



Witness to Holiness

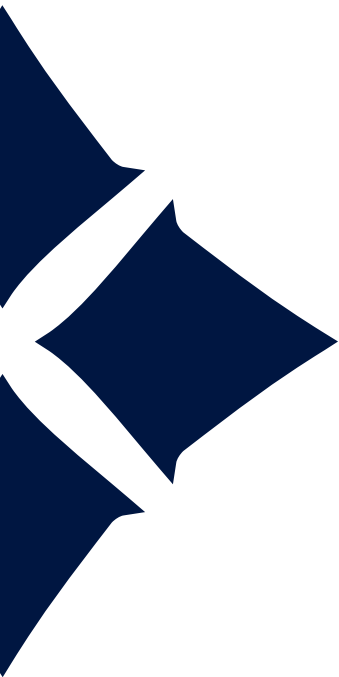
A Collection of
Saint Biographies

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The saints in this book are 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 mcgrath.nd.edu/vision.

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Jesus of Nazareth

"Were not our hearts burning within us as he spoke to us on the way?"

—From the Gospel of Luke 24:32

Holy Mary, the Mother of God

◆ First Century



Mary received the ultimate call when God called her, a virgin, to be the mother of Jesus. As a teenager, probably around age 14, Mary must have been terrified by what this would mean for her. Nevertheless, she drew on her faith in God and accepted this challenging role.

The Bible does not tell us anything about Mary's early years. Other sources name her as the daughter of Anne and Joachim and identify her birthplace as Jerusalem or Galilee. In the Gospel of Luke, Mary was living in Nazareth and engaged to Joseph, a carpenter descended from King David, when the angel Gabriel visited her and announced that she would become pregnant by the Holy Spirit.

Mary and Joseph knew that her pregnancy could be very scandalous and damaging to her reputation. Rather than leave her, Joseph decided to fulfill his promise of marriage and serve as Jesus' earthly father.

When the angel visited Mary, he also announced that Mary's relative, Elizabeth, was pregnant even though it was thought she was much too old to conceive. Mary knew that she had someone who would understand her situation, so she went to live with Elizabeth for three months. Mary gave birth to Jesus in Bethlehem.

As Jesus began his ministry, the Bible tells us little about Mary's life. John's Gospel places her at the wedding feast of Cana. When the party ran out of wine, Mary instructed the servants to do whatever Jesus asked them. Performing his first miracle, Jesus turned jars of water into wine. According to John, Mary was also present at the crucifixion. Jesus instructed his apostle, John, and Mary to take care of one another, and we are told that Mary lived out the rest of her life in the house of John.

Mary has an important place in Catholicism and in the lives of many Catholics. She is recognized as a leading member of the communion of saints and of the Church. Many people recognize Mary as an important role model for Christians. She certainly answered a difficult call with great faith and courage.

And Mary said: My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior. For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed.

—Luke 1:46–48 (Beginning of the Magnificat)

St. Joachim and St. Anne

- ◆ First Century
- ◆ Feast Day: July 26
- ◆ Patron Saints of Grandparents



St. Joachim and St. Anne are the parents of Mary, the Mother of God. Tradition tells us that they were unable to have a child and prayed to God for this gift. An angel appeared to Anne and said that she would have a child whose name would be known to the ends of the earth. Anne promised that this child, whether male or female, would be dedicated to God. When a beautiful girl was born, Joachim and Anne named her Mary, and when she was old enough, she was brought to the temple and presented to God.

This story tells us a great deal of God's relationship with his people. Throughout the Bible, there are stories of couples unable to have children who miraculously give birth through the power of God. Joachim and Anne are in relationship with this same God who is able to work wonders. The salvation brought through Jesus Christ does not simply begin with Jesus'

birth but through the caring relationship that God has established with God's people from the first moment of creation. God's love brings forth gifts beyond our imagination, including children born in impossible situations. With God the impossible is made possible.

Thus, while we know little about Joachim and Anne, we know that they are part of a great generation of saints who have trusted in God's ability to work wonders in the life of God's people. As we think about our own relationships, there are many people who act as quiet, almost unknown saints in our lives. By simply living out their vocation of love for Mary as parents, Joachim and Anne helped prepare Mary to love and serve her own son, Jesus Christ.

God of our ancestors, you gave Saints Joachim and Anne the privilege of being the parents of Mary, the mother of your incarnate Son. May their prayers help us to attain the salvation you have promised to your people.

—Opening prayer for the Feast of Joachim and Anne, parents of Mary



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

Elizabeth and Zechariah

- ◆ First Century
- ◆ Feast Day: November 5



All that we know about Elizabeth and Zechariah comes from the Gospel of Luke, chapter one. Luke's story about the conception and birth of Jesus begins with the announcement of the birth of John the Baptist, the son of Elizabeth and Zechariah. Zechariah, a priest of the Temple, received a visit from the angel Gabriel who told him that Elizabeth would bear a child and that they would name the child John. Elizabeth, however, was known to be barren and both she and Zechariah were advanced in age.

Zechariah could not believe this news and asked for a sign. At that moment, he was struck speechless.

Elizabeth did, indeed conceive a child. As the child grew within her, her cousin Mary also received a visit from the angel Gabriel and learned that she would carry Jesus, the Son of God. At the request of the angel, Mary came to visit Elizabeth. As Mary approached, John leapt in the womb of Elizabeth. With joy, Elizabeth proclaimed, "Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb." Today, this exclamation is the second line of the Hail Mary. In turn, Mary proclaimed what we know as the Magnificat.

After a three-month visit with Mary, Elizabeth gave birth. On the eighth day, she found herself in an argument with friends and relatives over the name of the child. Elizabeth wanted to name him John, but others thought he should be named after his father. As they turned to Zechariah for his opinion, he wrote on a tablet, "John is his name." At that moment, Zechariah regained his speech and proclaimed a prophecy that spoke of what John and Jesus would mean for the people of Israel.

Do not be afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall name him John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of [the] Lord. —The angel Gabriel to Zechariah, Luke 1:13–15



St. John the Baptist

- ◆ First Century
- ◆ Feast Day: June 24
- ◆ Patron Saint of Jordan, Monks and Highways

Elizabeth and Zechariah had thought that they would never have children when the angel Gabriel announced that Elizabeth would bear a son, and his name would be John. In his disbelief, Zechariah was struck mute and could not say a word until eight days after his son's birth when it was time to name him. Zechariah announced that his son would be named John and prophesied the importance John's life would have. He said:

"And you, my child, will be called prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give his people knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins..." (Lk 1:76-77).

John lived an ascetic lifestyle in the desert until his thirtieth year when he actively began his ministry. John preached repentance and prepared the way for Jesus. John could have gained great

popularity and fame on his own, but he always preached that someone greater was coming. When Jesus asked John to baptize him, John did not feel worthy of this honor; Jesus convinced him otherwise.

As Jesus began his own ministry, John found himself in trouble with King Herod. John had not supported Herod's decision to marry Herodias, Herod's half-brother's wife. Out of fear that John could spread discontent and rebellious behavior among the people, Herod had John imprisoned.

At one of Herod's parties, Herodias' daughter danced for him with such skill that Herod promised her anything she wanted. At her mother's request, her daughter asked for the head of John the Baptist. Bound by his promise, Herod ordered that John be beheaded in prison.

Jesus had praised the work and ministry of John. He told crowds that among those born of women, there was no one greater. Upon hearing the news of John's death, Jesus was deeply saddened. The one who had prepared the way for him had died. The world had lost a great prophet and preacher.

I am baptizing you with water, for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is mightier than I. I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. —St. John the Baptist, Matthew 3:11

St. Mary Magdalene

- ◆ First Century
- ◆ Feast Day: July 22
- ◆ Patron Saint of Repentant Sinners, Hairdressers, and the Contemplative Life



Mary Magdalene was among Jesus' closest disciples. She was present at some of the most important events at the end of Jesus' life, namely his crucifixion, burial, and Resurrection. Like Mary and Martha, Mary Magdalene is an example of the role that women played in Jesus' ministry and of his respect for women.

Luke introduces Mary as one of the women following Jesus and mentions that she was healed of seven demons by Jesus. From this point, she actively followed Jesus all the way to the moment of his death.

Mary Magdalene was present at the execution of Jesus. She had to stand by and watch as the man who she was called to follow was crucified like a criminal. She was also present when Jesus was placed in the tomb and joined the other women in preparing spices and perfumes with which to anoint his body.

In her most important role, Mary Magdalene was the primary witness to the Resurrection. All four Gospels name Mary as one of the women, or the only woman, who discovered the empty tomb. Mark and John name Mary as the first person to whom Jesus appeared after his death and Resurrection. She was overjoyed at the sight of Jesus. He then sent her to proclaim the news of his Resurrection to the other disciples. Mary Magdalene is often referred to as the "Apostle to the Apostles" for the part she played as a witness to the Resurrection.

Many legends and stories surround the rest of Mary Magdalene's life. Some have argued that Mary spent the end of her life in southern France. Her burial place is said to be in Saint-Maximin. Regardless of how she spent her life after her time with Jesus, we remember her for her faith and devotion to Jesus. She must have been a close disciple of Jesus for him to appear to her after his death and Resurrection. She holds a privileged place in Scripture and the Christian Tradition.

Father, your Son first entrusted to Mary Madalene the joyful news of His resurrection. By her prayers and example may we proclaim Christ as our living Lord and one day see Him in glory, for He lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. —Opening Prayer of the Feast of Mary Magdalene



St. Peter and St. Paul

- ◆ First Century
- ◆ Feast Day: June 29

Peter was the first disciple called by Jesus and acted as the leader of the 12 apostles. Before being called to discipleship, Peter was a fisherman named Simon. When Jesus met Peter, he gave him his new name, which means “rock” and told him that he would now be a “fisher of men.” Throughout Jesus’ ministry, Peter was one of the three disciples who were closest to Jesus along with James and John.

Peter was far from perfect. When he was called by Jesus to walk out onto the water, Peter was overwhelmed with doubt and could not do it. After Jesus’ arrest, Peter denied knowing him three times. Peter wept after his act of betrayal.

After Jesus’ death, Peter became a strong defender of the gospel and worked to grow the Christian community. He also welcomed Gentiles into the community, an important decision in the development of Christianity. Evidence suggests

that Peter eventually traveled to Rome where he was crucified upside down since he was unwilling to die in the same way that Christ had died. St. Peter’s Basilica in the Vatican is believed to have been built upon Peter’s grave. Catholics trace the papal office to Peter and recognize him as the first Bishop of Rome.

Paul was equally instrumental in the development and spread of Christianity, but he began his ministry in a very different way. Paul, originally named Saul, persecuted Christians. One day while on the road to Damascus, Paul had a conversion experience and was called by the Risen Christ to spread the gospel. He paid special attention to the Gentiles and worked with Peter to bring them into the church. Paul went on at least three major missionary journeys throughout the Mediterranean world, and the letters he wrote during this time make up a major portion of the Christian Scriptures.

Like Peter, Paul died in Rome as a martyr. He was probably beheaded around the year 65 during the persecution by Nero. Christians today owe a great deal to the courage and perseverance of Peter and Paul.

Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, [love] is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. —Corinthians 13: 4-7



Mary and Martha, Disciples

◆ First Century

In a time when women did not enjoy the same status and rights as men, Jesus continually reached out to women in his ministry and counted them among his disciples. Mary and Martha, along with their brother Lazarus, followed and served Jesus as his friends and disciples.

Perhaps the most well known story surrounding the two women is found in the Gospel of Luke. While traveling with his apostles, Jesus came to the sisters' house where Martha welcomed him. While Martha busied herself with serving the guests, Mary sat at the feet of the Lord and listened to his teaching. Martha, however, was concerned with getting her work done and wished that Mary would help her. Jesus supported Mary and told Martha not to worry so much about her work. This story is often interpreted as describing the differences between a life of contemplation and prayer and a life of action. It is unclear, though, if the story is intended to favor one woman over

the other. Most important is the fact that Jesus welcomed women to follow him as disciples.

The Gospel of John tells us more about Mary and Martha in the story of the raising of Lazarus. John identifies Mary as the anonymous woman in the Gospel of Mark who anointed Jesus' feet with perfume and wiped them with her hair, a gesture that identifies her as a close disciple of Jesus. John also tells us how much Jesus loved the two women and their brother. Mary and Martha were greatly saddened by Lazarus' death. They both believed that his death would not have happened if Jesus had been there. Lazarus was dead for four days before Jesus came. Martha went to meet Jesus and expressed her faith that Jesus was the Son of God and could ask anything of God.

Martha sent Mary to see Jesus, and she fell weeping at his feet. Jesus wept as well for the death of his friend. Jesus went to the tomb and called for Lazarus to come out. Lazarus, wrapped in his burial clothes, came out of the tomb alive and well. Mary and Martha loved Jesus very much and were counted among his closest friends and disciples. They are examples of the faith and devotion needed to follow Christ.

Father, your son honored Sts. Mary and Martha by coming to their home as a guest. By their prayers may we serve Christ in our brother and sisters and be welcomed by you into heaven, our true home. —Adapted from the Opening Prayer on the Feast of Martha

St. John, the Apostle and Evangelist

- ◆ First Century
- ◆ Feast Day: December 27
- ◆ Patron Saint of Asia Minor and Turkey



John was fishing on the Sea of Galilee with his brother, James, and his father, Zebedee, when he received the calling that would change his life. As John and James mended their nets, Jesus walked by and asked them to follow him. The brothers put down their nets and began their journey of discipleship.

As time went by, John became one of three disciples who were closest to Jesus, along with Peter and James. John was present at many important moments during Jesus' ministry. John witnessed the Transfiguration of Jesus and the raising of Jarius' daughter. During Jesus' agonizing time in Gethsemane before his death, Jesus asked John, Peter, and James to stay with him. John and Peter were also given the task of preparing the Last Supper.

Christians typically identify John with the "Beloved Disciple" in the Gospel of John. In this

Gospel, John is the only disciple to follow Jesus to the cross. He follows his call to discipleship to the very end and is asked by Jesus to take care of Mary. He is also the first to reach the tomb after Mary Magdalene reports seeing it empty. John sees the tomb and believes.

After Jesus' death, John continued his discipleship by working with Peter to establish the church in Jerusalem and later going on to work with the church in Ephesus. John and his followers are believed to have written the Fourth Gospel, three Letters, and the Book of Revelation.

One popular story places John in Rome during the persecution of Christians by Emperor Domitian. John was dipped into boiling oil, but he walked away unhurt. He lived a long life and died of old age in Ephesus around the age of ninety-four.

John is often depicted with the image of an eagle. The eagle represents the style of his Gospel and its emphasis on divinity and the heavenly. The Gospel reflects a profound experience of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love. —1 John 4:7–8



St. Timothy

- ◆ First Century
- ◆ Feast Day: January 26

Timothy is one of the first generations of Christians in the New Testament. His father was Greek and his mother, Eunice, was a Jewish-Christian. His grandmother, Lois, was the first in his family to become Christian.

Timothy became an associate of St. Paul, helping him in his work in the churches at Corinth and Ephesus. Most likely, Timothy became the leader of the church at Ephesus at a young age.

While we have little information about Timothy's work as a leader of this community, we know from St. Paul that leadership in the early church was a difficult task, particularly for a person so young.

The leader of the community was required to exhort people to live a certain way, according to the spirit of Jesus Christ. Sometimes this meant recognizing the ways that the Gospel was at work in a specific group and other times it meant telling a community when it was failing to live as Christ taught. Just as Paul was frequently despised for his leadership, one can assume that Timothy also suffered because of the Gospel. In fact, legend tells us that Timothy was stoned and beaten to death for preaching against a pagan festival in Ephesus around the year 94.

As a young person in a position of leadership, Timothy has much to teach the Church today. Young people can be important leaders in the community. The Christian leader is not judged by age or level of knowledge as much as ability to serve as an example of Christian living. To be an example of Christian living, the Christian leader cannot rely on his or her own efforts but must rely upon the grace of God, who is the source of all human gifts.

Let no one have contempt for your youth, but set an example for those who believe, in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity...Do not neglect the gift you have, which was conferred on you through the prophetic word with the imposition of hands of the presbyterate. Be diligent in these matters, be absorbed in them, so that your progress may be evident to everyone. Attend to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in both tasks, for by doing so you will save both yourself and those who listen to you. —1 Timothy 4:12, 14-18

Abraham and Sarah

◆ Second Millennium B.C.



The story of Abraham and Sarah is told in the opening book of the Hebrew Scriptures, a story to which the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions trace their roots. Abraham and Sarah's migration from the Fertile Crescent to Canaan and Egypt is consistent with the route of the Amorite people over 2,000 years ago.

God called Abraham to leave his home in Haran for the land of Canaan. God promised Abraham that his descendants would be blessed and make a great nation. Abraham obeyed God's command and began a nomadic lifestyle with Sarah.

Abraham and Sarah began to doubt God's promise of descendants when Sarah did not become pregnant. Responding to Abraham's confusion and frustration, God made a covenant with Abraham and promised him an heir, many descendants, and land. Still, Sarah did not

conceive and encouraged Abraham to have a child with her maidservant, Hagar. Abraham agreed, and Hagar gave birth to a son, Ishmael.

Many years later, God informed Abraham that Sarah would bear him a son. Considering their old age, Abraham could not believe this. God insisted that this would be true and made a covenant with Abraham that reinforced the promise of descendants and land. Circumcision would be the sign of this covenant. God blessed both Abraham and Sarah - at this time, their names were changed from Abram and Sarai. Sarah conceived and bore a son named Isaac.

The final story of Abraham involves the sacrifice of Isaac. In Genesis 21, God called Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. Abraham did as he was commanded but God stopped Abraham from killing his son and renewed the covenant. While this story may be difficult to understand, Abraham showed incredible faith in God. Abraham and Sarah are considered the founders of Israel and are remembered for their obedience and devotion to God.

I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. All the communities of the earth shall find blessing in you. —The Lord's promise to Abraham, Genesis 12:2-3

Moses and Elijah

◆ Twelfth and Ninth Century B.C.



Moses and Elijah were leaders in the Israelite community who proclaimed and testified to the mystery of God's presence to the Israelites and the entire world. Moses' story is recorded in the book of Exodus where he led the Israelites out of Egypt and shared the Ten Commandments given to him by God.

God called Moses while tending his father-in-law's sheep on Mount Horeb. Moses saw a bush blazing with fire yet not consumed. As Moses approached the bush to investigate the strange sight, God called to Moses and told him he was to lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt so they could freely worship God. At the burning bush God revealed to Moses His name—"I AM" (Exodus 3).

The little we know of Elijah's life is narrated in the Book of Kings. His prophetic ministry centered on proclaiming worship of the one true God. Elijah's ministry began with God's call to Elijah to live in

deep solitude on Mount Carmel by the flowing waters of the stream, Carith. Living as a hermit in a crevice on the mountain, drinking from the stream, and eating only what ravens brought him to eat, Elijah lived a life contemplating God's loving presence. Out of prayer and solitude, God called Elijah to be a prophet, proclaiming worship of the one true God.

Elijah's experience of God's presence reveals to us something about the way God encounters humans. Elijah did not experience God in a mighty wind, great earthquake, or a raging fire. Rather, God's presence was made known in a quiet, whispering wind (1 Kings 19:11-13). God is present even in the quiet, hidden moments of our lives.

Both Moses and Elijah received profound revelations of God's presence. Their experiences come to a crescendo when they appear with Jesus at the Transfiguration. Moses and Elijah, who proclaimed God's desire for intimate relationship with the chosen people, now point toward Jesus Christ, God incarnate, as the fullest revelation of God's presence and desire for loving relationship with humanity.

LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. —Elijah speaking in 1 Kings 18:36



David

◆ 10th Century B.C.

David, the youngest son of Jesse, was anointed the next king of Israel by Samuel, a prophet sent by God. David was to succeed Saul and soon became a part of Saul's court as a musician and armor-bearer for the king.

As Saul declined in power and ability to rule justly, David's strength and uprightness increased. When the Israelites fought the Philistines, David courageously volunteered to take on the giant Goliath with a slingshot. David killed Goliath and was given soldiers to command in Saul's army. David even became best friends with Saul's son, Jonathan. Their loyal relationship is a model of true friendship in Scripture.

Saul became very jealous of David and tried to have him killed. Taking Jonathan's advice, David fled and managed to escape Saul. On two occasions, David could have killed Saul, but he spared his life. Through all of his trials, David always listened to what God asked him to do.

In another battle with the Philistines, Saul and Jonathan were killed. Rather than rejoice over Saul's death, David mourned the loss of his best friend, Jonathan. David succeeded Saul and took his place as the king of Judah. Through his great military ability, David conquered the northern kingdom of Israel and became the first ruler of the united kingdom. He conquered Jerusalem and made it the center of Israel, bringing the Ark of the Covenant to the city. God promised a great line of descendants to David. The New Testament traces this line to Jesus.

David also had serious flaws. He had an affair with Bathsheba, the wife of an armor-bearer in his army, Uriah. When she became pregnant with David's son, David had Uriah killed. The prophet Nathan helped David realize the seriousness of his sin and led him to repentance. David still had to pay the price. Terrible disasters struck his family and tension began to build between Judah and Israel. Upon David's death, his son Solomon, known for his wisdom, succeeded him as king. David had not been perfect, but he had tried to live according to God's will.

With his every deed [David] offered thanks to God Most High, in words of praise, with his whole being he loved his Maker and daily had his praises sung... —Sirach 47:8



Amos and Jeremiah

- ◆ 8th Century B.C. and 7th Century B.C.

Amos and Jeremiah received difficult but important callings to be prophets in the name and service of God. The call to prophecy required giving up their ways of life and bringing God's message to people who often did not want to hear or obey it.

All that we know about Amos comes from the Book of Amos. We are told that Amos was a shepherd from Tekoa. We do not know when or how the call of Amos took place, but he eventually took on the job of responding to the unjust behavior of the Israelites. Most of the book consists of oracles and prophecies that Amos proclaimed on behalf of the Lord. Amos spoke most passionately on the issue of social justice and the need to respect the dignity of all people.

While Amos is known mostly through the words he spoke, Jeremiah is known by the model way in which he lived as well as by his words. He is

one of the figures in the Hebrew Scriptures most frequently cited as a model of Jesus Christ. The Book of Jeremiah begins with God calling Jeremiah to the prophetic ministry. God told him that he was designated as a prophet before he was born. Jeremiah feared what this vocation meant and insisted that he was too young to do what God asked of him. God bid Jeremiah to have no fear and promised to make up for what he lacked in experience and knowledge.

Jeremiah accepted his role as prophet, but his job was anything but easy. His prophecy responded to times of great political turmoil, and he showed great courage in confronting kings with God's message. Jeremiah felt great pain as he saw the coming destruction by invaders and witnessed people's suffering. He questioned God's purpose and care for the people but continued in his ministry and tried to do what God asked of him.

Throughout his ministry, Jeremiah was imprisoned and even threatened with death. Amos and Jeremiah took their vocation seriously and did their best to understand and fulfill it.

Say not, 'I am too young.' To whomever I send you, you shall go; whatever I command you, you shall speak. Have no fear before them, because I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord. —The Lord to Jeremiah, Jeremiah 1:7–8

Ruth and Naomi

◆ Fifth Century B.C.



The story of Ruth and Naomi is found in the book of Ruth, one of the few books of the Bible named for a woman. Despite the overwhelming odds against them, these two women stayed loyal to God and to each other, and God's goodness is seen at work in their lives.

Naomi was an Israelite woman, the wife of Elimelech and the mother of Mahlon and Chilion. After the family left their home country due to famine, Elimelech died and Naomi's two sons married foreign women, Orpah and Ruth. Within a decade, Naomi's sons also died, leaving the three women in a precarious situation. In ancient society, a woman left without male kin to care for her had little opportunity to provide for herself. Knowing that they would be safest in their fathers' homes, Naomi tried to send her daughters-in-law away to find new husbands and start their lives over.

After some protest, Orpah returned to her father's home but Ruth refused. Her husband's death absolved her of responsibility to her marriage, but she took her vow so seriously that she saw her mother-in-law as her own family. She insisted on leaving everything familiar to her in order to accompany Naomi back to Bethlehem, where the two women devised a plan to provide for their future.

Ruth made herself known to Naomi's relative Boaz, who quickly came to admire her commitment to her new family. He prayed that Ruth would be blessed by Israel's God since she had "come under his wings for refuge." Ruth broke the traditional approach to marriage proposals by asking Boaz to take her under his robe—imagery that imitates the act of seeking shelter under God's wings. The marriage of Ruth and Boaz mirrors the love of God for his chosen people, and their marriage was richly blessed.

A woman of initiative and loyalty, Ruth is included as one of four women in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus. Although not an Israelite by birth, Ruth is included in God's plan of salvation which reaches beyond the borders of any one nation.

Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die—there will I be buried. May the LORD do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you! —Ruth 1:16b-17

St. Cecilia

- ◆ Third Century
- ◆ Feast Day: November 22
- ◆ Patron Saint of Poets, Singers and Musicians



Cecilia, whose name means “lily of heaven,” is known for her ardent devotion to God. According to a fifth-century legend, Cecilia vowed to Christ that she would remain a virgin and devote her life to praising and following him.

However, her father refused to accept her vow and forced her to marry a pagan named Valerian. Cecilia married Valerian, but she was determined to remain faithful to her promise of virginity. On her wedding day, she wore clothing made of hair beneath her gown in an attempt to protect her body.

That night, she told Valerian that an angel was protecting her body and that he, too, could experience God’s love if he allowed Cecilia to keep her vow. Valerian promised to believe Cecilia and to respect her wishes if he could see

the angel for himself. This, Cecilia explained, could only happen if he first became baptized. Valerian received the sacrament of baptism from Pope Urban I and was granted a vision of the angel next to Cecilia.

Valerian converted to Christianity, but he soon died as a martyr for his faith at the hands of the Romans. Shortly after, Cecilia was also condemned after refusing to worship the pagan gods. After the Romans failed in an attempt to suffocate her, a soldier tried to behead her. He did a poor job, however, and she lived for three days before finally dying.

Cecilia has become an extremely popular saint and is best known as the patron saint of music. This role comes from the story that, on her wedding day, she heard heavenly music within her heart and was inspired to remain faithful to God and to her promise. When portrayed by artists, Cecilia is often shown with organ pipes in her hand.

Lord of Mercy, be close to those who call upon you. With St. Cecilia to help us, hear and answer our prayers. –Opening Prayer of the Feast of Cecilia

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

St. Agnes

- ◆ 291-ca. 304
- ◆ Feast Day: January 21
- ◆ Patron Saint of Girls and Engaged Couples



Agnes is one of the most popular early Christian martyrs. Her name is derived from the Greek word for “pure” (hagne), and because of the similarity of her name to the Latin word for “lamb” (agnus), the lamb has been her emblem since the sixth century. Agnes is often depicted with a lamb.

In early accounts of her life, Agnes was described as a beautiful girl who at age thirteen attracted the attention of many young noblemen competing for her hand in marriage. Refusing all marriage proposals, Agnes responded that she was betrothed to Jesus Christ, her heavenly spouse, and devoted to a life of consecration to the Savior.

According to tradition, a governor’s son tried to win her hand in marriage, yet Agnes refused his offer. During an era when Christians were tortured and treated as enemies of Rome, Agnes was denounced as a Christian and imprisoned. Agnes courageously proclaimed the Gospel

despite her captor’s promises of freedom and leniency if she would renounce her faith. When instruments of torture were placed before Agnes, she bravely responded by making the sign of the Cross. Agnes was condemned to a house of prostitution, but her powerful aura of purity infuriated the governor who eventually ordered her execution by beheading. An account of her martyrdom states, “she went to the place of her execution more cheerfully than others go to their wedding.” At the time of her execution she proclaimed, “You may be able to stain your sword with my blood, but you will never be able to profane my body consecrated to Christ.”

Agnes is a wonderful example of openness to God, courage in the face of persecution, and confidence in the grace and power of Jesus Christ. She is mentioned by name in the Eucharistic prayer of the Mass among seven other women, a reminder that her life was poured out in loving service for the Kingdom of God. As we share in the celebration of the Eucharist, we join our prayers with the disciples and martyrs, that like St. Agnes we may live as unhesitating and courageous disciples of Jesus.

Almighty ever-living God, who choose what is weak in the world to confound the strong, mercifully grant, that we, who celebrate the heavenly birthday of your martyr Saint Agnes, may follow her constancy in the faith. —Opening prayer of the Feast of Agnes

St. Martin of Tours

- ◆ 316-ca. 400
- ◆ Feast Day: November 11
- ◆ Patron Saint of Soldiers



St. Martin was a Christian convert and an early conscientious objector. He was born around 316 AD to pagan parents in what is now Hungary. His father was an officer in the Roman army and the family was transferred to Pavia in Northern Italy.

In Pavia, Martin learned about Christianity. It was newly recognized as a legal religion in the Roman Empire yet not widely accepted among the higher classes of Roman society. At age ten, against the wishes of his parents he decided to become a catechumen and devote time to contemplative prayer.

As a veteran's son, Martin was required to join the army at age fifteen. One day while he was stationed at Amiens in Gaul (now northern France), he was riding into town and noticed a poorly clothed man begging for alms. Martin, who had nothing with him but the clothes he was wearing, cut his woolen military cloak into two.

Keeping himself warm with one half, he gave the other to the beggar. That night, he dreamt that he saw Jesus, accompanied by angels, wearing the cloak he had given away. In his dream, he heard Jesus say to the angels, "Martin, as yet only a catechumen, has covered me with his cloak." This vision drove Martin to be baptized at age eighteen.

Two years later, Teutonic tribes invaded Gaul, calling the Roman army into action. Martin decided his Christian faith prohibited him from fighting. He was jailed for his objection and was accused of cowardice. Martin agreed to go unarmed into battle but was released from prison after a truce was made. He then traveled to Poitiers where he was ordained a deacon.

In 371, after years of traveling to evangelize and convert people to Christianity, Martin was made bishop of Tours. Martin was reluctant to accept the position but continued to enthusiastically evangelize and call people to conversion, while maintaining a life of poverty and simplicity. Martin died on November 8 between the years 395 and 402. He requested to be buried in the Cemetery of the Poor.

O God, who are glorified in the Bishop Saint Martin both by his life and death, make new, we pray, the wonders of your grace in our hearts, that neither death nor life may separate us from your love. —Opening Prayer of the Feast of Martin of Tours

St. Monica

- ◆ 332-387; North Africa
- ◆ Feast Day: August 27
- ◆ Patron Saint of Mothers and Alcoholics



Monica, who is best known as the mother of St. Augustine, was a woman of great faith and persistence. She endured a very difficult marriage. Her husband, Patricius, was a short-tempered man who drank too much and cheated on Monica. To make matters worse, her mother-in-law lived in their house and was a very difficult woman with whom to get along.

Despite her unpleasant living situation, Monica exercised great patience and prayed for the conversion of her husband and mother-in-law, who were both pagans. Eventually, she won them over, and they saw Monica for the good and faithful person she was. A year before his death, Patricius was baptized.

Monica and Patricius had three sons whom Monica loved very much. She wished to see them live morally good lives in the Church. She was especially concerned for Augustine, who was living a wild and dissolute lifestyle. Again, she was extremely patient and prayed that he might soon see the error of his ways.

In 383, Augustine left for Milan with his female companion and their son without telling his mother. Monica found out where they were going and followed them. Here, she became friends with Ambrose, the bishop of Milan. Ambrose was later responsible for mentoring Augustine and helping him in his conversion process. In 387, Monica witnessed the baptism of Augustine by Ambrose. Her work was complete.

On their way back to Africa, Monica died at the age of fifty-five. She died peacefully in the knowledge that her son had found his way to God. In his spiritual autobiography, *Confessions*, Augustine wrote extensively about his mother and what a profound influence she had on his life.

God of mercy, comfort those in sorrow. The tears of St. Monica moved you to convert her son St. Augustine to the faith of Christ. By their prayers, help us to turn from our sins and to find your loving forgiveness.

—Opening Prayer of the Feast of St. Monica



St. Augustine

- ◆ 354-430; North Africa
- ◆ Feast Day: August 28
- ◆ Patron Saint of Theologians, Printers, and Brewers

discussion. Although he could accept Christianity in his head, he had a difficult time accepting its moral teachings in practice.

In *Confessions*, the first spiritual autobiography of its kind, Augustine tells the story of his conversion. He was sitting under a fig tree when he heard some children say, "Take up and read!" He took this to mean that he should open his Bible and read whatever passage he saw. His eyes fell to Romans 13:13-14: "Not in orgies and drunkenness, not in promiscuity and licentiousness, not in rivalry and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the desires of the flesh." This was the call to conversion that Augustine was seeking. He put his wild lifestyle behind him and was baptized by Ambrose in 387 at age 33.

In 395, Augustine was named Bishop of Hippo. He spent his time carrying out his duties as leader of the church in Hippo, setting up monastic communities, traveling, and writing major theological works. These writings have been some of the most influential writings in the theology and teaching of the Church. Augustine died in 430, but his legacy lives on today.

Augustine grew up under the careful guidance of his mother, St. Monica. She prayed that Augustine would follow the example of his father and grandmother and be baptized in the Christian faith. Augustine, however, was drawn to philosophy and could not comprehend how one could think philosophically and accept Christianity.

He also led a rather wild and unruly lifestyle. Before he was 20 years old, he had a son with a woman to whom he was not married. Monica, of course, was terribly upset by his choices and continued to pray for his conversion.

After various jobs teaching rhetoric, Augustine was appointed as a professor in Milan. Here, he came under the influence of Ambrose, the bishop of Milan. Through listening to Ambrose's sermons, Augustine came to understand that Christianity could coincide with philosophy and had much to offer those who craved intellectual

My love of you, O Lord, is not some vague feeling: it is positive and certain. Your word struck into my heart and from that moment I loved you. —St. Augustine

St. Brigid and St. Patrick

- ◆ ca. 450-525; 389-461; Ireland
- ◆ Feast Days: February 1 and March 17
- ◆ Patron Saints 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. Although many legends surround the names of St. Patrick and St. Brigid, there is little doubt that they led great changes in Ireland and established Christianity's place within the country.

Patrick 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 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. 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.

St. Brigid is closely associated with St. Patrick. It is said that she was baptized by Patrick and developed a close friendship with him. As a young girl, Brigid felt called to be a nun. At this time, women who took vows of chastity remained at home with their families. But Brigid knew about Patrick's monasteries and began a community of her own where people pursuing a religious life could live together. She began a monastery in Kildare that was soon opened to both men and women who helped to spread Christianity throughout Ireland. Brigid is remembered as a woman of great generosity and charity, even when she had little to give.

Thanks to Brigid and Patrick, 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.
—St. Patrick's Prayer

St. Benedict and St. Scholastica

- ◆ 480-547 and 480-543
- ◆ Feast Days: July 11 and February 10
- ◆ Patron Saint of Schoolchildren & Patroness of Nuns



Tradition tells us that Benedict and Scholastica were twin brother and sister, born in Nursia, a small village northeast of Rome. Benedict was sent to Rome to receive an education in classical studies, while Scholastica remained at home. Early in his studies, Benedict fled Rome becoming a hermit in the foothills of Rome. After several years of living the monastic life, other monks wanted Benedict to serve as their spiritual father in a community. But finding Benedict's way of monastic life too strict, they tried to poison him by giving him a glass of tainted wine. Benedict blessed the glass of wine and it shattered into pieces. He left this group of monks, eventually founding twelve other monasteries of twelve monks each.

Benedict wrote a rule for these monks, known today as the rule of St. Benedict. In writing this rule, Benedict wanted to ensure that the monastery was not a place of harsh discipline but a school for serving the Lord. According to Benedict, the life of a monk should involve both prayer and work. The major form of prayer was a praying of the psalms throughout the day so that the speech of the monk joined with the praise of God in heaven. The monastery itself was a place of great hospitality, such that every guest who visited the monastery had his or her feet washed. This washing of the feet was most important when the poor came to visit because the Rule teaches that in receiving the poor, we greet Christ himself.

Even though Benedict had written this important rule for monks, it was his sister, Scholastica, who taught him the most important lesson about living a Christian life. Once a year, Benedict and Scholastica would meet. During this annual visit,

Let us get up then, at long last, for the Scriptures rouse us when they say: "It is high time for us to arise from sleep" (Rom 13:11). Let us open our eyes to the light that comes from God, and our ears to the voice from heaven that every day calls our this charge: "If you hear his voice today, do not harden your hearts" (Ps 95:8). And again: "you that have ears to hear, listen to what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev 2:7). And what does he say? "Come and listen to me children; I will teach you the fear of the Lord" (Ps 34:12). "Run while you have the light of life, that the darkness of death may not overtake you" (Jn 12:35). —Rule of St. Benedict, Prologue 8-13

St. Margaret of Scotland

- ◆ 1045-1093
- ◆ Feast Day: November 16
- ◆ Patron Saint of Scotland



The daughter of English royalty, Margaret was born while her father was exiled in Hungary, and she was raised in the very devout court of Andrew I. She returned to England with her family but soon had to depart again when the Normans conquered the throne.

She and her family sought refuge under the protection of the Scottish king, Malcolm III. Several years after Margaret's arrival, she and Malcolm were married, and they would go on to have eight children, three of whom would serve as Scotland's king.

As a wife and mother, Margaret had great influence over the leadership of her country. She encouraged her husband and sons to invite God into their leadership of Scotland, entreating them to become holy and just rulers. Although himself not particularly religious, Malcolm admired his wife's piety, and presented her with a richly ornamented book of the Gospels. Margaret also worked to reform the Scottish church, unifying it more closely with the Church of Rome.

Margaret tended to the needs of the poor, serving food to the hungry every day before she ate. Much of her own time was spent in prayer and devotion, and she established a ferry to aid pilgrims visiting the relics of St. Andrew in Fife.

Margaret died in 1093 and was canonized by Innocent IV in 1250. She is a patron saint of Scotland and, because of her love for devotional reading, is often pictured with a book in her hands.

Lord, you gave Saint Margaret of Scotland a special love for the poor. Let her example and prayers help us to become a living sign of your goodness.

—Opening prayer of the Feast of Margaret of Scotland



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)

St. Dominic

- ◆ 1170-1221; Spain
- ◆ Feast Day: August 8
- ◆ Patron Saint of Astronomers



At age 14, Dominic worked hard as a student of theology and other subjects. After ten years of studying, a famine struck the area where he lived. Dominic could not justify spending money on things like school supplies while his neighbors were starving, so he sold all of his possessions to help them. Dominic then became a priest of the cathedral at Osma and began a life of ministry in the Church.

At this time, a heretical group called the Albigensians, or the Cathari, was gaining popularity in southern France and northern Italy. The Albigensians believed that matter was evil and that all people must abstain from sexual activities and follow very strict diets. The Church did not support the Albigensians' beliefs

and practices. In Dominic's extensive travels with Bishop Diego of Azevedo, the two men encountered the Albigensians and established groups of preachers and teachers to strengthen the Church and to deal with these widespread heretical beliefs. After Diego's death, Dominic was in charge of these groups, which eventually grew into the Order of Preachers or Black Friars. Today, we know them as the Dominicans.

Early on, Dominic encouraged members of the order to travel and spread God's Word. Dominic, too, traveled extensively throughout his life, and today Dominicans are present in 86 countries. They take a vow of poverty and are devoted to contemplative prayer and intellectual studies. Dominic is admired for seeing that the Church needed to be strengthened and renewed. He responded to this need by creating a new, vibrant community devoted to preaching and helping others encounter God's word.

May God the Father who made us bless us. May the Son send his healing among us.

May God the Holy Spirit move within us and give us eyes to see with, ears to hear with, and hands that your work might be done.

May we walk and preach the Word of God to all.

May the angels of peace watch over us and lead us by God's grace to the Kingdom. Amen.

—Prayer of St. Dominic

St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi

- ◆ 1181-1226 and 1193-1253; Assisi, Italy
- ◆ Feast Days: October 4 and August 11
- ◆ Patron Saint of Italy and the Environment & Patroness of Television



As a young man, Francis sought glory and a life of luxury as a soldier. He paid little attention to the sick and poor of Assisi. One day as he was preparing to fight, Francis heard a voice that told him to serve the Master instead of other men. He devoted his life to God, prayer and service.

Francis was praying in a run-down church named San Damiano when he heard a call from God to repair the church. Francis stole some cloth from his father to raise money for the repairs. His father, who already disapproved of Francis' lifestyle, took him to the bishop's court and demanded money for the cloth. Francis returned the money, stripped his clothes, and gave up his possessions and rights to an inheritance.

Francis, wearing the simple cloak of a shepherd, began to move from place to place preaching and gathering followers, later called the Friars Minor. In 1211, a young aristocratic woman named Clare heard Francis preaching. She was so struck

by his faith and dedication that she, too, decided to live a simple life according to the Gospel.

In 1212, Francis invited Clare to lead a group of women in a life of poverty and chastity like Francis and his friars. Clare's family did not support her decision to start her community. They tried to bring her home, but Clare refused. Francis offered Clare and her community a small house attached to San Damiano and named her abbess.

The Poor Clares, as her followers were known, lived simple lives of faith in convents that quickly spread across Europe. During the last years of Clare's life, the pope and other high-ranking leaders of the Church visited her and paid tribute to her hard work and devotion to Christ.

As Clare was working with the Poor Clares, Francis continued to work with the Friars Minor. While Francis was on retreat in 1224, he had a vision of an angel nailed to a cross and received the wounds of Christ. This is the first recorded experience of the stigmata. Francis died two years later at age 45. Both Francis and Clare were canonized two years after their deaths. Today, their communities are known as the Franciscans.

What are the servants of God but his singers whose duties it is to lift up the hearts of men and women and move them to spiritual joy? —St. Francis of Assisi

St. Elizabeth of Hungary

- ◆ 1207-1231
- ◆ Feast Day: November 17
- ◆ Patron Saint of Bakers and Nursing Homes



Elizabeth was the daughter of the king of Hungary. Given her royal status, her marriage to Louis of Thuringia was arranged when she was four years old and Louis was eleven. She moved to the court of Thuringia where she grew up with Louis and became his best friend. In 1221, Elizabeth married the man she had come to love very much.

Although she lived in the royal court, Elizabeth chose a life of simplicity, prayerful devotion, and service to the poor and sick. Louis supported her lifestyle even when, as one story tells us, he

found a leper lying in their bed whom Elizabeth was nursing to health. She even used the basement of their castle as a hospital. Louis was patient with Elizabeth and loved her all the more for the life she led.

In 1227, tragedy struck when Louis died of the plague. Elizabeth had just given birth to her third child and was devastated by her loss. Elizabeth refused to remarry. She and Louis had promised not to marry another person if one of them should die. Instead, she joined the Franciscans as a tertiary, or secular, member of the order. She lived the rest of her life caring for the sick, the dying, and the poor at a hospice she established. She died at the young age of twenty-four on November 17, 1231.

Father, you helped Elizabeth of Hungary to recognize and honor Christ in the poor of this world. Let her prayers help us to serve our brothers and sisters in time of trouble and need. —Opening Prayer of the Feast of St. Elizabeth



St. Thomas Aquinas

- ◆ ca. 1225-1275; Italy
- ◆ Feast Day: January 28
- ◆ Patron Saint of Students and Catholic Universities

Thomas Aquinas was educated at a Benedictine monastery where he encountered the writings of Aristotle, who would come to have great influence on his thought and writings. Despite his time with the Benedictines, Thomas decided that he wanted to join the Dominicans.

His family, who really did not want him to join any religious order, was especially opposed to his interest in the Dominicans. They viewed the order as a group of beggars who were not worthy of Thomas' association. His parents went so far as to send his brothers after him, who locked Thomas in a castle for a year. They even sent a woman to seduce him and try to change his mind. Thomas held firm to his vocation, though. He managed to escape, join the Dominicans and continue his studies.

While in Cologne, Thomas studied under Albert the Great and was ordained a priest. Referring

to Thomas' large size and quiet demeanor, Albert predicted that someday "the lowing of this dumb ox would be heard all over the world." He was right.

While living a life of prayer and service, Thomas wrote extensive works that covered every area of Christian doctrine. He used Aristotle to present Christianity as a philosophically sound system. He is best known for his *Summa Contra Gentiles* and *Summa Theologiae*, two of the most influential works in theology.

Thomas' work was not immediately accepted. After his death, his writing was closely scrutinized and even condemned. It did not take long, however, for people to realize the greatness of Thomas' work. He was canonized in 1323 and named a Doctor of the Church in 1567.

Christianity is forever indebted to Thomas' courage to pursue his vocation and devotion to a life in service to God. In the end, he came to the humble awareness that God ultimately remains beyond our human knowledge and understanding. We stand in awe of the Mystery.

All I have written seems to me like straw compared to what I have seen and what has been revealed to me. —St. Thomas Aquinas, after an experience at Mass in December, 1273

St. Catherine of Siena

- ◆ 1347-1380; Italy
- ◆ Feast Day: April 29
- ◆ Patron Saint of Italy and Nursing; Co-Patron Saint of Europe



Catherine grew up in a large family – the twenty-fourth of 25 children! At age 7, she experienced a mystical vision. As she grew older, her family worried that she spent too much time praying so they tried to keep her busy with chores. When they tried to arrange a suitor for her, Catherine refused to marry. One day, her father watched her praying in her room and saw a dove hovering over her head. He decided to allow her to live the prayerful life she desired.

Catherine became a lay member of the Dominicans and spent several years in a solitary life of prayer. Soon, however, she felt called to serve the sick and preach God's Word. A group of disciples began to follow Catherine, serving Siena's poor and tending to those who were hungry in body and in soul. With her help and intervention, prison inmates and crime bosses turned their lives around. Priests found it difficult

to keep up with all those who sought penance after encountering Catherine.

As the Church experienced papal difficulties, Catherine felt it was her duty to work toward Church unity. In 1376, Pope Gregory XI was residing in Avignon, France, as a result of many political and civil divisions. Catherine gave him the confidence to return to Rome. After Urban VI succeeded Gregory, the Church experienced the Great Schism. For nearly 40 years, two and sometimes three men claimed to be the legitimate pope. Catherine urged Catholics to recognize Urban as the pope, although she gained many enemies along the way. She was greatly distressed by the turmoil in the Church. She knew that if the papal leadership was in disarray, then any reform in the Church would be all the more difficult. Catherine's work came to an end when she fell ill. On April 29, 1380, she died of a stroke.

Catherine wrote a great spiritual work titled *The Dialogue*. The Church recognized her great contribution to mystical theology by naming her the first lay Doctor of the Church in 1970. She is one of three women to hold this title (with Teresa of Ávila and Thérèse of Lisieux).

If you see souls in danger and you can help them, don't close your eyes... Work, then, my daughter, in the field you see God calling you to work in, and don't trouble or weary your Spirit over what is said to you but carry on courageously. Fear and serve God selflessly, and then don't be bothered by what people say, except to have compassion on them. –St. Catherine of Siena



St. Joan of Arc

- ◆ 1412-1431; France
- ◆ Feast Day: May 30
- ◆ Patron Saint of France and Military Personnel

Joan of Arc, a peasant girl, grew up in a dangerous time of conflict between France and England. At the age of thirteen, she began to hear the voices of saints. She was virtually ignored until she began to predict the defeats of France.

She soon began to gain the attention of the Dauphin, who would later become Charles VII of France. After careful questioning by Charles and by theologians, her legitimacy was established. With Charles' permission, Joan led troops to Orléans and broke the English siege. After more victories, Joan's fame spread. When Charles was crowned king of France, Joan stood at his side.

Joan soon found herself in great danger. When she was captured by the Burgundians and sold to the English, Charles betrayed her and did nothing to save her. Looking for an excuse to execute

her, the English charged her with witchcraft and sorcery. The bishop of Beauvais led the interrogation, and Joan, with little education and certainly no theological training, found it difficult to defend herself. At one point, she began to take back things she had said. Drawing on her faith, she returned to her original claim that God had sent the voices to her and had set her on a mission. This hesitation, however, was used against her.

Joan was condemned as a lapsed heretic and was burned at the stake on May 30, 1431. As she died, she called out to Jesus.

Over twenty years later, Joan's family requested that the Pope reopen the case. A papal commission determined that Joan was wrongfully condemned and proclaimed her innocence. She was canonized in 1930.

We remember Joan of Arc for her courage and her faith in God.

I fear nothing for God IS with me! –St. Joan of Arc

St. Juan Diego

- ◆ ca. 1474-1548;
Cuauhtitlan, Mexico
- ◆ Feast Day: December 9



Juan Diego and his wife were members of the lowest and largest class of the Aztec Empire. They lived a simple and humble lifestyle in a small house on a small piece of land. His native name was Cuatitlatoatzin, which means “the talking eagle.” In the 1520s, he and his wife converted to Christianity and took the names Juan Diego and Maria Lucia.

Juan’s wife died shortly after her conversion, so he left Cuauhtitlan to live in Tolpetlac with his uncle. He lived a very devoted religious life and walked many miles to attend Mass and receive religious instruction. In 1531, when Juan was fifty-seven years old, he met a beautiful woman surrounded in light on a hill in Tepeyac. It was the Blessed Virgin Mary, who began to speak to Juan in Nahuatl, his native language. She wore a European dress, but the decorations were like those in Juan’s native land and her face was Mestizo. She was pregnant with the Lord Jesus.

Mary spoke to Juan of love and peace and instructed him to go to the local bishop and tell him to build a church on the site of the apparition. Juan did as Mary asked, but he had a difficult time convincing the bishop that he was telling the truth. The bishop wanted a sign. Juan went back to Mary and told her what the bishop had said, and she gave the bishop his sign – an image of the Lady appeared on the cloak that Juan was wearing. The bishop agreed to build the church on the site.

Juan’s uncle, who was gravely ill, also received a visit from Mary. She told him to call her and her image, “Santa Maria de Guadalupe.” After his encounter with Mary, Juan’s uncle was cured.

The chapel that held Juan’s cloak soon became a site for many pilgrims. For the last years of his life, Juan dedicated himself to serving the pilgrims and telling his story. Today, the cloak is kept at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Tepeyac and still attracts thousands of pilgrims. It is one of the most popular religious pilgrimage sites in the Western Hemisphere. In honor of his humility and simple faith, Juan Diego was beatified in 1990 by Pope John Paul II in Mexico City, and was canonized in the summer of 2002.

I am nobody, I am a small rope, a tiny ladder, the tail end, a leaf. –St. Juan Diego



St. Thomas More

- ◆ 1477-1535; England
- ◆ Feast Day: June 22
- ◆ Patron Saint of Lawyers, Politicians and Adopted Children

Thomas' new position put him in a difficult spot when Henry's actions came under the scrutiny of Pope Clement VII. After Catherine of Aragon could not bear Henry a son, Henry divorced her and married Anne Boleyn. The Church, however, declared his marriage to Catherine still valid and refused to recognize his marriage to Anne Boleyn.

When Henry was named "Protector and Supreme Head of the Church of England," Thomas recognized that Henry was breaking ties with Rome and he resigned his chancellorship. He also refused to attend the coronation ceremony of Anne Boleyn. When he refused to take an oath that acknowledged Henry's first marriage as null and his second marriage as valid, Thomas was thrown into the Tower of London.

While in jail, he wrote spiritual works and letters to his daughter. In 1534, Henry VIII began to order the execution of traitors who would not take the oath. Thomas was beheaded on May 22, 1535. Thomas died proclaiming that he was "the king's good servant, but God's first." We remember Thomas for the way in which he balanced a busy work life with his prayer life and for his courage to stand up for his convictions.

Thomas began his career as a member of Parliament during the rule of England's King Henry VIII. While he worked in Parliament, he often thought about entering a monastery or the priesthood and struggled in the discernment of God's call in his life. In the end, he chose the vocation of marriage and a life of politics and law.

Thomas led a busy life both inside and outside the home. At home, his family's days always included prayer and Scripture reading. Guests frequently stopped by for a visit, including the king himself. In 1529, Henry VIII appointed Thomas as the Lord Chancellor. Although this position meant many hours of work for Thomas, he continued his religious traditions with his family and always spent Fridays in prayer. He also wrote and spoke in favor of moral and social reform. His most famous work is *Utopia*, written in 1516.

Nothing can come but what God allows. And I am very sure that whatever that be, however bad it might seem, it shall indeed be the best.

—St. Thomas More, in a letter from prison to his daughter, Meg

St. Ignatius of Loyola

- ◆ 1491-1556
- ◆ Feast Day: July 31
- ◆ Patron Saint of Jesuits and Retreats



St. Ignatius of Loyola is best known as the founder of the Society of Jesus, or the Jesuits. Born in Spain in 1491, Ignatius became a soldier. At age 30, a cannon ball shattered his leg while leading a battle against the French. The French soldiers carried him through the mountains to his family home in Loyola where he spent several months confined to bed.

As he healed, Ignatius read a book on the life of Christ and another on the lives of the saints. He became inflamed with God's love, often imagining himself in the midst of Christ's life and ministry. Before making a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, Ignatius spent several months outside the town of Manresa. This period was marked by both experiences of desolation, or feeling nothing in prayer, and the consolation of God's grace.

Ignatius' recordings of the reflections and practices that allowed him to grow in relationship with God became the heart of the Spiritual Exercises. In the first week, one contemplates the mystery of salvation offered through Christ. The second week is an imagination of the life of Christ's ministry. The third week is devoted to placing oneself into the scenes of Christ's passion and death. Finally, the fourth week is a focus on the wonders of the resurrection.

The Spiritual Exercises became essential to the spirituality of the Society of Jesus. The religious order was devoted to the service of the Pope, including missionary work in India and China and the opening of schools. Today, Jesuits operate universities and high schools throughout the world. In addition, they continue to serve the poor. Ignatius encouraged daily reflection through the Examen Prayer, paying attention to times one felt close to God and times when they struggled to see God.

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding and my entire will, All I have and call my own. You have given all to me. To you, Lord, I return it. Everything is yours; do with it what you will. Give me only love of you and your grace. That is enough for me. —Suscipe Prayer of St. Ignatius of Loyola



St. Teresa of Ávila

- ◆ 1515–1582; Spain
- ◆ Feast Day: October 15
- ◆ Patron Saint of Spain and Headache and Heart Attack Sufferers

In 1554, Teresa was praying in front of a statue of Christ when she experienced a conversion. Many mystical experiences then followed, but she was often ridiculed when she shared them with others.

In 1562, Teresa decided to initiate a reformation of her order. In an effort to return to the original Carmelite way of life, she started her own order, the Discalced Carmelites (“Discalced” means “without shoes”—the sisters wore only sandals). The sisters lived lives of poverty, engaged in manual labor, abstained from meat, and lived in solitude.

Teresa is well known for her great spiritual writings, which included *The Way of Life* and *The Interior Castle*. In 1970, the Catholic Church recognized her important contributions to Christian spirituality and named her a Doctor of the Church.

Teresa died on October 4, 1582. Those who witnessed her death claimed to smell a beautiful scent coming from her body. When her grave was later ordered by one of her confessors to be opened, her body supposedly smelled of lilies. Today, Teresa’s spiritual writings are still widely read. We admire her ability to combine contemplation and action in her life.

Teresa grew up in Spain and loved learning about Jesus and the saints. When she was seven years old, Teresa and her brother Rodrigo left home for the country of the Moors in the hopes of becoming martyrs. Their plan failed when they ran into their uncle, who brought them back home to their upset mother. From then on, they stayed close to home and tried to build stone hermitages in the garden. These never turned out very well, but Teresa still strove for a life of quiet and solitude.

After her mother died, Teresa fell ill, possibly from grief. She decided to enter a Carmelite monastery, where she was able to recover. After she took her vows, she succumbed to a second, extremely painful illness. She underwent a difficult recovery period and spent the next twenty years trying to live a life of prayer and fidelity to God. She often found it difficult to pray, though, and knew that something was missing.

Let there be nothing which we know would further our Lord’s service that we dare not undertake with the assistance of his grace. —St. Teresa of Ávila

St. Charles Borromeo

- ◆ 1538-1584
- ◆ Feast Day: November 4
- ◆ Patron Saint of Catechists and Catechumens



Born into a family of nobility in Italy, Charles Borromeo was given every opportunity to succeed in life. At twelve years of age, Charles was sent to a Benedictine monastery to receive an education. When he was twenty-one years old, his uncle was elected pope. His uncle, Pius IV, made him a cardinal and administrator of the diocese of Milan, even before he was ordained as priest or bishop.

Just as this had happened, the head of the Borromeo family, Count Frederick Borromeo, passed away. Charles was asked to be the head of the Borromeo family but turned this title down in order to be ordained a priest of the diocese of Milan. A year after this, he was ordained the bishop of the diocese.

During this time, the Church was in a period of great turmoil following the Protestant reformation. Charles helped reform the Catholic Church through the education of priests in seminary programs, the education of laity through the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD), and through greater care to the poorest in his diocese. Charles also founded an order of priests, the Oblates of St. Ambrose, which emphasized the importance of good preaching and holiness of life.

When Charles died, he was recognized as a man of great intelligence, passion, and, most importantly, holiness. In his leadership, Charles acted not as a man of great power from a wealthy family, but as a servant to each person in the diocese. In addition, he continued to reform the church through encouraging each priest and lay person to love God with all of their hearts. Charles Borromeo is a model of a priest, a teacher, a reformer, and a leader for the contemporary Church.

Would you like me to teach you how to grow from virtue to virtue and how, if you are already recollected at prayer, you can be even more attentive next time, and so give God more pleasing worship? Listen, and I will tell you. If a tiny spark of God's love already burns within you, do not expose it to the wind, for it may get blown out. Keep the stove tightly shut so that it will not lose its heat and grow cold. In other words, avoid distractions as well as you can. Stay quiet with God. —A Sermon given by St. Charles Borromeo

St. John of the Cross

- ◆ 1542-1591; Spain
- ◆ Feast Day: December 14



John, who was born in Spain with the name Juan de Yepes, had a difficult childhood. His father died when he was very young, and his mother moved him and his siblings from town to town looking for work. Once they finally settled down, John found work at a hospice caring for the sick and studied at a Jesuit school.

After he completed his studies, he joined the Carmelite order and was ordained a priest in 1567. Unhappy with the Carmelites, John was considering transferring to a different order when he met Teresa of Ávila, who had begun a reformed Carmelite Order, the Discalced (barefoot) community, for women. She convinced John that instead of leaving the Carmelites altogether, he should begin a Discalced community for friars. He followed Teresa's advice and took a new name, John of the Cross.

John and Teresa worked hard to spread the Discalced movement. As Discalced members,

they followed a lifestyle of contemplative prayer and total poverty. Through his involvement in the movement, John began to make enemies. In 1557, angry Carmelites who were against reform had John arrested and imprisoned at Toledo. He was treated very harshly in prison, but he began to write beautiful, mystical poetry. After nine months, John escaped. He continued writing and completed great spiritual books that are still read and highly regarded today, such as *The Dark Night of the Soul*, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, *The Living Flame of Love*, and *The Spiritual Canticle*.

John's troubles, however, were not over. After 1590, John's enemies came from within his own community. Some friars thought that a reformed community was not enough; they wanted to break completely from the Carmelites. They thought that John was too moderate and forced him down from his leadership position. They viciously attacked his character and humiliated him. In the midst of these attacks, John contracted a serious fever and died in 1591.

In 1926, the Church recognized John's incredible contribution to spiritual theology by naming him a Doctor of the Church. He is remembered for his life of courage, perseverance, and deep spirituality.

Do not feed your spirit on anything apart from God. Cast away all cares and let peace and reconciliation fill your heart. —St. John of the Cross

St. Paul Miki and Companions

- ◆ ca. 1564-1597; Japan
- ◆ Feast Day: February 6



Paul Miki was born in Tounucumada, Japan just as Jesuit missionaries were aiding the quick spread of Christianity. St. Francis Xavier had introduced Christianity to Japan in the 1540s, and by the 1580s there were approximately 200,000 converts. Emperor Hideyoshi, however, felt threatened by the rise of Christianity and ordered the banishment of Catholics in 1587. The Jesuits went into hiding and worked in secret.

During this time, Paul Miki received his education with the Jesuits and, at age 22, began the process of becoming a priest. He was known for his ability to preach intelligently and eloquently. In late 1596, just before Paul Miki's ordination, the emperor changed his strategy from banishment to persecution. He gathered and ordered the execution of 26 Christians, including Paul Miki and other Jesuits, Franciscans, and lay people.

On February 5, 1597, the 26 men and boys were paraded through the streets of Kyoto with blood streaming from their severed ears. The crowd reacted with great compassion and sadness. Many became Christians themselves after witnessing this tragedy. After marching through the streets, the group of Christians were taken to a hill near Nagasaki and strapped to crosses. Each martyr had an executioner at his side ready with a sword. At the same time, the executioners pierced the sides of the martyrs and killed them. Eyewitnesses collected their garments and saved them as relics.

Paul Miki and his companions were the first, but not the last, martyrs in the church of Japan. Christianity survived, but it went underground until 1865 when Japan opened itself to the outside world again. Christianity's survival in Japan is in no small way indebted to the courage and witness of the martyrs, the missionaries, and countless other brave Christians who held on to their faith in times of great difficulty and persecution.

Like my Master, I shall die upon the Cross. Like him, a lance will pierce my heart so that my blood and my love can flow out upon the land and sanctify it to his name. —St. Paul Miki



St. Aloysius Gonzaga

- ◆ 1568-1591; Italy
- ◆ Feast Day: June 21
- ◆ Patron Saint of Youth

at age 17 when he entered the Jesuit novitiate. He was ordained a deacon at age 20 but never became a priest. In 1590, he received a vision from the Archangel Gabriel that he would die within a year.

In 1591, an outbreak of the plague occurred in Rome and the Jesuits opened a hospital to care for the victims. Aloysius volunteered to work there, but his order was concerned about his poor health. They allowed him to work in a ward without victims of the plague, but one man in the ward had already contracted the disease. Aloysius had another vision, and told his confessor, Saint Robert Bellarmine, that he would die on the feast of Corpus Christi. On that day, which fell on June 21 that year, he seemed very well in the morning, but insisted that he would die before the day was over. As he began to grow weak, Bellarmine administered last rites and recited the prayers for the dying. Aloysius died just before midnight. He was 23 years old, and it is said that he died with the name of Jesus on his lips.

Aloysius, known for his purity and strong interior life, was canonized by Pope Benedict XIII in 1726.

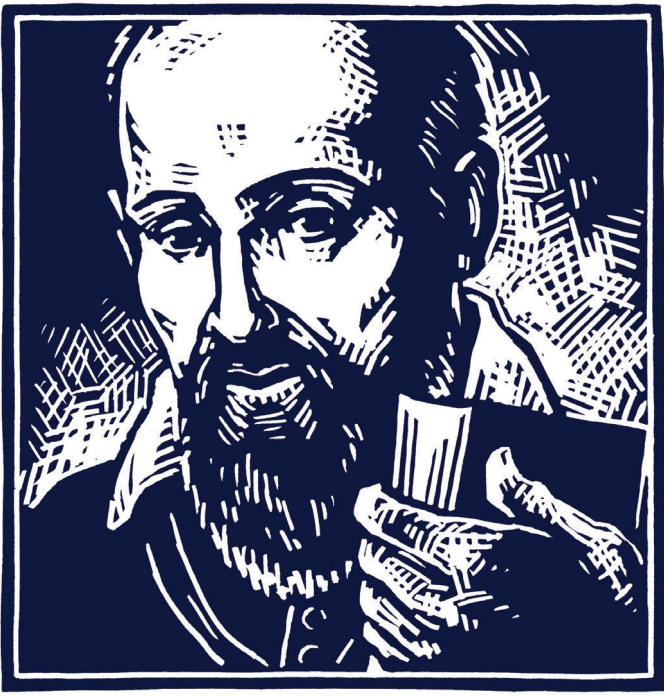
Aloysius was born to a powerful, aristocratic Italian family among great violence and frivolity during the Italian Renaissance. He was a rebel in his wealthy and military family, wanting a life of radical charity. As a child, Aloysius contracted a kidney disease that kept him confined to bed, but he spent his time reading the lives of the saints and praying. He met the great Saint Charles Borromeo at age 12, and it was from him that Aloysius received his first Holy Communion.

After reading about the Jesuit missionaries in India, Aloysius decided to become a missionary himself. He began practicing by teaching catechism classes to young boys in the summers. Aloysius' father greatly opposed his son's desire to become a Jesuit in part because it would cut Aloysius off from his inheritance. His father also wanted to see his military lineage carried on in his son. The boy persisted and won his father over

Father, you called Aloysius from a life of riches, comfort and power to be poor as Jesus was poor. As Jesus healed the sick and raised the dead, Aloysius cared for the sick and dying. Give me courage to seek you in the poor and the abandoned, in those who have no place and no status in this world. —From the Jesuit Prayer Card to St. Aloysius

St. Francis de Sales

- ◆ 1567-1622
- ◆ Feast Day: January 24
- ◆ Patron Saint of Journalists and Writers



Francis de Sales was born on August 21, 1567 in Savoy, France. As a teenager, Francis desired to serve God by becoming a priest, a desire that he kept secret from everyone except his mother. Francis' father had different expectations for his eldest son; he sent Francis to Paris to study law, and intended for him to marry and become a lawyer or a politician.

While enrolled at university, Francis obeyed all of his father's wishes but also pursued other interests. Francis ran in many circles and immersed himself in the culture of the busy city. Unfortunately, he soon became overworked, and became confused about his life's direction. In those moments of stress, Francis turned to prayer. Despite his father's disapproval, and through his mother's support, Francis decided to put his heart into theology and preparations for the priesthood. He was ordained in December 1593.

Knowing Francis had a wonderful speaking and writing ability, the bishop sent Francis to the city of Chablais where Catholicism was reviled and almost non-existent. The church pews were frequently empty, so Francis had to find a new way to reach the community. He decided to use his ability to write and his spirit of simplicity, communicating deep Catholic beliefs using simple analogies and carefully-chosen words. He was realistic in his explanations to people with no theological background, and he proposed arguments with incredible strength and gentleness. His arguments and letters were so convincing and relatable that tens of thousands of people in the city of Chablais converted to Catholicism in only four years.

Francis became popular for his ability to communicate heartfelt love, faith, and generosity through his preaching and writing. People from every walk of life wrote letters to Francis asking for advice on God's plan for their lives. He wrote to them all, encouraging them to "Be who you are, and be that well." Some of his letters were compiled into a book, *The Introduction to the Devout Life*, which is still popular today. Francis de Sales died in 1622.

Do not look forward to what may happen tomorrow; the same everlasting Father who cares for you today will take care of you tomorrow and every day. Either He will shield you from suffering, or He will give you unfailing strength to bear it. —St. Francis de Sales



St. Jane de Chantal

- ◆ 1572-1641
- ◆ Feast Day: August 12
- ◆ Patron Saint of Forgotten People, Widows and Parents Separated from Their Children

St. Jane de Chantal was born in 1572 in Dijon, France. At age 20, she married Baron de Chantal and they were blessed with seven children, although three died in infancy. Jane became a widow at age 28 with four young children.

During the season of Lent in 1604, Jane heard the powerful preaching of St. Francis de Sales and asked him to serve as her spiritual director. Throughout their time together, Jane grew to understand how God was working in her life, even amidst the difficulties of raising four children by herself. Jane discerned that the Lord was calling her to serve the Church as a consecrated nun. Once her children were older and no longer dependent on her, Jane committed her life to the Church as a vowed religious. In 1610, Francis de Sales collaborated with Jane to found and establish a new religious order, the Congregation of the Visitation of Holy Mary.

This new order was modeled after the meekness and humility of the Virgin Mary. Many of the women who joined the order were often considered too ill or elderly for other religious orders. The Visitation sisters were called to be active in the world and perform works of mercy throughout France. They were to live out humility in action, sharing the love of Jesus with all, especially the weakest of society.

Jane faced many trials throughout the remainder of her life. The deaths of many loved ones, including three of her adult children, further challenged Jane's faith. During this time, Jane faced periods of interior darkness and spiritual dryness. Still, she strived to live out the will of God in her life.

In 1641 at age 69, Jane passed away. Throughout France, she was revered for her life of holiness and service to others. She was officially canonized by the Catholic Church in 1767. Although her life as a wife, mother, and consecrated nun was marked with sorrow, Jane knew true joy came from understanding and living out the Christian call to conform one's life to the love of Jesus Christ.

You want to be humble? Try to know yourself well...trust only and continuously in God, persuaded that not able to do anything by yourselves, you can do all with His grace and powerful help. –St. Jane de Chantal

St. Martin de Porres

- ◆ 1579–1639; Peru
- ◆ Feast Day: November 3
- ◆ Patron Saint of Social Justice and Race Relations



Martin de Porres was born in Lima to a Spanish knight and a freed slave woman from Panama, whose darker complexion he inherited. He was born outside of marriage and was considered an “illegitimate” child when he was baptized. With this label of illegitimacy and the color of his skin, Martin could not expect a life of great social status or wealth.

Determined to live his life in the way he wished, Martin joined a Dominican monastery when he was fifteen years old. In 1603, he became a lay brother and spent the rest of his life at the monastery. Martin did important work for the monastery and for the people of Lima. He ministered faithfully to the sick, the poor, and the orphans. He helped people of all races. He also had a special place in his heart for animals. He truly loved all of God’s creatures.

Martin learned the occupation of physician, but his gifts went beyond medicine—he is believed to have had great powers of healing. Although he tried to hide his gift by pretending to heal the sick with medicinal treatments, people found out about his abilities.

Martin also had a deep spiritual wisdom and was able to give excellent advice that helped his order solve theological problems. Despite all of his talents and gifts, Martin lived a very humble life and never forgot to devote a large amount of time to prayer. He developed a very close friendship with St. Rose of Lima, who also ministered to the poor of Lima.

Martin died of a fever on November 3, 1639. We remember Martin for his unselfish charity, his love for all people and creatures, and his humble efforts to make a difference in his community.

Lord, you led Martin de Porres by a life of humility to eternal glory. May we follow his example and be exalted with him in the kingdom of heaven.

—Opening Prayer of the Feast of Martin de Porres



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

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



St. Rose of Lima

- ◆ 1586-1617; Peru
- ◆ Feast Day: August 23
- ◆ Patron Saint of Peru, South America, the Indies, and the Philippines

Rose was born with the name Isabel, but she was such a beautiful baby that she was compared to a rose, and the name stayed with her. Rose was devoted to her parents and tried to follow what they wanted for her. However, when they expressed their wish that she be married, Rose could not obey them.

She was incredibly devoted to Christ and lived a life of prayer in a small hut on her parents' property while she was a teenager. When suitors called, she deliberately tried to make herself look less attractive. Frustrated with her parents' wish for her to marry, she eventually took a vow of virginity and joined the Dominicans. She never

stopped loving her parents deeply. At one point, they were experiencing financial difficulties, so Rose sold flowers during the day and sewed at night to support them. She also extended her kindness to the poor of Lima by turning part of her family's home into an infirmary for the sick. Anyone, regardless of his or her race or economic status, was welcome. Through her work, she developed a close friendship with St. Martin de Porres, a fellow minister to the poor of Lima.

After three years of being very ill, Rose died on August 24, 1617, at age 31. A huge crowd of people gathered for the funeral of the woman who had been so kind to the people of Lima and had lived such a faithful life.

If only mortals would learn how great it is to possess divine grace, how beautiful, how noble, how precious. How many riches it hides within itself, how many joys and delights! –St. Rose of Lima

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.

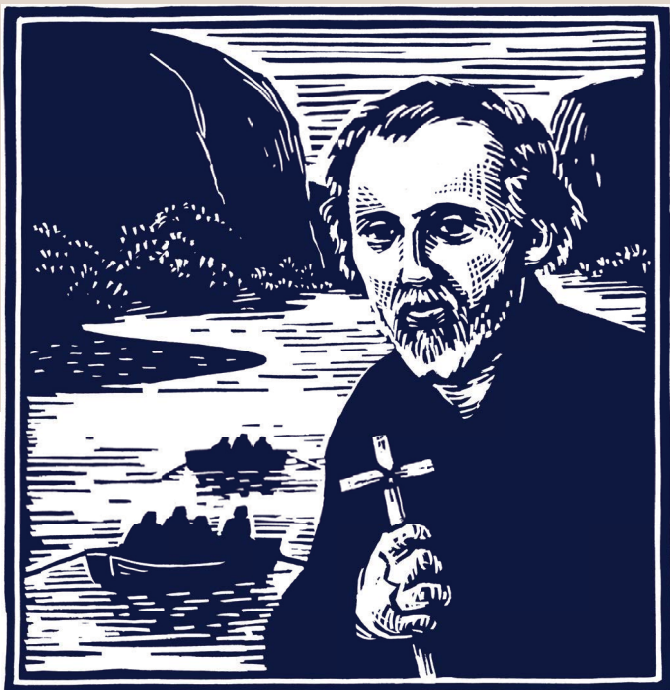
Louise's own struggle with her vocation is a model for the Church. One's vocation is not a single decision to fulfill a certain role, but openness to God's workings in a person's life, whatever they may be. The disappointments of her earlier life were transformed into the very gifts that allowed her 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

St. Isaac Jogues and the North American Martyrs

◆ 1607-1646

◆ Feast Day: October 19



Saint Isaac Jogues and his companions were some of the first missionaries to the native peoples of North America. During Isaac's first trip to North America, he lived in constant danger of capture and torture by the natives.

Amidst the cruelest possible conditions, Isaac experienced happiness greater than any riches could afford and considered himself one of the most blessed people on earth. In a letter to his mother about a year after he left France, he wrote the following: "[Providence] has granted me the grace of the greatest happiness and peace, a thousand times over... a greater happiness than if I had in my possession all the riches in the world. ... We have baptized about two hundred and forty of [the natives] this year. Among these are some whom I have washed in the waters of baptism, and who are assuredly in Paradise, since some of them were small babies of one or two years of age."

In the sixth year of his missionary work, Isaac was captured by the natives, brutally tortured, and enslaved for 13 months. He escaped and returned to France where he was received with great honor and called a living martyr by the Pope. Isaac chose to return to North America for a second encounter with the Iroquois. He was accompanied by the French military to negotiate a peace treaty with the natives. Immediately after this diplomatic mission was completed, Jogues begged his superiors to send him back. When he returned to the Iroquois out of concern for their salvation, he was captured and killed.

Jogues was prepared for this end. Shortly before his death, he wrote to a Jesuit friend the following: "I shall be happy if our Lord will complete the sacrifice where He has begun it, and make the little blood I have shed in that land the earnest of what I would give from every vein of my body and my heart. In a word, this people is 'a bloody spouse' to me (Exodus 4:25)." Isaac loved the Iroquois people and joined Jesus in sacrificing himself for their eternal glory.

O God, who chose to manifest the blessed hope of your eternal Kingdom by the toil of Saint Isaac Jogues and companions and by the shedding of their blood, graciously grant that through their intercession the faith of Christians may be strengthened day by day. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

—Opening Prayer of the Feast of Isaac Jogues and the North American Martyrs



St. Augustine Zhao Rong and the Chinese Martyrs

- ◆ 1648-1930
- ◆ Feast Day: July 9
- ◆ Patron Saint of Catechists and Missionaries

Christianity came to China through the work of Syrian missionaries in the 5th century during a period of Christian persecution. Many Christians, who feared being killed for practicing their faith, were forced into secrecy and hiding. Augustine Zhao Rong and 119 more Chinese martyrs were killed for proclaiming the Gospel and refusing to renounce faith in Jesus Christ.

Killed between 1648 and 1930, the Chinese martyrs span ages 9 to 79 and represent various countries of origin and Christian vocations. Thirty-three of the martyrs were European missionaries from France, Italy, Spain, Belgium, and the Netherlands. The majority of the European missionaries were priests and religious. Eighty-seven of the martyrs were born in China and include lay women and men, priests, seminarians, catechists, and catechumens.

Augustine Zhao Rong was the first martyr native to China. He joined the Chinese military at age 20 where he witnessed the persecution of Christians. He was struck by the charity, prayerfulness, and teaching of a priest named Fr. Martin Moye who was imprisoned for his faith. When Fr. Martin was released from prison, Zhao Rong accompanied him and asked to be accepted as a catechumen. He was baptized on the feast of St. Augustine at age 30, taking Augustine as his patron saint and baptismal name. He was ordained to the priesthood at age 35 and martyred in 1815.

Chi Zhuzi was another martyr who was preparing for baptism at age 18. Before he was tortured and killed for refusing to deny his faith, Chi Zhuzi boldly proclaimed, "Every piece of my flesh, every drop of my blood will tell you that I am a Christian." A young woman named Ann Wang was 14 years old when she was martyred. Ann remained faithful in the face of her impending death, and just before she was beheaded she proclaimed, "The door of heaven is open to all," and repeated the name of Jesus three times.

Pope John Paul II canonized Augustine Zhao Rong and the 119 Chinese martyrs as a group on October 1, 2000.

All-powerful, ever-living God, turn our weakness into strength. As you gave Augustine Zhao Rong and the martyrs of China the courage to suffer death for Christ, give us the courage to live in faithful witness to you. —Opening Prayer of the Feast of Augustine Zhao Rong and the Chinese Martyrs



St. Kateri Tekakwitha

- ◆ 1656-1680; New York, United States
- ◆ Feast Day: July 14
- ◆ Patron Saint of the Environment and Ecology

In 1677, Kateri decided to find a community where she would feel welcomed and loved. Gathering up her courage, she left her village and walked to a Christian mission in Sault St. Louis, near Montreal – 200 miles from her home! Here, she was able to practice her Catholicism freely and as a part of a faith community.

Kateri, who had never completely recovered from smallpox, died on April 17, 1680. Miracles and appearances are said to have taken place after her death. She was beatified in 1980, and on October 21, 2012 was canonized by Pope Benedict XVI.

Known as the “Lily of the Mohawks,” Kateri Tekakwitha is the first beatified Native American. She was born in New York to a Mohawk chief and a Christian Algonquin. When she was only four years old, her family members died from smallpox. Kateri survived the disease but was left disfigured and partially blind. When she was orphaned, Kateri’s relatives took her in and raised her.

As she was growing up, Kateri decided that she did not wish to get married. This decision, however, was not acceptable to her community. When she was twenty years old, she met a Jesuit missionary, Father Jacques de Lamberville. Under his guidance, she converted to Catholicism and was baptized on Easter Sunday. This only increased the disapproval of her relatives, and she felt very alone in her village.

Lord God, you called the virgin, Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, to shine among the Indian people as an example of innocence of life. Through her intercession, may all peoples of every tribe, tongue, and nation, having been gathered into your Church, proclaim your greatness in one song of praise. –Opening Prayer of the Feast of Kateri Tekakwitha

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

- ◆ 1774-1821; New York, United States
- ◆ Feast Day: January 4



Elizabeth was born into a wealthy New York family. At the age of twenty, she married William Magee Seton, a wealthy merchant whom she loved very much. The couple had five children before William fell seriously ill with tuberculosis. They traveled to Italy hoping that William would recover from his illness, but he died in 1803.

Elizabeth lived for six months with an Italian family who taught her the Catholic faith. Feeling a call to conversion, Elizabeth returned to the United States with her children and entered the Catholic Church in 1805. However, her friends and family disapproved of her decision to become Catholic, and did little to help support her children.

While struggling to support her family, Elizabeth met a priest in Baltimore who invited her to open a Catholic school for girls. Elizabeth accepted the job, and other women joined in her work. They soon formed a new religious order, the Sisters of St. Joseph. After being approved by the bishop, the sisters took vows and began calling Elizabeth “Mother Seton,” as the superior of their order. Elizabeth died in 1821, leaving behind many communities devoted to education. Mother Seton’s sisters were already spread throughout the world, establishing schools and orphanages.

Elizabeth Ann Seton is admired for her devotion to her children, students, sisters, and God. Elizabeth’s schools formed the foundation for the Catholic parochial education system present and vibrant in the United States today. She was the first native-born American to be named a saint.

The first purpose of our daily life is to do the will of God; secondly, to do it in the manner he wills; and thirdly, to do it because it is his will.
—St. Elizabeth Ann Seton



St. John Vianney

- ◆ 1786-1859; France
- ◆ Feast Day: August 4
- ◆ Patron Saint of Parish Priests

John Vianney, also known as the Curé d'Ars, always had difficulty in school. During his time at the seminary, he struggled with his studies and could not seem to learn Latin. This posed a problem since all of the classes were taught in Latin! A priest named Abbé Balley saw John's faith and goodness and decided to tutor him. With his help, John was ordained in 1815.

John Vianney's first and only assignment was to Ars, a small French village of just over two hundred people. Despite the size and remoteness of the village, John worked hard and soon revitalized the church in Ars. He visited every parishioner and taught the children religion. He was best known, however, for his role as confessor. When people confessed their sins to John, they felt understood and comforted by his compassion. Many even began to call him a miracle worker.

His reputation soon spread, and Ars became a place of pilgrimage. Between 1830 and 1845, 300 people came to Ars each day. This meant that John spent countless hours in the confessional—often between twelve and sixteen hours a day! Wishing for solitude and peace, John tried to leave Ars on a number of occasions, but he always came back. He also never accepted any promotions or public recognition for his work.

Just before he died, 20,000 people were visiting Ars each year. His years of spiritual guidance eventually took their toll, and John Vianney died on August 4, 1859. He is looked up to as a model for priests and Christians everywhere.

The interior life is like a sea of love in which the soul is plunged and drowned. Just as a mother holds her child's face in her hands to cover it with kisses, so does God hold the devout person. —St. John Vianney

St. Theodore Guerin

◆ 1798-1856

◆ Feast Day: October 3



Mother Theodore Guerin, made a saint on October 15, 2006, was the first saint canonized from Indiana. Born in France as Anne Thérèse, she received her initial education of Scripture and catechism through the efforts of her mother. At the time, religious education was rare in France due to the suppression of the Catholic church during the French revolution. Her father, a member of the army, was murdered by a group of bandits as he was returning home from war when she was 15 years old.

Anne then took the responsibility of caring for her family and her mother. At age 25, Anne became a nun in the Sisters of Providence, taking the name Sister Theodore. The sisters recognized her leadership, intellect, and religious virtue and sent her to the Diocese of Vincennes, Indiana in 1840 to serve as the superior of a new community. While she was initially unsure of her new mission, she remained open to divine Providence, believing

that all was possible through God. In Indiana, Sister Theodore saw the great need for religious education, particularly for young girls. At the time, there were very few schools in Indiana.

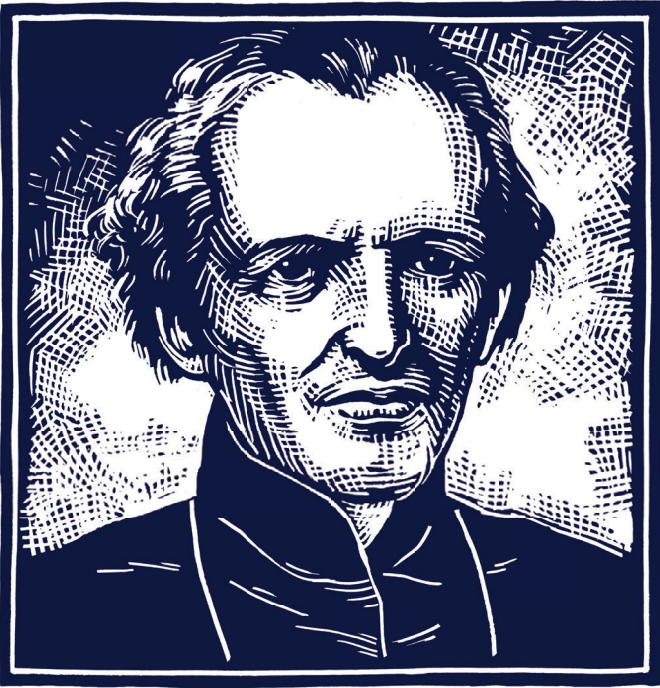
The first school founded by the Sisters of Providence was Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in Terre Haute, Indiana—the first Catholic women’s college in the United States. At the time, most colleges in the country did not admit women. In the next sixteen years, Mother Theodore founded schools throughout Indiana, including Jasper, Vincennes, Montgomery, Madison, Fort Wayne, and Evansville. In addition, she opened pharmacies and hospitals to serve the poor in Indiana.

Mother Theodore was a visionary who recognized the potential for religious education in the mission territory of Indiana. More importantly, she knew that such religious education must not be reserved only for men. By founding the first Catholic college for women, Mother Theodore opened up opportunities for women to receive an education in the liberal arts. Through this training, Mother Theodore and her college in Indiana has inspired countless women to serve the Church and the world.

Loving God, in St. Mother Theodore Guerin you have given us an example of a religious woman who trusted deeply in Providence. Through her intercession, inspire us to dedicate our lives to proclaiming the Gospel through works of love, mercy, and justice. —Opening Prayer of the Feast of Theodore Guerin

Blessed Basil Moreau

- ◆ 1799-1873
- ◆ Feast Day: January 20



Basil Moreau was born February 11, 1799 in Laigné-en-Belin, France. In the wake of the French Revolution, Basil witnessed incredible turmoil and was deeply affected by the persecution against the Church. After the tensions began to subside, Basil joined the seminary. The anti-clerical laws of France had exiled or executed a majority of the French priests, and Basil was deeply concerned with how the lack of priests and educators led to poor religious education for citizens.

In 1835, Basil founded a group of priests to meet the people's spiritual needs, named the Society of Auxiliary Priests. This same year, he was asked by his bishop to take over leadership of the recently founded Brothers of Saint Joseph. In 1837, Basil joined the two societies into one community, the Congregation of Holy Cross. Basil later founded a community of sisters, completing his vision of a community

where priests, brothers, and sisters worked together in the model of the Holy Family to build up the the Kingdom of God.

Basil was a zealous man, passionate to spread the Gospel through education. Soon after professing his vows in the Congregation of Holy Cross, he began sending missions around the world. He sent Fr. Edward Sorin and six Holy Cross brothers to the United States where they founded the University of Notre Dame.

The Cross was center of Basil's spirituality. He made the motto for his community "Ave Crux, Spes Unica," or "Hail the Cross, our Only Hope." Despite many setbacks in founding the Congregation of Holy Cross, Basil trusted that through Divine Providence, his struggles would work to God's greater glory.

Basil died on January 20, 1873. In 2007, Basil was beatified in Le Mans, France. His zeal and passion for educating young hearts and minds continues to animate the religious of the Congregation of Holy Cross who find support, strength, and hope in the Cross of Jesus Christ.

God will be glorified by the works of justice and holiness that we produce, but as one who plants a tree is glorified by its produce. —Blessed Basil Moreau, Sermons

St. John Henry Newman

- ◆ 1801-1890; England
- ◆ Feast Day: October 9



John Henry Newman spent his life listening to his conscience and trying to understand what he was being called to do. When he was 15 years old, he experienced a conversion and felt committed to Christianity and drawn to the clergy. However, as a student at Trinity College, Oxford, John also felt drawn to a life of study. Eventually, he decided to pursue both vocations. He prepared for ordination as a deacon in the Church of England while simultaneously competing for a fellowship at Oxford. John succeeded in both endeavors.

By 1833, John was convinced that the Church of England was in need of reform to return to some of the original elements of the early Church, and so began the Oxford Movement. Having come into contact with Roman Catholicism during a trip to Rome, John included many elements of Catholicism in his writings but was often criticized for doing so. Gradually, he came to believe that Catholicism was genuinely

continuous within the early Church. In 1845, after spending a great deal of time in prayerful contemplation, John answered the call to become Catholic.

Not only did John enter the Catholic Church, but he also studied for the priesthood and was ordained in 1847. He established communities of priests who shared his interest in combining intellectual and pastoral pursuits. He devoted most of his time to prayer and to writing. His writings and thought had a great influence on the Second Vatican Council and on the lives of everyday readers. John's writings call attention to our duty to develop our gifts and follow our vocations. They encourage us to consider the sacredness of everyday life, and they challenge us to act according to our consciences and faith.

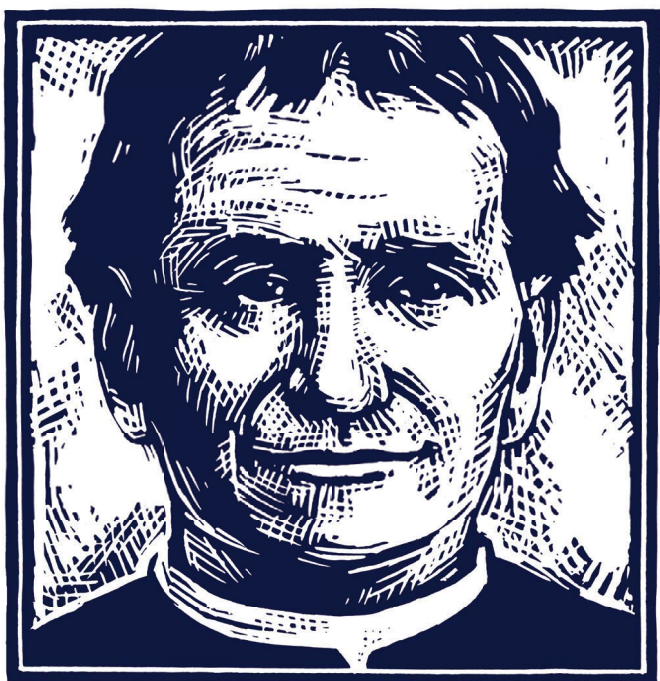
Recognizing John Henry Newman's contribution to Catholicism, Pope Leo XIII named him a cardinal in 1879. Over 100 years after his death, Saint John Paul II recognized Newman's lasting impact by declaring him "venerable" in 1991. He was beatified by Pope Benedict XVI on September 19, 2010, and was canonized by Pope Francis in the fall of 2019.

*Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead thou me on!
The night is dark, and I am far from home,
Lead thou me on!
Keep thou my feet! I do not ask to see the distant scene;
one step enough for me.*

—St. John Henry Newman

St. John Bosco

- ◆ 1815-1888
- ◆ Feast Day: January 31
- ◆ Patron Saint of Young People, Boys, and Students



St. John Bosco had a difficult early life. His father died when he was two years old, leaving his mother, Venerable Margaret Bosco, as the sole supporter of the family. Thus, when he was old enough to work, John did various jobs to raise extra money for his family. A performer by nature, John also attended the circus to watch the magicians and would repeat these tricks to audiences of young boys later in the day. During his performance, John would preach the homily he heard earlier from the priest.

In college, John continued to work various jobs supporting his family until he was ordained a priest in 1841. As a priest, he ministered to orphan boys, preparing them for first communion as well as teaching them skills that they needed to obtain a job later in life. His mother Margaret assisted in this work.

His ministry grew so large that he opened a house for boys and founded a religious order named after St. Francis de Sales, known as the Salesians. This order dedicated itself to the education of the poor, and published catechisms and other materials for religious education.

John Bosco's approach to education was quite unique for his time. Instead of insisting upon harsh discipline and physical punishments, he believed that each student ought to be treated as a son or daughter of the teacher. By treating each person with kindness and affection, John knew that the person would be teaching the Gospel not only through the words of the catechism but through actions that imitated Christ's own love.

As a model of faith, John Bosco offers the Church a way of approaching each of our vocations—through the love of Christ. As Christians, our words are certainly important, but we may often teach as much through the kindness and affection that we give to each person that we encounter.

There must be no hostility in our minds, no contempt in our eyes, no insult on our lips. We must use mercy for the present and have hope for the future, as is fitting for the true parents who are eager for real correction and improvement. In serious matters it is better to beg God humbly than to send forth a flood of words that will only offend the listeners and have no effect on those who are guilty. —From a letter by St. John Bosco

Sts. Louis and Zélie Martin

- ◆ 1823-1894; 1831-1877
- ◆ Feast Day: July 12
- ◆ Patron Saints of Lay Ministers and Married Couples



Sts. Louis and Zélie Martin, the parents of St. Therese of Lisieux, were a married couple who lived ordinary lives in an extraordinary way. Both wanted to enter religious orders and devote themselves completely to service and love of God but, upon meeting each other, it became clear that God had other plans for them. After marrying on July 13, 1858, Louis and Zélie enjoyed life together for 19 years. Louis worked as a clockmaker-jeweler and later as the manager for Zélie's lace-making business.

The Martins valued the family as a place for shared prayer, outreach to their local community, and growth in relationship with God. They shared a happy relationship but also knew pain and suffering. Of their nine children, four died during infancy or early childhood. The other five

came near to death in childhood sickness. Louis and his five daughters, Pauline, Marie, Céline, Thérèse, and Léonie, tragically lost Zélie to breast cancer when she was 44 years old. Of the five living Martin daughters, four entered the Carmelite Monastery of Lisieux and one became a Visitation sister.

Near the end of his life, Louis suffered mental health complications. St. Thérèse writes in her autobiography about the profound grief she experienced in seeing her father suffer, but she also writes beautifully about the humble way he carried himself in the midst of this suffering. Louis died on July 29, 1894 at age 71.

Louis and Zélie Martin model what it means for marriage to be a sacrament of love and holiness. The Martins call us to be attentive to the movement of the Holy Spirit even in the midst of confusing and painful events. They were beatified on October 19, 2008 by Pope Benedict XVI. Pope Francis canonized them as saints, the first spouses canonized as a couple, on October 18, 2015.

Saints Louis and Zélie Martin, today we turn to you in prayer. By fulfilling the duties of your state in life and practicing the evangelical virtues as spouses and as parents, you have modeled for us an exemplary Christian life. May the example of your unwavering trust in God and your constant willingness to surrender all the joys, the trials, the sorrows and the sufferings that filled your life encourage us to persevere in our daily challenges and to remain in joy and Christian hope. Amen. —Prayer of Spouses and Parents to Saints Louis And Zélie Martin

St. Damien and St. Marianne of Molokai

- ◆ 1840-1889; 1838-1918; Hawaii
- ◆ Feast Days: May 10; January 23
- ◆ Patron Saints of Hawaii and Those with Leprosy



Damien De Veuster was a young brother in the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary in Belgium who longed to be a missionary, but was thought unfit to become a priest. When his brother, also a member of the order, was too ill for a mission to Hawaii, Damien volunteered and was sent in 1864. He was soon ordained a priest.

Father Damien offered to live and work on the island of Molokai where victims of leprosy were quarantined. He worked tirelessly to bring order and peace to the community. He built churches, homes, and schools, dug graves, and established law and education among the lepers. He brought respect and dignity to those who were rejected by society and transformed their lives with hard work, compassion, and spiritual fervor. He contracted leprosy after sixteen years among them and died in 1889. He is considered a "martyr of charity" for his total dedication to this community of outcasts.

Marianne Cope was a member of the Sisters of Saint Francis in Syracuse, New York and established two of the first hospitals in central New York. As Superior General of the order, she willingly accepted a call to help the mission of Hawaii and took six of her sisters with her to establish a hospital in 1883. She, too, was particularly concerned with the victims of leprosy, especially the orphan girls of leprosy patients.

Mother Marianne cheerfully moved her work to Molokai in 1888 and helped care for the dying Father Damien, whom she greatly admired and who had been shunned by many church leaders and the government upon contracting leprosy. After his death, she took over his work with the boys' home he had established and founded a school for girls with leprosy. Her unflinching optimism and trust encouraged her sisters to persevere among the lepers without fear for their own safety. She died of natural causes in 1918.

Father Damien and Mother Marianne were canonized by Pope Benedict XVI. They are celebrated as heroes in Hawaii on April 15th, the day of Father Damien's death.

God of compassion, we bless your Name for the ministries of Damien and Marianne, who ministered to the lepers abandoned on Molokai in the Hawaiian Islands. Help us, following their examples, to be bold and loving in confronting the incurable plagues of our time, that your people may live in health and hope. —Opening Prayer of the Feast of Damien and Marianne

St. Bernadette Soubirous

- ◆ 1844-1879; Lourdes, France
- ◆ Feast Day: April 16



Bernadette grew up as an impoverished, sickly, and uneducated girl. She would have lived a life of anonymity if not for a few months in the year of 1858. During these months, Bernadette experienced eighteen visions of the Virgin Mary in a cave along a river in Lourdes, France. In her visions, Mary urged Bernadette to pray for sinners and to build a church at this site where others could come to pray.

The Virgin referred to herself as “the Immaculate Conception” and led Bernadette to a hidden spring that had never been seen before. At the young age of fourteen, Bernadette had to deal with the interrogations and ridicule from the leaders and people of the town and church who did not believe in her visions. Visitors who wanted to know more about the visions were constantly bothering her.

Bernadette never stopped believing in her visions. In 1866, she joined the Sisters of Notre Dame of Nevers and lived the rest of her life in the convent. She wanted nothing to do with the opening of the church that was built at the site of her visions of Mary. Rather, she was canonized in recognition of her prayerful devotion and her quiet faith and perseverance in the face of the others’ mockery and disbelief.

The Grotto on the campus of the University of Notre Dame, built in 1896, is a replica of the cave in Lourdes where Bernadette saw the Virgin Mary.

I promise to make you happy, not in this world, but in the next.

—The Virgin Mary to Bernadette at Lourdes



St. André Bessette

- ◆ 1845-1937; Canada
- ◆ Feast Day: January 6

St. André Bessette grew up just outside Montreal. When he was young, he loved the Holy Family and the Church. One night, he had a dream of a beautiful church, which he never forgot as he grew older. Tragically, when André was twelve, his parents died and left him and 11 his siblings orphaned.

André decided to put off his education and work in New England to support his brothers and sisters. He later returned to Montreal and answered a call at age 25 to enter the Congregation of Holy Cross, the religious order that founded the University of Notre Dame. Given his lack of education and poor health, André was unable to become a Holy Cross priest, but the bishop of Montreal suggested that André become a lay brother.

Although disappointed, André followed God in whatever ways he could. He worked as a doorkeeper at the congregation's high school in Montreal. Here, he began to spread his love of

St. Joseph to the poor and sick. Many people began to report healings after praying with André. He soon earned the title of "Miracle Man" of Montreal. So many people were visiting the high school hoping to find healing that students' parents and members of the community began to complain. In 1904, Brother André was allowed to build a small chapel on a hill near the school where he could tend to the sick.

André had not forgotten his dream of the beautiful church, and made plans for the shrine to be built at the site of his chapel. It took nearly fifty years to build St. Joseph's Oratory, which stands as the tallest building in Montreal and the most well-known shrine to St. Joseph in the world.

André never took credit for his work and healings. He always said that the real power came from St. Joseph and God. He died on January 6, 1937. It took a number of days before his burial could take place because of the millions of people who wished to pay their respects to Brother André. Pope John Paul II beatified André in 1982. On October 17, 2010 André was canonized by Pope Benedict XVI.

A daily crowd of the sick, the afflicted, the poor of all kinds—those who were handicapped or wounded by life—came to him. They found in his presence a welcome ear, comfort and faith in God. Do not the poor of today have as much need of such love, of such hope, of such education in prayer? —St. John Paul II in a homily honoring St. André

St. Frances Xavier Cabrini

- ◆ 1850-1917; Italy
- ◆ Feast Day: November 13
- ◆ Patron Saint of Immigrants and Hospital Administrators



Frances Cabrini, the youngest in an Italian family of thirteen children, grew up with the burning desire to become a nun and a missionary in China. To her great disappointment, Frances was unable to join a religious order due to poor health. She never gave up her dream, however, and began to work as a school teacher in Italy.

One day, a priest offered Frances the opportunity to begin her own religious order of women devoted to missionary work. She would not think of passing up this chance, and in 1880 she formed the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart.

When Pope Leo XIII approved her order in 1887, Frances told him of her wish to pursue her work in China. The Pope had other plans for Frances and her order, though. He sent her in the opposite direction from China to the United States so that she could tend to the large population of Italian

immigrants there. Frances left her home country for New York City where fifty thousand Italian immigrants were living, many of whom lived in poverty and were not warmly welcomed into the Church. Working against many obstacles, the Missionaries ran schools, hospitals and orphanages in New York and soon began to spread to other parts of the United States and even to other countries.

In 1907, Frances became a citizen of the United States. When she died ten years later, her order was present all over the world. She eventually became the first American citizen to become a saint (Elizabeth Ann Seton was the first American-born saint).

Lord, you are the one who acts. I am not even an instrument in your hands, as others say. You alone are the one who does all, and I am nothing more than a spectator of the great and wonderful works that you know how to accomplish. —St. Frances Xavier Cabrini



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 sought ways to put her money to good use and 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 heart attack in 1935 and spent the last 20 years of her life in contemplative prayer. We remember Katharine for her 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

St. Charles Lwanga and Companions

- ◆ ca. 1860–1886; Uganda
- ◆ Feast Day: June 3



In the 1880s, Christianity had begun to spread through the work of missionaries into the Ugandan kingdom of Buganda. Many of the pages—or young male servants—in the court of King Mwanga were becoming followers of this new religion. Mwanga, known for his terrible treatment of the pages, saw Christianity as a threat to his authority. When the Catholic head of the pages, Joseph Mukasa, criticized the king's behavior and tried to protect the pages, Mwanga ordered him to be beheaded.

Charles Lwanga became the new head of the pages and continued to protect them and teach them the ways of Christianity. Unwilling to accept Christianity and the actions of Lwanga in his court, King Mwanga ordered the Christian pages to give up their faith or die. The pages spoke up loudly and professed their faith in front of

the king. They were then forced on a sixteen-mile march to Namugongo, the place of their execution. As the leader of the pages, Charles Lwanga was one of the first men to be burned to death. Throughout the ordeal, the young men, all between the ages of 13 and 25, remained courageous and even joyful. In total, 22 African Catholics and 24 Protestants were martyred.

After the pages' deaths, Christianity secretly survived in the court of King Mwanga. After King Mwanga's death, missionary priests who had been expelled now returned. By 1890, it is estimated that there were as many as 10,000 Christians in the kingdom of Buganda.

A well that has many sources never runs dry. When we are gone, others will come after us. —One of the Ugandan Martyrs



St. Josephine Bakhita

- ◆ 1868-1947
- ◆ Feast Day: February 8
- ◆ Patron Saint of Sudan

In 1890, she was baptized and took the name Josephine Margaret. A few years later she entered the novitiate and on December 8, 1896, she took her vows as a Canossian Sister. For the next 42 years, she served in Schio as a cook, sacristan, and porter. She was very well known in the community for her charisma, gentle nature, and missionary spirit. During World War II, many people in Schio turned to her for comfort and protection.

The last years of her life were marked by illness, but when asked how she was doing she would respond "as the Master desires." She died on February 8, 1947 and is remembered as a symbol of the transformative power of God's love. Canonized by St. John Paul II in 2000, St. Josephine Bakhita is the only patron saint of Sudan.

Venerated as a modern African saint, St. Josephine Bakhita exemplifies Christian hope.

Kidnapped and sold into slavery at age 7, this joyful woman was no stranger to human suffering. She was frequently traded between owners, and she experienced physical, mental, and moral abuse.

While living in Italy with the family of a diplomat, she and the diplomat's child were left in the custody of the Canossian Sisters of Venice. This simple experience would prove to be one of the most transformative encounters of her life. She refused to leave the convent and the issue was taken to an Italian court. It was decided that because slavery was not legal in her home country at the time of her kidnapping, Bakhita was never legally a slave. For the first time in her adult life, she was free.

If we had no hope in the Lord, what would we do in this world? –St. Josephine Bakhita

St. Thérèse of Lisieux

- ◆ 1873-1897; France
- ◆ Feast Day: October 1
- ◆ Patron Saint of Foreign Missions and France



Thérèse, also known as the “Little Flower,” grew up as the youngest child in a family of five daughters. Sadly, Thérèse’s mother died when she was only four years old. Her father moved the family from Alençon to Lisieux, France. Here, Thérèse’s aunt looked after her and her sisters. Thérèse’s religious development was entrusted to her older sisters.

When Thérèse was nine years old, her oldest sister entered the Carmelite convent at Lisieux and set Thérèse to wondering if she would like to do the same thing someday. After a second sister joined the convent, she began to think seriously about her calling to religious life.

At the age of fourteen, Thérèse had a conversion experience on Christmas Eve. The sadness that she had carried with her since her mother’s death left her heart. She later wrote in her

autobiography, “Love filled my heart, I forgot myself, and henceforth I was happy.” Her desire to enter the convent was now stronger than ever, but she was told that she was too young.

When Thérèse refused to give up on her vocation and persisted in her efforts to join the Carmelites, the bishop finally gave her special permission to enter the convent at the age of fifteen. Happily, she joined her sisters and took up life with the Carmelites. Thérèse always wanted to become a missionary, and in 1897, she was invited to join the Carmelites at Hanoi, which is now in Vietnam. She realized she would be unable to attain her dream, however, when she began to hemorrhage from the mouth on Good Friday. She had contracted tuberculosis and died on September 20 of that year.

Thérèse is remembered for the simplicity of her faith and her belief that anyone can praise God through small deeds and quiet prayers. She truly believed that the perfect Christian life is attainable by all people. Her autobiography, *The Story of a Soul*, and other spiritual writings still hold wide appeal. She was named a Doctor of the Church in 1997.

Love proves itself by deeds. I will scatter flowers, perfuming the Divine Throne, and I’ll sweetly sing my hymn of love. These flowers are every little sacrifice, every glance and word, and the doing of the least of actions for love. —St. Thérèse of Lisieux



St. Gemma Galgani

- ◆ 1878-1903; Italy
- ◆ Feast Day: April 11
- ◆ Patron Saint of Tuberculosis, Patients and Pharmacists

Gemma Galgani fostered a devotion to Christ and to prayer very early in her childhood. By the age of fifteen, she knew that she wanted to become a nun. However, she spent much of her time battling various illnesses, particularly tuberculosis. These aspects of her life, among others, have led people to draw comparisons between Gemma and St. Thérèse of Lisieux.

Through her active prayer life, Gemma had visions and spiritual experiences of Christ. Her friends and family did not understand these experiences and often mocked her. She suffered much humiliation as a controversial figure and could not follow her dream to become a Passionist nun because of her illness. Nonetheless, she drew strength from her faith. During one bout with sickness, Gemma prayed to the Passionist St. Gabriel Francis Possenti and was miraculously healed.

More controversial than her healing or her visions, however, was the appearance of Gemma's stigmata. For nearly three years, the wounds of Christ appeared on her body and bled once a week. Gemma did not try to gain people's attention from these wounds. Rather, she tried to hide them and go about her daily routine. She did not lash out in anger at those who mocked her or distrusted her. She was nothing but kind to them.

Unfortunately, Gemma's cure did not last forever. Once again, she became very sick and this time she did not recover. In 1903, Gemma died at the age of twenty-five. She had lived a difficult life, but throughout her battles with illness and with her opponents, Gemma held on to her belief in God and her ability to see God working in her everyday life.

Try to think of a light that fills the whole universe, that penetrates and kindles it. At the same time, a light that gives life and animation to all things, so that all things that exist are imbued with, or encircled in it, and in it and through it have life. Thus I see God and in [God] all creatures. —St. Gemma Galgani



St. John XXIII

- ◆ 1881-1963; Italy
- ◆ Feast Day: October 11

In 1904, Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli answered the call to priesthood, a decision that started him on the road to becoming one of the most beloved popes in history.

During World War I, Angelo worked as a hospital orderly and military chaplain. After the war, he was appointed as the national director of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. Achille Ratti, who would become Pope Pius XI, steered Angelo into a life of travels and diplomacy. He worked in such countries as France, Greece, Bulgaria, and Turkey, before and during World War II.

In 1958, Angelo was elected pope and took the name John XXIII. Because he was almost 77 years old, many expected him to continue running things as they were without calling for significant change. In the next few years, Pope John XXIII proved these expectations wrong.

John XXIII saw himself in the role of shepherd. He was committed to Christian unity, social justice, and human rights and tried to reach out to the people. On Christmas, for example, he visited prisoners and the sick. He tried to be visible in Rome by visiting parishes, hospitals, and schools.

On January 25, 1959, John XXIII surprised everyone by calling an ecumenical council—the Second Vatican Council. Unlike many previous councils, this council was called not to correct errors, rather, to bring new life and energy into the Church. He understood the world was changing and that the Church needed to respond to the ways in which the Holy Spirit was working through the “signs of the times.”

On September 23, 1962, John XXIII discovered that he was suffering from stomach cancer. He soon understood that his role was to get the council started, and others would have to direct its course after his death. On June 3, 1963, Pope John XXIII died. The council, placed in the hands of his successor, Paul VI, lasted until 1965 and changed the face of the Church forever. Pope Francis canonized Saint John XXIII on April 27, 2014.

What counts the most in this life is blessed Jesus Christ, his holy Church, his Gospel, truth and goodness. —St. John XXIII

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

St. Maria Goretti

- ◆ 1890-1902
- ◆ Feast Day: July 6
- ◆ Patron Saint of Young People, Girls, and Rape Victims



St. Maria Goretti was born into a poor family in Italy and never learned to read or write. Several months after receiving her first communion at age 12, an eighteen year-old who worked for her father named Alessandro seized Maria. He took her into a bedroom and attempted to rape her.

Maria resisted, reminding Alessandro that raping her would be a sin for him. Alessandro responded by stabbing Maria fourteen times. She was taken to the hospital where she survived for twenty-four hours. Before dying, she forgave Alessandro, comforted her family, and received the Eucharist for the last time.

Maria's story did not end with her death. Alessandro was sentenced to 30 years in prison. During the early part of his sentence, he remained unrepentant for his horrific crime. One evening while sleeping, Alessandro dreamed that Maria came to him, offering him flowers and

her forgiveness. At this moment, Alessandro repented. Twenty-seven years after the crime, Alessandro was released from prison and asked Maria's mother for forgiveness.

Maria's story quickly spread and devotion to her spread. Maria was canonized less than 50 years later. Maria's family, including her mother, as well as Alessandro, were present for her canonization. This marked the first time that a saint's mother was present for her child's canonization.

In the calendar of saints, Maria is listed as a martyr, or one who died for her faith. But, the word martyr also means "witness." Maria is an important model of faith because she witnessed to the power of Christian forgiveness. By forgiving her attacker, she showed that Christian forgiveness extends to the most hideous of crimes. Such forgiveness is by no means easy. But when it is offered in a spirit of Christian love, it has the ability to transform not only the life of the one who is forgiven, but the entire world. In her act of forgiveness, Maria became an image of Christ for the entire world.

Father, source of innocence and lover of chastity, You gave St. Maria Goretti the privilege of offering her life in witness to Christ. As you gave her the crown of martyrdom, let her prayers keep us faithful to your teaching.

—Opening Prayer of the Feast of Maria Goretti



St. Edith Stein

- ◆ 1891-1942; Poland
- ◆ Feast Day: August 9
- ◆ Co-Patron Saint of Europe

went after many Christians from Jewish families or converts from Judaism who were living in the Netherlands. Just as Edith was planning to move to a convent in Switzerland, she and her sister Rosa, also a convert from Judaism, were seized by the Nazis. On August 9, 1942, Edith was put to death at the Auschwitz concentration camp.

Throughout her frightening ordeal, Edith held on to her faith in God. She stands as a model of goodness and conviction in the midst of undeniable evil. One of our more contemporary saints, Edith Stein was canonized in Rome on October 12, 1998.

Edith Stein, also known as Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, grew up in a Jewish family but considered herself an atheist as a young woman.

Extremely intelligent and well educated, Edith studied philosophy under Edmund Husserl at Freiburg University and earned her Ph.D. in 1916. Through her studies, Edith encountered Catholicism. Her interest in the religion grew, and after reading St. Teresa of Ávila's autobiography, she chose to be baptized Catholic in 1921.

In the early 1930s, Edith was teaching in Germany when the Nazis came to power. Because of her Jewish background, Edith was fired from her position. A year later, Edith joined the Carmelite community of nuns in Cologne. In order to escape the Nazi threat, she later moved to the Netherlands. However, the Nazis soon

How wonderful are your gracious wonders! All we can do is be amazed and stammer and fall silent because intellect and words fail. –St. Edith Stein

St. Maximilian Kolbe

- ◆ 1894–1941; Poland
- ◆ Feast Day: August 14
- ◆ Patron Saint of Those Suffering from Drug Addiction



Maximilian Kolbe was a Franciscan priest who had a special devotion to Mary. He and the group that he founded, the Militia of the Immaculata, tried to spread devotion to Mary through their monthly paper and evangelization. His work included trips to Japan and to India, all while suffering from tuberculosis.

Maximilian is best known for the way in which he lived the last few years of his life. As the Nazis rose in power, he spoke out against them and used his paper to spread these anti-Nazi sentiments. Even though he had a German background, he refused to protect himself by becoming a legal German national.

In February of 1941, Maximilian was imprisoned in Warsaw and suffered great abuse and torture. He was released, only to be imprisoned a second time in May and sent to Auschwitz. While there, Maximilian continued in his ministry as a priest.

He heard confessions, comforted other prisoners, and said Mass with bread and wine that had been smuggled into the camp.

In July, a prisoner attempted to escape. As a penalty, ten prisoners were chosen to be executed. Among them was a young husband and father who begged to be spared. Maximilian spoke up and asked that he be taken in place of the young man. The officer switched the men, and Maximilian and the others were sent to a starvation chamber. For two weeks, he tried to keep their spirits up through praying the rosary and through singing. Eventually, they began to die. Maximilian was the last to remain conscious. On August 14, 1941, he and the four men who were still alive were injected with phenol. Their bodies were then burned. Maximilian died on a feast of Mary—the Feast of the Assumption.

We remember Maximilian Kolbe for his courage under horrific circumstance. He held on to his beliefs and love of God in a time of great despair for so many people.

No, we will never give in, we will hold out to the end, their terror will never kill the Polish soul. If we die, we will die in holiness and peace, accepting the will of God. —St. Maximilian Kolbe



Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati

- ◆ 1901-1925
- ◆ Feast Day: July 4

Blessed Pier was born in Turin, Italy in 1901 into an influential, rich family. His father was a political journalist and activist, who eventually served as ambassador to Germany during World War I. His mother was a popular Italian painter. The earliest portion of his education took place at home with his sister, Luciana. Pier was also interested in athletics, mountain climbing and skiing; he also had a deep love for music. Most importantly, Pier loved his faith.

From his father, Pier inherited a passion for justice. Unlike his father, who was an agnostic, Pier grounded his works of justice in the Beatitudes. In college, he studied engineering and mineralogy so that he could serve the needs of the miners, who were treated quite poorly. He would give away his money to the poor, and walk home instead of taking the train. He participated in demonstrations in Italy against fascism, a form of government that valued the state over the

needs of individuals and society. Pier believed this disrespect for the human person was at the root of World War I. In caring for the poor and his activism, he found nourishment in the contemplation of the Blessed Sacrament and prayer, becoming Dominican tertiary.

In June 1925, Pier was diagnosed with polio. He contracted the disease through his frequent visits with the poor, something that he had never mentioned to his family. He died a month later at age 24. Thousands gathered at his funeral. While his father expected a large number of people at the funeral, he was surprised to see the many poor and needy present. The poor were surprised to learn that this gentle, humble, and loving man was such a well-known member of society.

Blessed Pier is an important model of faith for all of us as we continue to discern our vocations. As a layman in the Church, he lived out the radical call of his baptism through the deep love that he held for each human being he met. Pier approached his entire life, whether playing sports, attending the opera, or caring for the poor, as a gift from God.

Every one of you knows that the foundation of our religion is charity. Without it all our religion would crumble, because we would not really be Catholic as long as we did not carry out or rather shape our whole lives by the two commandments in which the essence of the Catholic faith lies: to love God with all our strength and to love our neighbor as ourselves. —Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati

Blessed Franz Jägerstätter

- ◆ 1907-1943; Austria
- ◆ Feast Day: May 21



Franz Jägerstätter was born in Austria on May 20, 1907 into a poor but loving family. Franz focused his life on being a good husband and father to his three daughters. He was not interested in politics, yet he couldn't remain neutral when Hitler's armies entered Austria in 1938. At the time, many Catholics in Austria supported Hitler, believing he would wipe out communism. Franz felt uncomfortable about followers of Jesus using machine guns and bombs, and he wondered whether obedience to Hitler was compatible with obedience to God.

One night Franz had a dream of a beautiful train. The conductor shouted, "All aboard," and people rushed to obey the conductor by getting on the train. Then Franz heard a voice in the dream warning him not to board the train. The dream instantly changed to a vision of people suffering and dying. He woke up terrified, realizing the dream was about the war that the Nazis were

waging and the suffering and death it would cause. When Franz was required to report for military duty, he refused to join the army. His appeal to work in a hospital was not accepted, and he was soon arrested for refusing to fight.

Franz's family and friends pleaded with him, "Join the army for the sake of your wife and children." Yet Franz knew that he could not disobey his conscience, even for his wife and daughters. He asked: "Is an action any better because one is married and has children? Is it better or worse because thousands of other Catholics are doing the same?" He hoped his decision not to fight would encourage others to resist war. He pleaded to others to follow his example: "I would like to call out to everyone who is riding in this train: Jump out before this train reaches its destination, even if it costs you your life."

Toward the end of his life, Franz echoed the words of Jesus saying, "Let us love our enemies, bless those who curse us, pray for those who persecute us...happy are those who live and die in God's love." On August 9, 1943, Franz was executed by guillotine for refusing to fight in Hitler's army.

There have always been heroes and martyrs who gave their lives for Christ and their faith. If we hope to reach our goal someday, then we, too, must become heroes of the faith. —Blessed Franz Jägerstätter



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

St. 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. Pope Francis canonized Oscar Romero on October 14, 2018.

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. —St. Oscar Romero



St. John Paul II

- ◆ 1920-2005; Poland
- ◆ Feast Day: October 22

He took the name John Paul II and served as the Bishop of Rome for 27 years, one of the longest pontificates in Church history.

John Paul II's pontificate was marked primarily by his missionary spirit and charism of renewal for the worldwide church. John Paul II traveled more than any of his predecessors visiting 125 countries and ministering to large crowds of pilgrims wherever he went. With a particular love for young people, he instituted and led nineteen World Youth Days across the globe. He promoted spiritual rebirth in the Church by naming the Year of Redemption, the Marian Year, and the Year of the Eucharist and sought to offer the church models of modern piety by beatifying 1,338 individuals and canonizing 482 saints. John Paul II published an extensive collection of Encyclicals, Exhortations, Apostolic Letters, and Apostolic Constitutions along with five full length books.

On April 2, 2005, in the Octave of Easter, John Paul II died leaving a legacy of hope and renewal in the church. On April 28, 2005, his successor, Benedict XVI, waived the five-year waiting period before opening the cause for canonization. Pope Francis canonized Saint John Paul II on April 27, 2014.

Karol Jozef Wojtyla was born in 1920 in a small Polish town 50 kilometers from Krakow. After graduating high school, Karol pursued his love of theatre, enrolling in Jagiellonian University in Krakow and in a school for drama. The drama school was closed a year later by Nazi forces and Karol made his living in a chemical factory.

In 1942, Karol began studying for the priesthood and in 1946, at age 26, was ordained a priest by the Archbishop of Krakow. Almost immediately following his ordination, he was sent to Rome to complete a doctorate in Theology. When he returned to Poland, he studied philosophy and became a college professor and university chaplain. His work as chaplain during these years harbored his love for the youth of the church.

Karol was ordained a bishop in 1958 and made a cardinal just nine years later. On October 16, 1978 he was elected the 263rd successor to St. Peter.

Young people who are listening to me, young people who, more than anything else, want to know what you must do to gain eternal life, always say yes to God and he will fill you with his happiness. —St. John Paul II

St. Gianna Beretta Molla

- ◆ 1922-1962
- ◆ Feast Day: April 28



Gianna Beretta was one of thirteen children born into a family of great faith in Milan, Italy. At an early age, she excelled in the classroom, eventually becoming a pediatrician. During her training as a doctor, she devoted herself to serving the poor, something she felt was part of her baptismal vocation.

In 1952, she opened up a special clinic to serve the poor in Milan. On September 24, 1955, she was married to Pietro Molla, and strove to live out her vocation of medicine joyfully as a wife and mother. In addition to these vocations, Gianna loved to ski and hike in the Italian mountains.

After giving birth to three children named Pierluigi, Mariolina, and Laura, Gianna became pregnant again.

During the pregnancy, she began to feel pain throughout her body. Doctors discovered that

she had developed a benign tumor in her uterus, which had to be removed at risk to the child. She prayed for the child, and the doctor was able to save the life of the child and remove the tumor. Sadly, the pregnancy remained complicated. Two days before giving birth, Gianna, who had remained active in her medical practice and as a mother throughout the pregnancy, told the doctor, "If you must decide between me and the child, do not hesitate: choose the child - I insist on it. Save the baby." She gave birth to baby Gianna Emanuela on April 21, 1962. The mother remained in critical condition, though, and one week after the birth of her baby, despite the best efforts of doctors to save her, Gianna died, praying, "Jesus, I love you. Jesus, I love you."

Gianna is a model for all Christians, particularly those who are called to serve the Church as laity. In her position as a doctor, a wife, and a mother, she shared the life of Christ with each person that she met in a spirit of great joy. Eventually, her own vocation of self-gift was fulfilled in offering her own life so that her child might live. In this action, Gianna became an image of Christ for the entire world.

Jesus, I love you. Jesus, I love you. —St. Gianna Beretta Molla

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