



Teaching the Saints

A Workbook for
Faith Formation
and Education

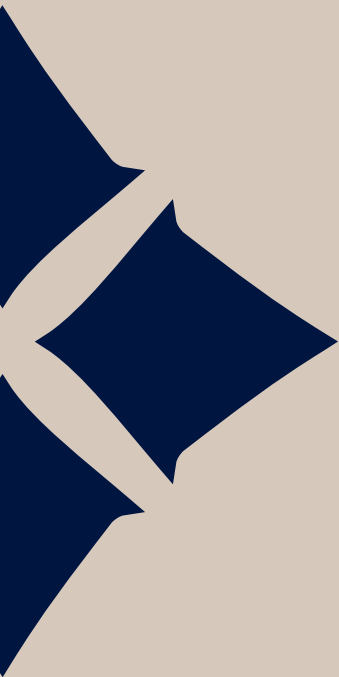
Saints for the month of
MARCH



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The saints selected for this month are drawn from the "Witnesses to Holiness" collection from Notre Dame Vision, a high school conference hosted by the McGrath Institute for Church Life at the University of Notre Dame. Notre Dame Vision asks teenagers to consider their God-given talents and how they will use their gifts to respond to God's call for their life. For more information, visit vision.nd.edu.

The illustrations of saints used in this workbook were created by Julie Lonneman, who holds exclusive rights to the further distribution and publication of the art.

How to Use This Workbook

Turn to the witness and intercession of the saints to lead middle school and high school students toward a deeper sense of God's invitation to follow Him. This free teaching resource features the lives of the saints paired with short guided prompts for further reflection, discussion and action.

The worksheets can be used by youth, parents, teachers, religious educators and ministers to celebrate saint feast days during March. Adapt the worksheets for use in the classroom, home or parish to highlight the myriad and unique ways that God calls us to use our gifts to serve the Church and world.

Each worksheet includes the following:

- ◆ A short biography on each saint's life and witness
- ◆ A reflection inviting the student to consider ways each saint resonates with their faith journey
- ◆ A challenge prompting the student to put the saint's witness into action

St. Katharine Drexel

- ◆ 1858-1955; United States
- ◆ Feast Day: March 3



Katharine Drexel was the daughter of a wealthy banker in Philadelphia. Her father always taught Katharine and her sister that social responsibility came with wealth. Katharine's step-mother was devoted to helping the poor, and taught her daughters to do the same.

By 1885, Katharine's parents had died and left the entire estate to their two daughters (Katharine's half would be worth about \$80 million today). Katharine, seeking ways to put her money to good use, donated money to the Bureau for Catholic Indian Missions for the education of children. She soon realized that donating money was not enough.

As much as she desired a life of social action, Katharine also felt called to a prayerful life as a contemplative nun. She struggled over which path to pursue, and in the end, she decided to pursue both. She established the Sisters of

the Blessed Sacrament, a religious community that combined social action with prayer and paid special attention to the needs of African and Native Americans. The sisters established numerous missions and schools on reservations and in the South, including Xavier University in New Orleans, the first and only Catholic university for African Americans.

Her community faced much opposition and ridicule, particularly from those who did not believe they should be ministering to the African American community. In 1922, the Ku Klux Klan tried to force a pastor in Texas to close down one of Katharine's schools. Klan members threatened to tar and feather the pastor and destroy the church. The sisters prayed for the safety of the church and its pastor. A few days later, a tornado passed through the area and demolished the Klan's headquarters. Katharine's work was never again threatened by the Ku Klux Klan.

Katharine suffered a serious heart attack in 1935 and spent the last twenty years of her life engaged in contemplative prayer. We remember Katharine for her great generosity, courage and devotion to those in need.

Everloving God, you called St. Katharine Drexel to teach the message of the Gospel and to bring the life of the Eucharist to the African-American and Native American peoples. By her prayers and example, enable us to work for justice among the poor and oppressed and keep us undivided in love in the Eucharistic communion of your Church.

—Opening Prayer of the Feast of St. Katharine Drexel

Reflect

What about St. Katharine Drexel's life stands out to you?

Imagine that you inherited a large sum of money or an estate similar to the size of Katherine's. What would you do with that money? What causes would be important for you to support?

Act

Katharine was devoted to fighting the injustice and inequality that she saw around her. Unfortunately, injustice and inequality still exist in various forms in our communities and our relationships. Consider where in your life you might still see a situation that is unjust or unfair. What can you do to address this situation?

St. Felicity and St. Perpetua

- ◆ Martyred 203
- ◆ Feast Day: March 7
- ◆ Patron Saint of Martyrs



Everything we know about Felicity and Perpetua comes from an account of their martyrdom on March 7, 203 in Carthage, North Africa. At this time, the Roman authorities were persecuting Christians who would not worship an image of the emperor, part of the Roman religion of the day. Christians were viewed as a threat to the welfare of the state and frequently killed for their disobedience.

Felicity and Perpetua were among a group of Christians arrested during this period. Felicity, a female slave, was pregnant at the time of her arrest. Because a pregnant woman could not be executed according to Roman law, Felicity gave birth to a girl as witness to her Christian faith. The child was raised by her sister.

Perpetua was a catechumen preparing for baptism who came from a wealthy family. Her young son stayed with her in prison while her

father encouraged her to worship the image of the emperor to avoid death. She tried to comfort her father, letting him know that in her martyrdom, she would experience new life with Christ. Nonetheless, he went away sad.

Legend tells us that Felicity and Perpetua's faces were shining with light as they walked into the stadium for their execution. On entering the stadium, the women encountered a bull that was to kill them. After wounding them, the people of the stadium called for their execution by the sword. Felicity and Perpetua exchanged a kiss of peace before being killed. Perpetua guided the sword of the executioner to her neck so she might die through her own will and not at his hands.

The martyrs' actions are valuable for the Church today. The two women rejected the unjust laws of their state because of their experiences of a greater truth in Jesus Christ. They witnessed to this power even unto death. Additionally, Felicity, a poor slave, and Perpetua, a wealthy woman, were united through their new life in Christ. Their names are forever connected as a reminder that all human beings are equal, even if they are not viewed so by the state.

Father, your love gave Saints Perpetua and Felicity courage to suffer a cruel martyrdom. By their prayers, help us to grow in love of you. –Opening prayer of the Feast of Felicity and Perpetua, martyrs

Reflect

What about St. Felicity and St. Perpetua's life stands out to you?

The account of the martyrdom of Felicity and Perpetua is so striking because of their steadfast refusal to put the emperor above their worship and praise of God. While we might not 'worship' another person like an emperor, sometimes our actions and the things we choose in our lives make it clear that we don't always put God at the center of our lives.

What things get in the way of your relationship with God?

Act

Take a moment this week to perform an examination of conscience, revisiting the areas of your life where you may follow your own desires instead of God's desires for you. Consider attending the Sacrament of Reconciliation to express sorrow for these times and to renew your relationship with God.

St. Louise de Marillac

- ◆ 1591-1660
- ◆ Feast Day: March 15
- ◆ Patron Saint of Social Workers



Louise de Marillac suffered greatly as a young woman. Born in France, both of Louise's parents were dead by the time she was fifteen years old. With the death of her parents, Louise approached a priest asking that she might become a nun, but this priest encouraged her to be married instead due to her feeble health. Crushed by this decision, she entered into an arranged marriage with Antony LeGras, whom she nursed through illness before his untimely death just after the birth of their only child.

Despite her health problems, the disappointments of her life, and her poverty, Louise would become a great servant to the Church through her care for the poor. St. Vincent de Paul, who served as her confessor, saw in Louise a woman that was capable of organizing his own efforts to serve the poor in urban Paris, as well as a woman who would be trusted by the poor due to the difficult circumstances of her life.

Eventually, Louise formed a small community of four women that blossomed into a full religious community, the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, also known as the Daughters of Charity. This community of women did not live in a convent but served in hospitals and orphanages and wore the simple peasant garment of the day. In this action, Louise and her fellow women religious shattered the popular notion of the day that only the wealthy were able to offer their service to the poor. All people had gifts to love.

Louise's own struggle with her vocation is a model for the Church. One's vocation is not a single decision to fulfill a certain role, but openness to God's workings in a person's life, whatever they may be. The disappointments of her earlier life were transformed into the very gifts that allowed her to love the poor with such devotion. Even if we are denied access to our dream school for college, or do not get the job that we want, Louise's life reminds us that these disappointments can become opportunities that allow us to love each person more intensely.

As for your conduct toward the poor, may you never take the attitude of merely getting the task done. You must show them affection; serving them from the heart – inquiring of them what they need; speaking to them gently and compassionately; procuring necessary help for them without being too bothersome or eager. –Spiritual Writings of St. Louise

Reflect

What about St. Louise de Marillac's life stands out to you?

Despite challenging circumstances and early setbacks, Louise did not close herself off to the possibilities for her life. Even when life was difficult, she did not give up. Instead she kept moving forward, searching for new ways to love and serve.

Have you ever encountered a setback that gave way to new opportunities? What happened? What allowed you to keep moving forward?

Act

Louise is the patron saint of social workers, the men and women who work in the midst of challenging social circumstances to alleviate the burdens of those in need. Take a moment this week to pray for all those who care for persons most in need.

St. Patrick

- ◆ 389-461; Ireland
- ◆ Feast Day: March 17
- ◆ Patron Saint of Ireland



Most people have heard of St. Patrick's Day, but fewer people know about the life of the saint whose day we celebrate by wearing green, decorating with shamrocks, and eating corned beef and cabbage. Although many legends surround St. Patrick, there is little doubt that he led great changes in Ireland and established Christianity's place within the country.

Patrick first came to Ireland as a slave. He grew up as the son of a successful family in Roman Britain, but he was captured by Irish pirates while a teenager and spent six years working with livestock in Northern Ireland. During this time, Patrick grew close to God through prayer, and even came to love Ireland. He managed to make his way back to Britain to pursue an education and ordination, but he felt called to return to Ireland and establish the Church there.

He returned to Ireland around 435 to take his role as the second bishop of Ireland. Many popular stories about Patrick exist, such as Patrick driving the snakes from Ireland or using a shamrock to explain the Trinity. We can say with relative certainty that Patrick had a profound impact on Christianity's spread throughout Ireland by converting thousands of people and establishing numerous Christian communities and monasteries. When he died in 461, the Church was alive and prospering in Ireland.

It is said that Patrick baptized St. Brigid and developed a close friendship with her. Brigid, knowing about Patrick's monasteries, began a community of her own in Kildare where men and women pursuing a religious life could live together.

Thanks to Patrick and Brigid, Christianity was firmly established in Ireland. Their devotion to God and to their fellow human beings always shined forth through their work.

*Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ within me,
Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ at my right, Christ at my left,
Christ in my lying down, Christ in my sitting, Christ in my arising,
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks to me,
Christ in every eye that sees me, Christ in every ear that hears me.*

—St. Patrick's Prayer

Reflect

What about St. Patrick's life stands out to you?

As a catalyst for Christianity's spread in Ireland, it's not hard to imagine that St. Patrick would have been quite gifted at communicating the faith and explaining difficult concepts. Imagine yourself faced with the task of inviting others to know Christianity on a deeper level. What images or examples would you use to show others its essential truths?

Act

The life of St. Patrick is associated with many images and symbols. His "lorica," or hymn of faith and trust in God, is one of his most famous. You can see a part of it reproduced at the bottom of his biography on the front page of this worksheet.

Take a moment this week to write your own prayer that captures your trust in God. If you need inspiration, read the entirety of St. Patrick's Lorica. You can find it on the web or in some prayer books.

St. Joseph

- ◆ First Century
- ◆ Feast Day: March 19
- ◆ Patron Saint of Fathers, Church Workers, China and Peru



Scripture tells us little about the life and person of Joseph. According to Matthew and Luke, Joseph was a descendant of King David and a carpenter. Although we do not have much biographical information beyond this, we can get a sense of the qualities that made Joseph an appropriate foster father for Jesus and make him worthy of our admiration by considering his relationship with Mary.

Joseph was engaged to Mary when he received some startling news that Mary was pregnant. Joseph could have reacted with great anger and disbelief that his fiancée was pregnant by the Holy Spirit. Instead, he attempted to spare Mary a great deal of shame and scorn by divorcing her quietly rather than publicly renouncing their engagement or announcing her infidelity. He wanted to do what was best for her. Before he followed through with his decision, an angel of the Lord visited him and confirmed the nature of

Mary's pregnancy. The angel told Joseph to marry her and announced the name of the child, Jesus.

Joseph believed what the angel had told him and obeyed the command to take Mary into his home. He later took Mary to Bethlehem, where she delivered the baby Jesus. He was visited by the angel again after Jesus' birth and was told to take Mary and the child to Egypt in order to avoid Herod's attempts to kill Jesus. Again, Joseph obeyed and showed great faith in God.

After the story of the family's return to Nazareth and Jesus' experience in the Temple, Scripture does not tell us anything more about Joseph. This could mean that he died before Jesus began his ministry. In any case, we remember and admire Joseph's faith and goodness as he faced a difficult decision.

When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home. —Matthew 1:24

Reflect

What about St. Joseph's life stands out to you?

While there are no recorded sayings from Joseph in the Gospels, we know from his actions that he was a devoted husband to Mary and foster father to Jesus. In this way he is recognized as patron saint of fathers. In what ways do you think Joseph might be an example to all fathers?

Act

Take a moment to think about the positive characteristics of your father, grandfather, parish priest, or someone who is a father-figure to you. Consider reaching out to them to express your gratitude through a letter or phone call.

Blessed Oscar Romero

- ◆ 1917-1980; El Salvador
- ◆ Feast Day: March 24



Oscar Romero was born in eastern El Salvador and answered the call to priesthood at age 13. After spending time in seminaries in El Salvador, Oscar continued his studies and was ordained in Rome. He began to work on a Ph.D. in theology, but his heart soon called him back to El Salvador.

In the early 1970s, Oscar was named bishop of Santiago de María, a very rural diocese where he came face-to-face with the struggles of the peasant class. In 1975, five peasants were killed by the rural police. Romero did what he could for their families and the community. He spoke to the leader of the police and El Salvador's president but avoided speaking out publicly.

Romero became Archbishop of San Salvador in 1977. At this time, peasants were forming small Christian communities where they discussed the gospel. They began to see themselves as victims of unjust treatment and started to work

for change. El Salvador's land-owning class and government began to take notice of the peasant movement. Priests and lay members of the Christian communities were killed. Romero, one of the only bishops to speak out, condemned the oppression and injustice when preaching at Mass and on radio.

Romero began to gain support from outside El Salvador. He was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize and made the world aware of what was taking place in his country. He revealed that he had received death threats in response to his activism.

Instead of quieting his message, Archbishop Romero spoke more loudly. On March 23, 1980, he called on soldiers to ignore their orders to kill peasants and asked the government to let the peasants' voices be heard. The next day, as he was celebrating Mass in the chapel of the hospital where he lived, an assassin fired a single shot striking Romero in the heart. He died on March 24. A great number of people, especially those for whom he worked so endlessly and courageously, mourned his death. Archbishop Oscar Romero was beatified in San Salvador on May 23, 2015.

We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own. —Blessed Oscar Romero

Reflect

What about Blessed Oscar Romero's life stands out to you?

Imagine that you were in Oscar Romero's position, witnessing the plight of the people you were called to serve. What would you have done? How would you have acted?

Act

Oscar Romero's example and witness was a beacon of hope in the midst of the turmoil and darkness in San Salvador. Is someone in your life experiencing sickness, the death of a family member, bullying, financial difficulties, or another tough time? How can you reach out to them this week to bring hope?



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