

The Nativity / Birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary – Monday 8th September 2025:

Nine months after her Immaculate Conception (8th December), the Church celebrates the Feast of Our Lady's Birthday. The Church only celebrates three Nativities: Our Lord's, Our Lady's, and St John the Baptist. All other saints must wait for their death, it being common to celebrate their feast day on their heavenly birthday instead. In celebrating the Birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we are saying that she was born into the world without the stain of original sin, and was indeed, full of heavenly grace. Our Lady appears on the horizon of salvation history before the birth of Christ. In fact, she has been in the mind of God for eternity, for he has planned the remedy for humanity's fall from grace even before we freely chose disobedience. In the fullness of time, when the second person of the Blessed Trinity chose to take on our humanity, the sacred vessel of the Blessed Virgin Mary was already prepared to receive Him.

The opt. memorial of St Peter Claver – Tuesday 9th September 2025:

St. Peter Claver was a Jesuit missionary, born of impoverished parents but had links to an ancient and distinguished Spanish heritage. While studying philosophy at Majorca, Peter was influenced by St. Alphonsus Rodriguez to go to the Indies and save '*millions of perishing souls.*' He landed at Cartagena in Colombia, the principal slave market of the New World, where a thousand slaves were landed every month. After his ordination in 1616, he dedicated himself by special vow to the service of the Negro slaves at work there, a ministry that lasted for thirty-three years. He laboured unceasingly for the salvation of the African slaves and the abolition of the Negro slave trade, and the love he lavished on them transcended the natural order.

Wednesday in 23rd Week in Ordinary Time (I) – 10th September 2025:

St Luke presents a repetition or another rendition of the '*Beatitudes*'. Jesus is demanding in what he says and the crowds who heard him were often astonished at his teaching, but He makes it clear that we are called to be saints, making no distinction in people's state-in-life, race or circumstances. For those who have been given much in life, much is therefore expected of them in assisting others who need a helping hand on their pilgrimage. In both the '*sermon on the mount*' and the '*sermon on the plain*', we might see the '*beatitudes*' as unattainable, and if we rely on our own merits, they probably are, and this, then, should elicit an attitude of humility and recognition that we need God's grace if we are to '*rejoice and leap for joy in our salvation.*'

Thursday in 23rd Week in Ordinary Time (I) – 11th September 2025:

Jesus says: *'Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly'*. It is atrocities such as the attacks on the World Trade Centre twenty-four years ago that makes this radical teaching of Christ hard to accept, and yet, we are called never to escalate the situation or seek vengeance but always be the first to extend an olive branch and seek peace.

The Opt. memorial of the Most Holy Name of Mary – Friday 12th September 2025:

Every name is special because it marks out our identity. However, we do not know the name of the woman at the well, or the name of the widow at the Temple or the Widow of Nain, or the name of the adulterous woman; but we do know the name of the mother of God – Mary! This makes her accessible to us and in saying *'Hail Mary!'* we pay her the same compliment that God pays her at the Annunciation. The name Mary means *'Star of the Sea'*. Just as mariners are guided to a safe harbour by the stars, she guides us to our heavenly home. Her holy name scares hell to hell, the invocation of Mary sends the devil running for fear, for she crushes the head of the ancient serpent.

The Memorial of St John Chrysostom, Bishop & Doctor – Sat. 13th Sept. 2025:

St. John, named Chrysostom, meaning *'golden mouthed'* on account of his eloquence, was born in Antioch, the place where followers of Jesus were first called 'Christian'. Living firstly as an anchorite or hermit, he was forced to return to the city because of ill-health, where instead he lived out his vocation as a priest, later becoming Bishop of Constantinople. He suffered much from those jealous of his ability to simplify and teach complex theological concepts, and that as archbishop he refused to hold lavish parties which made him popular with the common people but unpopular the wealthy and his clergy who enjoyed them and benefited from the social networking that they provided. He was exiled not once, but twice, due to his reformist views and powerful sermons which often contradicted the opulence and corruption evident within the Church and Imperial Court of his time. He emphasised the virtues of humility, compassion, and wealth's proper use, saying that the path to spiritual fulfilment and communion with God was through humble and compassionate living. John's homilies reveal a deep understanding of human nature and a commitment to helping individuals lead lives devoted to Christ's teachings. He highlighted the importance of *'agape'*, stating that true charity involved more than just almsgiving but a genuine love for humanity.