

# St Joseph's Catholic Parish

Fourteenth Sunday in Ord. Time  
Year B, 7 July, 2024

Embracing the communities of  
Cherbourg, Goomeri, Murgon,  
Proston and Wondai



*Unity in diversity ... being one in Christ through Baptism!*

## Trappist Martyrs of Algeria Remembered

May 7 was the first liturgical Memorial of Christian de Cherge and companions, Trappist Martyrs in Algeria who were beatified in 2018.

In March 1996, when the world was stunned by the kidnapping of seven Trappist monks in Algeria, being held for a prisoner exchange. Our entire Order joined in days of prayer for their safe return. Fifty-six days later, the world was electrified by news of their death. France was horrified, every Catholic church tolled its bells at the same time in the monks' memory. Seven lives for God and for the Church of Algeria.

The fundamentalist rebels had warned in French: "Leave Algeria or die! Algeria for Algerians! All foreigners out!" But the monks chose to stay, sheep in the midst of wolves.

It was learned after the funeral that Fr Christian had written a letter two years previous, forgiving his future persecutors, sealed the letter, left it with his mother in France, to be opened only upon his death. It was his Last Testament, an amazing account of forgiveness. In the face of this remarkable peacemaker, who could forgive his enemies in advance, let us be sorry for not being able to forgive long after the fact.

"Who are these wearing white robes, and whence have they come?" – Revelation 7:13

They are the seven monks from Tibhirine, who lived together, died together, and will be remembered together for all eternity. Though they died together almost 25 years ago, they're still spreading the message of peace.

All of the murdered monks came from French monasteries to Our Lady of Atlas, in Tibhirine, Algeria, where they formed a typical monastic community, each with his own personality, his individual gifts.

They got caught in a war between the army and extremist rebels who wanted to force the French out of Algeria, a war of terror which ultimately claimed 44,000 people, mostly civilians, including 150 imams who dared preach against violence.



The monks' neighbours were all Muslims who trusted them, considered them friends, no different than any other inhabitant of the village, and repeatedly asked them not to go and leave them helpless.

When push came to shove, the monks united in their choice of remaining in Algeria, continuing their life of prayer and work, helping poor families with hand-me-downs, shoes, food, medicine as best they could, witnessing how possible it is for people to live in peaceful co-existence.

The seven monks died together after 56 days of detention. But they're still spreading the gospel of Christ's love and challenging the romantic notions we have of SAINTS... that Saints are special people, who've been given special gifts of mystical prayer or penance, who live lives out of the ordinary, do things out of the ordinary, work many miracles.

On the contrary, all seven were markedly different, with his own sensitivities and opinions. We'll never know their temptations, or weaknesses or failings, what personal obstacles they struggled with. We do know that, through their perseverance, God's grace won out. They were able to give of themselves, and go together to the end of their journey, singing the praises of God, leaving a powerful witness to the world.

They'd likely smile now that their monastery has become a tourist hot-spot, a shrine of peace, because all along, they were simply Christians, living ordinary monastic lives, fulfilling the Great Commandment: **Love your God, Love your neighbour.**

*Blessed Brothers of Tibhirine, pray for us that we also may be faithful witnesses!*

## Sunday Mass Times

Murgon		
WEEK	DAY	TIME
every	Sunday	8.00am
Wondai		
WEEK	DAY	TIME
every	Saturday	5.00pm
Proston		
WEEK	DAY	TIME
every	Saturday	9.00am
Goomeri		
WEEK	DAY	TIME
every	Sunday	6.00pm
Gayndah		
WEEK	DAY	TIME
every	1st, 3rd, 5th Sundays	10.30am
every	2nd, 4th Sundays	9.00am
Cherbourg		
WEEK	DAY	TIME
5	Sunday	4.30pm
Weekday Mass Times		
12 noon, Wednesday, Gayndah		
5.00pm, Wednesday, Wondai		
9.00am, 2nd, 4th Thursdays, School/Parish Mass, Murgon		
9.00am, 1st, 3rd Thursdays, Castra		
Holy Hour for Peace		
Wondai, 4.00pm to 5.00pm, Wednesday, before Mass		

## Today's readings

Ezekiel 2: 2-5; Corinthians 12: 7-10;  
Mark 6: 1-6

*Response:*

Our eyes are fixed on the Lord,  
pleading for his mercy.

*Gospel Acclamation:*

Alleluia, alleluia! The Spirit of the Lord is upon me: he sent me to bring Good News to the poor. Alleluia!

# How the Roman prison that once held Saints Peter and Paul in captivity became a Holy Site

Hidden below the Church of Saint Joseph of the Carpenters, among the ruins of ancient Rome, lies the city's oldest maximum-security prison: the Mamertine prison.

## Historical evidence of the saints' imprisonment

It is believed Saints Peter and Paul were incarcerated until their respective martyrdoms, because of the seriousness of their 'crime': refusing to ascribe absolute power and divinity to Roman Emperor Nero.

It is probably this prison that Paul referred to in his Second Letter to Timothy, when he urged Timothy to visit him soon: "Do your best to come before winter" (2 Timothy 4:21).

Indeed, while it is believed that Saint Paul wrote his letters to the Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians and to Philemon during his first Roman imprisonment during Nero's reign (according to tradition, Paul was imprisoned in his own house under house arrest for two years during his first imprisonment) it is assumed that he wrote his Second Letter to Timothy during his second imprisonment in Rome, shortly before his martyrdom. For instance, Saint Paul writes: "Do not be ashamed then of testifying to our Lord, nor of me his prisoner" (2 Timothy 1:8).

Apart from the writings of some early saints such as Saint Peter of Alexandria, the main evidence that Saint Peter was also imprisoned in the Tullianum, together with Saint Paul, can be found in one of the earliest of the apocryphal acts of the apostles in Christianity, the 'Acts of Peter', dating to the late second century A.D.

In addition, frescoes inside the prison and Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus' Histories from the fourth-century associate the site with the veneration of Peter and Paul from the earliest centuries after the death of Christ.

It wasn't a prison for petty thieves. It was a prison for the most important enemies of the State. They wanted people to see that these prisoners were being tortured and sentenced to death.

Among the many historical figures condemned to death by starvation, strangulation or beheading in the Mamertine Prison, several deserve to be mentioned: Pope Sixtus II and Saint Lawrence are said to have been incarcerated there.

The prison consists of two superimposed floors: the upper level is known as the 'Carcer', while the lower level is the 'Tullianum'.

There was no entrance or exit from the lower area, there was only this hole right here in the ground where the prisoners would be thrown down to be left to starve to death or to await their execution.

## Miraculous events in the prison

Despite the harsh conditions of the apostles' incarceration, the apocryphal 'Acts of Peter' recounts miraculous events around their martyrdom, as signs of God's blessings and mercy to them in this time of strife.

For example, Peter was able to give witness to the Gospel even here in the Mamertine Prison, to the very prison guards who were watching over him. He was able to tell them about the Gospel, and they listened to his words. They welcomed the message of the Gospel into their hearts and wanted to be baptised. But there was no water with which to baptise them, so Peter had water spring forth miraculously, and he used that water to baptise them. These prison guards, Processus and Martinian, themselves became martyrs of the Gospel.

Following their baptism, the two warders – who are today mentioned in the Roman Martyrology – were then arrested, tortured and beheaded by Nero's order.

Peter and Paul showed great courage, they embraced the cross, and not only in an individual manner, but together. Peter and Paul, who had very different personalities, different approaches, different charisms, still had a great respect for one another and wound up sharing together the experience of martyrdom here in Rome.

After their imprisonment, tradition holds that Saint Peter was crucified upside down in Nero's circus on the Vatican Hill – where the obelisk 'The Witness' stands today.

Saint Paul is said to have been decapitated just outside of Rome, at the 'Aquas Salvias', where his severed head allegedly rebounded three times, miraculously giving rise to a source of water each time that it touched the ground. This is how the place earned the name 'San Paolo alle Tre Fontane', meaning "Saint Paul at the Three Fountains".

Over time, the Mamertine Prison – which was in use until the fourth century – became a place of Christian worship, just as the Colosseum and other places of Christian martyrdom in Rome.

The story of the martyrs is one of great courage and of being able to stand up for the truth, even if it means losing one's



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**We pray for those who are sick:**  
Orlando Dyrity; Wendy Heidemann;  
David McIntosh.

life. The truth of the Gospel is indeed more precious than the gift of life itself, which is one of the most precious gifts that God has given us.

*Bénédicte Cedergren is an Associate Producer for EWTN.*



## Novena Prayer to Saint Joseph

Oh, patron of the universal church, Saint Joseph, we ask for .....  
Remember O Most Chaste Spouse of the Virgin Mary, that never has it been known that anyone who asked for your help and sought intercession was left unaided. Full of confidence in your power, we hasten to you and beg your protection. Listen, O, foster father of the redeemer, to our humble prayer and in your goodness hear and answer us. Amen