

VOLUME ONE

SAINTS

for
Young
Readers
for Every
Day

JANUARY - JUNE



REVISED, WITH NEW STORIES!

SAINTS

for Young Readers
for Every Day

Third Edition

VOLUME 1
January–June

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Dedicated to
Venerable Maggiorino Vigolungo

Maggiorino was a teenager who lived not so long ago. He reached a hero's level of love for God and people by following his challenging slogan: "Make a little progress every day."

Known as the young apostle of the press, Maggiorino joined the newly established Society of St. Paul in his native Italy. His burning ideal shines clearly in his own words: "With the help of God, I intend to consecrate my entire life to spreading the message of Jesus through the apostolate of the media. I want to become a saint, a great saint—and soon!"

Maggiorino was just fourteen when he died, but he was ready to meet his Lord. In fact, he had written, "Heaven! Eternal happiness! This is what is waiting for me."

How to Use This Book

This book offers a story of a saint for each day. Some lived long lives; others died when they were young. Some were close to God from their childhood and teenage years. Others learned the hard way that only God can make us happy.

In these pages you will meet saints from every nation and race. They are from different centuries, starting with the early days of the Church right down to our own times. You'll come to know saintly kings and laborers, queens and housemaids, popes and priests, nuns and religious brothers. They were mothers and fathers, teenagers and children. They were doctors and farmers, soldiers and lawyers.

Saints were as different from each other as we are. They were as human as we are. They lived on this earth, experienced temptations and faced problems. They became saints because they used their will-power to make right choices and they prayed. They tried to correct their faults and they never gave up trusting in Jesus' love for them.

Don't try to read all the stories in a few days. Read them one day at a time. The saint for the day is from the current Church calendar (called the Roman Calendar). When this calendar does not present a saint on a certain day, we have chosen one that we thought you might appreciate learning about.

You might ask, “What’s the difference between a SAINT and a BLESSED?” Saints are holy persons now in heaven who grew close to God while on earth. The Church declares them saints so that we can love, imitate, and pray to them. Saints can pray to God for us and help us. Persons declared BLESSED are holy people who are now in heaven. Usually the Church requires miracles obtained through their intervention. When the miracles have been carefully studied and accepted as real, the blessed are proclaimed saints. You will also find MARTYRS in this book. Martyrs are people who allowed themselves to be put to death rather than deny God or give up their Catholic faith.

A good way to use this book is to read the saint story for the day either before or after you say your morning or evening prayers. In this way, you’ll be able to think about what you read during the day and try practicing the suggestion at the end of the story. (You might also want to read more biographies of the saints you especially liked.)

If you read a story a day, you’ll have made many new friends in heaven by the end of the year. And they’ll be more than happy to help you to become closer to God.

Contents



JANUARY

1. Mary, Mother of God	1
2. St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory Nazianzen	4
3. Most Holy Name of Jesus	5
4. St. Elizabeth Ann Seton	7
5. St. John Neumann	10
6. Blessed André Bessette	13
7. St. Raymond of Peñafort	15
8. St. Andrew Corsini	17
9. St. Adrian of Canterbury	18
10. St. John the Almsgiver	20
11. Blessed Bernard of Corleone	22
12. St. Marguerite Bourgeoys	23
13. St. Hilary of Poitiers	25
14. St. Macrina the Elder	27
15. St. Paul the Hermit	28
16. St. Berard and Companions	30
17. St. Anthony of Egypt	31
18. Blessed Christina Ciccarelli	33

19.	St. Paula	34
20.	St. Fabian and St. Sebastian	36
21.	St. Agnes	37
22.	St. Vincent of Saragossa	40
23.	St. William of Bourges	41
24.	St. Francis de Sales	43
25.	Conversion of St. Paul	45
26.	St. Timothy and St. Titus	48
27.	St. Angela Merici	49
28.	St. Thomas Aquinas	51
29.	St. Genevieve	53
30.	St. Maria Soledad Torres-Acosta	55
31.	St. John Bosco	57



FEBRUARY

1.	St. Brigid of Ireland	61
2.	Presentation of the Lord	62
3.	St. Blase	63
4.	St. Jane Valois	65
5.	St. Agatha	66
6.	St. Paul Miki and Companions	69
7.	Blessed Giles Mary	70
8.	St. Josephine Bakhita	72

9. St. Apollonia and the Martyrs of Alexandria	74
10. St. Scholastica	75
11. Our Lady of Lourdes	77
12. St. Meletius	79
13. St. Catherine of Ricci	81
14. St. Cyril and St. Methodius	82
St. Valentine	84
15. St. Faustinus and St. Jovita	85
16. St. Onesimus	86
17. Seven Founders of the Order of Servites	88
18. Blessed Elisabetta Canori-Mora	89
19. St. Barbatus	91
20. St. Margaret of Cortona	92
21. St. Peter Damian	93
22. Chair of St. Peter	95
23. St. Polycarp	97
24. Blessed Josefa Naval Girbes	98
25. St. Caesarius of Nazianzen	99
26. St. Porphyry	101
27. St. Gabriel Possenti	103
28. St. Romanus and St. Lupicinus	105



MARCH

1. St. David of Wales	107
2. Blessed Agnes of Bohemia	108
3. St. Katharine Drexel	109
4. St. Casimir	112
5. St. John Joseph of the Cross	114
6. St. Colette	115
7. St. Perpetua and St. Felicity	117
8. St. John of God	118
9. St. Frances of Rome	120
10. St. Dominic Savio	123
11. St. Gemma Galgani	125
12. Blessed Aniela Salawa	126
13. St. Seraphina (Fina)	127
14. St. Matilda	129
15. St. Zachary	130
16. Blessed Torello	132
17. St. Patrick	133
18. St. Cyril of Jerusalem	136
19. St. Joseph, Husband of Mary	138
20. St. Cuthbert	139
21. St. Serapion	141
22. St. Deogratias	142

23.	St. Toribio de Mogrovejo	144
24.	Blessed Diego	145
25.	Annunciation of the Lord	147
26.	St. Margaret Clitherow	148
27.	St. John of Egypt	149
28.	St. Tutilo	151
29.	St. Jonas and St. Barachisius	152
30.	St. John Climacus	153
31.	St. Guy of Pomposa	154



APRIL

1.	St. Hugh of Grenoble	157
2.	St. Francis of Paola	158
3.	St. Richard de Wyche	160
4.	St. Isidore of Seville	162
5.	St. Vincent Ferrer	163
6.	Blessed Notker	165
7.	St. John Baptist de la Salle	167
8.	St. Julie Billiart	169
9.	St. Madeleine Sophie Barat	170
10.	Blessed Antoine Frédéric Ozanam	172
11.	St. Stanislaus	174
12.	St. Joseph Moscati	175
13.	St. Martin I	178

14.	Blessed James Duckett	180
15.	Blessed Anna Schäffer	182
16.	St. Benedict Joseph Labre	183
17.	St. Stephen Harding	185
18.	Blessed Marie of the Incarnation	187
19.	Blessed Marcel Callo	188
20.	St. Agnes of Montepulciano	190
21.	St. Anselm	191
22.	Blessed Lidwina	193
23.	St. Adalbert	195
24.	St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen	196
25.	St. Mark the Evangelist	198
26.	St. Zita	199
27.	St. Gianna Beretta Molla	201
28.	St. Peter Chanel	203
29.	St. Catherine of Siena	205
30.	St. Pius V	207



MAY

1.	St. Joseph the Worker	211
2.	St. Athanasius	212
3.	St. Philip and St. James	214
4.	Blessed Ceferino Giménez Malla	215
5.	St. Mary Mazzarello	217

6.	Blessed Francois de Montmorency Laval . . .	219
7.	Blessed Rose Venerini	221
8.	Blessed Catherine of St. Augustine	222
9.	Blessed Nicholas Albergati	224
10.	St. Damien Joseph de Veuster of Molokai	227
11.	St. Ignatius of Laconi	229
12.	St. Pancras	231
13.	Our Lady of Fatima	232
14.	St. Matthias	235
15.	St. Isidore the Farmer	236
16.	St. Felix of Cantalice	238
17.	St. Paschal Baylon	239
18.	St. John I	241
19.	St. Celestine V	242
20.	St. Bernardine of Siena	244
21.	St. Christopher Magallanes	246
22.	St. Rita of Cascia	247
23.	St. John Baptist Rossi	249
24.	Blessed Marie-Leonie Paradis	251
25.	St. Bede the Venerable	253
26.	St. Philip Neri	254
27.	St. Augustine of Canterbury	256
28.	St. Mariana of Quito	258
29.	Blessed Eugene de Mazenod	259

30. St. Joan of Arc 260
 31. Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary 262



JUNE

1. St. Justin 265
 2. St. Marcellinus and St. Peter 266
 3. St. Charles Lwanga and Companions 269
 4. St. Francis Caracciolo 270
 5. St. Boniface 272
 6. St. Norbert 274
 7. Blessed Anne García 276
 8. St. William of York 278
 9. St. Ephrem 280
 10. Blessed Anna Maria Taigi 281
 11. St. Barnabas 283
 12. St. John Gonzalez de Castrillo 284
 13. St. Anthony of Padua 287
 14. St. Andrew Fournet 289
 15. St. Germaine of Pibrac 291
 16. St. John Francis Regis 292
 17. St. Emily de Vialar 294
 18. St. Gregory Barbarigo 296
 19. St. Romuald 298
 20. Blessed Michelina of Pesaro 299

21.	St. Aloysius Gonzaga	301
22.	St. John Fisher and St. Thomas More	303
23.	St. Joseph Cafasso	307
24.	Birth of St. John the Baptist	309
25.	St. William of Vercelli	310
26.	St. Josemaría Escrivá	312
27.	St. Cyril of Alexandria	314
28.	St. Irenaeus	316
29.	St. Peter and St. Paul	317
30.	First Martyrs of the Church of Rome	322

For an alphabetical listing of all the saints and blessed
in volumes 1 and 2, see page 325.

JANUARY

January 1



Mary, Mother of God

Today we begin a new year. It's one week since Christmas Day. In the nativity scene we have at home or at our parish, we gaze at Baby Jesus in the manger just as the shepherds did so long ago. We see Mary, his mother, and Joseph, Jesus' foster-father.

Mary was the daughter of Joachim and Anne. She loved God and her Jewish religion very much. Her neighbors probably thought Mary was very ordinary. It would be God's work in her that would make her so special, so full of grace.

God chose Mary from all women to be the mother of his Son. The Lord sent the Archangel Gabriel to Mary's town of Nazareth. Gabriel asked Mary to become the mother of God's Son. Mary wanted to please God, and so she answered "yes." With her "yes," Mary became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. She became Jesus' mother. Because she is the mother of Jesus, God's Son, Mary *really* is the Mother of God! What a blessing it was for Mary and her husband, Joseph, to be the ones to raise Jesus! They spent many happy years with him in Nazareth.

MARY



Mother of God

When Jesus was about thirty years old, he began his preaching and healing ministry. This is usually called his public life. (It seems that Joseph had died sometime before.) Mary often went with her friends to be near her Son and listen to his words. One day, she attended a marriage celebration in a town called Cana. Jesus and his disciples came too. When the wine ran out, Mary asked Jesus to do something. She wanted him to save the couple from being embarrassed in front of their guests. That's when Jesus worked the miracle of turning plain water into delicious wine!

Mary loved Jesus and believed in him. She was there when he was nailed to the cross. She received his body into her arms after he had died and was taken down from the cross. After Jesus' resurrection, Mary waited with Jesus' apostles for the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. The apostles loved her. They knew they needed more courage to be real followers of Jesus. Mary prayed for them and encouraged them. She taught them how to be disciples of her Son. Mary's feast days are special events that we celebrate throughout the year. Today we honor Mary as God's Mother by going to Mass. We can be very happy because Jesus gave Mary to us as our mother, too.

Mary's life was closely connected with the life of Jesus. To remember the events of Mary's life is to remember the life of Jesus too. Let's ask Mary to help us love her Son Jesus more each day of this new year.

January 2



St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory Nazianzen

Basil and Gregory were born around the year 329 in Asia Minor. Today we call this area Turkey. Basil's grandmother, father, mother, two brothers and a sister are all saints. Gregory's parents are St. Nonna and St. Gregory the Elder. Basil and Gregory met and became great friends at school in Athens, Greece.

Basil became a well-known teacher. But he wasn't satisfied. He felt that God was calling him to live as a monk. Basil visited monasteries in Syria, Egypt and Palestine, then moved to the wilderness and started his first monastery. The rule he gave his monks was very wise. Monasteries in the East have followed it down to our own times.

Both Basil and Gregory became priests and then bishops. They often preached about the Holy Trinity, because the errors of Arianism were confusing many people. Arianism was a teaching that denied that Jesus is God.

While he was bishop of Constantinople, Gregory converted many people with his wonderful preaching. But it nearly cost him his life! Once, a young man planned to murder him. He repented at the last moment and begged Gregory's forgiveness. Gregory did forgive him and won him over with his gentle goodness.

Forty-four of Gregory's speeches, 243 letters and many poems were published. His writings are still important today. Many people have based their writings on his.

Gregory's good friend Basil had a very kind and generous heart. He always found time to help the poor. He even invited poor people to help those who were worse off. "Give your last loaf of bread to the beggar at your door," he urged, "and trust in God's goodness." Gregory sold his inheritance to help the poor. He also built a hospital where he visited the sick.

Basil died in 379 at the age of fifty. Gregory died in 389 at the age of sixty. He is buried in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

Our education, time and talents are all gifts that God has given us. If we want to be like Saints Basil and Gregory, we can use these gifts to help the people around us become closer to God.

January 3



Most Holy Name of Jesus

In his letter to the Philippians, St. Paul wrote: "At the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:10).

The name “Jesus” means “God saves” in Hebrew. This name was given to God the Son by the angel Gabriel at the annunciation. The name “Jesus” tells us who our Lord is and what he came on earth to do. Jesus came to save us, his people, from our sins. St. Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, declared, “There is no other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved” (Acts 4:12).

In the fifteenth century, St. Bernardine of Siena promoted devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus. He preached about the power of Jesus’ name and was responsible for the addition of the name Jesus to the Hail Mary: “Blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.”

Through the centuries, the Church has taught us to use the name of Jesus with reverence and love. In the liturgy, we end every prayer with the words, “through our Lord Jesus Christ.” There is even a short prayer called *The Jesus Prayer*, which is very easy to memorize and repeat. It goes like this: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” Many great followers of Jesus, such as St. Joan of Arc, have died pronouncing his name as a prayer.

We should always use the holy name of Jesus with respect. It’s a very bad habit to use the Lord’s name in the wrong way, and we should never do this. When we hear other people using the name of Jesus disrespectfully, we can make up for it by praying silently, “Blessed be the name of Jesus.”