

Saint Ambrose

7 December



About Saint Ambrose

Saint Ambrose was born in Trier (now in Germany) between 337 and 340, to a Roman family. His father was praetorian prefect of Gaul. Ambrose was educated at Rome and embarked on the standard *cursus honorum* of Roman advocates and administrators, at Sirmium, the capital of Illyria. In about 372 he was made prefect of Liguria and Emilia, whose capital was Milan.

In the year 374, the See of Milan fell vacant. Ambrose tried to resolve the conflict between the Catholics and Arians (those who denied the divinity of Jesus Christ) over the appointment of a new bishop. However, that did not go to plan for Ambrose, because the people turned on him and demanded that he become the bishop himself. He was a layman and not yet baptized (at this time it was common for baptism to be delayed and for people to remain for years as catechumens), but that was not going to get him out of becoming a bishop. Pressured by the people and by the emperor, Ambrose was baptized, ordained, and installed as bishop within a week, on 7 December 374.

Ambrose did not care for people's status. When the Emperor Theodosius ordered the massacre of 7,000 people in Thessalonica, Ambrose forced him to do public penance.

Ambrose defended the rights of the Church and attacked the Arian heresy with learning, firmness and gentleness. His talents also extended to hymn writing. Many of these are still in use today. He is also associated with the Ambrosian Rite which is one of three liturgical rites used in the Latin Church. This Rite has been maintained in Milan since the time of Saint Ambrose. <https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/ambrosian-rite>

He had great wealth and upon being ordained and becoming a bishop the first thing he did was to give his money to poor and his land to the Church. He also set about learning theology. His theological studies were helped by his knowledge of Greek (which few people had at the time), and therefore he was able to read (and in turn study) the Eastern theologians and philosophers as well as those of the West.

Ambrose was a key figure in the conversion of St Augustine to Catholicism. He died on Holy Saturday, 4 April 397.

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What can we learn from Saint Ambrose's life?

Saint Ambrose carried out his office with great care and perseverance. He displayed charity to all and was a true shepherd and teacher of his flock, just as a bishop should be.

Perhaps Ambrose's greatest claim to fame was that he was a key figure in the conversion of Saint Augustine of Hippo to Catholicism. Saint Augustine was impressed by Saint Ambrose's intelligence and scholarship, which made him different from the other Catholics that he had met.

Evangelization and witness are two important elements to being a Catholic in the twenty-first century. If we live our faith authentically and sincerely, we will lead people to Jesus. However, if our faith is something that we turn on and off like an electrical appliance then people will see through us and are unlikely to see any value in becoming a Catholic.

Those of us who are involved in liturgical preparation must remember that each liturgy may be a moment of conversion and/ or evangelization of someone, so the liturgy should always be prepared with great care and should be presented according to what the Missal asks us to do in the liturgy.

Collect

O God, who made the Bishop Saint Ambrose
a teacher of the Catholic faith
and a model of apostolic courage,
raise up in your Church men after your own heart
to govern her with courage and wisdom.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever. Amen.

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Gospel

John 10:11-16

The good shepherd is one who lays down his life for his sheep

Jesus said:

'I am the good shepherd:

the good shepherd is one who lays down his life for his sheep.

The hired man, since he is not the shepherd
and the sheep do not belong to him,
abandons the sheep and runs away
as soon as he sees a wolf coming,
and then the wolf attacks and scatters the sheep;
this is because he is only a hired man
and has no concern for the sheep.

'I am the good shepherd;

I know my own and my own know me,
just as the Father knows me
and I know the Father;
and I lay down my life for my sheep.
And there are other sheep I have
that are not of this fold,
and these I have to lead as well.
They too will listen to my voice,
and there will be only one flock,
and one shepherd.'

Antiphon

He who ponders the law of the Lord day and night
will yield fruit in due season.
proclaim on the housetops.

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Hymn for Memorial of Saint Ambrose

Saint Ambrose of Milan,
you taught the faith so well
to those who knew Christ not
and into error fell.
You knew your sheep.
They knew you too
and followed you
in Christian ways.

Status and power did not
your favour ever win:
you made the Emperor
do penance for his sin.
You knew your sheep.
They knew you too
and followed you
in Christian ways.

You taught Saint Augustine
the way of Christian faith,
may our lives show the world
the way to Heaven's gate.
You knew your sheep.
They knew you too
and followed you
in Christian ways.

Text: Chris deSilva and Alessio Loiacono
Tune: Darwall's 148th

Other Music Suggestion

[Like a Shepherd](#)

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REFERENCES: Universalis App: 7December 2020