

Parish of Our Lady of the Annunciation - King's Lynn

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Holy Family Church
Field Lane, Gaywood,
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Tuesday, 12th May 2020.

Good morning,

I hope this morning finds you well.

Today we have the Optional Memorial of Saints Nereus & Achilleus, Martyrs and St. Pancras, Martyr.

From: <https://universalis.com/europe.english.eastanglia/20200512/today.htm>

Saints Nereus and Achilleus, Martyrs

Many saints and martyrs died forgotten, and intercede for us anonymously in Heaven: we shall not know them until the day of judgement. Others are one degree less anonymous: we know their names, and we know that people whose judgement we trust regarded them as saints, but that is all.

Such are Saints Nereus and Achilleus. Pope St Damasus I dedicated his life to establishing and strengthening the Church after the great persecutions, and took much care over the restoration of the Roman catacombs and the proper burial of the martyrs there. He composed a funerary inscription for Nereus and Achilleus, which is too literary to be of much use as an historical document, but does say that they were Roman soldiers who became Christians, refused to serve any longer, and were therefore executed. They were buried in Rome, in the catacomb of St Domitilla. The fact that enough was known about them to identify them suggests that there must still have been a living memory of their martyrdom, which would put their deaths early in the fourth century.

Some legendary "Acts" of the martyrs exist, which make them servants of Flavia Domitilla, a noble Christian woman of the late first century. On the whole, it is likely that the composer of these Acts sought to fill in the gaps in history with what seemed most plausible and most edifying. We, who have a more bureaucratic idea of history, find it difficult to accept such motives, and so we are thrown back on saying that Nereus and Achilleus did exist, did die for their faith, are truly to be venerated as saints – and that this is all that we really need to know. As we pray to be given the strength of purpose that they had, we should be reminded that our own acts of witness are still valuable even if they are not spectacular, even if they do not result in every detail of our biographies being passed down through the ages.

Saint Pancras, Martyr

This Roman martyr is buried on the Aurelian Way just outside Rome. Some legends say that he was born in the East, orphaned, brought to Rome by an uncle, and martyred at the age of fourteen, but there is no particular reason to believe them.

The cult of St Pancras spread widely in the sixth century: in England, the first church that St Augustine built in Canterbury was dedicated to him.

In England today, St Pancras is not much revered, and people no longer name their children after him (as they still do, for instance, in Poland and Italy). This is not due to any major theological shift: it is simply that St Pancras gave his name to a parish in central London, and the parish gave its name to a **major railway terminus next to King's Cross. And who would want to be named after a railway station?**



We do not suggest that English parents should inflict on their children the continuing humiliation of a name whose associations have become so bathetic; but all of us, everywhere, can honour the memory of St Pancras (about whom so little is known) by not letting the fear of ridicule dissuade us from doing what is right.

Pope Francis has called a day of prayer, fasting and good works for our world in the present pandemic, this coming Thursday, May 14th:

Dear fellow believers and brothers and sisters in humanity,

Our world is facing at the moment a great danger that threatens the lives of millions of people around the world due to the growing spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. While we reaffirm the role of medicine and scientific research in fighting this pandemic, we should not forget to seek refuge in God, as we face this severe crisis. Therefore, we call upon all peoples around the world to pray according to each one, respective religious convictions, to observe fast and to do good deeds to end this pandemic. May each of us, wherever we are, and according to the teachings of our own respective faith traditions and philosophies, seek divine help to rescue ourselves and the entire world from this adversity, to inspire scientists to find a cure for the virus and to save the whole world from the health, economic, and human repercussions of this serious pandemic.

As part of its efforts to realize the objectives of the Document on Human Fraternity, the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity proposes Thursday, 14 May 2020 as a Day of prayers, fasting and works of charity for the good of all humanity. In this regard, the Committee invites all religious leaders and peoples around the world to respond to this call together; to beseech God, the Almighty to safeguard the entire world, to help us overcome this pandemic, to restore security, stability, health, and prosperity, so that, once this pandemic-crisis is over, our world may become a better place for humanity and for human fraternity than ever before.

A letter is attached from Vatican City.

From:

<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/catholic-bishops-respond-to-governments-lockdown-easing-plans/>

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales has responded to the government's document released today, 11 May, titled 'Our plan to rebuild: The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy'.

Statement

The timing and the manner of the opening of churches touches profound sensitivities and

spiritual needs. The Government's document and statements fail to recognise this.

The Government's position, established today, includes these steps aimed at opening churches as soon as possible: the establishment of a task force for places of worship, to work closely with 'stakeholders' in ensuring that premises are COVID-19 secure; and heeding the experience of other countries in which churches are already open for worship.

In dialogue with the Government, the Catholic Church will continue its engagement in this process and has already submitted a detailed plan, in full accordance with public health guidelines, for churches to be opened for private prayer.

The Church is ready to play its full part in the task force, understanding that this includes the possible earlier use of churches for private prayer, as a first safe step towards their use for public worship.

The Mass readings for today.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles 14: 19-28

From the Walk with me booklet:

'When the going gets tough, the tough get going.' St Paul and Barnabas acknowledged we have to go through many trials before we enter the kingdom of God. Life is often not easy, for we all face many challenges and difficult situations. Sometimes we can be overwhelmed or consumed by the challenges we face. We can feel that God is distant and remote. We can feel that God does not care. We become susceptible to believing these lies. This is the moment to remind ourselves of the truth-the truth dispels the lie. God draws near to us in our hardship and suffering. God will never desert us.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John 14: 27-31

Jesus said to his disciples:

'Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you, a peace the world cannot give, this is my gift to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid'

Something to ponder:

Where in my life do I need the peace of Jesus at the moment? Perhaps it's in a relationship, or in my work, or just in my own heart, peace with myself. Can I talk honestly now to Jesus about my need for peace, asking him to let his peace touch me where I most need it?

God bless

Shaun

Deacon Shaun Morrison
07880 600094



Vatican City, 6 May 2020

N. Prot. 399/20

Dear Friends,

In compliance with the initiative of the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity and the appeal by Pope Francis on 3 May 2020, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue invites believers of all religions and people of goodwill to spiritually unite themselves in a **Day of prayer, fasting and works of charity**, to implore the divine to help humanity in overcoming the pandemic caused by coronavirus.

This day of prayer fixed for **14 May**, as is understandable so as to prevent the risks of contagion, does not include any common public manifestation but rather will be lived by each one in his/her own interiority, placing himself/ herself before God and his/her conscience.

We shall however be united in living the universal values of prayer, fasting and acts of charity as “a witness to the greatness of faith in God that unites divided hearts and elevates the human soul” (*Document of Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*). This is not, surely, a time for indifference, selfishness, divisions, because the whole world is suffering and must unite itself in facing the pandemic (cfr. Pope Francis, *Urbi et Orbi* Easter Message, 12 April, 2020).

Grateful as we are for your kind attention, we send our cordial greetings.

Yours sincerely,

Cardinal Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, MCCJ
President

Msgr. Indunil Janakaratne Kodithuwakku Kanganamalage
Secretary

Religious Leaders in the World
Their Sees

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Daily Mass Readings Tuesday of the 5th Week of Eastertide

First reading - Acts 14:19-28

They gave an account of how God had opened the door of faith to the pagans

Some Jews arrived from Antioch and Iconium, and turned the people against the apostles. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the town, thinking he was dead. The disciples came crowding round him but, as they did so, he stood up and went back to the town. The next day he and Barnabas went off to Derbe.

Having preached the Good News in that town and made a considerable number of disciples, they went back through Lystra and Iconium to Antioch. They put fresh heart into the disciples, encouraging them to persevere in the faith. 'We all have to experience many hardships' they said 'before we enter the kingdom of God.' In each of these churches they appointed elders, and with prayer and fasting they commended them to the Lord in whom they had come to believe.

They passed through Pisidia and reached Pamphylia. Then after proclaiming the word at Perga they went down to Attalia and from there sailed for Antioch, where they had originally been commended to the grace of God for the work they had now completed.

On their arrival they assembled the church and gave an account of all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith to the pagans. They stayed there with the disciples for some time.

The Word of the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm - Psalm 144(145):10-13a, 21.

Your friends, O Lord, shall make known the glorious splendour of your reign.

All your creatures shall thank you, O Lord,
and your friends shall repeat their blessing.
They shall speak of the glory of your reign
and declare your might, O God,
to make known to men your mighty deeds
and the glorious splendour of your reign.

Your friends, O Lord, shall make known the glorious splendour of your reign.

Yours is an everlasting kingdom;
your rule lasts from age to age.

Your friends, O Lord, shall make known the glorious splendour of your reign.

Let me speak the praise of the Lord,
let all mankind bless his holy name
for ever, for ages unending.

Your friends, O Lord, shall make known the glorious splendour of your reign.

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia!

It was ordained that the Christ should suffer
and rise from the dead,
and so enter into his glory.

Alleluia!

Gospel - John 14:27-31

A peace the world cannot give is my gift to you

Jesus said to his disciples:

‘Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you,
a peace the world cannot give,
this is my gift to you.

Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.

You heard me say: I am going away, and shall return.

If you loved me you would have been glad to know that I am going to the Father,
for the Father is greater than I.

I have told you this now before it happens,
so that when it does happen you may believe.

I shall not talk with you any longer,
because the prince of this world is on his way.

He has no power over me,
but the world must be brought to know
that I love the Father

and that I am doing exactly what the Father told me.’

The Gospel of the Lord.

Feast Day of

*Saints Nereus and Achillues
(Martyrs)*

*St Pancras of Rome
(Martyr)*

12 May

Saints Nereus and Achilleus

The old Roman lists of the 5th century, which passed over into the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, contain the names of the two martyrs Nereus and Achilleus, whose grave was in the Catacomb of Domitilla on the Via Ardeatina. The notice in the more complete version given by the Berne Codex reads: IIII id. Maii, Romae in coemeterio Praetextati natale Nerei et Achillei fratrum (On 12 May at Rome in the cemetery of Praetextatus [an evident error for Domitilla?] the natal day of the brothers Nereus and Achilleus").

In the invocation of the Mass for 2 October in the "Sacramentarium Gelasianum", the names of Nereus and Achilleus alone are mentioned. In the fourth and following centuries a special votive Mass was celebrated on 12 May at the grave of Saints Nereus and Achilleus on the Via Ardeatina. The Itineraries of the graves of the Roman martyrs, written in the 7th century, are unanimous in their indication of the resting-place of these saints (Giovanni Battista de Rossi, "Roma sotterranea", I, 180-83).

The basilica of Sts. Nereus and Achilleus in the Via Ardeatina (not to be confused with the church of the same name near the Baths of Caracalla to which the relics of the saints were translated in the 6th century), was erected above the burial site of the two saints and is of the latter part of the 4th century; it is a three-apsed basilica, which was abandoned in the mid 9th century and rediscovered in 1874 by de Rossi in the Catacomb of Domitilla. Amongst the numerous objects found in the ruins were two pillars which had supported the ciborium ornamented with sculptures representing the death of the two saints by decapitation; one of these pillars is perfectly preserved, and the name of Achilleus is carved on it. There was also found a large fragment of a marble slab, with an inscription composed by Pope Damasus, the text of which is well-known from an ancient copy. This oldest historical mention of the two saints^[3] tells how Nereus and Achilleus as soldiers were obedient to the tyrant, but suddenly being converted to Christianity, joyfully resigned their commission and died the martyr's death; as to the date of their glorious confession we can make no inference. The acts of these martyrs, legendary even to a romantic degree, have no historical value for their life and death; they bring no fewer than thirteen different Roman martyrs into relation, amongst them even Simon Magus, according to the apocryphal Petrine Acts, and place their death in the end of the first and beginning of the 2nd centuries. These Acts were written in Greek and Latin; according to Achelis (see below) the Greek was the original text, and written in Latin in the 6th century; Schaefer (see below) on the other hand holds the Latin to have been the older version, and seeks to prove that it emanated from the first half of the 5th century; so remote a date is improbable, and the 6th century is to be preferred as the source of the Acts.

Legend

According to these legends, Nereus and Achilleus were eunuchs and chamberlains of Flavia Domitilla, a niece of the Roman Emperor Domitian; with the Christian virgin, they had been



banished to the island of Ponza (Pontia), and later on beheaded in Terracina. The graves of these two martyrs were on an estate of the Lady Domitilla near the Via Ardeatina, close to that of Saint Petronilla.

The author of this legend places the two saints quite differently from the poem of Pope Damasus: as Nereus and Achilleus were buried in a very ancient part of the Catacomb of Domitilla, built as far back as the beginning of the 2nd century, we may conclude that they are among the most ancient martyrs of the Roman Church, and stand in very near relation to the Flavian family, of which Domitilla, the foundress of the catacomb, was a member. In the Epistle to the Romans, St. Paul mentions a Nereus with his sister, to whom he sends greetings (Romans 16:15); perhaps even the martyr was a descendant of this disciple of the Apostle of the Gentiles. Owing to the purely legendary character of these Acts, we cannot use them as an argument to aid in the controversy whether there were two Christians of the name of Domitilla in the family of the Christian Flavian, or only one: the wife of the Consul Titus Flavius Clemens. As to other martyrs of the name Nereus, who are especially noted in the old martyrologies as martyrs of the faith in Africa, or as being natives of that country (e.g., in the Martyrologium Hieronymianum, 11 May, 15 or 16 October, 16 November) though there is one of the name in the present Roman Martyrology under date of 16 October, nothing more is known.

The relics of Nereus and Achilleus are housed since the 6th century together with the relics of Domitilla under the high altar of the church of Santi Nereo Achilleo.

Feast day

The Tridentine Calendar had on 12 May a joint feast (semidouble rank) of Nereus, Achilleus and Pancras. The name of Domitilla was added in 1595. The joint celebration of Nereus, Achilleus, Domitilla and Pancras continued with that ranking (see General Roman Calendar of 1954) until reduced to that of simple in 1955 (see General Roman Calendar of Pope Pius XII) and that of third-class feast in 1960 (see General Roman Calendar of 1960).

In the present General Roman Calendar, revised in 1969, Saints Nereus and Achilleus (together) and Saint Pancras have distinct celebrations (optional memorials) on 12 May. Saint Domitilla is not included in the revised calendar, because the liturgical honours once paid to her "have no basis in tradition".

The feast is celebrated on the same day by the Orthodox Church.

Saint Pancras of Rome

Saint Pancras (Latin: *Sanctus Pancratius*) was a Roman citizen who converted to Christianity, and was beheaded for his faith at the age of fourteen, around the year 304. His name is Greek (Πανκράτιος) and means "the one that holds everything".

From an early stage, Saint Pancras was venerated together with Saints Nereus and Achilleus in a shared feast day and Mass formula on 12 May. In 1595, 25 years after Pope Pius V promulgated the Tridentine Missal, Saint Domitilla was also added.

Since 1969, Saint Pancras has been venerated separately, still on 12 May. He is, traditionally, the second of the Ice Saints. In the Syriac traditions he is known as Mor Izozoel (Mar Azazael) remembered on 12 May and 12 August.



*Statue of Pancras
in a church at Vranov, Moravia.*

Legend

Because he was said to have been martyred at the age of fourteen during the persecution under Diocletian, Pancras would have been born around 289, at a place designated as near Synnada, a city of Phrygia Salutaris, to parents of Roman citizenship. His mother Cyriada died during childbirth, while his father Cleonius died when Pancras was eight years old. Pancras was entrusted to his uncle Dionysius' care. They both moved to Rome to live in a villa on the Caelian Hill. They converted to Christianity, and Pancras became a zealous adherent of the religion.

During the persecution of Christians by Emperor Diocletian, around 303 AD, he was brought before the authorities and asked to perform a sacrifice to the Roman gods. Diocletian, impressed with the boy's determination to resist, promised him wealth and power, but Pancras refused, and finally the emperor ordered him to be beheaded on the Via Aurelia, on 12 May 303 AD; this traditional year of his martyrdom

cannot be squared with the saint's defiance of Diocletian in Rome, which the emperor had not visited since 286, nor with the mention of Cornelius (251–253) as Bishop of Rome at the time of the martyrdom, as the most recent monograph on Pancras' texts and cult has pointed out.

A Roman matron named Ottavilla recovered Pancras' body, covered it with balsam, wrapped it in precious linens, and buried it in a newly built sepulchre dug in the Catacombs of Rome. Pancras' head was placed in the reliquary that still exists today in the Basilica of Saint Pancras.

*Saints Nereus & Achilleus
and
St Pancras of Rome
extracted from Wikipedia*
