



## February 2026 - Calendar / Feast Days

**February 1: St Brigid**

**February 2: The Presentation of the Lord**

**February 3: Saint Blaise**

**February 5: St Agatha**

**February 6: Saints Paul Miki and his Companions**

**February 7: St Mel**

**February 8: St Josephine Bakhita**

**February 10: St. Scholastica**

**February 11: Our Lady of Lourdes, St. Gobnait**

**February 14: Saints Cyril and Methodius**

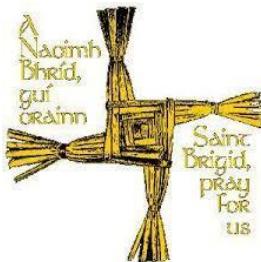
**February 17: St. Fintan**

**February 18: Ash Wednesday**

**February 21: St. Peter Damian**

**February 2: First Sunday of Lent**

## February 1st: St Brigid



St. Brigid is renowned for her hospitality, almsgiving and care of the sick. She was born c. 454. When she was young, her father wished to make a very suitable marriage for her but she insisted in consecrating her life to God. Others followed her example and this led her to found a double monastery in Kildare. She died in 523 and devotion to her is widespread not only throughout Ireland but in several European lands. The St. Brigid's Cross, in legend used by Brigid to explain the Christian faith, remains a popular sign of God's protection.

### Prayer to St Brigid

Brigid, you were a woman of peace.  
You brought harmony where there was conflict.  
You brought light to the darkness.  
You brought hope to the downcast.  
May the mantle of your peace cover those  
who are troubled and anxious,  
And may peace be firmly rooted in our hearts  
and in our world.  
Inspire us to act justly and to reverence all God has made.  
Brigid, you were a voice for the wounded and the weary.  
Strengthen what is weak within us.  
Calm us into a quietness that heals and listens.  
May we grow each day into greater wholeness in mind, body and spirit.  
Amen.

### A Prayer to St Brigid of Faughart

Brigid, patroness of the Irish and woman of deep faith  
We salute you as with Patrick you helped the Irish come to faith in Jesus.  
Your love for the Master drove you to be an apostle of the faith.

Your compassion for the poor and sick knew no boundaries.

People recognised in your heart the Light of the world.

Your love for all creation drew wild creatures to trust you.

You were always a woman of action more centred on people than bricks and stones.

A woven cross of reeds helped a dying man grieve for his sins

resulting in forgiveness and reconciliation.

Encircle us with your cloak of charity and help us all find

a renewed faith in Jesus our common Master.

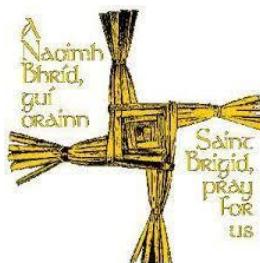
Help us reach out to the Christ we meet daily in the faces of those in need  
who approach us for comfort,

Help us to seek their blessing upon us as we wash their feet and try to bind their wounds.

Mary of the Irish show a mother's protective care to all  
who call upon you in need.

Help us always to care for our beautiful planet Mother Earth.  
Brigid of Faughart, pray for us. Amen.

Amen



May the blessing of light be on you, light without and light within.

May the blessed sunlight shine upon you and warm your heart till it glows like a great peat fire, so that the stranger may come and be warmed and also a friend.

And may the light shine out of your eyes, like a candle set in the window of a house, bidding the wanderer to come in out of the storm.

And may the blessing of the rain be on you – the soft sweet rain.

May it fall upon your spirit so that all the little flowers may spring up and shed their sweetness on the air. And may the blessing of the great rains be on you, may they beat upon your spirit and wash it fair and clean, and leave there many a shining pool where the blue of heaven shines, and sometimes a star.

And may the blessing of the earth be on you – the great round earth.

May you ever have a kindly greeting from them you pass as you're going along the roads. May the earth be soft under you when you rest upon it, tired at the end of a day, and may it rest easy over you when, at the last, you lie out under it.

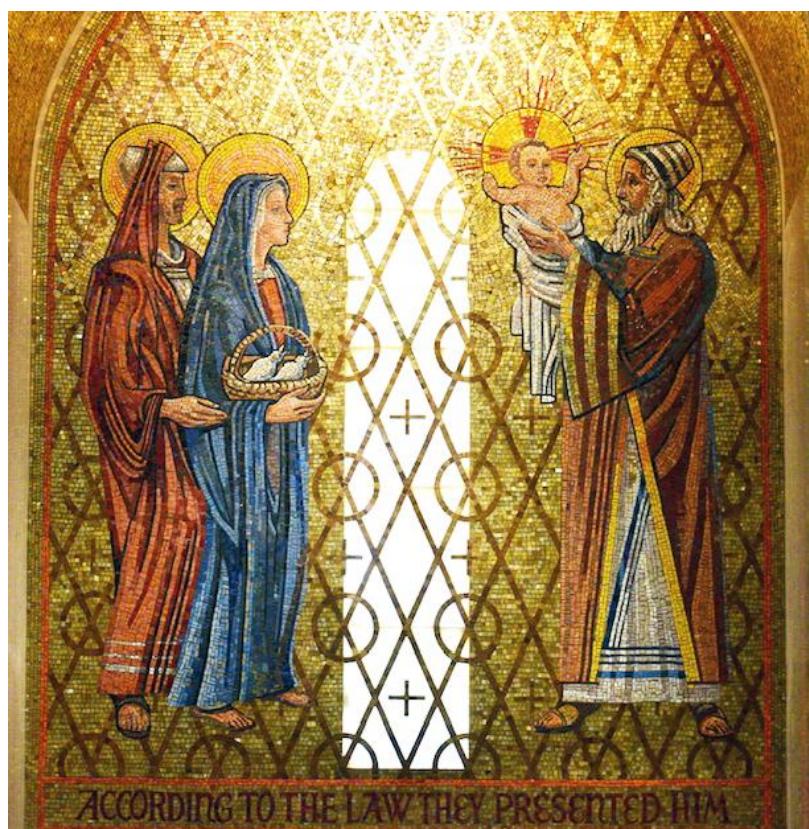
May it rest so lightly over you that your soul may be off from under it so quickly and up and off, and on its way to God.

And now may the Lord and Our Lady bless you and bless you kindly Amen.

## February 2: The Presentation of the Lord

The Feast of the Presentation of the Lord is celebrated 40 days after Christmas Day. The Gospel of Luke recalls Mary and Joseph taking the child Jesus for his first visit to the Temple in Jerusalem. This feast is also known as Candlemas because of the tradition of blessing and distributing candles at Mass and holding a candlelight procession on this day. These practices are drawn from Simeon's words in the gospel for this feast, in which he prophesies that the child Jesus will become

"a light for revelation to the Gentiles".



## The Fourth Joyful Mystery of the Rosary

### The Presentation in the Temple.

We observe the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, honouring Jesus Christ's presentation in the Temple when he was a young child.

The Lord had told Simeon, a devout and upright man, he would meet the Messiah before his death. When Simeon receives Jesus, he blesses him, and prophesies Jesus' future as Saviour, proclaiming him the Light of the world.

The Gospel of Luke explains that the old prophet Simeon and the prophetess Anna were at the Temple that day (see Luke 2:22-38). They, like many others, had spent their lifetime

waiting, longing for a Messiah, and the Holy Spirit had revealed to Simeon that he would not die until he had seen the Saviour. Among all the children and mothers coming into the Temple, Simeon recognized Jesus as the Christ Child. He held Jesus and exclaimed this hymn of thanksgiving, "Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in sight of all the peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel" (Luke 2:29-32). The hymn has traditionally been termed the *Nunc Dimittis*.



Pope John Paul II connected the feast day with the renewal of religious vows. In the Roman Catholic Church, the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple is the fourth Joyful Mystery of the Rosary.

### **February 3rd: Saint Blaise**

On this day the Church gives a "Blessing of the Throats" in honour of St. Blaise. From the eighth century St. Blaise has been invoked on behalf of the sick, especially those afflicted with illnesses of the throat.

A physician of Sebaste in Cappadocia, where he was later named Bishop, St. Blaise was martyred about the year 320. He is venerated as a patron to protect us against diseases of the throat, mainly because of the story told that he cured a boy choking from a fishbone.

As a doctor Blaise went into every home, at all hours of the day and night, knew both the rich and poor of the neighbourhood, comforted, cured, and advised all. As a bishop, he did the same thing. It was said that people had to look for him in the prisons, in the caves with hermits, in the mountains and the valleys, so fast were his steps to search out and to help each person who needed help.

### **Blessing of the Throats**

It is customary in many places to bless the throats of the faithful with two candles tied together with a red ribbon to form a cross. The rite of the blessing of throats may take place before or after Mass.



The candles are placed around the throat of whoever seeks the blessing and the formula used is: "Through the intercession of St. Blaise, bishop and martyr, may God deliver you free from every disease of the throat, and from every other disease. In the name of the Father and of the Son, + and of the Holy Spirit. R. Amen."

### **February 8th: St Josephine Bakhita**



St Josephine Bakhita, 1868-1947, a native of Sudan, was brought as a slave to Italy where she became a Christian and joined the Canossian Sisters, an international missionary congregation.

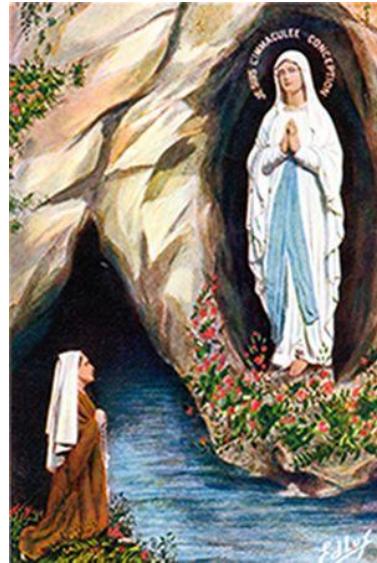
#### **Prayer to St. Josephine Bakhita**

**O St. Josephine Bakhita, assist all those who are trapped in a state of slavery.**

**Intercede with God on their behalf so that they will be released  
from their chains of captivity.**

**Provide comfort to survivors of slavery and  
let them look to you as an example of hope and faith. Amen**

### **February 11: Our Lady of Lourdes**



**On the 11 February in 1858, Our Lady first appeared to fourteen-year-old Bernadette Soubirous. Later Bernadette was to learn that the mysterious lady was the Blessed Virgin and to hear her say, “I am the Immaculate Conception. In 1992 Pope John 11 instituted the World Day of the Sick to be held on the commemoration of Our Lady of Lourdes.**

Lourdes, which is in the southeast of France, is a place of pilgrimage. A pilgrimage is a special type of journey people go on which helps them to pray and reflect. Each year millions of people travel to Lourdes as pilgrims. In Lourdes, those who are sick experience the care of volunteers who go there in their hundreds every year to look after the pilgrims who need someone to care for them. Many young people work as volunteers in Lourdes. Lourdes is famous because some people who have visited there have been cured of their illnesses, and many of those who have not been cured have felt much better after visiting Our Lady's shrine.



When people go to Lourdes, they recall the appearance of Our Lady to fourteen-year-old Bernadette Soubirous. The first apparition was on 11 February 1858. Bernadette said that Mary was dressed in white, with a blue sash and yellow roses at her feet. She held rosary beads on her arm. Mary appeared eighteen times to Bernadette. Bernadette asked Mary who she was and Mary replied, 'I am the Immaculate Conception.' Bernadette realised that it meant that Mary was born without original sin. Our Lady also told Bernadette to tell the priests in Lourdes that they were to build a chapel there and to encourage pilgrims to visit Lourdes. On one of her visits to Bernadette, Our Lady told Bernadette to dig in the dirt and to find and drink the water from the stream. Bernadette did as Mary asked and, after several attempts, she was able to find the water.

The water continued to flow, and it still does so to this day. Many who are sick bathe in baths of water from the stream that Bernadette found, and some have been physically healed, while the majority have experienced spiritual healing or a sense of feeling more at peace with their situation. People bring holy water home from Lourdes to give to their friends.

For pilgrims to Lourdes, Mary's universal message is that she accompanies people all through life, leading them closer to her son, Jesus.

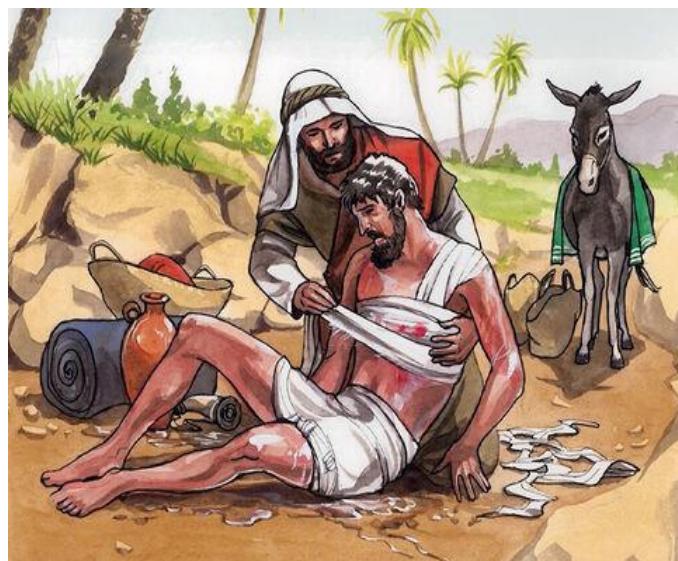


**The theme chosen by Pope Leo XIV  
for  
World Day of the Sick on 11 February 2026 is**

**"The compassion of the Samaritan: loving by bearing the pain of the other".**

The theme centres on the Gospel figure of the Samaritan, who demonstrates love by caring for the suffering man who fell in with robbers. It highlights a key dimension of love for one's neighbour: love must be expressed through concrete acts of closeness, by taking on the suffering of others — especially those who are ill, and often also vulnerable due to poverty, isolation, or loneliness.

The Dicastery writes that "the World Day of the Sick, established by St. John Paul II in 1992, offers a privileged moment of prayer, spiritual closeness, and reflection for the entire Church and for civil society, who are all called to recognize the face of Christ in our sick and vulnerable brothers and sisters. Like the Good Samaritan that bent down to help the injured man along the road, the Christian community is also called to stop and help those who suffer and be evangelical witnesses of closeness and service to the sick and most vulnerable."



**The Pope therefore invites everyone to offer compassionate and loving closeness to those who are ill, following the example of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37).**



February 18<sup>th</sup>: Ash Wednesday



**Ash Wednesday** marks the beginning of Lent. We receive ashes as a reminder that we are beginning our Lenten journey. Lent is a 40-day season of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving that begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Thursday. It is a period of preparation to celebrate the Lord's Resurrection at Easter. During Lent, we seek the Lord in prayer; we serve others by giving alms; and we practice self-control through fasting.

Every Lent is a new beginning.

Lent gives us the opportunity to refresh our faith.

Like the springtime, it is a time of growth and renewal. It is time to take stock, and to reflect on our lives as followers of Jesus and to prepare our hearts for renewing our Baptismal promises at Easter.

**The Lenten good works of  
“Praying, Fasting and Almsgiving”  
help to keep us focused on what it means to be a follower of Jesus.**



## Information regarding Lent and the Pioneer Pledge

Many people in Ireland offer spiritual support to a relation who is struggling because of alcohol or an addiction problem. “*Offering it up for the Holy Souls*” or “*off the drink for Lent*” are expressions which remind us that “*the bonds of friendship and affection do not unravel with death*” ... or with addiction or sickness.

Prayer and penance have been part of the response by many Irish families to the challenges which they have met across the centuries.

This tradition is also part of the journey of Lent or of Advent. Pilgrimages to Lough Derg, Croagh Patrick and other holy sites allowed people to “carry the intentions” of their family in prayer.



Anyone who wishes to take a **short-term Pioneer pledge during Lent** is welcome to do so.

Information can be accessed by clicking on the following link: [www.pioneerassociation.org](http://www.pioneerassociation.org)

There are people from all walks of life who are taking one day at a time with the support of AA meetings and the prayerful encouragement of relations and neighbours.

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## **“Special Year of St. Francis”**

The special Jubilee Year of Saint Francis proclaimed by Pope Leo XIV takes place from 10 January 2026 to 10 January 2027, on the occasion of the eighth centenary of the death of Saint Francis of Assisi.

Pope Leo XIV has proclaimed a “Special Year of St. Francis” to commemorate the 800th anniversary of the saint’s death. During this time of grace, which will extend until January 2027, the faithful are granted the opportunity to obtain a plenary indulgence.

This Franciscan Jubilee Year, considered a gift for the entire Church and an occasion for authentic spiritual renewal, was inaugurated on January 10 with a decree issued by the Apostolic Penitentiary of the Holy See.

Until January 10 of next year, 2027, the faithful can obtain this grace under the usual conditions — sacramental confession, Communion, and prayer for the intentions of the pope — by making a pilgrimage to any Franciscan conventual church or place of worship dedicated to St. Francis anywhere in the world.

Furthermore, the elderly, the sick, and those who, for serious reasons, cannot leave their homes can obtain the plenary indulgence by spiritually joining in the jubilee celebrations and offering their prayers, pains, or sufferings to God.