

Our Friends in Heaven



July to
December
VOLUME

2

Our Friends in Heaven

Saints for Every Day Volume 1
January to June

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We would like to dedicate this book to our dear

Sister Susan Helen Wallace, FSP

(1940–2013),

author of the first edition of
Saints for Young Readers for Every Day.
Her joyful spirit and love for the saints
inspired us to pour our own hearts
into this work in the hopes that
it will touch many lives.

From eternity, may she intercede
for all the readers of this new edition.

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How to Use this Book

This book is the first volume of a two-part set. Volume I covers January through June. Volume II covers July through December. In these pages, you will find stories about lots of saints. 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.

There are saints from every part of the world. They lived in many different centuries, from the time of Jesus to our own times. You will 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 are not just one type of person. They 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 willpower to make right choices and they prayed. Even when they made mistakes, they never gave up trusting in Jesus' love for them.

You might ask, "What is 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 meet MARTYRS in this book. Martyrs allowed themselves to be put to death rather than deny God or give up their Catholic faith.

Some saints are the PATRONS of particular needs, places, or groups of people. This means that those saints pray in a special way for those things. When you have a specific problem that you need help with, you can ask the patron saint of that problem to pray for you. You can also choose your own special patron saints to turn to in times of need (for example, a saint who shares your name, birthday, or is from the same country as you). These patron saints can become your friends in heaven, helping you throughout your life.

What is the best way to read this book? Do not try to read all the stories in a few days. Read them one day at a time (for example, before you go to bed each night). At the top of each biography, it says when that saint was alive, which day his or her feast is celebrated on, and what he or she is the patron of. At the end, there is a short prayer to help you get to know the saint better and ask them for help in your everyday life.

If you read one story a day, you will have made many new friends in heaven by the end of the year. They will be happy to help you grow closer to God. And maybe someday you will become a saint, too!

NOTE: This book is not intended to be used as a liturgical calendar of Church celebrations. Sometimes, the reading for the saint is on his or her feast day, but not always.



January 1

Mary, Mother of God

(First Century)

Feast Day: January 1

Patron of all humanity

God chose Mary to be the mother of his Son. She was a teenager and her parents were Joachim and Anne. Mary was an ordinary girl who loved God and her Jewish religion. She became special because of God's work in her and the way she cooperated with God's plan. God sent the Archangel Gabriel to Mary's town of Nazareth. The angel asked her if she would accept a wonderful plan—wonderful for her and for all of us. He asked her if she would become the mother of the Son of God. Mary loved and trusted God, so she said yes. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Mary became Jesus' mother. Mary and her husband, Joseph, raised Jesus with great love and taught him all they knew about their

faith. Jesus spent many happy, quiet years with Mary and Joseph in Nazareth.

When Jesus was about thirty years old, he was at a wedding in Cana with his friends and his mother, Mary. Joseph had probably died sometime before that. When the wedding party ran out of wine, Mary asked Jesus to do something. She wanted him to save the married couple from being embarrassed in front of their guests. He worked the miracle of turning plain water into delicious wine. Mary loved Jesus and believed in him. By making this request, she was telling Jesus it was now time to begin his public ministry. After the wedding he began to preach and to heal in different areas of Israel.

Three years later, Mary was there when Jesus was nailed to the cross. In fact, when Jesus died and was taken off of the cross, Mary received his body into her arms. After the 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, today's feast honors you as the Mother of God. Help us remember that you are our mother too and that you love us. Remind us to come to you when we need help. We know you will lead us to your Son, Jesus. Amen.



January 2

Saint Basil

(c. 330–January 1 or 2, 379)

Saint Gregory Nazianzen

(c. 329–January 25, 390)

Feast Day: January 2

Basil: Patron of education

Gregory: Patron of poets

Basil and Gregory were born around the year 330 in Asia Minor, or modern-day Turkey. Basil's grandmother, father, mother, two brothers, and a sister are all saints. Gregory's parents are Saint Nonna and Saint Gregory the Elder. Basil and Gregory met and became great friends at school in Athens, Greece.

Basil became a well-known teacher. But one day his sister, Saint Macrina, suggested that he become a monk. He listened to her advice, moved to the wilderness, and there started his first monastery. The rule he gave his monks was very wise. Monasteries in the East have followed it ever since.

Basil had a very kind and generous heart. He always found time to help the poor. He even invited people who were poor themselves to help those worse off. "Give your last loaf to the beggar at your door," he urged, "and trust in God's goodness." He gave away his inheritance and opened a soup kitchen where he could often be seen wearing an apron and feeding the hungry.

Both Basil and Gregory became priests and then bishops. They preached bravely against the Arian heresy which

denied that Jesus is God. This heresy, or false teaching, was confusing people.

While he was bishop of Constantinople, Gregory converted many people with his wonderful preaching. However, this nearly cost him his life. A young man planned to murder him but repented at the last moment and begged Gregory's forgiveness. Gregory forgave 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 writers have based their works on his.

Basil died in 379 at the age of forty-nine. Gregory died in 390 at the age of sixty and is buried in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

Saints Basil and Gregory, pray for me that I may use my education, time, and talents to help the people around me become closer to God. Amen.



January 3

Saint Genevieve

(c. 422–c. 500)

Feast Day: January 3

Patron of Paris

Genevieve was born around 422 in Nanterre, a small village four miles from Paris, France. While still very young, she desired to devote her life to Jesus. After her parents

died, Genevieve went to live with her grandmother. She spent time praying every day. She became very close to Jesus and wanted to bring his goodness to people. Genevieve was a kind, generous person. She liked to do good things for others.

When Genevieve was still a young woman, her city was in danger. A fearsome invader called Attila the Hun was coming with his army to attack Paris. The people of Paris were terrified. They wanted to run away and let the army have the city. But then Genevieve stepped forward. She encouraged the citizens to trust in God. She said that if they did penance to show that they were sorry for their sins, God would protect them, and they would be spared. The people did what she said. Before the fierce army reached Paris, they suddenly changed their route and went somewhere else. They did not attack the city at all.

Genevieve practiced charity and obedience to God's will every day of her life, not just in times of need. She never gave up trying to do as much good as possible. Many people saw that she was a holy woman and came to her for advice. Even the king listened to her opinions. Genevieve had a church built over the tomb of Saint Denis, the patron saint of France. She wanted the people of France to pray often and always remain faithful to God. Courage and faithfulness to Jesus are the special gifts of witness she leaves for us.

Saint Genevieve, pray for our leaders that they may turn to God in everything that they do, especially when making decisions that affect us all. Amen.

January 4

Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton

(August 28, 1774–January 4, 1851)

Feast Day: January 4

Patron of Catholic schools

Elizabeth was born in New York City in 1774. Her father, Richard Bayley, was a well-known doctor. Her mother, Catherine, died when Elizabeth was very young. Elizabeth was Episcopalian. As a teenager, she did many things to help poor people.

In 1794, Elizabeth married William Seton. He was a rich merchant who owned a fleet of ships. Elizabeth, William, and their five children had a happy life together. However, within a short time, William lost his fortune and his good health. Elizabeth had heard that the weather in Italy might help him get better. So she and her oldest daughter, Anna, journeyed with William to Italy by ship. Sadly, William died shortly after arriving. Elizabeth and Anna remained in Italy as guests of the generous and kind Filicchi family. They tried to make Elizabeth and Anna's sorrow easier by sharing their own deep love for the Catholic faith. When Elizabeth returned home to New York she wanted to become a Catholic. Her family and friends did not understand. They were very upset, but she went ahead with courage. Elizabeth joined the Church in 1805.

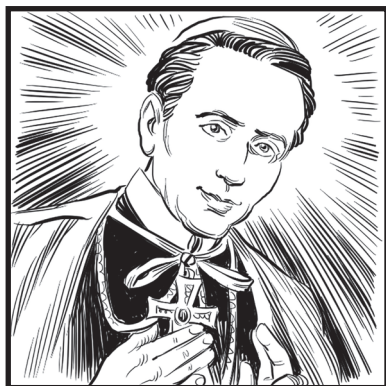
A few years later, Elizabeth was asked to come and open a girls' school in Baltimore. It was there that Elizabeth decided to live as a religious sister. Many women came to join her, including her sister and sister-in-law. Her own daughters, Anna and Catherine, also joined the group. They

became the American Sisters of Charity and Elizabeth was given the title “Mother Seton.” Elizabeth became well known. She started many Catholic schools and a few orphanages. She made plans for a hospital, which was opened after her death. Elizabeth loved to write, and she also translated some textbooks from French to English. But she was most famous for the way she visited the poor and the sick.

Elizabeth was declared a saint by Pope Paul VI on September 14, 1975. She is the first person born in the U.S. to be made a saint.

Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, you embraced God in hardship. Pray for me, that I may also trust in the Lord, even when things seem difficult. Help me believe that he has a plan for my talents. Amen.





January 5

Saint John Neumann

(March 28, 1811–January 5, 1860)

Feast Day: January 5

Patron of Catholic education

John Neumann was quiet and short—five feet, two inches tall. His eyes were very kind and he smiled a lot. He was born in Bohemia, now part of the Czech Republic. He had four sisters and a brother. After college, John entered the seminary. His ordination date was never set because Bohemia had enough priests at the time. Providentially, he had been reading about missionary activities in the United States. John decided to go to America to ask for ordination. He walked most of the way to France and then boarded the ship *Europa*.

John arrived in Manhattan in 1836. Bishop John DuBois was very happy to see him. There were only thirty-six priests for the two hundred thousand Catholics living in the state of New York and part of New Jersey. Just sixteen days after his arrival, John was ordained a priest and sent to Buffalo, New

York. There he would help Father Pax care for his parish, which was nine hundred square miles in size. Father Pax gave him the choice of the city of Buffalo or the country area. Now John's heroic character began to show. He chose the more difficult option—the country area. The farms were far apart. John would walk long distances to reach his people. They were German, French, Irish, and Scottish. He knew or learned all his people's languages so that he could communicate God's love with them.

After some time in New York, John joined the Redemptorist order and continued his missionary work. He became bishop of Philadelphia in 1852. He tended to the needs of immigrant Catholics, building fifty churches while he was bishop. He also cared very much about the education of Catholic children. John opened almost one hundred schools, and the number of parochial school students grew from five hundred to nine thousand.

John died suddenly when he was forty-eight. He was walking home from an appointment when he fell to the ground from a stroke. He was proclaimed a saint by Pope Paul VI on June 19, 1977.

Saint John Neumann, you moved around the world to follow your dream of being a priest. Pray for me, that I find the strength to always do God's will in whatever ways he asks of me. Amen.

