

### **Holy Mary, Mother of the Church – Monday 25<sup>th</sup> May 2026:**

*'Holy Mary, Mother of God'* is a phrase we are used to praying within the context of the *'Hail Mary'*, but we could also pray *'Holy Mary, Mother of the Church'*, for her spiritual motherhood extends to all people whom Jesus came to save. There is a connection to Pentecost and the Descent of the Holy Spirit, for we see Mary already exercising her motherhood, found amid the Apostles (*the nascent Church*) who gather in prayer as commanded by the Lord Jesus. The Blessed Virgin Mary is intimately connected with the Church and through her intercession brings us into communion with Christ her Son. Assumed into Heaven, Mary as both Queen and Mother, is well placed to make intercession on our behalf, and with a Son's love for His Mother, Christ is well disposed to listen to and answer all those petitions made through her.

### **The Memorial of St Philip Neri, Priest – Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> May 2026:**

Philip Neri's mission was to create an order of priests in Rome to serve others, particularly in Education and care for the poor, destitute and abject sinners. His passion for reform and personal holiness drew many followers, leading to the formation of the Church of the Holy Trinity of the Pilgrims, the Congregation of the Oratory. It became a centre of spiritual renewal and pastoral innovation, focusing on prayer and music, gatherings which combined religious instruction with recollection.

### **The Feast (in England) of St Augustine of Canterbury – Wed. 27<sup>th</sup> May 2026:**

Pope St Gregory the Great sends Augustine as the *'Apostle to the English'*, to connect the local Church to the Church of Rome, the Apostolic See of St Peter and St Paul. His mission is to consolidate the Church in southern England, which was still largely pagan and in the North, Wales and Cornwall to heal the suspicions of the Celtic Church, who remained suspicious of the Roman Church, who thought it was merely an expression of their former Roman Occupiers, which couldn't be further from the truth, the Roman Church itself a victim of the Empire's persecution. On seeing British slaves being sold in Rome, Gregory said they were not *'Angles'* but *'Angels'*, needing a mission to bring them the freedom of the Gospel and so sent Augustine who had a good grasp of scripture and administration meaning they quickly made many converts in the Kingdom of Kent. This success quickly led to him being consecrated a bishop and receiving the Pallium a mark of his unity to the Pope in Rome – to St Peter, until the rupture of the English Reformation, leaving the see of Canterbury *'Sede Vacante'*.

### **The Feast of Christ the Eternal High Priest – Thursday after Pentecost (28<sup>th</sup> May):**

The one Priesthood of Christ is shared with the Church in two ways: One, as a common priesthood shared with all the baptised, formed into a Church as a *'kingdom, of priests for his God and Father.'* This priesthood allows Christians to access the liturgy of heaven and through prayer, offer their lives for the sake of the gospel. The other expression is the ministerial priesthood which is at the service of the baptised who renew in his name, the sacrifice of human redemption, set before His children the paschal banquet, and lead the people in charity, nourishing them with the word and strengthen them with the Sacraments. The Common Priesthood, by the unfolding of baptismal grace, show their *'faith, hope and love'* to the world through the ministrations of the *'corporal and spiritual works of mercy'*, making Christ present to the world.

### **The Opt. mem of St Paul VI, Pope – Friday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2026:**

Cardina Montini was elected to replace John XXIII, and as the new pope he re-opened Vatican II. He implemented new liturgical rites for the sacraments and a new liturgical calendar. Paul VI was the first traveling pope, making seventeen apostolic journeys where he exhorted churches and nations to address world peace, social justice, poverty, illiteracy, ecumenism, and world unity. His most controversial act was issuing the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, re-iterating the Church's teaching on contraception. While many in the Church wanted a more liberal approach, he prophetically foresaw what would happen if he did: a huge rise in infidelity, moral decline, diminished respect for women, governmental abuse of power, and an erroneous belief that humans had unlimited dominion over their own bodies, all of which have come true.

### **The Sol. of St Joan of Arc – Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2026:**

When Joan arrives to see Charles the Dauphin, she reveals angelic knowledge of the war, gaining credibility among the Dauphin's counsellors. And so, she goes to war wearing armour, carrying a sword which she never used. She carried a banner displaying the holy names of Jesus and Mary and the Holy Spirit, saying they were weapons enough. In time, she was captured and those French collaborating with the English, handed Joan over for trial. She was charged with witchcraft, for dressing as a man and for heresy. The transcript of her trial shows she responded with an extraordinary level of grace, but even so she was condemned to death. Because of the irregularities of the trial, it was revisited and 50 years later she was exonerated.