

# The Beatitudes and the Saints

## LESSON OVERVIEW

### Overview

All the souls in heaven were once people on earth: sons, daughters, priests, religious, husbands, wives, friends. The saints give ample examples of just how rich and varied the call to holiness looks among the members of the Church. In this lesson, students assume the persona of a saint, and engage in discussions with classmates/other saints. Saint biography cards are provided here at two reading levels. With younger students, read the stories of 3 or 4 saints aloud and assign everyone in the class to play one of those four. Older students can do their own research to learn more about these individuals, and/or write new biography cards for saints not included in this guide.

### Grade Levels

 ES  MS  HS

### Time

One fifty-minute class



### Connection to the Catechism

- › CCC 2683



### Essential Questions

- › What can the saints teach us about what it means to live a holy life?
- › How can I live my own vocation to beatitude?

## BIBLICAL TOUCHSTONES

And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one.

JOHN 17:22

Remember your leaders who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

HEBREWS 13:7

# Religious Icons Collection



# *Sacred Art and the Beatitudes*

## **The Beatitudes and the Saints**



### **Religious Icons Collection**

**Directions:** This image is a photograph of many religious icons. Take a few minutes to look at each individual icon as well as the photograph of all of them as a whole.

### **Conversation Questions**

1. Have you ever seen paintings like the ones in this photograph? Where?
2. What is an icon?
3. How do these icons differ from art you see today on things like movie posters, print advertisements, billboards, and other places?
4. Catholics do not believe that Jesus or the saints are present in sculptures or icons, and we do not worship sculptures or icons. What are they used for?
5. What are some reasons Christians would have icons in their homes?
6. We are all called to be saints. What are some ways this collage of icons shows us that truth?
7. Many saints are pictured in icons with objects or symbols. If someone were to paint an icon of you, what objects or symbols might be included?

# Lesson Plan

## Student Materials

- Saint Cards
- Handout A: Sainly Dinner Party
- Handout B: Three Saint Stories

## Background/Homework

If you make the saint assignments a few days ahead of time, students could be asked to bring in food from their saint’s region and time period for the “dinner.”

## Warm-Up

*20 minutes*

- A. Copy, cut out, and laminate sets of Saint Cards. Make each set on a different color paper.
- B. Make enough sets so that every student in your class can receive one card. Have students familiarize themselves with the information on their card, and prepare to “become” that saint for next class. Variation: For younger students, select 3 or 4 saints and read their stories aloud. Then distribute cards for just those saints among students. Older students could be given cards as the basis for a longer biography or creative writing assignment.
- C. Now encourage students to stand up and “mingle” as though at a dinner party with the other saints. (Keep students within color groups so they avoid “meeting” the same saint they are playing.) In their persona, they should introduce themselves; share a little bit about their lives, and so forth.

## Activity

*20 minutes*

- A. Have students now settle into groups of 4-8 for “dinner.” If you had students bring in food for their saint, have them serve it now.
- B. As students share a meal together, they should discuss some of the following questions. Write them on the board:

- › Who are you and where are you from? When did you live?
- › What gifts and talents did God bless you with, and how did you use them to serve God and your neighbor?
- › What was your biggest challenge?
- › What can people learn from your life?

### **Additional ideas:**

- › Sophisticated students could create and add new cards into the mix for individuals such as Cain, King Herod, Judas, Pontius Pilate, or others, and plan discussion questions that would bring to light differences in morality and discussions of good vs. evil.
- › Prepare a Saint Card for yourself ahead of time, and act as a “surprise visitor” for dinner.
- › Have all the St. Monicas come to the front of the room (or all the St. Pauls, all the St. Peters, etc.). Give the audience of students a chance to ask questions, and allow the students up front to confer on their answers.
- › Have students write skits that tell the stories of their saints.
- › Have “fishbowl” conversations between unexpected pairings of saints. For example, put St. Stephen with Bl. Miguel Pro. What topics of conversation arise?

### **Wrap-Up**

*10 minutes*

Still in their dinner groups, have students begin **Handout A: Sainly Dinner Party** and finish it for homework.

### **Extension Options**

- A. Have students read **Handout B: Three Saint Stories** and complete the chart that follows.
- B. Have students learn about the miracles attributed to their saint’s intercession. They should report on what they find in a brief oral presentation.
- C. Have students use their Bibles to look up the Scripture references that formed the basis of the Saint Cards for Sts. Paul, Peter, and Stephen. Have them draw a picture for each reference, or create a comic strip-type panel on poster board. A list is below:

### **St. Paul**

Acts 9:1-20 – Paul’s conversion

Acts 16:22-33 – Paul imprisoned and the earthquake

Acts 21 – Paul preaching in Jerusalem and accused

Acts 25:10-12 – Paul appeals to Caesar

Acts 27 – Paul’s voyage and shipwreck

Acts 28 – Paul preaches in Rome

Paul’s Letters: Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon.

### **St. Peter**

John 1:39-42 – Andrew introduces Peter and Jesus calls him

Matthew 16:13-18 – “You are Peter”

Matthew 17:1-8 – Transfiguration

Matthew 26:36-45 – Agony in the Garden

John 8:10-11 – Peter cuts off slave’s ear

Matthew 26:31-35 – Jesus predicts Peter’s denial

Luke 22:54-62 – Peter denies Jesus

John 21:15-17 – “Feed my Sheep”

Acts 1 – Peter speaks on Pentecost

Acts 3:1-8 – Peter’s first miracle

Acts 15 – Council of Jerusalem

Acts 12:1-11 – Angel frees Peter

1 and 2 Peter – Peter’s 2 Letters

### **St. Stephen**

Acts 6 and 7

## **Bulletin Board Option**

On large, different colored strips of paper, write out each of the Beatitudes. Post them at regular intervals on the bulletin board. Then make copies of the Saint Cards, and challenge students to match up saints with particular beatitudes. (For example, for “Blessed are those who mourn,” students might select St. Monica.) They should write at least 3 or 4 sentences explaining how that particular saint lived the beatitude they chose. Display the saint pictures and student paragraphs.

# Saint Cards

## St. Jeanne D'Arc



**1412-1431**

**Feast Day:**  
May 30

Jeanne D'Arc was born in a French village to a Catholic family. Her father was a farmer. Her mother could not read or write, but she taught Jeanne how to pray and how to work hard. During this time, England and France were at war. England ruled over the northern part of France, including the place where French kings were coronated (received their crowns).

When Jeanne was 13 years old she began hearing the voices of saints. Soon she began having visions as well. The archangel Michael, St. Margaret, and St. Catherine appeared to her and told her to help the French king fight the English. The king sent her into battle, and Jeanne led her troops to victory. The French won several more battles. The king was finally able to receive his crown at Reims Cathedral, and Jeanne was there for the ceremony. The French were on their way to winning the war with Jeanne's help.

But not everyone was happy with the French victories. Some French people wanted England to win. In 1430, Joan was captured by some of those people. She was put in an iron cage with chains on her neck, hands, and feet. At her trial, her captors questioned Jeanne about her visions. They knew she was a simple peasant girl, and they tried to trick her into saying that she was practicing witchcraft. But she refused to say she had not seen and heard the saints. She told the judges: "I saw them with these very eyes, as well as I see you."

Throughout of her trial, the French king did nothing to help her. Jeanne was convicted of witchcraft and heresy and burned alive. She was 19 years old. Thirty years later, a Church court declared that her trial had been unfair, and she was declared innocent of all crimes.

## 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.

## St. Francis of Assisi



**1181-1226**

**Feast Day:**  
October 4

Francis was born into a rich Italian family. He enjoyed his wealth with wild, popular parties. One night while camping on his way to join the Fourth Crusade, God told him in a dream to return home. He did, and he started forming habits of prayer. While praying in a chapel, Christ spoke to him from the crucifix, “Francis, repair my church.” Francis obeyed literally, fixing the chapel’s walls and roof. Then he literally obeyed Christ’s commands throughout the Gospels: Francis gave what he had to poor people and he preached the Good News. Many men joined Francis, gave away their possessions, and lived in poverty. They begged when they needed food and gave to poorer people whatever they did not need. Francis and his followers preached in Italy, Tunis, Morocco, and Egypt.

Francis wrote a rule to set out how he wanted himself and his followers to live. Pope Innocent III approved it. After several revisions, Pope Honorius III also approved it. A woman named Clare joined Francis, and she started a group of women called the Poor Clares. These women supported the Franciscans by praying before the Eucharist.

During the Crusades, Francis tried to make peace with the Sultan who was fighting the Christians. The Sultan was impressed by Francis, but refused to convert. While praying one evening, Francis received the stigmata. He died several weeks later. Franciscans and Poor Clares continue to live according the rules of St. Francis and St. Clare.

## St. Francis of Assisi



**1181-1226**

**Feast Day:**  
October 4

Francis was born into a rich Italian family. He had an easy life and had lots of friends.

Francis decided to fight in the Crusades. He was on his way to join the fight when God told him in a dream to return home. He obeyed and went home. Another day he was praying in a chapel. Christ spoke to Francis from the crucifix. Jesus said, “Francis, repair my church.” Francis again did exactly what Jesus said. He started fixing the chapel’s walls and roof. Then he followed Christ’s commands from the Bible, giving what he had to poor people and telling them about God’s love.

Many men joined Francis. They also gave away their possessions. They begged when they needed food. They gave whatever they did not need to poorer people.

The Crusades continued. Francis tried to make peace with the Sultan who was fighting the Christians. The Sultan liked Francis, but the war continued.

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

## St. Augustine of Hippo



**354-430**

**Feast Day:**  
August 28

Augustine was born on the northern coast of Africa, in the country we now call Algeria. His mother, St. Monica, was Christian. His father worked for the Roman Empire and was a pagan, but he allowed Augustine's mother to teach the family's three children about following Jesus.

Augustine was very bright, and his parents worked hard to send him to the best schools. He read the most challenging authors of the day. He became a popular speaker and teacher. But even though Augustine was achieving success in the eyes of the world, he was living a wicked life. Over time, thanks to the influence of his mother and the Bishop of Milan, St. Ambrose, Augustine came to believe that God's grace could save even a terrible sinner like him. He was converted to Christianity. He became a priest and, later, the Bishop of Hippo.

Augustine became one of the most important Christian writers in history. In his book *Confessions*, we wrote about his conversion. He explained how all of us naturally yearn to be with God. Augustine also spent time correcting people who had wrong ideas about Christianity. He spoke about love, and said the Church should always show mercy to those who repent. He argued against those who thought humans could achieve moral perfection through their own free will alone. Augustine knew that we need God's grace to be saved. When the most important city in the world was destroyed by the Visigoths (a barbarian tribe), many people felt like it was the end of the world. But in his book *De Civitate Dei (City of God)*, Augustine assured people that no pagan city on Earth could compare to Christians' true home: Heaven. He wrote more than 300 sermons.

Augustine was 75 when another barbarian tribe, the Vandals, started to attack his hometown of Hippo. He died that summer. He is one of the most important Church Fathers, and a Doctor of the Church.

## 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.

## St. Teresa of Ávila



Teresa Sánchez de Cepeda y Ahumada was born in the Ávila region of Spain. When she was younger she was caught up in her social life. She wanted to love God, but felt like she did not deserve to be close to Him. Her father sent her to a convent to help her straighten out her life. But the convent turned out to be more like a hotel, with frequent visitors and socializing. Teresa prayed to be closer to Jesus, but felt like He wasn't answering her. After 18 years, she felt like giving up.

**1515-1582**

**Feast Day:**  
October 15

When she was 41, a priest encouraged her to turn back to prayer. But it was hard for her. She felt like her mind was too busy and distracted to be able to focus on Jesus. But soon she felt very close to God. Praying became such an intense experience that she would cry. She would feel pain, and all her senses would be overwhelmed. Sometimes her whole body would even levitate (be raised up from the ground). These experiences scared Teresa and she especially disliked when they happened in public. But she knew Jesus was with her when He came to her in visions. Then she felt peaceful and encouraged.

Two years later she decided to start a new convent focused on prayer and living simply. Her reforms made a lot of people angry, but new Discalced Carmelite communities eventually spread throughout Europe. She wrote books about her life and her visions, even though many people said women shouldn't do those things. In 1970, Pope Paul VI named her a Doctor of the Church. This is a very special title that means her writings helped form Catholic doctrine.

## 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.

## Bl. Chiara Luce Badano



**1971–1990**

**Feast Day:**  
October 29

Chiara was born in a small Italian village to Catholic parents who had prayed for 11 years for a child. In kindergarten, she started saving her money for African missions. She gave her best toys to poor children. At school, she gave her snacks to poor classmates; when her mom packed extra snacks for her, she gave them all away. One day she took an apple from a neighbor's tree without asking. Her mother told her that though it would be embarrassing, she must return the apple and apologize. Chiara did. The neighbor gave Chiara a box of apples because she had learned something important that day.

When Chiara was nine, she joined the Focolare Movement, a Catholic organization devoted to worldwide unity in Christ. She also enjoyed tennis, hiking, swimming, singing, dancing, and spending long evenings with friends.

Chiara struggled with school and failed the first year of high school, but she persevered. When she was sixteen, she went on a Focolare retreat in Rome and developed a deep devotion to Jesus. While playing tennis, she felt pain in her shoulder. The pain continued and doctors found she had bone cancer. Chiara offered her pain to Jesus, praying, "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 a friend who was becoming a missionary to Africa. As she grew more ill, she told her mother not to be sad for her: "Don't shed any tears for me. I'm going to Jesus." She died in October 1990 before her 19th birthday.

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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.

## 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. A monk was walking in the snow to the church. Josemaría decided he wanted to suffer for God too and do whatever God wanted. He became a priest so that he could live always listening to God's call. Fr. Escrivá moved to Madrid, where he gathered university students and people of many professions to help him care for poor, sick people.

When he was twenty-six, he founded Opus Dei, an institution within the Church for evangelization. Opus Dei is a Latin phrase for "the work of God." Its first members were the university students he knew. Fr. Escrivá had to flee to survive persecution during the Spanish civil war. When the war ended, he traveled through Spain holding retreats for priests. He established the Priestly Society of the Holy Cross so that Opus Dei could include priests and lay people. Opus Dei spread to many countries, including Portugal, Italy, France, Ireland, Great Britain, Kenya, and the United States.

Fr. Escrivá moved to Rome to oversee the many projects of Opus Dei: elementary, secondary, and professional schools, universities, agricultural training centers, hospitals and clinics, and retreat centers. Fr. Escrivá helped in Vatican Council II. He journeyed through Europe and Latin America speaking to people about God's love, the sacraments, and the sanctity in daily work and family life. 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.

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**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.

## 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 friaries (religious communities) in Poland, Japan, and India.

When he returned to Poland, the Nazis had invaded the country. Fr. Kolbe organized a shelter for thousands of Polish refugees. In 1941, the Nazis raided the shelter. They took Fr. Kolbe and his companions to Auschwitz, a Nazi death camp.

Fr. Kolbe was tortured and beaten by the Nazi guards. Though he was suffering, he offered to help the other prisoners. At night he would ask each one, "I am a Catholic priest. Can I do anything for you?" He would hear their confessions and tell them about God's love. He wouldn't ask for medical help until all his fellow prisoners had been treated.

One day a prisoner from the camp escaped. The guards announced that to prevent future escape attempts, 10 prisoners would be starved to death. The guards choose 10 men, including one young man who cried out in anguish 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, where 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. At first that man felt regret. He felt like he had caused Fr. Kolbe's death by allowing himself to be saved. But then he understood: "A man like Fr. Kolbe could not have done otherwise. Perhaps he thought that as a priest his place was beside the condemned men to help them keep hope. In fact he was with them to the last."

## St. Maximilian Kolbe



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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 and father had nine children, and Thérèse was one of five who survived. Thérèse's mother died when Thérèse was only 4 years old. Her father moved the family to Lisieux, and Thérèse's older sisters helped take care of her.

For much of her life, Thérèse was delicate and sensitive. She would cry if she thought someone was criticizing her. Then she would feel even worse about herself because she had cried.

Two of her sisters were nuns at a Discalced Carmelite convent. Thérèse also received a call to religious life, but she was too young to join the convent. But Thérèse did not give up. When she was 15, she went on a pilgrimage to Rome. Her group was able to visit the Pope, and she asked him for special permission to enter the convent. One of the Pope's officers saw her and was impressed with her courage. She was given permission to enter the convent. Thérèse would be a cloistered nun, meaning she would spend her days in prayer, away from other people and the world.

Thérèse knew that Jesus wanted the little ones to come to Him. In fact, Jesus Himself had become a child! So Thérèse was glad she was little. Thérèse also wanted to be holy. At first she felt discouraged when she compared herself to the saints. But instead of feeling discouraged, she persevered. She wrote: "In spite of my littleness, I can aim at being a saint. ... I will look for some means of going to heaven by a little way which is very short and very straight, a little way that is quite new." St. Thérèse is known for this "Little Way" of seeking holiness in ordinary, everyday things.

In 1896 she started coughing up blood. She had tuberculosis, which is a painful and deadly illness. She died less than a year later at age 24. The wisdom in her writings was so profound that Pope John Paul II named her a Doctor of the Church.

## 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.

Two of her sisters were 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. She was able to enter the convent. Thérèse spent her days in prayer, away from other people and the world.

Even as she grew older, Thérèse liked being little. She 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 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.

## St. Gianna Beretta Molla



**1922–1962**

**Feast Day:**  
April 28

Gianna was the tenth of thirteen children in a Catholic Italian family. When she was twenty, she went to Milan to study medicine. After graduating medical school, she opened an office. Her patients were children. One of her brothers was a missionary priest in Brazil. She wanted to join him and help care for the people there, but her own health problems kept her in Italy.

When she was 32, she met a man named Pietro Molla. A year later, Pietro and Gianna married; they had four children. While Gianna was pregnant with their fourth child, Gianna grew very sick. She had a tumor growing in her womb near her unborn baby.

Gianna was given three choices: she could have an abortion. She could ask the doctors to take out her womb. Or she could ask the doctors to take out only the tumor. Gianna refused to have an abortion, because it is a sin to kill an unborn baby on purpose. Gianna did not want the doctors to take out her womb because that would kill her baby too. Instead, Gianna asked the doctors to take out only the tumor. The doctors did. But Gianna was still sick. She told her family that if she became so sick that the doctors could save only her life or the baby's, she wanted the doctors to save her baby's life. Finally on Holy Saturday, her baby was born, a little girl. Gianna lived for one more week and then she died. She was 39 years old.

## 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. She went there so she could go to school to become a doctor. When she graduated, she opened an office. Her patients were children.

When she 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 bad cells in the body. Some tumors are very serious, like Gianna's was. The tumor had to be removed.

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

## St. Monica



**331–387**

**Feast Day:**  
August 27

Monica was born in Northern Africa to Christian parents shortly after Christianity was legalized. Her parents gave her in marriage to a pagan man, Patricius. Patricius frequently criticized Monica and lost his temper, but Monica loved him still. She asked God to help her husband abandon his sins. Patricius and Monica raised three children, Augustine, Navigius, and Perpetua. Augustine became deadly sick, and Monica asked that he be baptized. At first, Patricius agreed. But when Augustine grew healthier, Patricius denied Monica's request. Augustine left home to study law at the university in Carthage. He lived a wicked life there. Monica prayed patiently for him and for her husband. After nearly twenty years of marriage, her husband converted to Christianity and was baptized. He died one year later.

When Augustine came home from school, he told his mother his beliefs. His beliefs were heretical. Monica sent him away from the dinner table, and he left the house and went to Rome. Monica later saw a vision that made her want to reconcile with her son. So Monica went to Rome, but Augustine had gone to Milan. Monica joined him in Milan and introduced him to the bishop there, St. Ambrose. Under St. Ambrose's instruction, Monica learned to pray more simply and give what she had to the poor. Augustine converted to Christianity. Monica and Augustine lived happily together as Augustine prepared for baptism. He was baptized that Easter at age 33 by St. Ambrose. 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."

While Monica and Augustine were waiting for a boat back to Africa, Monica became ill with a fever and died.

## 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."

## St. Thomas More



**1478-1535**

**Feast Day:**

June 22

Thomas More was born in London. From an early age he was very bright and interested in subjects like logic, Latin, history, and music. He went to good schools, and impressed his teachers. One said he spoke Latin as easily as he spoke English! He became a successful lawyer, and gave lectures on St. Augustine. Many of his friends were scholars and writers. More was also a successful writer. His book *Utopia* was a story about a “perfect” society. Later authors borrowed that idea and the utopian genre (or type of literature) is still very popular. He considered religious life, but he discerned that it was not his calling. He continued the practice of law, and served in Parliament, England’s lawmaking body. He got married and had four children before his wife died suddenly.

By the early 1500s, More had married again and was serving as an advisor to King Henry VIII. The Protestant Reformation was tearing Europe apart. But More remained faithful. King Henry VIII wanted to divorce his wife and he tried to use the Bible to say divorce was okay. But More knew that the King was wrong. King Henry VIII finally broke England away from the Catholic Church. More refused to swear allegiance to the King as head of the Church of England. He knew that, going back the Apostles, the Pope was the true head of the Church Jesus had founded. The King put him in prison and took away his property. While he was in prison he wrote letters to his family and essays about Jesus. When the King found out, he had his writing materials taken away. More was convicted of treason and beheaded in 1535. His last words were: “I die the good King’s servant, but God’s first.”

## 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 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. But 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. More said no. 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."

## St. Paul



**Died 67 A.D.**

**Feast Day:**  
June 29

Paul was a Jew, and a Roman citizen. For years, Paul persecuted Christians because he thought Christianity was false. He traveled to Damascus to persecute Christians, but a light shone from heaven and 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, so his friends led him to Damascus. God sent Ananias, a Christian man, to Paul; Ananias miraculously healed Paul’s eyes and baptized him.

Immediately, Paul preached the Gospel to Jews and Gentiles, worked miracles in Jesus’ name, and established Christian churches in many cities. Some Roman politicians who hated Christianity ordered Paul to be beaten and imprisoned. An earthquake shook the prison doors open. Paul, however, did not escape; he stayed and preached to the guard, and baptized him and his family.

Paul went to Jerusalem to preach, and some Jews took him to their court for preaching Christianity. Paul’s case was brought to the local Roman court where the Jews falsely accused him. Paul, being a Roman citizen, appealed to Caesar. On his way to Rome, Paul preached to his guards and to the sailors. A storm brought the boat to an island, and Paul preached to the island natives. When he arrived in Rome, he preached to crowds of Jews while waiting for his trial before Caesar, who released him. Paul preached in many countries and returned to Rome, where he was accused and imprisoned again, and then beheaded. He wrote fourteen letters to the people he converted to Christianity, and these letters are in the Bible.

## St. Paul



**Died 67 A.D.**

**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. Pope John Paul II



**1920–2005**

**Feast Day:**  
October 22

Karol Wojtyła was born in Poland. His father was an army lieutenant and his mother was a schoolteacher, and his dream was to be an actor. When Nazis invaded Poland, his college education and his acting came to an end. He worked to avoid being deported to Germany. When he was 22, he secretly entered seminary. After World War II, the seminary re-opened publicly. He was ordained a priest soon after. After further study in Rome and Poland, he was made Bishop of Krakow in the 1960s, a time when Poland was suffering from atheistic and Communist ideas. He participated in Vatican II and helped write many of its documents. When he was elected Pope, he chose the name John Paul II.

As a Polish pope, John Paul II inspired the Poles to form Solidarity, a trade union that regained rule of Poland from the Communist party. Pope John Paul II worked to convert England back to Catholicism. He allowed Anglican priests (who can marry) to keep their wives and families and become Catholic priests.

Pope John Paul II founded World Youth Day, when young Catholics from around the world gather in one city to meet the Pope, pray with him, listen to him, and attend Mass he offers for them. He wrote influential encyclicals such as *Evangelium Vitae*, which is about the value of human life. His lectures on the human person, purity, and marriage are together known as Theology of the Body. He died in April 2005. Thousands of people, including nearly a hundred political and religious leaders, attended his funeral.

## St. Pope John Paul II



**1920–2005**

**Feast Day:**  
October 22

Karol Wojtyla 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.

But 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.

## St. Peter



**Died 64 A.D.**

**Feast Day:**  
June 29

Simon was a fisherman. His brother Andrew introduced him to Jesus, and Jesus called Simon and Andrew to be Apostles. When Jesus asked His Apostles who they thought He was, Simon answered that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the Son of God. Jesus answered Simon, “You are Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church.” The word “Peter” means “rock,” and Jesus built the Church on the foundation of the papacy, with Peter as the first pope. Jesus allowed Peter to see the Transfiguration and also to pray with Him before He was arrested to be crucified. When men came to arrest Jesus, Peter cut off a man’s ear with his sword, but Jesus healed the man’s ear.

Jesus warned Peter that he would deny Jesus. Peter promised he would not, but while Peter waited for Jesus outside the courthouse, people asked Peter if he knew Jesus. Peter lied and said he did not; then Peter remembered Jesus’ prediction and left, weeping.

Jesus was crucified and rose from the dead, and came to Peter, saying to him, “Feed my sheep.” After Jesus had ascended into Heaven and the Holy Spirit descended to the apostles, Peter was the first Apostle to preach and to work miracles in Jesus’ name. Peter was imprisoned, but an angel freed him and he continued to preach to Jews and to Gentiles. 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 condemned Peter to be crucified; Peter asked to be crucified upside down because he was not worthy to die as Jesus did. His relics are in St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome.

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## Bl. Miguel Pro Juárez



**1891-1927**

**Feast Day:**  
November 23

Miguel was born in Guadeloupe, Mexico. His family was devoutly Catholic. Young Miguel enjoyed doodling and drawing cartoons, and he was very good at it! When his sister entered a convent, Miguel began to hear the Lord calling him to be a priest. He entered a Jesuit seminary. (A seminary is a school that prepares future priests.) He was there when people who hated Catholics began taking over Mexico. The seminary was forced to close. He and his classmates escaped to the United States. He continued his preparation, and was made a priest in Europe in 1925.

Back in Mexico, being Catholic was illegal. Churches had been forced to close. Priests had to hide. 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 while he tended to people's needs. Sometimes he would dress as a beggar. When he went into rich neighborhoods to ask people to help the poor, he would dress as a businessman. He even dressed as a policeman to offer Holy Communion to prisoners.

Someone told the police what Fr. Pro was doing, and he was arrested. The government lied and said Fr. Pro had tried to kill the president of Mexico. Fr. Pro was sentenced to death for a crime he did not commit. He was sent to a firing squad. He forgave his executioners, and prayed out loud for God to forgive them. He stood before them with his arms stretched out at his sides. He held a rosary in one hand and a crucifix in the other. His last words were "Viva Cristo Rey," which means "Praise Christ the King!"

## 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!”

## 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. The disciples of Jesus ordained him a deacon. He had the task of taking care of widowed women who became Christian, and Stephen also worked miracles. 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 were so angry that they bribed other men to falsely accuse Stephen of telling wicked lies about the Old Testament prophet Moses.

On these false accusations, Stephen was brought to the Jewish court. Stephen defended himself by telling the story of Moses. Moses saved the Israelites from the pagan Egyptians. But the Israelites betrayed Moses and God by worshiping a pagan idol. Stephen told the Jewish men that like Moses, every Old Testament prophet was betrayed and persecuted by the Jews, although the prophets tried to tell the Jewish people about Jesus. When Jesus came, He was also betrayed, persecuted, and killed by Jewish people, including by the men who arrested Stephen.

Then the Jewish men were filled with rage because they did not want to hear the truth. Then Stephen looked up, and he saw heaven, with Jesus standing at the right of God the Father. Stephen told the men what he saw, but they refused to listen. They dragged him out of the city and stoned him. Just before he died, Stephen prayed that Jesus would be merciful to the men who were killing him. A martyr is someone who is killed for his or her religious faith. St. Stephen is the first martyr of the Church.

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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.

## Bl. Teresa of Calcutta



**1910-1997**

**Feast Day:**  
September 5

Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu was born in Skopje, Yugoslavia, (now Macedonia) to a devoutly Catholic family. Her father died suddenly when she was only 8 years old. When she was 18, she set out for a convent in Ireland. She would never see her mother again. When she arrived, very few people there understood her language. One sister remembered her as “very small, quiet, and shy.” She received the name Teresa after St. Thérèse of Lisieux.

Her community sent her to India, where she taught high school history and geography for many years. She learned to speak the local languages. One day in 1946, Mother Teresa was on a train to a retreat in Darjeeling. On that train she received a call to found her own religious order, the Missionaries of Charity. She said, “I heard the call to give up all and follow Christ into the slums to serve him among the poorest of the poor.” Mother Teresa helped throughout India. She taught children the alphabet by writing in the dirt. She visited the poor and the ill, asking what they needed and helping them. Pope Paul VI and St. Pope John Paul II praised her work. She helped lepers, orphans, AIDS patients, alcoholics, and many others. Her order opened houses in over 100 countries. She tried to bring help to China, but she wasn’t able to.

Mother Teresa won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979. In her acceptance speech, she urged people to protect unborn babies. She continued to help throughout the world even as her health got worse. She died in 1997.

## Bl. Teresa of Calcutta



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**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.

# Saintly Dinner Party



**Directions:** Answer the questions based on the activity completed in class.

**My saint:** \_\_\_\_\_

Write down the names of the saints you met today. In the “Notes” column, write 1-2 ways this saint used his or her gifts and talents to serve the Lord and others, and anything else you found interesting about him/her. Then answer the questions below.

**My dinner companions:**

**Notes**

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

1. How did your saint use the gifts and talents he or she received from God to serve God and help others?
2. If you could meet your saint, what would you say to him/her? What questions would you ask?
3. On the back of this paper, write a prayer asking one of the saints you “met” today to pray for you in a special way.

# Three Saint Stories



**Directions:** Read the stories and then complete the chart.

## St. Dominic Savio

Dominic Savio was born in a small village in northern Italy, the first child of parents who were deeply in love with Christ. His parents, recognizing the gift God gave them, named him Dominic, meaning “belonging to God.” By the time Dominic was four years old he could pray on his own, and his parents would often find him praying alone, in quiet places around the house. Dominic’s father worked away from home, so during the day he would help his mother with cleaning and housework. He eagerly waited for his father to come home and would greet him with much excitement and love. Dominic never needed reminders to pray before meals or going to bed, and he would even become frustrated when having meals with guests if they would not pray together before eating.

Dominic went to church each morning to pray with his mother. They would often arrive at the church before it was unlocked for the day. Not wanting to waste the time he could be spending in conversation with the Lord, Dominic would kneel down outside the church – even in snow and mud- until they were able to enter. Dominic was excited to become an altar server when he turned five. He dearly loved Jesus in the Eucharist, and because of his great devotion and reverence for the Eucharist, he was given special permission

to receive his First Communion early. He had learned his catechism well and spent even more time reading other spiritual books to prepare himself for such a gift. He repeatedly said throughout his life that his First Communion was “the happiest and most wonderful day of my life.” On his First Communion Day Dominic made four special promises which he wrote neatly in his little notebook. The four promises were:

1. I will go to confession often, and as frequently to Holy Communion as my confessor allows.
2. I wish to sanctify the Sundays and festivals in a special manner.
3. My friends shall be Jesus and Mary.
4. Death rather than sin.

Dominic went to elementary school in his village, where he made great progress by his hard work and cleverness. When he was old enough, he attended the county school which was three miles from his house. Since he was now ten, he was able to walk to and from school on his own. One hot sunny day, a farmer stopped him to ask if he was not tired from walking. Dominic quickly replied, “Nothing seems tiresome or painful when you are working for a Master who pays well.” His friends invited him to go swimming often, but Dominic refused to go, and he told them it was a situation that

would be easy to offend God, as his friends had behaved in a vulgar manner on other times that they had gone.

Dominic's teacher at school arranged for him to meet John Bosco, who became his mentor and teacher at an oratory in another small town in Italy. John Bosco, who himself would become a saint, said that Dominic was always eager to follow the school rules and work as diligently as he could. He never was unhappy or complained about listening to long talks and sermons, but would show his interest by asking questions to clarify his thinking. At his new school, Dominic was careful in choosing his friends and was always obedient to his teachers. Dominic's mother wrote a letter to John Bosco saying, "You have many good boys, but none can match the good heart and soul of Dominic Savio. I see him so often at prayer, staying in church after the others; every day he slips out of the playground to make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. When he is in church he is like an angel living in paradise."

Not long after Dominic began school at the Oratory, he listened to a talk on sainthood. He became very moved by three points of the talk:

1. That it is God's will that each person should become a saint.
2. That it is easy to become a saint.
3. That there is a great reward waiting in heaven for those who try to become saints.

For the next few days he was quiet and worried about exactly how he would live a saintly life, as this was the greatest desire of his heart. John Bosco quickly comforted

him by telling him to continue to be his cheerful self, to be faithful to his studies, to persevere in prayer, and not to shy away from playing games with his classmates and friends. It was also at this time that Dominic learned that his name meant "belonging to God," and he became ever more excited to set about becoming a saint.

To help himself grow in holiness, Dominic began doing small acts of penance to deny himself and make more room for loving the Lord. His teachers noticed that he was doing too much that might affect his health, such as sleeping only with a thin blanket in the winter, wearing a hair shirt under his normal clothes, and only eating bread and drinking water. John Bosco reminded him that the best penance would be to do all of his duties with perfection and in littleness and humility, seeking nothing for himself. He also told him that obedience would be the greatest sacrifice. From that time on, Dominic decided to live by the philosophy, "I can't do big things but I want everything to be for the glory of God." He committed himself to never complaining about food or the weather, suffered everything in great cheerfulness, and would keep his eyes from distractions of the world. Dominic even began a special prayer group at his school to spread devotion to our Holy Mother. When his classmates were suffering or experiencing difficulties, Dominic made it his quiet mission to talk with them and give them cheerful encouragement. At this time his own health was deteriorating very quickly, but he was sure to not let it keep him from giving himself to others; he even came back to the oratory after his doctors ordered that he spend time at home. Once

he returned to the oratory, John Bosco spoke with him and helped him understand the importance of returning home to spend his last days with his family. Dominic dearly wanted to spend his last moments at the oratory, but willingly submitted to returning home. His friends did not know how serious his sickness was, as he did not let much of his suffering show. He bid them goodbye and traveled back to his hometown.

Upon arriving home, his health declined very quickly, but through it all Dominic stayed calm and courageous. He received the sacraments of the Holy Eucharist, Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, and even received the papal blessing days before his death. Dominic died peacefully at home in the presence of his family.

### **St. André Bessette**

St. André Bessette was born into a poor family in Montreal, Canada. His parents had him baptized immediately after his birth because he was very weak. André's poor health would be a battle he would face for the rest of his life.

André's parents were very devout and had great faith in God. Prayer was important to them, and it would be important for André as well. He prayed often and would come away feeling a great peace and joy from being with God.

As a child, his faith was tested as he suffered the loss of his father at age 9. His mother died a few years later, yet he never wavered in doing good for others and deepening his prayer life. Following

the death of his parents, he and his siblings went to live with relatives on their farm. He struggled with many of the chores he was asked to do, as his poor health made him very weak. He pleaded with God, through the intercession of St. Joseph, to help him know what it was that he was supposed to do with his life, as there had to be something out there at which he could be successful. He tried many things including working in a bakery, a shoe shop, and a factory, but he walked away from each job recognizing that they were too difficult and caused him to become even sicker.

Throughout all of the feelings of frustration and difficulty, André prayed evermore insistently for guidance. One day the pastor at André's parish, who had noticed André's great devotion, asked him if he ever thought God might be calling him to the priesthood or religious life. André was convinced he was not very smart and much too weak to be called. Father reassured him that he needn't worry about his weaknesses, but to just pray. Meanwhile, Father wrote a note to a nearby community of brothers and priests, telling them that he would be sending them "a saint." At first the community turned André away, telling him he was too weak and ill to join their community. The archbishop intervened for him and he was eventually allowed to stay.

From this point on André became known as Brother André and was given very small duties that did not seem very significant. However, Brother André used these small tasks as great opportunities to make himself little before the Lord and to serve God even in the smallest things. Brother

André grew in great devotion and prayer, especially to St. Joseph. As doorkeeper and messenger, he shared his deep joy with everyone who came to visit the brothers and greeted them with deep love and compassion. Many people began to visit just to share stories with him, some of them very sad and troubling. Brother André would always assure them of his prayers, but he also invited them to seek the intercession of his very special saint friend—St. Joseph. Through this, Brother André brought great peace and calm to many troubled souls who would later come back to tell him they had been cured of their illnesses or relieved of their difficult burden. They claimed their triumphs to be bold miracles attributed to his intercession, but Brother André would always redirect their excitement and gratitude, giving God the credit and the glory. He often went to visit the sick in their homes and would entrust them to St. Joseph in prayer. More and more healings were attributed to the power of his prayers, yet he always refused to take any credit for them, instead giving St. Joseph the honor. Word spread quickly and even greater crowds of people came to the door to witness the humility and great trust Brother André had in the Lord. Throughout his long life, Brother André was scrutinized and seen as a crazy man by many, but he persevered in his sufferings, continuing to spread deep faith and devotion to prayer.

### **St. Rose Philippine Duchesne**

Rose Philippine Duchesne was born in a large family in France. She lived with her immediate family as well as her aunt,

uncle, and cousins. Between the two families there were 20 children in all, so Rose was never without excitement and opportunities to help others. She learned from her mother at a very young age to put others before herself, and she always tried to follow her mother's example. At church she loved to listen to the missionary priests from America tell stories of their work with the Native Americans.

Rose and her siblings were homeschooled until she reached the age of 12, when she was sent with her cousin to be educated in a monastery known for its prestige. The monastery was located near a community of Visitation Sisters who helped with the teaching. Rose loved learning from the sisters about the lives of the saints and their impact on history, and she was intrigued by the peaceful and prayerful lives of the sisters who taught her. She prayed fervently that God would show her how she could love and serve Him best.

When her father found out about her ever-growing attraction to the life of the sisters, he pulled her from the school and had her tutored at home with the rest of her siblings and cousins. A short while later, when Rose was eighteen, she made the decision to enter the Visitation Sister's community, despite her family's disapproval.

A few years later, however, persecution of Catholics began, and French Revolutionaries forced the sisters to shut down the monastery and disperse throughout the country. Rose went home to live with her family. For ten years, Rose lived at home and continued to live a life

dedicated to serving God and others. She visited and cared for the sick, as well as educated young children.

When the war was over Rose wanted to go back to the convent, and she prayed to see what God had in store for her. She and a few of her sisters returned to the monastery and found everything in shambles. They attempted to repair and rebuild the community, but were not successful. Rose, meanwhile, heard about a new community being formed in northern France. She became a very dear friend of Mother Barat, the Superior of the community, and the two communities merged into one. Rose now became Sister Philippine.

In one of her conversations with Mother Barat, Sister Philippine told her of her lifelong desire to be a missionary in America. She told her she wanted to serve the Native Americans and those who were less fortunate. Instead, Mother Barat sent Sister Philippine to Paris, the capital of France, to work with the poor. Sister never gave up her dream of going to America, however. One day her prayers were finally answered when Mother Barat told her that an American bishop had asked for help in America. Sister Philippine could not contain her excitement! She and four other sisters sailed to America on a long and difficult 10-week journey.

When they finally arrived in Louisiana, the sisters found out that the bishop had not arranged any housing for them. They eventually traveled up the Mississippi River

and settled in St. Charles, Missouri. They quickly built a log cabin and opened a school. They endured many difficulties in settling in a remote area. It was hard to find food and fresh water. The summers were very hot, and the winters were bitter cold. Mother Philippine Duchesne, as they now called her, never gave up and was never heard complaining about the conditions. She was dedicated to the service of the poor in the area. All the while that she taught, cooked, cleaned, gathered wood, and made clothing, her prayer never ceased. The sisters continued to open schools and build additional convents, but Mother Duchesne's desire to work with the Native Americans was still stirring deep in her heart.

When she was seventy-one, Mother Duchesne's dream finally came true: she had received an invitation to work with the Native Americans in Kansas! However, the difficulties did not stop. When she arrived in Kansas, Mother Duchesne was not able to successfully learn the Native American language. Instead of going home in defeat, she spent many hours in prayer for the people she was sent to help. The children of the community began to call her the "Woman Who Prays Always," and she had a big influence on them even without words.

When her health began to decline, Mother Duchesne decided to return to Missouri. Her life was very lonely, and she suffered much for the souls of the people the sisters served. Never giving up her faith despite her struggles, she often said, "He who has Jesus, has everything."

<b>Saint</b>	<b>What special talents did this saint have?</b>	<b>How did she/he use these talents to serve God and others?</b>	<b>What was your favorite part of this saint's story?</b>

# Answer Key

## Sacred Art and Catechesis

1. Accept reasoned answers.
2. An icon is a flat painting, usually on wood, of Our Lord, Our Lady, or a saint(s).
3. Like all good art, icons can help us connect spiritually to the saints by helping focus our minds and imaginations.
4. Icons have a religious focus, and tend to be very simple. Where art in modern contexts often tends to be bright, busy, constantly changing, and so forth, icons facilitate stillness and silent contemplation. Focusing on them can help us quiet our minds enough to be able to hear God speaking to us.
5. Accept reasoned answers.
6. To focus our minds on the Lord and examples of holiness, to aid us in intercessory prayer. At home, the use of icons and other sacred art can extend Catholic beliefs and devotions into every room of the house.
7. The collage is a sign of how rich and varied the call to holiness is among the members of the Church.