

December Calendar Saints and Composers

3 Francis Xavier, priest, was one of the first Jesuits. He went to the Orient in 1541, where, for ten years, he tirelessly proclaimed the Gospel in India and Japan. Through his preaching, he brought many to believe.

4 John Damascene, priest and doctor, lived in the Monastery of St. Sabas near Jerusalem in the eighth century. He edited a great collection of prior theological teaching and defended the use of icons in Christian worship.

6 Nicholas, bishop of Myra in Asia Minor in the fourth century, has become legendary in German tradition and in some Eastern traditions as the one who brings gifts to children in December, offering them on his feast day.

7 Ambrose, bishop and doctor in Milan in the late fourth century, defended the faith and composed hymns--he was one of the first Christian hymnists to compose metrical texts in Latin instead of Greek.

8 Under the title of the Immaculate Conception, Mary is honored as the patroness of the United States. Originally celebrated as the Conception of St. Anne, this solemnity honors God's work in preparing Mary to be the mother of the Son.

8 Jean Sibelius, composer, was born in Finland on this date in 1865. His interest in Finnish history and legend shaped his musical compositions.

9 Juan Diego/Cuatitlatoatzin, hermit, had a vision when he was fifty years old. Near Mexico City, he saw a woman with Aztec features who called herself the Mother of God (December 12).

10 César Franck, composer, became a leading figure in the musical life of France in the second part of the nineteenth century. He composed service music for the choir and the organ at Ste. Clotilde in Paris, but he was most famous for his extemporaneous playing before and after Mass.

11 Damasus I, pope, reigned in Rome when the co-emperors Gratian and Theodosius declared Christianity "as professed by the bishops of Rome and Alexandria" to be the official religion of the Roman state. He summoned synods to work against schismatics and heretics and widely promoted the cult of the martyrs, whose burial places he adorned with sacred verse.

11 Louis-Hector Berlioz, born on this date in 1803, was the French musical version of the Romantic Movement. Attracted by what he heard at Mass, he studied music privately while he was preparing to become a doctor. He finally went full-time into composition in 1830.

12 Our Lady of Guadalupe. In 1531, the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to an Indian convert, Juan Diego, and left a picture of her impressed on his cloak. Under this title, Mary is the patroness of the Americas.

12 Jane Frances de Chantal, religious, embraced the religious life in 1610, nine years after her husband's death. Under the guidance of Francis de Sales, she organized a new kind of religious community that would perform works of charity especially for the poor and the sick.

13 Lucy, virgin and martyr, suffered for the faith in Syracuse, Sicily, in 304.

14 John of the Cross, priest and doctor, renowned for his wisdom and sanctity, worked with Teresa of Avila to reform Carmelite houses in sixteenth century Spain. His writings about the spiritual life have become classics, and they remain a fitting testimony to his life.

16 Ludwig van Beethoven, composer, was born on this date in 1770.

16 Zoltán Kodály, composer and music educator, born on this date in 1885, used folk music to develop his educational theories.

21 Peter Canisius, priest and doctor, taught and preached in sixteenth century Bavaria, Germany, and Switzerland. He worked strenuously for many years by his writings and teachings to safeguard the Catholic faith. Of his numerous books, the Catechism is the most renowned. Peter died in Fribourg, Switzerland, in 1597.

23 John of Kanty, priest, taught Scripture in Poland in the fifteenth century. He distinguished himself as an orthodox teacher of the faith, and by his piety and love of neighbor he gave Christian example to his colleagues and students.

25 The Solemnity of the Nativity of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (And the first performance of "Silent Night" at St. Nicholas Church in Obendorf, 1818.)

26 Stephen, first martyr. See Acts of the Apostles 7.

27 John, apostle and evangelist. During the persecution of Domitian, John was exiled to the island of Patmos. He probably died at Ephesus at an extreme old age, the only apostle who did not suffer martyrdom.

28 Holy Innocents, martyrs. Read Matthew 2.

29 Thomas à Becket, bishop and martyr, served as chancellor of England under Henry II in 1154 and then as archbishop of Canterbury from 1162 until he was martyred in 1170.