

Elizabeth Fry (1780- 1845) 12th October

Elizabeth (Betsey) Gurney was born into a Quaker family of bankers in 1780. At 19 she decided to adopt the simple dress (as seen in the two portraits) and speech (stressing the equality of persons) of strict Quakers. She married in 1800, and over the next 21 years bore 11 children, while being active in promoting education, vaccination against smallpox, and help for the poor immigrants around her home in East Ham near London. In 1811 she was registered as a Quaker minister.

It was in 1813 that she began the main work of her life in prison reform. She focused particularly on women's prisons, starting with the notorious Newgate, campaigning for reform rather than punishment, with education and employment provided for the women, along with better physical conditions, including for prisoners transported to Australia. She also travelled in Europe as an advocate for reform, and published a handbook on the treatment of female prisoners

From 1828 she faced many challenges, as her husband went bankrupt and increasingly her religious position contributed to her ideas being dismissed as unprofessional and out of date.



Samuel Drummond.
Watercolour on ivory. 1815
© National Portrait Gallery



George Richmond 1843



A memorial statue of Elizabeth Fry by Alfred Drury has been placed in the Old Bailey, London's Central Court

St Teresa of Ávila (1515- 1582) 15th October

Teresa entered a Carmelite convent in her home town of Ávila, in Spain when she was 20, more out of fear than love of God. For over 20 years she struggled with her faith, but gradually illness, her reading, and a series of visions inspired her with an intense desire to serve God more fully than she found possible in the very social atmosphere of her convent. She began to set up "Reformed" foundations, travelling through Spain, and attracting both support and condemnation. She wrote several books on meditation and the spiritual life, and an autobiography, books which have continued to be published and read ever since.

She described one of her mystical experiences as being pierced with an arrow in the heart by an angelic figure. This is the basis for an outstanding example of the extraordinary genius of Lorenzo Bernini, baroque sculptor, in Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome. The central section, usually referred to as "The Ecstasy of St Teresa" (more formally, The Transverberation of St Teresa) is most often reproduced, but it is just part of the central section of a complex occupying the entire chapel donated by the Cornaro family, constructed between 1647 and 1652. It is a tour de force of sculpture, colour, light which has inspired a voluminous commentary.





17th Ignatius of Antioch

Ignatius lived in the second century, and was martyred in Rome before 140 – most writers think a date around 110 is most likely. At an advanced age, as the Bishop of Antioch in modern Syria, one of the three most important Christian centers of the time, he was arrested during a wave of persecutions against Christians, and taken in chains to be executed – early sources claim by being thrown to lions in the amphitheatre, a fate he refers to in his Letters. The seven letters reliably ascribed to him are a very important source for understanding early church beliefs and practices. He is the first known writer to refer to the church as *katholikos* (according to the whole). The Letters also strongly stress the divinity of Christ, the observance of Sunday: “let every friend of Christ keep the Lord's day as a festival, the resurrection-day, the queen and chief of all the days [of the week]. Looking forward to this, the prophet declared, “To the end, for the eighth day,” on which our life both sprang up again, and the victory over death was obtained in Christ.” (Letter to the Magnesians) and the importance of the Eucharist “the medicine of immortality.” (Letter to the Ephesians).

The Letters also proclaim an urgent desire to proceed to his death, and images most frequently show him flanked by lions, as in the painting from the Menologion (Church Calendar and Service book) of Basil from around 1000.



The 14th c mosaic in the Church of the Theotokos Pammakaristos in Istanbul (now a mosque) show St Ignatius in the garb of an eastern Bishop, holding a copy of the Scriptures, and making a sign of blessing, recalling the warm and encouraging greetings conveyed in his Letters to churches along the route of his last journey.

