

## GK Chesterton, writer (1874 – 1936)

*Observed 13 June*



Some of the people honored in the new schedule of observances may seem odd choices, but this choice will resonate with the countless people for whom Gilbert Keith Chesterton is their favorite Christian author. His writings have helped many explore and deepen their faith. Few today read his erudite literary criticism, focused on many of the greatest nineteenth century British writers. But many still enjoy his Father Brown mysteries, detective tales in which the priest protagonist connects his sleuthing to Christian thought and practice. His *The Man who was Thursday* is a subtle and highly entertaining commentary on Job under the guise of an adventure story. He also regularly contributed columns to newspapers (many of which have been collected in books) and a wealth of poetry, both comic and serious, some dealing with great historical events and personages. Of his works on the Christian faith, the more didactic (such as *Orthodoxy* and *The Everlasting Man*) may no longer have wide appeal, but his biographies of Saint Francis, and especially of Thomas Aquinas remain very readable and highly insightful. GKC was a man of deep personal faith, always eager to engage others in conversation, to share his faith with any who would listen, to explore the world of thought with delight and enthusiasm.

### **The Donkey by G. K. Chesterton**

When forests walked and fishes flew  
And figs grew upon thorn,  
Some moment when the moon was blood,  
Then, surely, I was born.

With monstrous head and sickening bray  
And ears like errant wings—  
The devil's walking parody  
Of all four-footed things:

The battered outlaw of the earth  
Of ancient crooked will;  
Scourge, beat, deride me—I am dumb—  
I keep my secret still.

Fools! For I also had my hour—  
One far fierce hour and sweet:  
There was a shout around my head  
And palms about my feet.

### **Eternities by G. K. Chesterton**

I cannot count the pebbles in the brook.  
Well hath He spoken: "Swear not by thy head.  
Thou knowest not the hairs," though He, we read,  
Writes that wild number in His own strange book.

I cannot count the sands or search the seas,  
Death cometh, and I leave so much untrod.  
Grant my immortal aureole, O my God,  
And I will name the leaves upon the trees,

In heaven I shall stand on gold and glass,  
Still brooding earth's arithmetic to spell;  
Or see the fading of the fires of hell  
Ere I have thanked my God for all the grass.

*Lessons* I Chronicles 29:10-13; Psalm 8; I Corinthians 15:50-52; John 1:43-51

*Collect* O God of earth and altar, you gave G. K. Chesterton a ready tongue and pen, and inspired him to use them in your service: Mercifully grant that we may be inspired to witness cheerfully to the hope that is in us; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.