

SPIRIT *of* TRUTH



Saint Cards

List of Saints

St. Margaret Mary Alacoque	1
St. Catherine of Alexandria	2
St. Thomas Aquinas.....	3
St. Jeanne D'Arc	4
St. Clare of Assisi	5
St. Francis of Assisi	6
St. Augustine.....	7
St. Teresa of Ávila	8
Bl. Chiara Luce Badano.....	9
St. Bernadette	10
St. Teresa of Calcutta	11
Pope St. John XXIII	12
St. John Chrysostom.....	13
St. Peter Claver	14
Servant of God Dorothy Day.....	15
St. Juan Diego.....	16
St. Katharine Drexel	17
St. Dominic	18
St. Josemaría Escrivá.....	19
St. Faustina	20
Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati	21
St. Maria Goretti	22

Bl. Miguel Pro Juárez	23
St. Maximilian Kolbe	24
St. Thérèse of Lisieux	25
St. Ignatius of Loyola	26
Mary, Mother of Mercy	27
St. Paul Miki	28
St. Gianna Beretta Molla	29
St. Monica	30
St. Thomas More	31
St. Peter Nolasco	32
St. Paul	33
St. Vincent de Paul	34
St. Patrick	35
Pope St. John Paul II	36
St. Peter	37
St. Martin de Porres	38
St. Catherine of Siena	39
St. Stephen	40
St. Kateri Tekakwitha	41
St. Jean-Marie Vianney	42
St. Francis Xavier	43

St. Margaret Mary Alacoque



1647-1690

Feast Day:
October 16

Margaret was born to a poor family in the Burgundy region of France. She developed a special devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, especially while she suffered a long illness. She was so sick that she could not get out of bed for years. One day she promised the Blessed Virgin Mary that she would enter religious life if she could be cured. Immediately, her health was restored. In thanks, Margaret took Mary as part of her first name. Margaret entered the convent at the age of 23.

Margaret reported that Jesus several times, and revealed to her devotions to His Sacred Heart. He said to her, “My *divine Heart* is so *inflamed with love for mankind ... that it can no longer contain within itself the flames of its burning charity and must spread them abroad by your means.*” Sister Margaret Mary described Jesus’ heart as burning and encased by a crown of thorns. The flames were a sign of Jesus’ love for humanity, and the crown of thorns was a symbol of our rejection of Him. Jesus also told Margaret that He wants people to receive the Eucharist on the first Friday of each month, spend an hour in Eucharistic adoration on Thursdays, and celebrate the Feast of the Sacred Heart.

At first, only Margaret’s superior believed that Margaret had really seen and heard Jesus. But Margaret persisted, and eventually she was able to begin celebration of the Feast of the Sacred Heart in her convent. Later in a chapel was built nearby in honor of the Sacred Heart. Margaret died two years later. Her last words were, “I need nothing but God, and to lose myself in the heart of Jesus.” Pope Pius IX officially added the Feast of the Sacred Heart to the Church calendar in 1856.

St. Catherine of Alexandria



c. 287–c. 305

Feast Day:

November 25

Catherine was born in the year 287 in Alexandria, Egypt. When she was young, she read and studied as much as she could. She had a vision of Jesus and Mary, and so became a Christian. This was brave because at that time being a Christian was illegal. The penalty was often torture and death!

But Catherine had courage. Since she was the governor's daughter, she could talk to the Roman emperor, Maxentius. She urged the emperor to stop persecuting Christians. The emperor brought 50 people to debate with Catherine. But Catherine was an eloquent speaker. She not only won the debate, but even won more than 200 converts to the Faith, including members of Maxentius's own family. The emperor was furious. He had the new Christians put to death, and threw Catherine in jail.

Even in prison, St. Catherine gave every moment to Christ. Many people came to visit her, including the emperor's wife. Many of these people became Christians after their meetings with Catherine. The emperor had them all killed. When the emperor saw that torture and imprisonment did not stop Catherine from speaking the truth about Jesus Christ, he tried something new. He offered to marry her if she would deny the Catholic Faith. She refused. Catherine told him, "I have become a bride of Christ." So the emperor sentenced Catherine to death. She was 18 years old.

St. Catherine of Alexandria is a great example of courage. She is the patron saint of philosophers, preachers, and young female students.

© SOPHIA INSTITUTE FOR TEACHERS

St. Thomas Aquinas



1225–1274

Feast Day:
January 28

St. Thomas Aquinas was born in Italy around the year 1224. His father was a count and he had three older brothers and several sisters. When he was nineteen years old he joined the Dominicans, but his family disapproved. So when Thomas was on the road, his brothers came with a troop of soldiers to kidnap him! They imprisoned him in a castle for two years. Thomas studied theology and memorized large sections of the bible until his family let him go.

Then Thomas studied at the University of Paris. He was smart, but never showed off. The other students nicknamed him the “Dumb Ox,” because he was big and always quiet and humble. One of his classmates, thinking that Thomas was too slow to understand, offered to explain the day’s lesson to him. Thomas gratefully accepted his help. Then his classmate became confused over a difficult part in the lesson. Thomas had to explain the lesson to his classmate because he had understood it all along!

Thomas wrote many books, the most famous being the *Summa theologia*, which explains a large part of the Catholic faith. Thomas also loved Jesus in the Eucharist very much. He wrote about the Eucharist with great prayer. After he had finished, Jesus appeared to him in a vision and told him, “You have written well of the sacrament of my Body.” During his vision, Thomas’ body levitated, floating off the ground. Thomas also wrote many beautiful Eucharistic hymns. We still sing two hymns that he wrote, “O salutaris” and “Tantum Ergo,” during Benediction.

Near the end of his life, Thomas Aquinas had many mystical visions. These visions filled him with awe and wonder about the mystery of God. He stopped writing because he knew that nothing he wrote could ever compare to God.

Thomas died at about 50 years of age. He is the patron saint of Catholic schools, colleges, and universities.

St. Jeanne D'Arc



1412-1431

Feast Day:

May 30

Jeanne D'Arc was born in a small French village. When Jeanne was a teenager, angels and saints appeared to her. The angels and saints told Jeanne to help the king of France in the war against England.

Jeanne led her troops to victory. The French were on their way to winning the war with Jeanne's help.

Some French people were mad about this. Even though they were French, they wanted England to win. They arrested Jeanne and put her in jail. They threw her in an iron cage. They put chains on her neck, hands, and feet.

At her trial, they asked Jeanne tricky questions to try to confuse her. They tried to get Jeanne to say she was a witch, and that her visions of saints were bad.

Even though Jeanne had helped him, the French king did nothing to help her.

Jeanne was convicted of witchcraft and heresy (speaking against the Church) and burned alive. She was 19 years old.

Thirty years later, a Church court said that her trial had been unfair. Jeanne was declared innocent of all crimes.

© SOPHIA INSTITUTE FOR TEACHERS

St. Clare of Assisi



1194-1253

Feast Day:
August 11

Clare was the oldest daughter of a wealthy Italian nobleman. When she was 18, she heard St. Francis of Assisi preach. She asked Francis to help her live according to the Gospel. A few weeks later on Palm Sunday, she left her home and met Francis at a chapel. Her hair was cut short and she put on a plain robe; she gave her possessions to the poor. She lived at a Benedictine convent until a home was built for her and her followers next to San Damiano church, near Assisi.

Clare and her followers called themselves the Order of Poor Ladies of San Damiano. They wore plain robes and no shoes. They lived primarily on alms which Francis' friars begged for, and they prayed, especially for Francis and his friars. Many women joined Clare. Francis directed the women for four years, and then Clare was elected abbess. She wrote a Rule of Life that the sisters be committed to joyous poverty.

So many women joined the order that they began communities throughout Italy. Clare also encouraged and advised Francis in his work of preaching the Gospel. When Francis grew very ill, Clare built a hut for him in an olive grove near his monastery, where he rested and prayed until he died.

On August 9th, 1253, Clare's rule was approved by Pope Innocent IV. Two days later, surrounded by many of her followers, Clare died after listening to one of Francis' friars read the Passion of Christ from the Gospel of St. John.

© SOPHIA INSTITUTE FOR TEACHERS

St. Francis of Assisi



1181-1226

Feast Day:
October 4

Francis was born in 1181 into a rich Italian family. He had an easy life with lots of friends and was a favorite among the noble young men of Italy.

Francis wished to become a knight and win glory. On his way to battle, he received a vision from God telling him to go home and wait for a different kind of knighthood. He listened. One day, when he was praying in a chapel, Christ spoke to Francis from the crucifix. Jesus said, “Francis, repair my church.” Francis did exactly what Jesus said. He fixed the chapel’s walls and roof. But Jesus wanted Francis to fix more than just the physical walls of the Church. He had plans for Francis to build up His Church throughout the world.

Francis followed Christ’s commands. Many men joined Francis. They also gave away their possessions. They begged when they needed food. They gave whatever they did not need to the poor and the sick. This was the knighthood Francis had been looking for: a knighthood in service of Christ and of others.

Francis set out to Egypt to try to make peace with the Sultan who was fighting Christians in the Crusades. The Sultan was impressed by Francis, but the war continued, so Francis returned to Italy.

While praying one evening, Francis received the stigmata (wounds like the ones Jesus received on the Cross). He died a few years later. Religious men all over the world today continue to live according to the rules of St. Francis. They are known as Franciscans.

St. Augustine



354-430

Feast Day:
August 28

Augustine was born on the northern coast of Africa. His mother was St. Monica. She spent her life sharing Jesus with her family.

Augustine was very bright. His parents sent him to the best schools. He read great books. He became a popular speaker and teacher.

But Augustine was living a wicked life. His mother and the Bishop of Milan, St. Ambrose, kept trying to help Augustine see that God's mercy had no limits. Finally Augustine was converted to Christianity. He became a priest. Later he was made Bishop of Hippo.

Augustine became one of the most important Christian writers ever. He wrote about how all of us want to be with God. He wrote about love. He said the Church should always show mercy. He wrote about how we need God's grace.

During Augustine's life, the city of Rome was destroyed. Many people were scared. But Augustine helped people see that Christians' true home was Heaven.

Augustine died when he was 75. He wrote hundreds of sermons and many important books. He gave hope to countless people. He is a Doctor of the Church. This is a very special title that means his writings helped form Catholic doctrine.

© SOPHIA INSTITUTE FOR TEACHERS

St. Teresa of Ávila



1515-1582

Feast Day:
October 15

Teresa was born in a part of Spain called Ávila. When she was younger, she enjoyed being with friends and having fun. She wanted to love Jesus, but she worried she wasn't good enough.

Teresa's father sent her to a convent (a place where nuns live). But the convent was a bad place. The sisters there did not take their religious vows seriously.

Teresa prayed for almost 20 years. She felt like Jesus wasn't answering her. She almost gave up. But a priest encouraged her to keep trying. Then she finally started to feel like God was listening. When she prayed, she would start to cry. She would feel like she couldn't hear, see, smell, or even touch anything. Sometimes her body would even levitate (rise up off the ground). She didn't like it when these things happened to her where people could see.

But a lot of people were interested in what she had learned from God about praying. She wrote books about what she had learned. Teresa decided to start a new convent. Her convent would be focused on prayer and living simply. A lot of young ladies joined.

Long after she died, Pope Paul VI named her a Doctor of the Church. This is a very special title that means her writings helped form Catholic doctrine.

© SOPHIA INSTITUTE FOR TEACHERS

Bl. Chiara Luce Badano



1971–1990

Feast Day:
October 29

Chiara was born in a small Italian village. In kindergarten, she started saving her money so she could give it to people who were going to help people in Africa. She gave her best toys to poor children. At school, she gave her snacks to poor classmates.

When Chiara was nine, she joined a Catholic group that brought Christians around the world together. She also enjoyed tennis, hiking, swimming, singing, dancing. School was hard for Chiara, but she kept trying. When Chiara was 16, she went on a retreat in Rome. She became even more devoted to Jesus.

One day she felt pain her shoulder while she was playing tennis. The pain continued and doctors told her she had cancer in her bones. Cancer is a deadly and painful disease that doctors cannot always fix.

Chiara offered her pain to Jesus. She prayed, “It’s for you, Jesus; if you want it, I want it too.” She cheered other patients, her doctor, parents, and friends with her joyfulness. She gave all her money to charity. As she grew more sick, she told her mother not to be sad for her. She died in October 1990. She was 18 years old.

© SOPHIA INSTITUTE FOR TEACHERS

St. Bernadette



1844–1879

Feast Day:

April 16

St. Bernadette was the oldest of nine children born to a poor family in Lourdes, France. Bernadette was a sickly child and suffered many ailments throughout her life. When she was 14, Bernadette was collecting firewood when she heard the sound of rushing wind. When she looked around, she saw a rose floating in a grotto (a small cave). Then she saw a beautiful woman dressed in white with a blue sash. The woman asked Bernadette to come to the grotto every day for the next two weeks. Bernadette's parents did not believe her when she told them what she had seen. Many townspeople accused Bernadette of making the whole thing up

In all, Bernadette saw the apparition (or supernatural vision) 18 times. The woman instructed Bernadette to pray for sinners, do penance, and to have a chapel built on the spot of the visions. The woman also led Bernadette to discover a spring of water that had not been there before. Bernadette decided to ask the woman who she was. The woman replied "*Je suis L'Immaculate Conception*," French for "I am the Immaculate Conception." Immaculate Conception is a title of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

When she was old enough, Bernadette became a nun. She struggled with numerous illnesses. But in faithfulness to Jesus' command to bear wrongs patiently, as she did when she was a child, Bernadette offered all of her sufferings as penance for the sins of others. She died when she was 35. St. Bernadette was canonized by Pope Pius XI on December 8, 1933, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. To this day, water still flows from the miraculous spring at Lourdes. Every year, 5 million people come from all over the world to drink and bathe in its healing waters.

St. Teresa of Calcutta



1910-1997

Feast Day:
September 5

Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu was born in Yugoslavia. Her family was devoutly Catholic. She went to a convent (a place where nuns live) in Ireland when she was 18. There she received the name Teresa. She was quiet and shy. Very few people there understood her language.

Her community sent her to India. There she was a school teacher for many years. She learned to speak the local languages.

One day in 1946, Mother Teresa was on a train. On that train she received a call to serve “the poorest of the poor.” She started her own religious community to do this work.

Mother Teresa helped people throughout India. Even if they were extremely poor, or had very serious diseases, Mother Teresa showed them love. She helped people no one else would help.

Pope Paul VI and St. Pope John Paul II praised her work.

Women joined her communities in over 100 countries. She continued to help throughout the world even as her health got worse. She died in 1997.

© SOPHIA INSTITUTE FOR TEACHERS

Pope St. John XXIII



1881–1963

Feast Day:

October 11

Angelo Roncalli was born to a large Italian farming family. He completed his seminary studies and became a priest when he was 23. Fr. Angelo was assigned to work of secretary to his bishop.

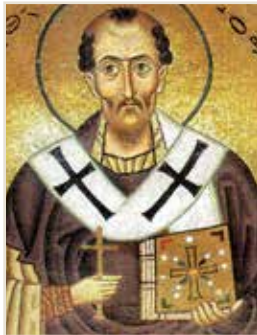
During World War I, Fr. Angelo was drafted to serve as a sergeant, stretcher-bearer, and chaplain. After the war, the Pope appointed him to help spread the Faith in Italy. The next Pope had Fr. Angelo consecrated a bishop and sent him to work in dioceses in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Bishop Angelo helped thousands of Jewish and European refugees find safety.

When World War II began, Bishop Angelo was sent as Apostolic Nuncio (a person in charge of a diplomatic mission) to France. He helped save thousands of refugees, especially Jews, from the Holocaust. After the war, he was made a Cardinal. Shortly afterwards, he was elected Pope, and he took the name John.

Pope John XXIII visited children in hospitals as well as prisoners and young people in reformatory school. He wrote about marriage and divorce, illness and age. He wrote that each person is valuable and has the right to live, and that every person has the duty to care for other people. On October 11, 1962, he began the Ecumenical Council, Vatican II, in order to preserve, teach, and spread the truth of our Catholic Faith in our current age. He died of stomach cancer a few months later.

© SOPHIA INSTITUTE FOR TEACHERS

St. John Chrysostom



347 - 407

Feast Day:
September 13

John Chrysostom was born in Antioch, Turkey, around the time that the Roman Empire was split into East and West. He converted to Christianity as a young man, and he was baptized when he was 22. For several years he lived in the mountains as a hermit, spending his days praying and praising God in solitude. When he was 37, he returned to Antioch and became a deacon and then a priest. He impressed many people with his powerful and eloquent preaching. He earned the nickname “Chrysostom” which means golden-mouthed. When he was 53, St. John was elected patriarch, or archbishop of Constantinople.

John immediately donated to the poor, sent out missionaries, and ended the extravagant luxury of church leaders in his area. He advised political leaders to end their extravagant luxury as well. His sermons were often critical of the rich and powerful. His preaching and his simple lifestyle made him many enemies. The empress and the bishop of Alexandria charged St. John with heresy and misdeeds. John was exiled (or sent away with orders never to return).

The Pope supported John. He sent five bishops to the Emperor to demand he free John from exile, but the Emperor threw the bishops in prison and exiled John even farther away, to a city on the very edge of the empire. The saint died of exhaustion in 407.

St. John Chrysostom is a Doctor of the Church. The most celebrated Divine Liturgy in the Byzantine Rite, the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, is attributed to him. The Byzantine Rite liturgy looks and sounds different from Holy Mass in a Latin rite, but it is still completely Catholic.

© SOPHIA INSTITUTE FOR TEACHERS

St. Peter Claver



1581 -1654

Feast Day:

September 9

St. Peter Claver was born to a wealthy Catholic family near Barcelona, Spain. He entered the Society of Jesus, or the Jesuits, at the age of 20, and he resolved to spend his life serving others in the colonies of New Spain in the Americas.

Claver arrived in Cartagena, in modern day Columbia, in 1610. There, he was moved by the plight of the African slaves from West Africa. Thousands of slaves were brought into Cartagena each year, even though two popes had prohibited the slave trade by papal decree.

Once Fr. Claver was ordained, he undertook his mission to the slaves with fervor. He would board the slave ships as soon as they docked and begin ministering to those who had survived the journey. Conditions aboard the ships were dismal. The holds were crowded, dirty, smelly, and disease-infested.

After the enslaved people had been moved to holding pens, Fr. Claver would bring them medicine, food and drink, and affirm their human dignity. Peter would also catechize the slaves using pictures and interpreters. Peter is said to have baptized over 300,000 enslaved people. Fr. Claver's mission fulfilled Jesus' call to give drink to the thirsty, not only by satisfying their actual thirst, but by satisfying their thirst for God and dignity. Fr. Claver spent the final four years of his life too sick to leave his room, and he died in 1654. Pope Leo XIII canonized St. Peter Claver in 1888 and declared him the patron Saint of missionary work among African peoples.

© SOPHIA INSTITUTE FOR TEACHERS

Servant of God Dorothy Day



1897–1980

Dorothy Day was born in New York, and came of age during a time when ideas about socialism and communism were spreading to the U.S. from Europe. Day became involved in socialist movements. After a series of failed relationships, she gave birth to a daughter.

Motherhood changed Day. She decided to have her daughter baptized in the Catholic Church. She went to Mass, read religious books, and became close with a Catholic nun. Her relationship with the “Church of the poor” grew. She was baptized at age 30.

Wishing to serve the poor and outcast, Dorothy and a friend founded the Catholic Worker movement in 1933. This group focused on living justly and serving the needs of others. She described the group’s mission as: “Our rule is the Works of Mercy... It is the way of sacrifice, worship, a sense of reverence.” She published *The Catholic Worker* newspaper to speak out against unjust working conditions, advocate peace, and spread Church teachings about social justice. This newspaper is still in circulation today.

Many viewed Day as a radical. But in truth, she lived out Christ’s command to comfort the afflicted through her commitment to Catholic teaching, active concern for the poor, and work for peace and justice.

It had been love of neighbor that first drew her to the ideas of socialism. But Day came to see that love and violence were incompatible. She wrote in 1951 that love of neighbor could never justify the forced labor, torture, and murder of millions that went on in China and the Soviet Union. Like many saints who lived their early lives in sin, Day was converted to Christ by the grace of God and accomplished great works of love and mercy. She is a Servant of God, the first step in the journey towards sainthood.

© SOPHIA INSTITUTE FOR TEACHERS

St. Juan Diego



1474-1548

Feast Day:
December 9

Juan Diego was born in Mexico where he lived with his uncle. One December morning while walking to church, Juan saw the Virgin Mary standing on Tepeyac hill. The Virgin asked Juan to tell the bishop that she wanted a chapel built on the hill, as a haven for everyone who called on her help. Juan told the bishop, but the bishop asked Juan to come back another day. As Juan walked back past Tepeyac hill, Mary appeared to him and encouraged him.

When Juan returned to the bishop, the bishop asked for a sign. Mary visited Juan as he walked home, and she promised him a sign the next day. But the next day, Juan's uncle was so sick that Juan had to stay home with him. The following day, Juan hurried to church to find a priest to prepare his uncle for death. Juan did not want to stop and explain to Mary why he had not come for the promised sign, so Juan took a different route to the church. Mary appeared to Juan anyway. She told him he ought always to ask her for help. "Am I not here," she said, "I who am your mother?" Then she told Juan that his uncle was cured. She instructed Juan to climb up the barren cliff and pick roses. There Juan found many blooming roses, and Mary arranged them in the folds of his cloak. When Juan unfolded his cloak before the bishop, the roses fell to the ground. On Juan's cloak was an image of the Virgin Mary. When Juan went home, his uncle was healed. His uncle told him that Mary had also visited him and wanted Juan to tell the bishop about his miraculous cure.

The bishop agreed to build a chapel on Tepeyac hill, and Juan moved there to care for the chapel and grounds. Juan died seventeen years later. Today, St. Juan Diego's cloak (also called a mantle or *tilma*) is in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City. It is the most visited Catholic pilgrimage site in the world.

St. Katharine Drexel



1858–1955

Feast Day:
March 3

Katharine was the second child of a very wealthy family in Philadelphia. For years her family had used their money to found and support good causes, such as schools and hospitals.

Katharine wanted to give her life to helping other people. She especially wanted to help Native Americans, who lived in poverty and had no education. After her father died, Katharine and her sisters traveled to Europe. Pope St. Leo XIII received the sisters when they asked to visit him. Katharine explained to Pope Leo that she wanted to give money for missions for Native Americans. Pope Leo suggested that Katharine be a missionary herself.

Katharine entered a convent in Pittsburgh. She took the name Mother Katharine when she began a religious community, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. A few years later, she opened a school in New Mexico. She asked friars from Ohio to join her in missions for Navajos and Pueblos, which she funded. She also gave money for the printing of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* for Navajos. Catherine also worked to help African Americans. Even though she faced threats of torture and death, Mother Katharine opened Catholic schools for African Americans. She opened more than 60 schools, dedicating her life and fortune of 20 million dollars to helping others.

Mother Katharine had a heart attack in 1935, and began to grow weaker. She spent the last years of her life in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. She died in 1955.

© SOPHIA INSTITUTE FOR TEACHERS

St. Dominic



1170-1221

Feast Day:
August 8

Dominic de Guzmán was born in Spain, and studied at the University of Palencia. Even as a young man, he showed the selfless love of a Christian: he sold everything he owned to help people suffering from a famine, and even offered to sell himself to slavery to the Moors in order to ransom the freedom of others.

He was ordained a priest, and he went with his bishop to southern France to preach against the Albigensian heresy. This was a false teaching that claimed that everything we can see was created by a bad god. At the time, the most common way to disagreements was armed conflict. But Dominic knew true victory could not come from force. He recommended prayer as a weapon “instead of a sword,” and told people to be “clothed with humility instead of fine raiment.”

He put this advice into practice, choosing to live among the Albigenses, preaching the truths of the Catholic Faith whenever he had a chance. When asked what he'd do if he were cornered by his enemies, Dominic bravely answered, “I would tell them to kill me slowly and painfully, a little at a time, so that I might have a more glorious crown in Heaven.”

Dominic organized a group of followers; they established a rule of life and system of education. In 1216, the Pope recognized a new Order of Preachers which would be known as the Dominicans. They spent their lives devoted to Christ through teaching, preaching, and prayer.

Dominic traveled through Italy, Spain, France, and Hungary, preaching the truth and starting more communities of Dominicans. He founded a college in Rome where people studied medicine, law, and theology. This college still exists and is now called the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas. His preaching and his order were successful because he used the wisdom he had from studying many books and applied it to the practical knowledge that people needed to lead good lives.

St. Josemaría Escrivá



1902–1975

Feast Day:

June 26

Josemaría was born in a Spanish Catholic family. One winter day, he saw footprints of bare feet in the snow. He saw a monk walking in the snow to the church. Josemaría decided he wanted to suffer for God too and do whatever God wanted. He wanted to answer God’s call every day, so he became a priest.

Fr. Escrivá moved to Madrid, the capital of Spain. There, he got people together to help him care for poor people and sick people. When he was 26, he founded a group called Opus Dei. Opus Dei means “the work of God.” Its members work to share Jesus’ love with others. The first members were students he knew.

Opus Dei spread to many countries throughout the world. Opus Dei projects include schools, hospitals, and retreat centers.

Fr. Escrivá journeyed through Europe and Latin America speaking about God’s love. He told them they could be holy every day at school, with their families, and at work. He was devoted to Our Lady. He hung a picture of her in all his rooms. He was sitting before a picture of her when he died.

© SOPHIA INSTITUTE FOR TEACHERS

St. Faustina



1905-1938

Feast Day:

October 5

Helena Kowalska was born in Poland. When she was 7, she went to Eucharistic Adoration. There she first felt called to be a nun. She wanted to enter a convent when she finished school but her parents would not allow it. So instead Helena worked to support herself and help her parents take care of her 9 siblings.

When Helena was 19, she saw a vision of Jesus suffering. She went into a nearby church to pray and saw Jesus again; He told her to go to Warsaw. She packed and left for Warsaw the next morning. There she entered a convent, and took the name Faustina, which means “blessed one.” Her tasks were gardening and cooking for the other sisters.

When she was 25, Jesus appeared to Sr. Faustina with light streaming out of His heart. He told her to have a painting made of what she saw, with the words “Jesus, I trust in you.” Jesus told Sr. Faustina that He wanted the Sunday after Easter to be devoted to His mercy. Sr. Faustina told all this to Fr. Sopocko, her spiritual director. Fr. Sopocko helped Sr. Faustina; he asked a friend to paint Faustina’s vision.

With the Archbishop’s permission, Fr. Sopocko set the painting in a church and offered Mass devoted to Divine Mercy on the Sunday after Easter. Jesus visited Sr. Faustina to teach her a prayer called the Divine Mercy Chaplet. He asked her to spread the news of His mercy for everyone. She wrote down what Jesus said to her, so we can read His words in her diaries. Sr. Faustina grew very sick, and she was sent to a convent near her family’s home. Jesus visited her there many times until she died at the age of 33.

Pope St. John Paul II kept a special devotion to St. Faustina and the Divine Mercy. He made the Sunday after Easter an official feast of the Church – Divine Mercy Sunday.

Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati



1901-1925

Feast Day:

July 4

Pier was born to a wealthy family in Turin, Italy. His friends noticed that although he was an average student in school, he was exceptional in his devotion to Christ. He went to Mass and received Communion daily. He spent many nights in Eucharistic adoration. He loved to go hiking and mountain climbing trips with his friends, and would lead them in song and prayer throughout the day.

Pier joined the St. Vincent de Paul Society when he was 17. He took care of sick people, orphans, and disabled veterans returning from World War I. He wanted to be a mining engineer so that he could serve Christ among the miners. He spent his free time in college helping the poor. When he was 18, he joined a student organization for social reform. He helped in starting a newspaper on the conditions, rights, and duties of workers. He spent summer vacations in Turin to serve the poor, giving them everything he had and doing all he could to help them.

When he was 20, he helped to organize the first convention of Pax Romana, an association for uniting Catholic students from around the world to work together for peace. Just before he was to graduate, he fell sick with polio. He wrote a note to a friend asking that his medicine be given to a poor man who needed it. He died at age 24. At his funeral, his parents were amazed to see huge crowds of the poor people and learn that their son had helped them all.

© SOPHIA INSTITUTE FOR TEACHERS

St. Maria Goretti



1890-1902

Feast Day:

July 6

Maria Goretti was born and lived in Italy. Her parents were so poor that they had to live in a house with another family and work on other people's farms. The family prayed together and loved each other deeply. Maria's father died when she was nine. Her mother took her father's place working on the farm, and Maria took her mother's place working in the home and caring for her youngest sister.

When Maria was 11, one of the sons of the other family, Alessando, tried to rape Maria. Maria, even as she feared for her own life, tried to tell Alessando he was committing a mortal sin. She tried to warn him crying out as she struggled, "It is a sin. You would go to hell for it!" Alessando then stabbed Maria. Maria was found by her mother and rushed to the hospital, but she was too deeply injured for the doctors to heal her.

As she was dying, Maria spoke with her mother. Maria said that that she forgave Alessando and wanted him to be in Heaven with her. Then she died. Alessando was not sorry for what he did until Maria appeared to him in a dream while he was in prison for her murder. She gave him lilies that felt hot in his hands. The next morning Alessando repented and confessed his sin. He spent almost 30 years in prison for his crime. When he was released from prison, he went immediately to Maria's mother and begged her forgiveness, and she forgave him. Alessando lived at a Capuchin monastery for the rest of his life, praying often for Maria's intercession as his "protector."

Like Jesus, Maria was an innocent person who died for the sins of her attacker. She beautifully responded to Jesus' call to forgive. She was canonized forty-eight years after her death by Pope Pius XII. Her mother, some of her siblings, and Alessando were there.

© SOPHIA INSTITUTE FOR TEACHERS

Bl. Miguel Pro Juárez



1891-1927

Feast Day:

November 23

Miguel was born in Guadeloupe, Mexico. His family was devoutly Catholic. Miguel was called to become a priest.

While he was preparing, the government in Mexico started making bad laws. It became illegal to be Catholic. Churches had to close. Many priests were killed. Miguel and his classmates escaped. He was made a priest in 1925.

Even though it was dangerous, Fr. Pro wanted to return to Mexico. He got permission to go. He began helping people in secret. He would wear disguises to stay safe. Sometimes he would dress as a beggar. Other times he dressed as a businessman. He even dressed as a policeman to give Holy Communion to people in prison.

Someone told the police what Fr. Pro was doing. He was arrested. The government lied and said Fr. Pro had tried to kill the president of Mexico. Even though he was innocent, Fr. Pro was sentenced to death. He forgave his executioners, and prayed out loud for God to forgive them. His last words were “Viva Cristo Rey,” which means “Praise Christ the King!”

© SOPHIA INSTITUTE FOR TEACHERS

St. Maximilian Kolbe



1894-1941

Feast Day:
August 14

Raymund Kolbe was born in Poland. He entered a Franciscan monastery when he was 16. There he received the name Maximilian. He was ordained a priest in 1919. He taught men who were preparing to be priests, and opened a religious community in Poland. He traveled to Japan and to India and opened communities there too.

When he returned to Poland, the Nazis had invaded the country. The Nazis were rounding up Jews and putting them in death camps. Fr. Kolbe organized a shelter for thousands of Polish people who had nowhere to go. In 1941, the Nazis raided the shelter. They took Fr. Kolbe and his companions to a death camp. Fr. Kolbe wrote a letter to his mother, telling her not to worry about him.

Life in the prison was very hard for Fr. Kolbe, but he always put the other prisoner's needs ahead of his own. The guards beat and tortured him. But he wouldn't ask for medical help until all his fellow prisoners had been treated. Though he was suffering, Fr. Kolbe helped the other prisoners. He would ask each one, "I am a Catholic priest. Can I do anything for you?" He heard their confessions. He told them about God's love.

One day a prisoner escaped. The guards said that 10 prisoners would be starved to death as a punishment. The guards choose 10 men. One of the men cried out in grief for his wife and children. Fr. Kolbe stepped forward and volunteered to take the man's place. Fr. Kolbe was put in a cell with the other 9 men. He prayed and read the Psalms with them. After two weeks of hunger and thirst, Fr. Kolbe was still alive. The Nazis injected poison into Fr. Kolbe's arm and he died.

The man Fr. Kolbe saved survived the war.

St. Thérèse of Lisieux



1873-1897

Feast Day:
October 1

Thérèse Martin was born in Alençon, France. Her mother died when she was only 4. She was a sensitive little girl. She would cry if people spoke to her harshly. Then she would feel even worse because she had cried.

After two of her sisters became nuns, Thérèse also received a call to religious life. She was too young to join the convent, but she did not give up. She even asked the Pope for special permission to enter the convent when she was in Rome. Thérèse spent her days in prayer, away from other people and the world.

Even as she grew older, Thérèse knew that Jesus wanted the little ones to come to Him. Jesus Himself had become a child! So Thérèse wanted to stay little. Thérèse also wanted to be holy. She wrote: “In spite of my littleness, I can aim at being a saint.” St. Thérèse is known for her idea of the “Little Way.” The Little Way means seeking to show God’s love in ordinary, everyday things.

In 1896 Thérèse became sick. She died less than a year later. She was only 24. St. Thérèse was little, but her writings and ideas about God’s love were big. Pope John Paul II named her a Doctor of the Church.

© SOPHIA INSTITUTE FOR TEACHERS

St. Ignatius of Loyola



1491-1556

Feast Day:
July 31

Ignatius was the youngest of 13 children of a wealthy Spanish family. He served as a courtier (a helper to the King) and a soldier. He hoped to win fame and popularity. When he was 30, a cannonball injured his legs. He was carried to the hospital in Loyola. During his recovery, Ignatius read books about the life of Jesus. He read about prayer and the lives of the Saints. He was very inspired by the simplicity of the life of St. Francis of Assisi.

When Ignatius recovered, he spent time in a monastery devoted to prayer. He left his sword and armor in a chapel dedicated to Mary. He gave all his clothes to the poor and wore a sackcloth robe.

While a university student in Paris, Ignatius and 6 other students founded the Society of Jesus, or the Jesuit religious order. These 7 men took vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience to the pope, and hoped to go evangelize the Holy Land. Ignatius and his companions were ordained priests. Ignatius wrote a Rule of Life for his community to live by and went to Rome to offer the services of the Society of Jesus to the Pope. The Pope welcomed them and wanted to send them out as missionaries. Ignatius's companions were sent to around the world to Portugal, India, Japan, Ireland, Germany, and many other places to evangelize. Ignatius remained in Rome and directed all these men by writing letters to them. The missionaries founded schools, colleges, and seminaries as well as gathered more men into their order.

Inspired by his earlier readings about Jesus and prayer, Ignatius wrote the *Spiritual Exercises*. These exercises help people to pray. The missionaries had founded 100 religious houses, and the order had 1,000 members when Ignatius died.

Mary, Mother of Mercy



c.15 B.C.-48 A.D.

Feast Day:

Saturday
before the
fourth Sunday
in July

When Adam and Eve sinned and broke the original communion between heaven and earth, God did not abandon mankind. He sent prophets to tell people a savior was coming. Then He created a baby girl, the daughter of Anne and Joachim. From the very beginning of her life, the moment of her conception, God gave this girl the gift of being pure of all sin.

When Mary was a young woman, God sent an angel to her. The angel called Mary “Full of Grace”, for no part of her soul was damaged by sin. The angel asked her to be the Mother of Jesus, so that God could come and give His abundant mercy to everyone. Mary submitted herself fully to God’s will and became the mother of His Son.

With Jesus growing in her womb, she visited her cousin Elizabeth. Mary told her that God had fulfilled His promise to show His mercy by sending a savior. Mary gave birth to Jesus, nursed Him and bathed Him, played with Him and taught Him. For 30 years, Jesus stayed with her and His foster father Joseph.

Then Jesus began His mission. At Mary’s request, Jesus performed His first public miracle for guests at a wedding. When Jesus was dying on the Cross, Mary stayed with him. Jesus entrusted his mother to the care of His apostle John. Mary stayed with John until God took her up to Heaven.

In Heaven, Mary prays constantly to God for everyone who asks for her help, and she asks Him to show His mercy. That is why we pray to her, “Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death.” God provides us with a Savior in His Son, and He provides us with a Mother, an example, and an intercessor in Mary. Jesus died so that everyone may be a child of God the Father, and Jesus entrusts every person to Mary our Mother.

St. Paul Miki



1562-1597

Feast Day:
January 6

St. Paul Miki was born 1562 and was the son of a Japanese military leader. His family converted to Christianity when he was a child and he studied under the Jesuit missionaries in Japan. He joined the Society of Jesus in 1580.

At that time in Japan, there were many political and religious tensions between the Japanese and the Christians that came from Spain and Portugal. The Japanese lord, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, ordered the arrest of 26 Christians at Kyoto. Paul Miki had just completed his eleven year training as a novice, and he was one of the 26 Christians arrested. The arrested Christians had their ears cut off as a sign of disrespect, and they were paraded through the streets of Kyoto. Paul Miki stood out among the crowd. They recognized him as the son of a nobleman and that he could even have been a Samurai if he wasn't a Christian. Many in the crowd felt pity for the Christians and some were even converted by their example.

The 26 Christians were then marched over 600 miles from Kyoto to Nagasaki. They were asked to give up their Faith to save their lives. They refused. When they reached Nagasaki, they were crucified like Jesus was. Paul Miki gave a final sermon from his cross. He declared that he was Japanese born and that he was being crucified because he was a Christian. Then he forgave his enemies.

The 26 Christians then sang the Canticle of Zachariah from their crosses and the executioners waited for them to finish. Then they were put to death by the lance. The eyewitnesses in the crowd were impressed by the faith, patience, strength, and peace in which the martyrs met their death.

For the next couple hundred years, Christianity was forbidden and persecuted in Japan. When missionaries returned to Japan, at first they could not find any trace of Christianity. But to their complete surprise, they found thousands of Christians around Nagasaki, where the 26 martyrs had died, who had secretly kept the Faith.

St. Gianna Beretta Molla



1922–1962

Feast Day:

April 28

Gianna was born into a Catholic Italian family. She had twelve siblings. When she was 20, she went to a city in Italy called Milan so that she could go to school to become a doctor. When she graduated, she opened an office. Her patients were children.

When Gianna was 33 she got married. She and her husband had four children. While Gianna was pregnant with their fourth child, Gianna grew very sick. Gianna had a tumor growing in her womb near her unborn daughter. A tumor is a growth of unhealthy cells in the body. Some tumors, like Gianna's, can be very serious. The tumor had to be removed.

Gianna had to decide what to do. Some of the ways the doctors could treat her would have killed her baby. Gianna did not want that to happen. She asked her doctors to take out the tumor, but to protect her baby.

The doctors took out the tumor, but Gianna was still sick. She knew that her doctors might have to decide between saving her, or saving her baby. She told her family she wanted her doctors to save her baby if they had to choose. Finally her little girl was born. Gianna lived for one more week and then she died. She was 39 years old.

© SOPHIA INSTITUTE FOR TEACHERS

St. Monica



331–387

Feast Day:
August 27

Monica was born in Northern Africa. Her parents gave her in marriage to a pagan man, Patricius. Monica loved Patricius even though he sometimes said mean things to her and lost his temper. Patricius and Monica had three children.

Monica was Christian, and she wanted her husband and children to be Christian too. She asked God to help her husband resist sin. She was patient and loving. After they had been married almost 20 years, her husband converted to Christianity and was baptized. He died one year later.

Monica's son Augustine went away to school. He started living a wicked life. She prayed for her son to believe in Jesus and be good. When Augustine went to Italy, Monica followed him. She introduced him to the bishop. They prayed for Augustine and taught him more about Jesus.

Monica learned to pray more simply. She gave what she had to the poor. She was grateful to God when Augustine converted to Christianity. Monica and Augustine were both happy. Monica told her son, "There was indeed one thing for which I wished ... and that was that I might see you a Catholic Christian before I died."

© SOPHIA INSTITUTE FOR TEACHERS

St. Thomas More



1478-1535

Feast Day:
June 22

Thomas More was born in London. He went to good schools, and impressed his teachers. One of his teachers said he spoke Latin as easily as he spoke English!

More became a successful lawyer. He was also a great speaker and a great writer. He served in Parliament, which makes laws for England. Later he became a helper to the King of England, King Henry VIII.

The king wanted to divorce his wife. He tried to use the Bible to say divorce was okay. More knew that the king was wrong. The king decided to break England away from the Catholic Church and start his own church. The king told More he had to stop being Catholic and be loyal to him. Instead, More said no, and the king put More in jail. He took away More's property. The king even took More's writing materials so he wouldn't be able to send letters to his family. Finally, the king had More beheaded.

More's last words were: "I die the good King's servant, but God's first."

© SOPHIA INSTITUTE FOR TEACHERS

St. Peter Nolasco



1189-1256

Feast Day:
January 28

Little is known of St. Peter Nolasco's life. He was probably from Languedoc, France and participated in the crusade against the Albigensian heresy, which taught that Jesus was only a spirit and did not have a physical body because the material world was evil.

After the defeat of the heresy, Nolasco was appointed the private tutor of King James I of Aragon and lived in Barcelona, Spain. He became friends with Raymond of Penafort and together they founded the Order of Mercedarians.

At this time in history, Muslim forces known as Moors occupied parts of southern France, Spain, Sicily, and North Africa. Christians who lived near the borders of Muslim territories were in constant danger of raid by the Moor armies. Many were taken prisoner to be ransomed or sold as slaves. Nolasco and Raymond of Penafort took Christ's command to visit the imprisoned to heart. They founded the Mercedarian religious order, under the patronage of the Blessed Mother, for its members to be offered as ransom for Christian captives.

To this day, the members of the order are devoted to offering their lives for the lives of other Christians. Peter himself was offered as ransom on multiple occasions. It is believed that on one trip to Moorish prisons in southern Spain, he won the release of more than four hundred Christians who were held prisoner there.

Peter Nolasco was canonized by Pope Urban VIII in 1628.

© SOPHIA INSTITUTE FOR TEACHERS

St. Paul



Died AD 67

Feast Day:
June 29

Paul was a Jew and a Roman citizen who lived around the time of Jesus.

For years, Paul made trouble for Christians. He thought Christianity was false. He traveled to Damascus, a city in Syria, to go after Christians. On his way a light shone from heaven. Paul fell to the ground.

A voice said: “Why do you persecute me?”

Paul asked, “Who are you?”

The voice answered, “I am Jesus.”

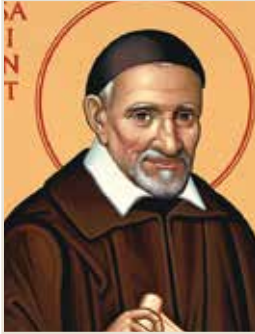
Then Paul believed that Jesus is God. When Paul stood up, he could not see. God sent Ananias, a Christian man, to Paul. Ananias miraculously healed Paul’s eyes and baptized him.

Right away, Paul preached the Gospel to everyone. He worked miracles and started Christian churches in many cities. Some Romans who hated Christianity ordered Paul to be beaten and put in jail. An earthquake shook the prison doors open. But Paul did not try to escape. Instead he stayed and preached to the guard. He baptized the guard and his family.

Paul traveled to many different parts of the world. Everywhere he went, he preached the Gospel. When returned to Rome, he was accused and out in jail again. The Roman emperor had Paul beheaded.

Paul wrote fourteen letters to the people he converted to Christianity. These letters are in the Bible.

St. Vincent de Paul



c. 1580-1660

Feast Day:
September 27

Vincent de Paul was born to poor peasant farmers in France in 1581. Vincent's parents saw that he had a natural talent for academic study, and they sacrificed to be able to send him to school. Vincent attended university, was ordained a priest at age 24, and continued his studies.

While on a short sea voyage, Fr. De Paul was captured by pirates and sold as a slave in Africa. There, he was re-sold to different masters many times over the next two years. Eventually, he converted his Muslim master to Christianity and the two of them escaped back to France. Fr. De Paul was given his freedom, but his experiences of the poor and outcast never left him.

Fr. De Paul especially responded to Christ's command to visit the sick. Fr. De Paul founded many hospitals for the poor and worked to treat not only their physical needs, but their spiritual needs as well. He founded communities and organizations to go out to the poor and the sick to care for them. These include the Ladies of Charity and the Daughters of Charity. He founded the religious order of priests called the Congregation of the Mission, or later, the Vincentians.

His fame around France grew, despite his humility regarding his work. He was able to use his notoriety to raise money to keep the hospitals, communities of service, and Works of Mercy serving the poor effectively. Fr. De Paul was also concerned with serving the clergy. He worked to reform the corrupt practices of the clergy in France. He also helped to better prepare men who felt called to enter into the priesthood.

St. Vincent de Paul died near 80 years of age in 1660. He was canonized by Pope Clement XII in 1737 and is the patron saint of all charitable societies.

St. Patrick



c.387-461

Feast Day:
March 17

The Patron Saint of Ireland, Patrick was born near the west coast of Britain, the son of a Roman civil servant.

At age 16, Patrick was carried off by Irish pirates and sold as a slave in Ireland, where he worked as a shepherd for six years. During this time he became very religious, spending long hours in prayer and meditation. Patrick finally escaped Ireland on a ship sailing to the European continent. He was reunited with his family in Britain, and soon began to study for the priesthood; then he spent 15 years in a monastery.

A dream he had many years earlier convinced Patrick that God was calling him to return to Ireland as a missionary. In 432 he was consecrated a bishop and sent to preach the Gospel to the Irish people.

He went to the northern and western parts of the island, which Christian missionaries had not yet reached. There were some believers in Ireland, but Patrick had many obstacles to overcome. The Irish people were mostly pagan and did not welcome Patrick. An Irish chieftain tried to kill Patrick, but Patrick converted the chieftain to Christianity. Patrick traveled all over Ireland and preached to people about God. He used a shamrock, a little plant that has three leaves from one stem, to help explain the Blessed Trinity—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and all three are God.

St. Patrick ordained priests, established dioceses, and founded several monasteries. Irish missionaries who revitalized the Church after the fall of Rome can be traced back to St. Patrick's evangelizing activities. He died in the town of Saul, the same town where he had built the first church in Ireland. His feast day is celebrated on March 17, the day he died.

Pope St. John Paul II



1920–2005

Feast Day:
October 22

Karol Wojtyła was born in Poland. When he was a young man, a lot of evil things were happening in Europe. The Nazis were sending Jews, Catholics, and many other people to camps. At the camps those people were tortured and killed. Karol secretly went into seminary (a school that prepares men to be priests). He was made a priest soon after World War II ended.

Even though the war had ended, people in Poland were suffering. They were not free under a Communist government. Fr. Wojtkla was made Bishop of Krakow (Poland) in the 1960s. When he was elected Pope, he chose the name John Paul II. He helped people of Poland free themselves from the Communist party. Pope John Paul II also tried to help England come back to Catholicism.

Pope John Paul II founded World Youth Day. On World Youth Days, young Catholics from all over the world come together to be with the Pope and attend Mass he offers for them.

He wrote many important essays and books that helped people learn more about God. He died in April 2005. Thousands of people came to his funeral.

© SOPHIA INSTITUTE FOR TEACHERS

St. Peter



Died AD 64

Feast Day:
June 29

Simon was a fisherman who lived around the time of Jesus. His brother Andrew introduced him to Jesus. Jesus called Simon and Andrew to be Apostles. Jesus told Simon, “You are Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church.”

Jesus warned Peter that he would deny Jesus. Peter promised he would not. While Peter waited for Jesus outside the courthouse, people asked Peter if he knew Jesus. Peter lied and said he did not know Him. Peter remembered what Jesus had told him and left, weeping.

Jesus was crucified and rose from the dead. He came to Peter saying to him, “Feed my sheep.”

Peter was the first Apostle to preach and to work miracles in Jesus’ name. Peter was put in jail, but an angel freed him. He continued to preach to everyone. With St. Paul’s help, Peter led the first Church council in Jerusalem. He wrote two letters that are in the Bible.

The Roman Emperor ordered Peter to be crucified. But Peter asked to be crucified upside down. He said he was not worthy to die as Jesus did. His relics are in St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome.

© SOPHIA INSTITUTE FOR TEACHERS

St. Martin de Porres



1910-1997

Feast Day:
September 5

St. Martin de Porres was born in Lima, Peru, in 1579. He was the son of a Spanish nobleman and a freed black slave from Panama. After the birth of Martin's little sister, Juana, two years later, their father abandoned them. The family grew up in poverty, with Martin and Juana's mother working as a laundress.

As Martin grew older, people mocked him for being mixed race. But even from the young age of eight years, Martin remembered the priest at Mass saying, "We were all made in God's image and likeness." He would tell Juana that God was concerned about the color of people's souls, not the color of their skin.

Martin became apprentice to a barber-surgeon, where he learned to care for the sick. He spent many hours at night praying before a crucifix that hung above his bed. He knew he wanted to give his whole life to God. So when Martin was fifteen, he went to live with the Dominican order in Lima at the convent of Santo Domingo. The Dominicans gave Martin the duties of caring for the sick and the clothes room. When Martin was twenty-four, the Dominicans made him a religious brother, and he took charge of the infirmary.

When an epidemic struck Lima, the sick novices were locked in a separate part of the convent to prevent the spreading of disease. Martin miraculously passed through the locked doors to take care of the sick. He also performed many other miracles: Martin could heal others instantly, light filled the room when he prayed, he could be in two places at once, and his ecstasies would lift him into the air.

When Martin turned sixty, he fell ill and endured terrible pain. He suffered for almost a year and died in 1639. He was so famous for his miracles that crowds flocked to his body and took pieces of his habit for relics.

St. Catherine of Siena



1347-1380

Feast Day:
April 29

Catherine was born in Siena, Italy, the second youngest of 25 children. From her youth, Catherine joyfully dedicated herself to prayer and devotion.

At the age of 18, Catherine began living in constant prayer as a hermit. During this time she attracted many followers who wanted to imitate her way of life.

After three years in seclusion, Catherine and her followers began to minister to the poor, especially those suffering from the Bubonic Plague, which took millions of lives in Europe at this time. The disease was so terrible that healthy people would not care for or even touch the victims, leaving the dead unburied in homes and in the streets out of fear that they too would become sick. Answering Jesus' command to bury the dead, Catherine would tend to the needs of the Plague victims, prepare them for death, and see that they were buried, often burying them herself.

Catherine believed passionately in the goal of the Crusades, and spoke out urging men to fight to free the Holy Land. She sent many letters to royalty, nobles, religious, and even the pope, on many different topics. She was illiterate, so she dictated them. She gained a reputation for wisdom, holiness, and ability to settle disputes.

Catherine played an especially important role during a turbulent time in Church history. From 1309-77 Roman Catholic Popes had been living in France, and multiple men were claiming to be pope. Catherine's devotion to the Pope of Rome never wavered, and she convinced him to bring the papacy back to Rome.

She received many visions, and was even given stigmata, or the wounds of Christ. In 1380, Catherine died of a stroke at the age of 33. She was canonized in 1461 by Pope Pius II, and given the title Doctor of the Church in 1970 by Pope Paul VI.

St. Stephen



Died 37 A.D.

Feast Day:

December 26

Stephen was a Jewish man who became one of the first Christians. He was full of wisdom and faith from the Holy Spirit. He took care of widowed women who became Christian. Stephen also worked miracles in Jesus' name.

Some Jewish men who hated Christianity tried to argue with Stephen. But they could not outsmart the wisdom he received from the Holy Spirit. They paid other men to lie and say that Stephen had said bad things about the Old Testament prophet Moses.

Stephen was brought to the Jewish court. Stephen defended himself by telling the story of Moses and other Old Testament prophets. Stephen said that the Ancient Jews had betrayed every Old Testament prophet, even though those prophets had tried to tell them about Jesus. Then when Jesus came, He was also betrayed and killed, including by the men who arrested Stephen.

The Jewish men were filled with rage. Then Stephen looked up. He saw Heaven. He saw Jesus standing at the right of God the Father. Stephen told the men what he saw, but they would not listen. They dragged him out of the city and threw stones at him until he died. Stephen prayed that Jesus would show mercy to his killers.

© SOPHIA INSTITUTE FOR TEACHERS

St. Kateri Tekakwitha



1656-1680

Feast Day:

July 14

Tekakwitha was a Native American who was born in what is now New York State. Her father was chief of the Mohawks. Tekakwitha was orphaned at age 4 when her parents died of smallpox. Tekakwitha survived smallpox, but she was left with scars on her face and her eyesight was damaged. Her aunt and uncle adopted her. As the new chief of the Mohawks, her uncle decided on a young Mohawk for Tekakwitha to marry when she was older.

Their village was visited by Jesuit (Catholic) priests in 1667. Tekakwitha's uncle did not want her to go near the priests. But Tekakwitha listened to the priests and believed all they taught about Jesus.

When Tekakwitha was a teenager, the time came for her to marry. But Tekakwitha refused and said she was converting to Christianity. She was baptized on Easter Sunday, 1676. She took the name Kateri, after St. Catherine of Sienna. Kateri's neighbors scorned her Faith; they accused her of sorcery and even threatened to kill her. She was treated poorly until she was able to escape to a Christian settlement near Quebec, Canada.

Kateri decided she would never marry and dedicated her life to God. She taught little children their prayers and cared for elderly and sick people. She went to Mass every day. She died at the age of 24 after a serious illness. Witnesses said that within minutes after her death, the scars on her face disappeared and her face was glowing. St. Kateri, the "Lilly of the Mohawks," was the first Native American to be canonized.

© SOPHIA INSTITUTE FOR TEACHERS

St. Jean-Marie Vianney



1786-1859

Feast Day:
August 4

Jean-Marie lived with his parents and five siblings in a French village. When Jean was very young, France was at war. The government outlawed Catholicism. Catholic priests were forced to hold Mass in secret. Jean and his family traveled for miles to farm houses where priests said Mass in rooms with windows covered to block the candlelight from being seen. Jean admired the priests who risked their lives to offer the Mass and hear Confessions.

When Jean was 16, the French Revolution ended. He began studying for the priesthood. But he was soon drafted into Napoleon's army. As he walked to the army base, he paused to pray. A Catholic saw him and offered to guide him to the base, but instead led Jean to a hidden village where many Catholics lived. Jean started a school for the children in the village. When French soldiers came looking for Jean, he hid inside stacks of old hay. Several months later, he was able to return to seminary. Jean was ordained at age 39 and assigned to the parish of Ars.

Fr. Jean worked hard in his parish. He tried to revive people's interest in the Faith, for the revolution had caused many people to feel suspicious or careless about being Catholic. Fr. Jean preached excellent homilies. He started a home for girls, and he heard the Confession of everyone who came to him. He sat in the confessional for up to 16 hours a day, every day, to listen, advise, and absolve the thousands of people who traveled miles to confess and receive his instruction. He heard Confessions every day until he died at age 73.

© SOPHIA INSTITUTE FOR TEACHERS

St. Francis Xavier



1506–1552

Feast Day:

December 3

Francis Xavier was born into a wealthy and noble family in Spain. While at university in Paris, Francis roomed with Ignatius of Loyola. Initially, Francis and Ignatius did not get along, but eventually Ignatius won him over with his simple way of life and preaching of the Gospel. The pair, along with five other men, soon took vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience to the pope. Together they founded a new religious order, the Society of Jesus, or the Jesuits, and lived under a rule of life written by Ignatius. Pope John III requested that the Jesuits be sent out as missionaries around the world.

Francis was sent on the first Jesuit mission, which brought him to Goa in western India. There, he preached to the Portuguese settlers who lived there, many of whom led sinful lives. He cared for the sick, catechized children, and built almost 40 churches. He evangelized a group of nearby natives who had been baptized Christians a decade before but had never really been taught about Jesus or the Faith.

Over the next eight years, Francis pushed eastward, spreading the Gospel to parts of Malaysia. Eventually, Francis became the first Jesuit missionary in Japan. To overcome the language barrier, he used simple paintings of Mary and the child Jesus to preach the Good News. He also used the Rosary, his catechism, and above all the example of his own life to evangelize.

Francis Xavier died of a fever while waiting for a boat to take him to China to continue his missionary work. It is thought by the time of his death, by his response to Jesus' command to teach the ignorant, he had personally converted to Christianity over 50,000 people. He was canonized by Pope Gregory XV in 1622 and is the patron saint of foreign missions.