Helena's generosity was such that she assisted not only individuals but entire communities. The poor and destitute were primary recipients of her charity. She visited churches everywhere with pious zeal and made rich donations. In fulfillment of the Savior's precept she brought forth abundant fruit in word and deed. Since the beginning of the fifth century, some ecclesiastical writers credit the finding of the Cross in the vicinity of Calvary to the work of St. Helena. Constantine was with her when she died at the age of 80 (approximately 330). In liturgical art she is depicted as an empress holding a cross.

**St. Joan of Arc, Counsel the Doubtful**

**Feastday May 30** (1412-1431)

St. Joan of Arc is the patroness of soldiers and of France. On January 6, 1412, Joan of Arc was born to pious parents of the French peasant class, at the obscure village of Domremy, near the province of Lorraine. At a very early age, she heard voices: those of St. Michael, St. Catherine and St. Margaret.

At first the messages were personal and general. Then at last came the crowning order. In May, 1428, her voices "of St. Michael, St. Catherine, and St. Margaret" told Joan to go to the King of France and help him reconquer his kingdom. For at that time the English king was after the throne of France, and the Duke of Burgundy, the chief rival of the French king, was siding with him and gobbling up evermore French territory.

After overcoming opposition from churchmen and courtiers, the seventeen year old girl was given a small army with which she raised the siege of Orleans on May 8, 1429. She then enjoyed a series of spectacular military successes, during which the King was able to enter Rheims and be crowned with her at his side.

In May 1430, as she was attempting to relieve Compiegne, she was captured by the Burgundians and sold to the English when Charles and the French did nothing to save her. After months of imprisonment, she was tried at Rouen by a tribunal presided over by the infamous Peter Cauchon, Bishop of Beauvais, who hoped that the English would help him to become archbishop.

Through her unfamiliarity with the technicalities of theology, Joan was trapped into making a few damaging statements. When she refused to retract the assertion that it was the saints of God who had commanded her to do what she had done, she was condemned to death as a heretic, sorceress, and adulteress, and burned at the stake on May 30, 1431. She was nineteen years old. Some thirty years later, she was exonerated of all guilt and she was ultimately canonized in 1920, making official what the people had known for centuries. Her feast day is May 30.

Joan was canonized in 1920 by Pope Benedict XV.

**Saint John and Saint Paul, Comfort the Sorrowful**

**Feast Day June 26** (Died Circa 362)

There is very little historical record of the lives of these martyrs. Tradition tells us that John and Paul lived in Rome during the reign of Julian the Apostate in the 4th century.

During this era, Christians gathered in secret at various homes to worship. The emperor discovered John and Paul, and he swiftly had them beheaded. They were then buried, in secret, beneath their homes. This act was considered a violation of Roman laws, which stated that burials had to take place outside the city's walls to prevent disease.

Devotion to John and Paul grew after their deaths, and church was built on the site of their graves a few years after their deaths. This church was elevated to the status of basilica by Pope Leo, and was nearly destroyed by Norman invaders in 1084. It was finally restored in the early 1700's.

Visitors to Rome still visit the church of Santi Giovanno e Paulo.

**St. Sebastian, Visit the Imprisoned**

**Feast Day January 20** (birth date unknown-died circa 288)

The Acts relate that he was an officer in the imperial bodyguard and had secretly done many acts of love and charity for his brethren in the Faith. When he was finally discovered to be a Christian, in 286, he was handed over to the Mauretanian archers, who pierced him with arrows; he was healed, however, by the widowed St. Irene. He was finally killed by the blows of a club. These stories are unhistorical and not worthy of belief.

The earliest mosaic picture of St. Sebastian, which probably belongs to the year 682, shows a grown, bearded man in court dress but contains no trace of an arrow. It was the art of the Renaissance that first portrayed him as a youth pierced by arrows. In 367, a basilica which was one of the seven chief churches of Rome, was built over his grave. The present church was completed in 1611 by Scipio Cardinal Borghese. His relics in part were taken in the year 826 to St. Medard at Soissons. Sebastian is considered a protector against the plague. Celebrated answers to prayer for his protection against the plague are related of Rome in 680, Milan in 1575, and Lisbon in 1599.

**St. Maria Goretti, Forgive All Injuries**

**Feast Day July 6** (1890 to 1902)

Born in 1890, Maria Goretti lived with her widowed mother and her siblings in a small Italian village near Anzio. In 1902, when she was just twelve years old, Maria was attacked by an eighteen-year-old neighbor, Alessandro Sarenelli. Sarenelli grabbed Maria and attempted to rape her.

As he attacked her, Maria told Alessandro that she would rather die than submit. He subsequently choked and stabbed her to death. Before she died, Maria forgave Alessandro.

Alessandro was soon captured and was sentenced to a lengthy jail term. During his early years in jail, Alessandro was unrepentant. This changed quickly after Maria appeared to him in a dream. In his dream, Alessandro saw a young girl holding a bouquet of lilies. She approached him, smiling, and handed him the flowers. As he took them, they turned into flames. The dream ended, but Alessandro's life as a repentant Christian was at its beginning.

After 27 years, Alessandro Sarenelli was released from prison. He rushed to Maria's mother, and begged her forgiveness. "If my daughter can forgive him, who am I to withhold forgiveness, " she said.

Maria Goretti was canonized a saint in 1950. Alessandro Sarenelli joined with the crowd in St. Peter's to celebrate the act of love and forgiveness that lead to her canonization. Maria Goretti is considered the patroness of young people and of purity. Her feast is celebrated on July 6.

**Saints Maris, Martha, Audifax, and Abachum, Bury the Dead**

**Feast Day February 19** (all died in 270)

Maris and his wife, Martha came to Rome with their sons, Audifax and Abachum during the reign of Emperor Claudius II. As passionate Christians, they sympathized with and helped the persecuted faithful, and buried the bodies of those killed for their beliefs. This made them vulnerable to revenge and they were seized and brought before a judge who, after finding they were unwilling to renounce their faith, condemned them to various tortures. Their final torture was final: Maris and his sons were beheaded and their bodies burned; Martha was thrown into a well. A Roman lady named Felicitas obtained the half-consumed remains of the father and sons and also the mother's body from the well, and had the sacred relics secretly kept in a catacomb, on the thirteenth before the Kalends of February (January 20th).

**St. Martin of Tours**

**Feast Day November 11** (316-397)

Martin was born in Sabaria (now Hungary) to pagan parents. At age 15 he was forced to serve in the army against his will. He became a Christian catechumen and was baptized at 18. He lived more like a monk than a soldier. One very cold day Martin came upon a poor beggar, moved by compassion he divided his coat in two and gave half to the poor man. The part he kept for himself became the famous relic of St. Martin's cloak. He refused the war bounty at age 23 stating, "I have served as a soldier; now let me serve Christ. Give the bounty to those who are going to fight. But I am a soldier of Christ and it is not lawful for me to fight."

After he was set free from the war he enrolled in the disciples of St. Hilary. He later became a monk and established the first French Monastery near Poitiers. The people of Tours demanded he become bishop. They tricked him into the city under the ruse of sick people in need; once there, reluctantly he became bishop. His brother bishops thought his unkempt appearance undignified for the office.

Martin fought paganism and pleaded for mercy to heretics (fought against putting heretics to death). Martin is one of the most popular saints and one of the first not to be a martyr. He died at the age of 81 from illness, ending a life of exemplary humility.

**St. Monica, Mother of St. Augustine, Pray for the Living and the Dead**

**Feast Day August 17** (322 to 387)

St. Monica was born and baptized a Christian in the year 322 in Ostia, Italy. She entered an arranged marriage to a pagan named Patricius. Monica's marriage was difficult; Patricius was bad-tempered and adulterous. In addition, his mother lived with them throughout most of their marriage. Monica bore these crosses silently; she did not tell others of her difficult marriage. Instead, she prayed constantly and fervently for her husband.

Their stormy marriage produced three children: Navigius, Perpetua, and Augustine. After years of persistent prayer, Monica's husband and mother-in-law converted to the Catholic faith in the year 370. Her children Perpetua and Navigius entered the religious life shortly thereafter.

Her son, Augustine, proved much more difficult. Unlike his siblings, he rejected a life of faith and instead pursued an immoral life filled with drinking and women. As she had done with her husband, Monica met the challenge of her son with great faith, praying so earnestly and persistently that priests were said to avoid her when she approached. After 17 years, Monica's faith was rewarded when Augustine was baptized by St. Ambrose in 387.

The conversion of St. Augustine produced some of the greatest writings in Church history. Much of what

we know about Monica comes from her son's writings. In his Confessions, Augustine writes that on her deathbed, Monica said to her son: "Bury my body wherever you will; let not care of it cause you any concern. One thing only I ask you, that you remember me at the altar of the Lord wherever you may be."

Monica is considered the patroness of married women and alcoholics. Her feast is celebrated on August 27th.

### St. Justin Martyr, Instruct the Ignorant

**Feast Day June 1** (100-165)

Martyr, philosopher, and defender of Christianity. He was born into a pagan family at Flavia Neopolis, or Nablus, in Palestine. At the age of thirty, he became a Christian and traveled to debate pagan philosophers, eventually going to Rome. There he was denounced and tried with Charita, Chariton, Euelpistus, Hierox, Liberianus, and Paeon. They were scourged and beheaded. Justin, also called "the Philosopher," was the first layman to serve as an apologist. His works include Apologies for the Christian Religion and Dialogue with the Jew Trypho. The records of Justin's trial are extant.

### St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Feed the Hungry

**Feast Day November 17** (1207 to 1231)

St. Elizabeth was the daughter of the King of Hungary. She chose a life of penance, simplicity, and self-discipline when a life of leisure and luxury could easily have been hers. This endeared her in the hearts of the common people throughout Europe. At 14 she married Louis of Thuringia whom she deeply loved and they had 3 children. Under the spiritual directions of a Franciscan friar she led a life of prayer, sacrifice and service to the poor and sick. She wore simple clothing and would give bread to hundreds who came to her gate. Her husband died after six years of marriage and left her grief stricken. His family mistreated her and accused her of squandering the royal purse and threw her out of the palace. When her husband's allies returned from the Crusades, she was reinstated and her son was legal heir to the throne.

In 1228 she joined the Secular Franciscan Order and spend her life caring for the poor in a hospital which she founded in honor of St. Francis. She died at age 23, though very young she was very popular. She was canonized 4 years later. During her short life she showed great love to the poor and suffering and as a result she became the patroness of Catholic charities and of the Secular Franciscan Order.

### St. Thomas More, Admonish Sinners

**Feastday June 22** (1478-1535)

St. Thomas More, Martyr (Patron of Lawyers) was born at London in 1478. After a thorough grounding in religion and the classics, he entered Oxford to study law. Upon leaving the university he embarked on a legal career which took him to Parliament. In 1505, he married his beloved Jane Colt who bore him four children, and when she died at a young age, he married a widow, Alice Middleton, to be a mother for his young children. A wit and a reformer, this learned man numbered Bishops and scholars among his friends, and by 1516 wrote his world-famous book "Utopia". He attracted the attention of Henry VIII who appointed him to a succession of high posts and missions, and finally made him Lord Chancellor in 1529.

However, he resigned in 1532, at the height of his career and reputation, when Henry persisted in holding his own opinions regarding marriage and the supremacy of the Pope. The rest of his life was spent in writing mostly in defense of the Church. In 1534, with his close friend, St. John Fisher, he refused to render allegiance to the King as the Head of the Church of England and was confined to the Tower. Fifteen months later, and nine days after St. John Fisher's execution, he was tried and convicted of treason. He told the court that he could not go against his conscience and wished his judges that "we may yet hereafter in heaven merrily all meet together to everlasting salvation." And on the scaffold, he told the crowd of spectators that he was dying as "the King's good servant-but God's first." He was beheaded on July 6, 1535. His feast day is June 22nd.

### St. Pantaleon, Visit the Sick

**Feast Day: July 27** (birth date unknown-died circa 305)

According to legend, Pantaleon was the son of a rich pagan, Eustorgius of Nicomedia, and although he had been instructed in Christianity by his Christian mother, Eubula, he eventually became estranged from Christianity. After studying medicine and becoming a physician to the Emperor Maximianus, he was won back to Christianity by a priest. Upon the death of his father, he came into possession of a large fortune and envious colleagues denounced him to emperor during the Diocletian persecution. Although the emperor wished to save him and wanted him to renounce his faith, Pantaleon refused and he healed a paralytic to prove that Christ is the true son of God. The emperor believed the miracle to be magic and Pantaleon was condemned to death by the emperor.

According to legend, Pantaleon underwent various tortures in which his flesh was burned, he was forced into a cauldron of liquid lead, thrown into the sea and to wild animals. Throughout most of these ordeals, Christ was present and saved him. Finally, an attempt was made to behead him, but the sword bent, and the executioners were converted. Pantaleon implored heaven to forgive them, and it was for this reason he also received the name of Panteleemon (the all-compassionate). It was not until he himself desired it that it was possible to behead him. Pantaleaon is venerated in the East as a great martyr and wonderworker. In the Middle Ages, he came to be regarded as the patron saint of physicians and midwives, and became one of the fourteen guardian martyrs.

### The Ugandan Martyrs: Charles Lwanga and Companions, Bear Wrongs Patiently

**Feast Day June 3rd** (Died in1886)

After the establishment of missions in the 1870's, Christianity began to take root and spread throughout the African continent. The Ugandan King Mwanga greatly detested the faith, and sought to oppress it whenever possible.

At one point, King Mwanga hired a Christian to serve as his chief steward. The young man, Joseph Balikuddembe, was repulsed by the king's lifestyle of debauchery. Young Joseph also witnessed the king's attempts to corrupt other young men of Uganda.

After he learned that Mwanga had ordered the execution of an Anglican missionary, Joseph spoke up against the king. King Mwanga soon ordered the murder of Joseph himself. Upon learning of his death sentence, Joseph said: "A Christian who gives his life for God is not afraid to die". Much to Mwanga's surprise, Joseph's death did not intimidate the Christian community; rather, it seemed to inspire greater devotion.

Around the same time, King Mwanda hired Charles Lwanga to serve as master of the pages. Like Joseph, Charles Lwanga spoke out courageously against the king, even baptizing young pages whom the king had sought to corrupt. Enraged by this, the king ordered the death of every practicing Christian.

Eventually, 32 Christians would burn to death in a literal holocaust. Before his death, one martyr proclaimed: "God will rescue me. But you will not see how de does it, because he will take my soul and leave you only my body." The martyrs died praising God.

The Ugandan martyrs were canonized by Pope Paul VI in 1964.