

 Living with Christ

POCKET BOOK *of Saints*

THEIR WORDS AND WISDOM



SAINT. What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear this word? Do you immediately think of a famous name such as St. Augustine, St. Francis of Assisi or St. Catherine of Siena? We are all familiar with these names and we are grateful to have such models of holiness to draw inspiration from. But can you think of anyone a bit closer in your life, in your circle of friends or acquaintances, or within your family even, that may reflect the life or virtues of a saint?

Mother Teresa once said “holiness is not the luxury of a few people, but a simple duty for you and me. We have been created for that.” If this shocks you, it shouldn’t. If perfection is the premise upon which we decide if someone is holy, I’m afraid not too many people – none, really – will make the cut. Even the prominent saints that we have admired for so long had real human struggles. When we lose focus of their *whole* humanity, the good and the bad, we make it impossible for us to think of sainthood as something achievable in our own lives.

What makes the saints extraordinary people is that they made their lives bigger than themselves by uniting themselves to the will of God in their lives. As you read through this book, may these brothers and sisters of ours in Christ help us to transform our own lives into something extraordinary as well.



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Prayer: Conversing with God

*Acquire the habit of speaking to God
as if you were alone with him,
familiarily and with confidence and love,
as to the dearest and most loving of friends.*

—ST. ALPHONSUS LIGUORI

Saint Alphonsus Liguori

THE LIFE OF ALPHONSUS LIGUORI (1696-1787) spanned the 18th century. Born in Naples, he was ordained in 1726. He soon won a reputation in Naples as a preacher and became widely sought as a confessor. He was committed to preaching sermons that were simple to understand and structured to hold the listener's attention. In 1732 he went to Scala and founded an order of mission priests that became the Redemptorists. His *Moral Theology* was published in 1748.

Alphonsus was known for his great kindness and concern for others. Made a bishop in 1762, he retired in 1775. He was canonized in 1839 and in 1871 was named a Doctor of the Church. St. Alphonsus Liguori is a patron of moral theologians and confessors.

*When we stand praying...
we ought to be watchful and earnest
with our whole heart,
intent on our prayers.
Let all carnal and worldly thoughts pass away,
nor let the soul at that time think of anything
except the object of its prayer.*
—ST. ALOYSIUS GONZAGA

Saint Aloysius Gonzaga

ALOYSIUS GONZAGA (1568-91) is a patron saint of young men. Born a prince in Lombardy, Aloysius began to practise prayer and penance at a young age, rejecting the values of his position and family. Against great resistance, in 1585 he gave up his rights as eldest son and joined the Jesuits, hoping to go to the missions. Instead, in 1591 the plague broke out in Rome, and Aloysius offered himself to serve the sick and dying in the hospital. He caught the plague and died three months later, at just 23 years old. He was canonized in 1726.

*A soul arms itself by prayer for all kinds of combat.
In whatever state the soul may be, it ought to pray. [...]
There is no soul that is not bound to pray, for every
single grace comes to the soul through prayer.*

—ST. FAUSTINA KOWALSKA

Saint Faustina Kowalska

BORN IN THE VILLAGE OF GŁOGOWIEC, near Łódź, in Poland in 1905, and dying in Kraków in 1938, Saint Faustina spent her short life amongst the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, generously conforming herself to the vocation she received from God and developing an intense spiritual life, rich in spiritual gifts and in faithful harmony with them.

In the *Diary* of her soul, Faustina herself recounts what the Lord worked in her for the benefit of all: listening to him who is love and mercy, she understood that no human wretchedness could measure itself against the mercy which ceaselessly pours from the heart of Christ. Thus she became the inspiration for a movement dedicated to proclaiming and imploring Divine Mercy throughout the whole world.

Canonized in the year 2000 by Saint John Paul II, the name of Faustina quickly became known around the world, thereby promoting the invocation of Divine Mercy and its credible witness in the conduct of the lives of believers. St. Faustina Kowalska is a patron saint of mercy. (*source: vatican.va*)

*Prayer is the best weapon we have;
it is the key to God's heart.*

*You must speak to Jesus not only with your lips,
but with your heart. In fact on certain occasions you
should only speak to him with your heart.*

—ST. PIUS OF PIETRELCINA

Saint Pius of Pietrelcina

FRANCESCO FORGIONE (1887-1968) was born in the Italian village of Pietrelcina. He entered the novitiate of the Capuchin Friars at the age of 16, taking the name Pio ('pious'), and was ordained in 1910. A stigmatic, he lived more than 50 years at the friary of San Giovanni Rotondo, devoted to a life of ministry through sacramental reconciliation and celebration of the Eucharist, and helping countless people who sought his counsel.

Pope Paul VI said of him: "Look what fame he had, what a worldwide following gathered around him! But why? Perhaps because he was a philosopher? Because he was wise? Because he had resources at his disposal? Because he said Mass humbly, heard confessions from dawn to dusk and was – it is not easy to say it – one who bore the wounds of our Lord. He was a man of prayer and suffering." Padre Pio was canonized by Pope John Paul II in 2002.

*Do you wish to rise?
Begin by descending.
You plan a tower that will pierce the clouds?
Lay first the foundation of humility.*

—ST. AUGUSTINE

Saint Augustine

BORN IN NORTH AFRICA, Saint Augustine lived from 354 to 430. He went to university at Carthage to study rhetoric but became interested in philosophy and literature instead. Augustine taught in North Africa for several years and then opened a school of rhetoric in Rome, moving to Milan in 384. There he heard the sermons of Bishop Ambrose and became convinced of the truth of Christianity. During Easter 387, Augustine was baptized by Ambrose and he and his entourage went to North Africa. In 391, the people of Hippo, near his hometown of Tagaste, insisted Augustine be ordained. Priest and ascetic, he established a religious community and began preaching. In 396, he became bishop of Hippo, where he spent the rest of his life.

These events and many more are recounted in Augustine's *Confessions*, a classic of spiritual autobiography. His other writings include *City of God*, *De trinitate* (*On the Trinity*), and *De doctrina christiana* (*On Christian Doctrine*). He is one of the greatest Fathers of the Church, known as the Doctor of Grace.

*Build an oratory within yourself,
and here have Jesus
on the altar of your heart.*

—ST. PAUL OF THE CROSS

Saint Paul of the Cross

PAUL OF THE CROSS was a “walking saint”: when he walked in public, crowds pressed in on him, hoping to get a piece of his habit as a relic, or to ask for a cure or a favour.

Born in northern Italy in 1694, Paul experienced conversion at 15 and began a lifetime’s devotion to prayer and austerity. After having had several visions, he determined that his vocation was to found an order dedicated to the Passion of our Lord. Officials declared the visions authentic and Paul withdrew to write a rule. He was joined by his brother, who remained with him for the rest of his life.

By 1747, the Passionists had three houses and were preaching missions throughout Italy. At his death in 1775, Paul was establishing a congregation for Passionist nuns. St. Paul of the Cross was canonized in 1867.

*More tears are shed over answered prayers
than unanswered ones.*

—ST. TERESA OF AVILA

Saint Teresa of Avila

TERESA WAS BORN IN AVILA, Spain, on March 28, 1515, and died in 1582. Of the many women who have exercised leadership roles in the Church, Teresa must surely be considered among the greatest.

When she entered the Carmelite convent, some thought Teresa was a spoiled young woman with an unremarkable prayer life but she soon advanced in prayer, experiencing visions and hearing voices. Dissatisfied with the laxity she perceived among religious, she determined to institute reforms and established St. Joseph's Convent where enclosure and a strict rule prevailed. With the assistance of Peter of Alcantara and John of the Cross, Teresa succeeded in founding the reformed (Discalced) Carmelite orders of nuns and friars.

Teresa wrote several works considered classics of spiritual literature, including *The Way of Perfection* and *The Interior Castle*. A great mystic and a strong, intelligent and active leader, Teresa was canonized in 1622 and in 1970 became the first woman to be declared a Doctor of the Church. She is a patron of Spain.

The limitless loving devotion to God, and the gift God makes of himself to you, are the highest elevation of which the heart is capable; it is the highest degree of prayer. The souls that have reached this point are truly the heart of the Church.

—ST. TERESA BENEDICTA OF THE CROSS

Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross

EDITH STEIN was born in Breslau, Germany (present-day Wrocław, Poland) on October 12, 1891, the youngest child in a large Jewish family. She studied philosophy with Edmund Husserl and received her doctorate at age 25. Drawn to Catholicism, Edith was baptized in 1922 and spent the next 12 years teaching at Catholic institutions. In 1934 she joined the Carmelites in Cologne, taking the name Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. By 1938 anti-Semitism was widespread, and her prioress helped Edith flee the Nazis, escaping to the Netherlands. She continued her writing and studies until August 2, 1942, when she and her sister were arrested by the Gestapo.

On August 7, 987 Jews were deported to Auschwitz, and on August 9, Edith Stein, her sister and others died in the gas chambers. Although a convert to Catholicism, Edith Stein always acknowledged her Jewish heritage. Canonized on October 11, 1998, she is co-patron of Europe with Saints Benedict, Cyril and Methodius, Bridget of Sweden and Catherine of Siena.

*When you kneel before an altar,
do it in such a way
that others may be able to recognize
that you know before whom you kneel.*

—ST. MAXIMILIAN KOLBE

Saint Maximilian Kolbe

SAINT MAXIMILIAN was born in Poland in 1894. As a Franciscan, he worked to spread the Gospel in his native Poland as well as in Japan. He had a great devotion to Our Lady.

During the Nazi occupation of Poland, he helped thousands of refugees, including Polish Jews. He was arrested by the Gestapo in 1941 and imprisoned at Auschwitz. Three months after Maximilian's arrival, a prisoner escaped. In retaliation, 10 men were chosen at random to die. One was a young father; Maximilian offered to take his place. His offer accepted, Maximilian died on this day in 1941 and was canonized in October 1982. He is a patron saint of prisoners and the pro-life movement.

*Let us remember the past
with gratitude,
live the present with enthusiasm,
and look forward
to the future with confidence.*

—ST. JOHN PAUL II

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