

Optional Memorial of St Wulstan, Bishop and Religious – Mon. 19th Jan. 2026:

Wulstan (sometimes Wulfstan) (1008-1095) was from Long Itchington, Warwickshire and joined the Benedictines at Worcester, serving as treasurer and prior, before being consecrated bishop of Worcester. Despite being a confidant of Harold Godwinson who had helped secure the bishopric, he was retained by the Normans, being the lone Anglo-Saxon kept in post by William the Conqueror. Wulstan rebuilt his cathedral, cared for the poor, and struggled to alleviate the harsh decrees of the Normans upon the vanquished Saxons. He is known as a social reformer, and he tried the best he could to bridge the gap between the old Saxon and the new Norman regimes.

The optional memorial of Saint Fabian, Pope & Martyr & Saint Sebastian, Martyr – Tuesday 20th January 2026:

Fabian died as one of the first victims of the persecution of emperor Decius in 250AD. He was a layman who became pope in 236, chosen because a dove landed on his head when the community gathered for the election. He was an excellent administrator, dividing Rome into seven areas each served by a deacon. He organised building works in the cemeteries (Catacombs) and brought back the bodies of Saints Pontian and Hippolytus from Sardinia. He presided over many years of peace until the Decian persecutions started. Sebastian died in the late 3rd Century. He was likely a native of Milan, born of Christian parents and was an officer in the army. He was martyred for helping and sustaining Christians arrested during the Decian persecutions. Both Fabian and Sebastian have been venerated in Rome since the fourth century and are honoured together in the liturgical calendar.

The Memorial of St Agnes, Virgin & Martyr – Wednesday 21st January 2026:

Agnes was beautiful, having many suitors but she had taken a vow of chastity. One, Procop, the Roman Governor's son, was very angry when rejected by her. He denounced her to his father, who offered her gifts to change her mind. When she refused, he sent her to a brothel to humiliate her. Eventually, he condemned her to death for being a Christian. Even the Pagans cried as this lovely girl was executed; yet Agnes was as happy as a bride on her wedding day. St Agnes' Church in Rome is built over her place of execution; she depicted with a lamb, the symbol of innocence, and a palm, the symbol of the martyrs. Today, the Pope blesses lambs, and the wool is made into the Pallium, the gift to Archbishops from the Pope, as a sign of their unity.

The opt. memorial of St Vincent, Deacon & Martyr – Thursday 22nd January 2026:

Vincent was born in Huesca, becoming a deacon in the Church of Saragossa. He was arrested in the Diocletian persecution. Even after torture, he refused to hand over the Holy Books of the Catholic faith and consign our sacred scriptures into the fire. He died in prison in 304AD, but not before converting his gaoler. He united his sufferings to Christ's cross, trusting that his Lord and Saviour would come to his aid.

Friday in 2nd Week of Ordinary Time and

in the Week of Prayer for the Unity of Christians – 23rd January 2026:

In choosing the twelve, Jesus called to Himself those whom he desired. Through His choice, the Apostles claim their authority to preach the gospel. Having prayed to His Father before appointing the twelve, the Church sees their choice in accord with divine will, and thus forms a permanent college, of which the Pope and bishops are their successors who share in that same authority to preach and teach. The effectiveness of our own apostolate is grounded in unity – with Christ and His Most Holy Church. While there are many functions and ministries in the Church, our first dignity is our mission outside of the Church: *'Go, you are sent to announce the gospel'*. The Apostles are sent to gather the nations into the peace of God's Kingdom and the Christian shares in this mission to go from Mass and bring the gospel to their families.

The Mem. of St Francis de Sales, Bishop & Doctor – Saturday 24th January 2026:

Early in life, Francis de Sales suffered from a bout of despair and depression concerning the future of his immortal soul. Persevering with his prayers he was inspired by the Blessed Virgin Mary, especially the *'Memorare'*, allowing him to appreciate God's unconditional love. Francis de Sales wanted to be of service to God and the Church, while his family desired him to have a position of responsibility, such as being a magistrate; also choosing for him a wealthy and noble bride. Francis knew he wasn't called to marriage but to priesthood. His approach to preaching was, *'he who preaches with love, preaches effectively'*. He believed that the spiritual life was for all, not just reserved for priests and religious, saying to people in spiritual direction, *'you learn to speak by speaking, to study by studying, to run by running, to work by working; in the just the same way, you learn to love by loving'*. He said to people that the key to loving of God was prayer: *'by turning your eyes on God in meditation, your whole soul will be filled with God. Begin all your prayers in the presence of God'*.