



Teaching the Saints

A Workbook for
Faith Formation
and Education

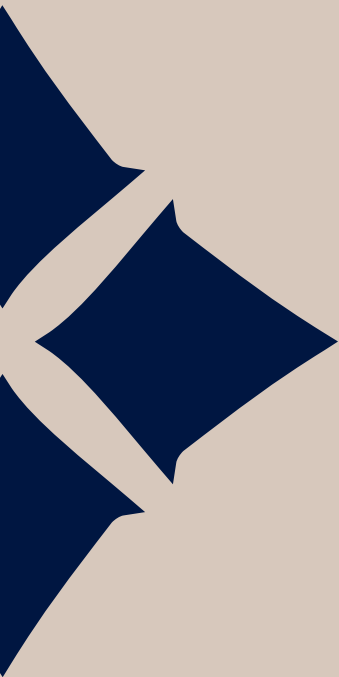
Saints for the month of
SEPTEMBER



McGRATH INSTITUTE FOR CHURCH LIFE



Where higher learning meets faithful service.



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 September. 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. Teresa of Calcutta

- ◆ 1910-1997
- ◆ Feast Day: September 5
- ◆ Founder of Missionaries of Charity



Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu, better known as Mother Teresa, was born to an Albanian family in Yugoslavia. Her father, a wealthy businessman, died when she was a child and left her family in a difficult financial situation. By age 18, Teresa answered the first of two major callings in her life—the call to religious life. She moved to Dublin with the hope of doing missionary work and entered the community of The Sisters of Our Lady of Loreto.

After some training in Ireland, Teresa moved to Calcutta, India to work as a geography teacher. She took her final vows in 1937. While teaching, she could not ignore the great poverty in Calcutta. She received the second of her callings on September 10, 1946. She was riding on a train to Darjeeling for a retreat when she heard God calling her to live among the poor. Teresa received permission from the pope to leave her convent and begin her new ministry.

Mother Teresa formed the Missionaries of Charity, who lived among the poorest of Calcutta. In addition to the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, members of her community took a fourth vow to serve the poor freely. In 1952, Mother Teresa opened a home where people could die in comfort and with dignity. She could not bear the thought of people dying alone in the street without knowing they were loved. The Missionaries of Charity opened more places for the dying and established orphanages, schools and food pantries.

In 1979, Mother Teresa received the Nobel Peace Prize for her amazing work. The Missionaries of Charity are present and serving the poor in nearly eighty countries. This is an incredible example of the effect that one single person can have on the world.

Mother Teresa died in 1997 and was mourned throughout the world. In a memorial homily delivered by Cardinal Basil Hume in London, he noted that Mother Teresa “loved and served humanity because she had given herself without reserve to the love and service of God.” Her faith in God led her to treat her fellow humans with the utmost respect, love, and dignity.

The fruit of silence is prayer. The fruit of prayer is faith. The fruit of faith is love. The fruit of love is service. The fruit of service is peace. —St. Teresa of Calcutta

Reflect

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

Why do you think it would have been important for the Missionaries of Charity to take a fourth vow promising to "serve the poor freely?"

Act

At the heart of the lives of the Missionaries of Charity is consistent prayer. Mother Teresa knew that cultivating a deep love for God would give the sisters a deep well by which to share God's love with others. Take a moment to evaluate your prayer life. If prayer has fallen by the wayside for you, schedule a few minutes (or longer) of time to engage in your favorite practice of prayer each day this week.

St. Peter Claver

- ◆ 1581-1654; Spain
- ◆ Feast Day: September 9
- ◆ Patron Saint of Catholic Missions Among People of African Descent



Peter Claver was born to a wealthy Catholic family on their farm in Catalonia, Spain. He studied at the University of Barcelona and felt called to become a Jesuit. During his time at the university Peter wrote in his journal, "I must dedicate myself to the service of God until death, on the understanding that I am like a slave."

After his 20th birthday, Peter entered the seminary and began studying philosophy at the Jesuit College of Majorca. While here, he met his lifelong mentor and spiritual director, Alphonsus Rodriguez—a Jesuit lay-brother and porter with a gift for prophecy. Rodriguez encouraged the young seminarian to go to New Spain and minister there, prompting Claver to volunteer for missionary service in Cartagena.

Located in New Granada, Cartagena was one of the most important slave markets in the world. Men, women, and children were transported from Africa on overcrowded, infernal voyages by sea.

An average slave could be bought in Africa at 4 crowns and sold in New Granada at 200, making the slave trade a very profitable business. In Peter's time, more than 10,000 Africans were being transported to Cartagena each year. Peter, ordained in 1622, signed his vows, "Peter Claver, slave of the slaves forever," promising the rest of his life to his brothers and sisters in bondage.

In addition to ministering physically and spiritually to captives as they came off the slave ships, Peter begged from the rich to support his work (against the wishes of some fellow Jesuits who accepted slavery). He visited the homes of slaves he had baptized in order to accompany them on their spiritual journeys. On these visits, he insisted on sleeping in the slave quarters. As one story goes, Peter gave up his bed for a slave and slept on the floor beside him.

Before he died on September 8, 1654, Peter had baptized around 300,000 people. His dedication to the corporal and spiritual works of mercy can be summarized in his words, "We must speak to them with our hands before we speak to them with our lips." Peter Claver and Alphonsus Rodriguez were canonized together in 1888 by Pope Leo XIII.

We must speak to them with our hands before we speak to them with our lips.
—St. Peter Claver

Reflect

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

Peter said, "We must speak to them (people) with our hands before we speak to them with our lips." What do you take that phrase to mean and how can we live it out?

Act

Peter Claver was radical. He let his life be ordered not by the prevailing forces of oppression, but by the commitment to love by practicing the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. In the spirit of St. Peter Claver, revisit the corporal and spiritual works of mercy and pick one that you would like to commit to this week.

St. Hildegard of Bingen

- ◆ 1098-1179
- ◆ Feast Day: September 17
- ◆ Patron Saint of Musicians and Writers



Hildegard lived only the first eight years of her life with her natural family. It was a custom to tithe the tenth child to the Church, and so Hildegard was given to a Benedictine monastery where she lived with a solitary anchoress named Jutta. Jutta taught young Hildegard Scripture and the Benedictine life of prayer and work.

Hildegard blossomed into a gifted musical composer, herbal healer, and leader. When Jutta died, Hildegard (now 38 years old) was elected abbess by the nuns of the convent, despite the fact that she was often ill. Throughout this time, God communicated the Mystery of God's presence to Hildegard in the form of visionary experiences. One of the first ones occurred when she was a child and had known the gender of a calf still in the womb. She kept these visions secret until age 42, when she received a blinding vision in which the divine Voice said to her, "Write what you hear and see."

Self-doubt made Hildegard hesitate—was it truly God who was speaking to her? What would others think? With the help of her scribe and friend Volmar, she began writing. Her first book took 10 years to complete. In her visions, poetry, music, letters, and medical treatises, Hildegard portrayed a world alive with *viriditas*—a Latin word created by Hildegard that is usually translated as "greening power." She saw the Christian life as fruitful and full of vitality, like Mary's fruitfulness in giving birth to Christ, and God as the source of this life. She used cosmic and natural symbols to communicate who God is and who humans are in relation to God.

Overcoming the opposition of the Benedictine monks, Hildegard made her group of sisters independent by moving and building a new convent. She corresponded with Popes, emperors, and theologians, offering and seeking counsel. In her old age, she went on a preaching tour in the Rhine, which was unheard of for a woman. In 2012, Pope Benedict declared Hildegard of Bingen to be the fourth female Doctor of the Church.

So now you must give others an intelligible account of what you see with your inner eye and what you hear with your inner ear. Your testimony will help them. As a result, others will learn how to know their Creator. They'll no longer refuse to adore God. —St. Hildegard's Scivias (Know the Ways of the Lord)

Reflect

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

Imagine yourself in Hildegard's position. How would you have felt if you had to leave your family for a monastery? How do you think that decision affected her life?

Act

Hildegard saw a world filled with God's presence and vitality. Take a moment this week to use one of your God-given gifts and notice how it fills you with life and vitality.

St. Padre Pio

- ◆ 1887-1968; Italy
- ◆ Feast Day: September 23
- ◆ Patron Saint of Confessors, Catholic Youth, and Civil Defense Volunteers



Born into a devout Catholic family in a small town in southern Italy and named after St. Francis of Assisi, Francesco Forgione entered the religious order founded by his namesake. At the young age of 15, he was accepted as a novice in the nearby Capuchin Franciscan monastery and took the name Pio (Pius). He was ordained a priest seven years later.

Padre Pio, as he was known from then on, suffered from periods of poor health since childhood, which continued as a priest. From a young age he also had mystical experiences in which he could see and speak with Jesus, Mary, and his guardian angel. One very important mystical experience occurred in 1918, eight years after Padre Pio's ordination. While absorbed in prayer after celebrating mass, Padre Pio had a vision of the crucified Jesus, who appeared to him with hands and feet bleeding from the wounds of the Passion. The wounds were transferred to

Padre Pio, who awoke from the vision with visible wounds in his own hands, feet, and side. This physical imitation of the suffering of Christ, called the stigmata, remained with Padre Pio for fifty years until his death.

While undergoing this constant suffering, Padre Pio gave himself entirely to the ministry of the priesthood. The Masses he celebrated often lasted two or three hours, as he would be caught up in ecstasy and meditation during the consecration of the Eucharist. He also placed great importance on the Sacrament of Reconciliation, regularly spending hours at a time hearing confessions.

Many healings and miracles have been attributed to Padre Pio's intercession, beginning while he was still alive. Once a young bishop wrote to Padre Pio to ask him to pray for a friend suffering from cancer. Later the cancer was found to be in spontaneous remission to the amazement of the doctors, who could not explain why. This young bishop, Karol Wojtyla of Krakow, Poland, would go on to become Saint John Paul II and celebrate both the beatification and the canonization masses of Saint Padre Pio.

My past, O Lord, to your mercy; my present, to your love; my future, to your Providence! —St. Padre Pio

Reflect

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

Even though Padre Pio suffered with poor health, he did his best to give his life fully to the ministry of priesthood. Have you ever known someone who did not let poor health limit them? What do you think it takes to make this type of commitment?

Act

Padre Pio is considered an apostle of the confessional. Take a moment this week to pray for those who may struggle to receive God's mercy or to give it to someone else. Pray for priests to be good confessors and consider going to confession this week!

St. Vincent de Paul

- ◆ 1581-1660; France
- ◆ Feast Day: September 27
- ◆ Patron Saint of Charitable Societies and Works



The son of a poor family in France, Vincent was ordained a priest in 1600. Legend has it that Vincent was captured by pirates in 1605 and spent two years enslaved in Tunisia. After he converted his master to Christianity, they escaped Tunisia and crossed the Mediterranean Sea in a rowboat.

Whether this is true, we cannot know for sure. What we do know, however, is that Vincent ended up in a parish outside of Paris in 1612 and worked as a tutor for the very rich and influential Gondi family. In his parish, he discovered a call to minister to the sick and the poor. He used his connections with the Gondi family to find funding for many charitable efforts.

Vincent was responsible for establishing two major groups: the Congregation of the Mission, also known as the Vincentians or Lazarists,

and the Sisters of Charity. The Congregation of the Mission concentrated on preaching and on training priests for parish work. The Sisters of Charity was the first order that did not require vows or enclosure in a convent. They lived where their work was needed, in hospitals, orphanages, prisons, etc.

Due to illness that affected his legs, Vincent spent the last few years of his life in an armchair, unable to walk. Nevertheless, he continued to write letters asking for donations to help his charities. After a long life of simplicity and charity, Vincent died on September 27, 1660.

In 1833, Frederick Ozanam founded the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, an organization of lay men and women devoted to helping the poor and needy. In the United States, their presence is perhaps best known through their used clothing and furniture stores. St. Vincent's work has certainly lived on.

It is our duty to prefer service to the poor to everything else and to offer such service as quickly as possible....Charity is certainly greater than any rule.

—St. Vincent de Paul

Reflect

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

Unpack this quote from Vincent: "Charity is certainly greater than any rule." What do you think that means? How can it be applied today?

Act

In light of Vincent's service to the sick and poor in France, the St. Vincent DePaul Society was established as an international organization. Consider volunteering with your family or friends at your local chapter this week or engaging in some other direct ministry with the poor.



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