

ADVENT

★ WITH THE

Saints



WISDOM FROM THE
CHURCH'S HOLY ONES



INTRODUCTION

Spend this Advent with the saints as you walk with those who have provided us ideal examples of how to live the faith. In *Advent with the Saints*, you'll learn from the wisdom, humility, the sacrifice and the strengths of saints from throughout the ages. Realize how many of these servants of God were not so different from us. Come to know the humble people who answered God's call, grew in their faith and served the Lord. They remind us that we can all become more saintly each day.

Since the founding of the Church, ordinary people, through their love for God and their desire to be holy, have become extraordinary. Each in their unique way and by using their God-given talents, the saints led people to God. Through the years, and still today, they have called us to do the same. Especially as you prepare this Advent, allow yourself to reflect upon these saints who opened themselves to God's graces as they progressed toward holiness—something we can all strive to do, especially in this special season of Advent.

Terence Hegarty, editor

St. Oscar Arnulfo Romero

(1917–1980)

Oscar Romero (Oscar Arnulfo Romero y Galdamez), archbishop of San Salvador in El Salvador, was a martyr and tireless advocate for the poor who boldly spoke out against the repression and abuse that the underprivileged suffered in his country.

Ordained to the priesthood in 1942, he was ordained an auxiliary bishop in 1970. In February 1977, he was the surprising choice to be archbishop of San Salvador. In the Central American country, violent factions, grappling for power, murdered and suppressed the populace. From the pulpit, Archbishop Romero demanded justice and recompense for the atrocities committed by the army and police. Consequently, he faced numerous death threats from all sides for his refusal to be silent in the face of such injustices. He knew that he was likely to be murdered and was, in fact, assassinated while celebrating Mass on March 24, 1980.

“You cannot reap what you have not sown. How are we going to reap love in our community if we only sow hate?”

“If we are worth anything, it is not because we have more money or more talent, or more human qualities. Insofar as we are worth anything, it is because we are grafted onto Christ’s life, his cross and resurrection. That is a person’s measure.”

“Wherever there is someone who has been baptized, that is where the church is. There is a prophet there. Let us not hide the talent that God gave us on the day of our baptism and let us truly live the beauty and responsibility of being a prophetic people.”

St. Thérèse of Lisieux

(1873–1897)

Also known as “The Little Flower,” St. Thérèse of Lisieux (Thérèse Martin) was born to Louis and Zélie Martin on January 2, 1873, in Alençon, France, the last of nine children. Her mother, who herself had a desire to become a saint, died of breast cancer when Thérèse was only four years old. Thérèse was a holy young woman (having died at age 24) who was determined as a young teen to begin her religious life. At just 15 years of age, she was allowed to join the Carmelite Order and lived a simple life of prayer. Through sickness and making small sacrifices regularly, she remained faithful to God. Thérèse contracted tuberculosis a year before her death but decided not to tell others. She suffered tremendously and even said that her pain was so great that if she had not had her faith, she would have committed suicide. Thérèse did small things and made small sacrifices with great holiness and without seeking recognition. Because of this, her sisters in community were worried that there would be nothing to say about her after her death.

However, two books were published from her writings: *The Little Way*, her devotional, and *The Story of a Soul*, her autobiography, which are still tremendously popular worldwide.

“My mission—to make God loved—will begin after my death. I will spend my heaven doing good on earth. I will let fall a shower of roses.”

“Love!... that is what I ask... I know but one thing now—to love Thee, O Jesus! Glorious deeds are not for me, I cannot preach the Gospel, shed my blood... what does it matter?”

“The good God does not need years to accomplish His work of love in a soul; one ray from His Heart can, in an instant, make His flower bloom for eternity.”

St. Columban (St. Columbanus)

(circa 543–615)

St. Columban was an Irish abbot and native of Leinster who traveled across Europe laying down firm Christian roots wherever he went. Considered one of the greatest of the Irish missionaries, Columban was regularly tempted by the flesh as a young man. Following the advice of a religious woman who had lived a hermit's life for years, he left Ireland, feeling that he could no longer be surrounded by such beautiful women.

Seclusion, study and prayer were his companions for many years until his desire for missionary work led to his traveling to Gaul with 12 companion missionaries. Columban devoted himself to travelling, preaching the gospel and serving as an example of humility and charity.

He and his companions were respected for their humble lifestyle, their preaching and their commitment to charity and religious life. Columban went on to establish several monasteries in Europe.

But not everyone was enthralled with his ways. Several Frankish bishops disagreed with Columban's orthodoxy and his Irish customs. At one point, Columban was deported back to Ireland, but his ship ran aground. He stayed in Europe, arriving in Italy where he was granted some land. In his last years, he established the famous Bobbio Abbey in Italy, where he died. Columban taught an Irish monastic rule and penitential practices. His most well-known writings include a treatise on penance and his monastic rule.

"If you search by means of discussions for the God who cannot be defined in words, He will depart further from you than he was before."

"Nothing is sweeter than the calm of conscience, nothing safer than purity of soul, yet no one can bestow this on himself because it is properly the gift of God's grace."

"Let me bless almighty God, whose power extends over sea and land, whose angels watch over all. Let me study sacred books to calm my soul: I pray for peace, kneeling at heaven's gates."

St. Margaret Mary Alacoque

(1647–1690)

St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, a French Visitation nun, was graced with numerous apparitions of Jesus and was asked by him to promote devotion to his Sacred Heart. She was born in 1647 in L'Hautecour, in the Duchy of Burgundy, and from early childhood was known for her intense love for the Blessed Sacrament. She preferred silence and prayer to childhood play. She vowed to the Blessed Virgin Mary that she would consecrate herself to religious life. Upon doing this, an illness from which she suffered for four years was miraculously gone.

At the age of 24, Margaret Mary joined the Visitation Convent at Paray-le-Monial, France. On December 21, 1674, she received the first of her revelations. Jesus requested that his love for humankind be made evident through her. For more than a year, Jesus appeared to her regularly. He related to her the importance of holy Communion and asked Margaret Mary to observe special prayers and receive the Eucharist, especially on the first Friday of each month. Even though devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus was not officially recognized until 75 years after St. Margaret Mary's death, many believed that it allowed them to experience in a more enriching way the love and mercy that God had for them. That continues to this day. St. Margaret Mary was canonized by Benedict XV in 1920. Her feast day is October 16.

*“Cling to God and leave all the rest to him. He will not let you perish.
Your soul is very dear to him; he wishes to save it.”*

*“When you have committed faults, do not be anxious because anxiety,
uneasiness and too much agitation withdraw the soul from God and cause
Jesus Christ to withdraw from the soul. Let us, rather, ask pardon of Him
and beg his Sacred Heart to restore us to favor.”*

*“Nothing unites us so closely to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ as the cross,
which is the most precious pledge of his love.”*

Blessed Miguel Agustín Pro

(1891–1927)

Amid some of the worst religious persecution in modern times, Father José Ramón Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez, a Mexican Jesuit priest, was executed via firing squad for being a priest. Born January 13, 1891, in Guadalupe, Mexico, he was one of 11 children. Miguel Pro joined the Jesuits in 1911 and was ordained in 1925, just as the Mexican government had banned public worship. He celebrated Mass and administered the sacraments in secret, often going about in disguise, distributing Communion and providing for the needs of the poor. Many priests had been killed by government forces up to this point following anti-Catholic provisions that were written into the Mexican constitution in 1917.

In November 1927, there was an assassination attempt on the life of Plutarco Elias Calles, the Mexican president at the time. A bomb was tossed at Calles' car from an auto previously owned by one of Miguel's two brothers. All three brothers were condemned to death. The youngest was pardoned, but Father Pro and his brother Humberto were executed.

As Father Pro walked to the firing squad, he blessed the soldiers, knelt and briefly prayed. Declining a blindfold, he faced his executioners with a crucifix in one hand and a rosary in the other. Recognized by the Church as a martyr, he was beatified by Pope John Paul II in September 1988.

"We are living through difficult days because the persecution against the Church is raging more than ever, but this should not frighten you. Always remember that the Church is a divine institution and it cannot come to an end."

"We ought to speak, shout out against injustices, with confidence and without fear. We proclaim the principles of the Church, the reign of love, without forgetting that it is also a reign of justice."

"Heart of Jesus, I am all Thine; but take care of my promise so that I may be able to put it into practice even unto the complete sacrifice of my life."

St. Robert Bellarmine, S.J.

(1542–1621)

The patron saint of catechists (along with St. Charles Borromeo), St. Robert Bellarmine was an Italian Jesuit and a cardinal of the Catholic Church. An exceptional scholar, he is known for having defended the Apostolic See against anti-clericals. A Doctor of the Church, he was born at the height of the Protestant Reformation and was an apologist who wrote extensively against the prevailing heretics of the time, becoming known as one of the most important figures in the Counter-Reformation. He taught that authority originates with God but is vested in the people, who entrust it to fit rulers.

*“Charity is that with which no man is lost,
and without which no man is saved.”*

*“The school of Christ is the school of charity. On the last day,
when the general examination takes place, there will be no question at all
on the text of Aristotle, the aphorisms of Hippocrates, or the paragraphs
of Justinian. Charity will be the whole syllabus.”*

*“... we must recognize prayer as one of the greatest duties of life, consecrate
to it every day some time with which lesser concerns should never be allowed
to interfere, and resume it at all times whenever possible.”*

St. Francis of Assisi

(circa 1181–1226)

Known as a saint who most closely modeled Jesus through the manner in which he lived his life, Francis chose poverty, preached boldly and cared for animals and creation. But he was not always so close to Jesus. Born into a wealthy family, Francis lived a free-spirited life as a young man and especially enjoyed wearing fine clothes and spending money freely. However, in his mid-twenties, a severe illness prompted spiritual reflection, causing him to abandon his selfish ways and embrace poverty. Soon after, he had a vision of Jesus. Jesus asked him to “build up my house,” which Francis eventually came to discern meant the Church. Francis gained followers, who were attracted by his example, and eventually founded the Franciscan Orders. For the last two years of his life, Francis suffered with the visible wounds of Christ, the stigmata.

His feast day (October 4) is usually recognized in faith communities by hosting a “blessing of the animals.”

“Not to hurt our humble brethren is our first duty to them, but to stop there is not enough. We have a higher mission—to be of service to them whenever they require it.”

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*“The deeds you do may be the only sermon some will hear today.”*

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“We have been called to heal wounds, to unite what has fallen away and to bring home those who have lost their way. Many who seem to us to be children of the devil will still become Christ’s disciples.”

ADVENT ★ WITH THE Saints

This Advent, walk with the saints and blessed who have provided us with ideal examples of how to live the faith. Since the founding of the Church, ordinary people, through their love for God and their desire to be holy, have become extraordinary in the eyes of the Church and of God. Spend your Advent with the saints and learn how they continue to light the way for us, allowing us to come closer to the Lord through their prayers and wisdom.

This book, along with many other *Creative Communications for the Parish* products, is available on [amazonkindle](#) and [nook](#)

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