



Celebrating the Saints

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The Family of God is much larger than meets the eye—literally.

Catholics are not only a rich diversity of family members living in countries throughout the world; we also are family with the Communion of Saints in heaven!

Persons' baptismal, confirmation, or religious names—not to mention parishes, schools, and national shrines—are after saints who inspire our faith. The Patroness of the United States, Mary the Immaculate Conception, stands as the most perfect model of holiness. American saints such as St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, St. Damien of Moloka'i, St. Katharine Drexel, and St. Frances Xavier Cabrini have lived and died in our country (*The United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*). Other saints from other countries are just as inspiring: St. John Vianney (*Reflections on Priestly Life: In the Footsteps of St. John Vianney, the Curé of Ars*), St. Juan Diego, St. Thérèse of Lisieux, and more!

Paragraph n. 2683 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that the saints "share in the living tradition of prayer by the *example of their lives*, the transmission of their *writings*, and their prayer today... Their *intercession* is their most exalted service to God's plan. We can and should ask them to intercede for us and for the whole world" (emphasis added).

Excellent Exemplars

The saints themselves show us how we can love God and our neighbor by the example of their lives (*Saints, Spiritual Thoughts Series* by Pope Benedict XVI). Part of our role as

catechists is to help students realize the holiness, goodness, and beauty of these virtuous men and women. Here are a few ways this can be done:

- ✳ Read stories of the lives of the saints. Particularly inspiring is to have students who are siblings read stories about sibling saints, such as St. Peter and St. Andrew; St. James and St. John; St. Benedict and St. Scholastica; St. Damian and St. Cosmos. Also inspiring are lives of parents, such as the Blessed Virgin Mary's parents, St. Anne and St. Joachim ("Faith and Perseverance: Saints Anne & Joachim Novena"); St. Monica; and St. Gianna Beretta Molla. And don't forget the many teachers who were saints and fostered the faith of their students who also became saints, such as St. Ambrose and St. Augustine; St. Albert the Great and St. Thomas Aquinas; St. John Bosco and St. Dominic Savio.

- ✳ Role-play the struggles and victories of love in a saint's life. St. Stephen, St. Maximilian Kolbe, St. Edith Stein, St. Christopher, St. Anthony of Padua, and the martyrs are wonderful examples!

- ✳ Watch a video that portrays the life of a saint, and talk about the virtues seen in that saint.

- ✳ Have students dress as saints or bring in props that tell something significant about a saint's life.

- ✳ Learn about a virtue and link it to a specific story in the life of a saint.

Saintly Sayings

- ✳ Read excerpts of what saints have written, such as one of the Four Gospels, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Francis de Sales, or St. Catherine of Siena.

- ✳ Write a story or poem about a saint or a saint's love for God.

Pious Prayers

- ✳ Learn the Litany of the Saints, adding the names of saints whom the students (or their city, brother, sister, etc.) are named after or would like to be named after (*Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*).

- ✳ Pray a novena to a saint ("A Heart Open to God's Will: Novena to the Blessed Mother, Feast of Annunciation").

- ✳ Sing hymns or songs about the saints' lives.

- ✳ Write songs about the children's favorite saints.

- ✳ Write prayers to the saints, asking for their prayers for particular intentions.

- ✳ Thank God for the spiritual favors received through a saint's intercession.

Children learn most efficaciously through your own admiration and genuine love for the saints. Ask for the saints' intercession for your students and class and, as a class, enjoy the friendship you have with them.

All titles mentioned are excellent resources published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (usccbpublishing.org).



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