

The Memorial of St Clare, Virgin – Monday 11th August 2025:

Aged eighteen, Clare heard St Francis preach, an encounter so positive that she ran away to follow him. Understanding her vocation, he facilitated her entry into a Benedictine Convent. At Assisi, Clare was joined by her sister Agnes and other women, becoming known as the '*Poor Ladies*', who lived an austere lifestyle in joyous imitation of Christ. Unlike the Friars, who travelled the country, they lived in enclosure.

The opt. mem of St Jane Frances Chantal, Religious – Tuesday 12th August 2025:

Jane lives the marriage vow, '*for richer, for poorer*'. While her husband inherited the title Baron, he was saddled with enormous debt. To the marriage, she brought a deep faith and a joyful can-do attitude enabling her to take charge of running every detail of the Baron's estate, which not only brought the finances under control, but won her the admiration of her staff. She and her husband shared "*one heart and one soul*" and were blessed with four children. She shared all her blessings with the poor, never turning away anyone who was hungry from her bread and soup kitchen. Her happiness was shattered when her husband was killed in a hunting accident, and although her husband had forgiven the man who had fatally wounded him, Jane struggled with forgiveness for a long time but through her constant prayer, God gave her not only the grace to forgive, but the generosity to become the godmother to his child. This drew her to the attention of Bishop St Francis de Sales, who encouraged her to form the Visitation Order for women who had otherwise been rejected from the religious life because of poor health or age. She died in 1641, at sixty-nine years of age.

The opt. mem of Saints Pontian, Pope & Hippolytus, Priest – Wed. 13th Aug. 2025:

Pontian was Pope from 230-235 and was the first pontiff to abdicate. He was likely Roman by birth and was elected to succeed St. Urban I and devoted much of his time to continuing the condemnation of the heretical aspects of Origenism and struggled against the schismatic movement which supported the antipope Hippolytus. In 235, Pontian was arrested by Roman officials during the persecutions of Emperor Maximinus I Thrax. With Hippolytus – his rival for the papacy - Pontian was exiled to the mines of Sardinia and, to make certain that the Church was not deprived of its leadership, Pontian stepped down, the first pope ever to do so. He and Hippolytus both died on Sardinia. Their remains were returned to Rome under Pope St. Fabian.

The Memorial of St Maximilian Kolbe, Martyr – Thursday 14th August 2025:

Saint Maximilian Kolbe was a Polish Priest and is known as a '*martyr of charity*' and is the patron saint of political prisoners. In 1941 he was arrested by the Gestapo and eventually sent to Auschwitz (prisoner #16670). In July 1941, three prisoners escaped and in retribution the German commander picked ten men to be starved to death. When Franciszek Gajowinczek cried out, '*my wife! My children!*', Kolbe volunteered to take his place. While in his cell, he continued to pray and encourage others by telling them that they would be with Mary in heaven. After two weeks of starvation and dehydration, only Kolbe remained alive, and so to free up the cell he was executed.

Vigil Mass of the Assumption – Thursday 14th August 2025:

The Ark of the Covenant contained the stone tablets of the law, Aaron's priestly rod and a sample of the mana, the heavenly bread. Mary is the Ark of the New & Eternal Covenant. For nine months, in her womb, resides the High Priest, the Law Giver and the Bread of Life who has come down from heaven. Something so precious is not lost to the earth but is to be returned or assumed back into the treasure house of heaven.

The Assumption of the BVM into Heaven – Friday 15th August 2025:

Following two World Wars, Pius XII presented the '*Assumption*' as the icon of humanity's ultimate destiny. The Assumption points us to heaven and to the resurrection. It is our final hope that we will live with God, as a complete person, in the '*new heaven and earth*' to come. At her Assumption, Mary's '*motherhood*' attains its full effect – seated beside her son, the King, she becomes '*Mediatrice*' of grace, as Queen of Apostles, of Martyrs, of Patriarchs, of the Church and of all the Saints. Her Assumption shows humanity is not destined for chaos; as such, all the baptised strive for holiness, because like Mary, we want to be where her Son is, wishing to take our place in the Church Triumphant and in the kingdom that is to come in its fulness. The Assumption is the Feast of our Hope, but also, a warning against the '*devil's empty show*' and we must choose between the kingdom of light or the kingdom of darkness.

Opt. Mem of St Stephen of Hungary – Saturday 16th August 2025:

Stephen is the first Hungarian King, crowned by Pope Sylvester II, after he led his people to reject paganism in favour of Christianity. Stephen showed great diligence as king, and while being diligent in his religious duties, showed great charity to the poor.