# HOLY HEARTS & HOMES

*Liturgical Living Newsletter*

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"Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common." Acts 4:32

## OCTOBER: Month of *The Holy Rosary*

### Pope's Intention: For mental health ministry.

Let us pray that the mental health ministry be established throughout the Church, helping to overcome the stigma and discrimination of persons with mental illness.

### Psalm 130

Out of the depths I cry to You, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice! Let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!

If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, so that You may be revered.

I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning.

O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with Him is great power to redeem. It is He Who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.

## *The St. Francis Year of Jubilee: Following the Example of a Saint*

The Catholic Church is celebrating a special Year of Saint Francis from January 10, 2026, through January 10, 2027. This Jubilee commemorates the 800th anniversary of the death of Saint Francis of Assisi, who died on October 3, 1226. The Church has invited Catholics throughout the world to use this special year as an opportunity to grow in holiness by following the example of Saint Francis, particularly through prayer, charity, peace, forgiveness, and care for creation. Pope Leo XIV has described the year as an opportunity for Christians to become "models of holiness of life" and "constant witnesses of peace."

What is a Jubilee? A Jubilee is a special period in the Catholic Church dedicated to spiritual renewal, conversion, forgiveness, and deeper communion with God. The tradition has roots in the Old Testament, particularly the Book of Leviticus, where a Jubilee was associated with reconciliation, restoration, and returning to right relationships. In the Catholic Church, Jubilee Years traditionally provide opportunities for pilgrimage, prayer, celebration of the sacraments, acts of charity, and receiving God's mercy. The USCCB (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) explains that a Jubilee is a time for the faithful to experience God's loving mercy in a special way.

The Year of Saint Francis is especially meaningful because Francis himself had a deep understanding of God's mercy. One of the most important expressions of this was the Pardon of Assisi, or Portiuncula Indulgence, associated with the little church of Saint Mary of the Angels near Assisi. Francis desired that people who sincerely turned toward God would experience His forgiveness and mercy.

Participation in the Year of Saint Francis is not limited to Franciscans. All Catholics are invited to participate. According to the Vatican decree, Catholics can participate by making

a pilgrimage to a Franciscan conventual church or another place of worship dedicated to or associated with Saint Francis. While there, they are encouraged to participate prayerfully in Jubilee celebrations or to spend time in meditation and prayer, asking God for greater Christian charity, peace, and harmony among peoples. The prescribed prayers include the Our Father, the Creed, and invocations to Mary, Saint Francis, Saint Clare, and the saints of the Franciscan family.

The special Jubilee also offers the opportunity to receive a plenary indulgence under the usual conditions: sacramental confession, reception of Holy Communion, prayer for the intentions of the Holy Father, and a heart detached from sin. The indulgence may also be offered for the souls in purgatory. Those who are elderly, seriously ill, caring for someone, or unable to leave their homes for serious reasons can participate spiritually and offer their prayers and sufferings to God.

Participation, however, is about much more than completing religious practices. Catholics are being invited to live like Francis lived: to become more compassionate, humble, generous, peaceful, and attentive to people who are poor or marginalized.

Saint Francis had an enormous impact on the Catholic Church. Born into a wealthy family, Francis experienced a profound conversion and chose to abandon wealth and privilege in order to follow Jesus Christ through poverty, humility, service, and preaching the Gospel. In 1209, he traveled to Rome and presented his way of life to Pope Innocent III, which the pope recognized as a gift to the Church. Francis became the founder of the Franciscan movement, which developed into religious communities of men and women and eventually included a significant lay Franciscan tradition. Saint Clare, inspired by Francis, founded the community that became the Poor Clares. Pope Leo XIV has emphasized that Francis did not simply serve poor people from a distance; he chose to live among them and recognize them as brothers and sisters. The mission of Saint Francis continues through the work of Franciscans, Catholic communities, schools, parishes, charitable organizations, and individual Catholics around the world. His example continues to inspire Christians to serve the poor, promote peace, protect creation, and treat every person with dignity. Saint Francis was also named the patron of ecology by Pope John Paul II in 1979 because of his profound respect for God's creation. His understanding that creation should lead humanity to praise and care for the Creator continues to influence Catholic teaching about environmental responsibility.

Ultimately, the Year of Saint Francis is an invitation to ask a simple but challenging question: How can I live the Gospel more faithfully? Francis answered that question with his life. He chose Christ, embraced the poor, sought peace, cared for creation, and served others with joy. Eight hundred years after his death, the Catholic Church continues to believe that his example can help Christians become more faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

## FAITH, HOPE, AND MENTAL HEALTH: YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Struggling with mental health can sometimes make a person feel isolated, ashamed, or even distant from God. Yet the Catholic Church teaches that mental health challenges do not diminish a person's dignity or worth. The USCCB reminds us that every person who experiences mental illness continues to bear the image and likeness of God. The Church's message is one of healing, hope, compassion, and accompaniment—not shame or judgment.

The lives of the saints remind us that holiness does not mean a person will never experience suffering, loneliness, fear, emotional distress, or mental struggles. St. Thérèse of Lisieux, for example, experienced a profound spiritual trial near the end of her life, including darkness and a sense of distance from God. Her experience became part of her journey of trusting God even when she could not feel His presence. Another example is St. Mark Ji Tianxiang, a Chinese Catholic physician who struggled with an addiction to opium after using it to treat a serious illness. Although he repeatedly tried to overcome his addiction (at that time there was limited knowledge on how addiction works), his confessor eventually believed he lacked true repentance and prevented him from receiving the Sacraments. For approximately 30 years, Mark was unable to receive Holy Communion, yet he never abandoned his faith. He continued attending Mass, praying, serving others, and trusting in God even when he could not receive the Eucharist. His story reminds us that struggling does not mean giving up, and that faithfulness can mean continuing to turn toward God even when healing does not come as we expect. Mark continued to bravely live his faith, died as a martyr during the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, and was canonized by Pope St. John Paul II in 2000.

Faith can be an important part of healing, but seeking professional help is also consistent with Catholic faith. Talking with a counselor, doctor, therapist, trusted adult, priest, family member, or mental-health professional is not a sign of weakness. Prayer and professional treatment do not have to compete with one another; both can be part of a person's journey toward healing and hope. Most importantly, remember that you do not have to face your struggle alone. God is present even in moments when He feels distant. As Catholics, we are called not only to seek help when we are hurting but also to become people who walk beside others with compassion, patience, and hope.

If you are experiencing a mental-health crisis or thinking about harming yourself, call or text 988 in the United States for immediate, confidential support.

# Featured Saints of October

## St. Mother Theodore Guerin

Feast Day: October 3rd
Patron of: the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, education, perseverance, and reconciliation

Anne-Thérèse Guerin was born in 1798 in Brittany, France. When she was fifteen, her father was murdered by bandits, leaving her mother devastated. She cared for her mother and younger sister and managed the family home until entering the Sisters of Providence at age twenty-four, taking the name Sister Saint Theodore. She became a teacher and cared for the sick and poor. In 1840, despite fragile health, Sister Saint Theodore was sent to America with five companion sisters to establish a mission at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in Indiana. There, now Mother Theodore as the superior of the mission, she founded an academy for girls, which became Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, and helped establish schools and works of charity for the poor. Through hardship, illness, and financial difficulties, she persevered in trusting God's Providence. Canonized by Pope Benedict XVI in 2006, she is remembered as an educator, missionary, and woman of deep faith. Her tomb is at the Shrine of Saint Mother Theodore Guerin at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana.

Ways to celebrate: make French crêpes; create a "Providence Jar" by writing down ways God has provided for you; read *Saint Theodora and Her Promise to God*, a Catholic children's book about her life.

## St. Luke

Feast Day: October 18th
Patron of: physicians, surgeons, artists, bachelors, notaries, and butchers

Saint Luke was a physician and companion of Saint Paul who became one of the four Evangelists. He carefully investigated the accounts of eyewitnesses and ministers of the word and wrote his Gospel, along with the Acts of the Apostles. Ancient Catholic tradition identifies the Blessed Virgin Mary as an important source for Luke's accounts of Jesus's infancy, which may explain his unique accounts of the Annunciation and Visitation. Luke also gives us the Magnificat, Mary's beautiful hymn of praise during the Visitation. He is traditionally remembered as an artist, and a pious tradition credits him with painting an early image of the Blessed Virgin.

Saint Luke's symbol is the winged ox, representing sacrifice, because his Gospel begins with Zechariah serving as a priest in the Temple and points repeatedly to Christ's priestly sacrifice. Tradition holds that Luke died a martyr, though the exact manner of his death is uncertain. His relics are traditionally venerated at the Basilica of Saint Justina in Padua, Italy.

Ways to celebrate: Make a Greek or Mediterranean meal in honor of Luke's travels; draw or paint an image of the Blessed Virgin Mary; or read the Magnificat and another favorite passage from Luke's Gospel together.

Bring Catholicism into everyday life with faith-filled shirts and hoodies from The Catholic T-Shirt Club that celebrate the liturgical year: www.catholictshirtclub.com

# ROSARY CRAFTS FOR THE MONTH OF THE ROSARY

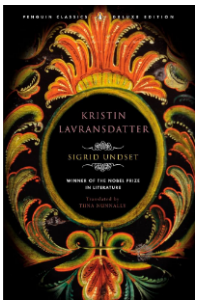
Make a rosary book from folded paper lunch bags, creating pockets to hold pull-out cards featuring the four sets of Rosary mysteries. Decorate the pages with colorful paper, ribbons, pictures, and the Rosary prayers for a fun, hands-on way for children to learn and pray the Rosary. Make it as simple or as ornate as you like! You can include the words to the prayers, or create a picture-only version. Find images online to print and paste into the book or print mini coloring pages for a more hands-on activity. Have fun, be creative, and make the book your own! Scan the QR code for a detailed tutorial.

Looking for something a little sweeter? Create an edible rosary using cupcakes decorated as beads, colorful sprinkles for the Our Father beads, and a chocolate cross for the crucifix, arranged in the shape of a rosary. For a smaller version, mini cupcakes can be used. Edible rosaries can also be a great way to get little kids to learn to count along when they join the family for prayer. A quick and easy edible rosary can be made from cereal, raisins, marshmallows, or chocolate chips.

# SUGGESTED RESOURCES

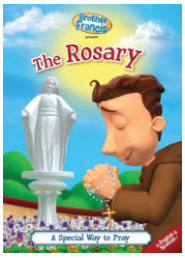
### Books by Sigrid Undset

Sigrid Undset (1882-1949) was a Norwegian author who converted to Catholicism in 1924. Her cause for canonization is now being prepared by the Diocese of Oslo. She won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1928, primarily for her two powerful works set in medieval Norway: her trilogy *Kristin Lavransdatter* and her tetralogy *Olav Audunsson*. Both novels are deep and beautiful explorations of the soul: the struggle between human weakness, sin, free will, guilt, and the loving will of God.



### The Scriptural Rosary

Want to enter more deeply into the mysteries of the Rosary? Try praying a Scriptural Rosary, which pairs each Hail Mary with a short passage from Scripture related to the mystery being prayed. These Scripture passages can help quiet the mind, focus the heart, and bring the scenes from the life of Jesus more vividly to mind as you pray. It is a beautiful way to become more familiar with the Rosary and to discover new depth in this beloved prayer. Free Scriptural Rosaries can be found online, or you can find beautifully designed booklets to purchase and keep as a lasting prayer resource.




### Brother Francis: The Rosary – A Special Way to Pray

**by Formed**

Join Brother Francis for a joyful and faith-filled journey into the Rosary! In this engaging episode, children discover why the Rosary is such a special way to pray, learning how each prayer and mystery helps us reflect on the life of Jesus and draw closer to Him through the loving guidance of His Mother.

THE ARCHDIOCESE OF KANSAS CITY IN KANSAS
CATHOLIC COUNSELORS

When life becomes difficult, seeking help can be an important part of caring for ourselves and our families. The Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas provides a directory of Catholic counselors who can offer professional counseling while respecting and understanding the Catholic faith. For additional spiritual and pastoral support, the International Association of Catholic Mental Health Ministers works to bring Catholic mental health ministry to parishes and communities, offering resources, prayer, accompaniment, and support for those experiencing mental health challenges and for those who care for them. These resources can help remind us that seeking help and relying on our faith can go hand in hand—we do not have to face difficult seasons alone.

International Association
Catholic Mental Health Ministers

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