

WALKING *with* *the* SAINTS

DAILY DEVOTIONS FOR LENT



BERT GHEZZI

ASH WEDNESDAY

ST. JAMES

(First Century)

Be doers of the word and not hearers only...

JAMES 1:22

St. James was the head of the Jerusalem community and a recognized leader in the early Church. He was not an Apostle but a relative of Jesus, one of the few that he visited after the Resurrection. James presided over the first ecumenical council that opened the Church to gentile believers.

James taught about behaviors essential for successful Christian living. He exhorts us to adopt practices that will make us saints: resisting temptation, controlling the tongue, avoiding worldliness and the like. That's why I chose St. James to open this devotional.

Every day, you will meet a saint whose life and teaching illustrate a Christian practice that produces holiness. In the next three days, for example, saints will show you their wise ways of praying, fasting and almsgiving.

You will be celebrating Lent with some saints like Francis, whom you likely know well. And with others like Angela of Foligno, whom you may not have met. I encourage you to reflect on the message of their lives. But please don't try to adopt every practice illustrated. Just imitate the saints by being a doer of the word.

St. James, pray for us.

May you celebrate this Lent enjoying the company of saints. With them, may you draw closer to the Lord Jesus. Let him make you a saint.

THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

ST. TERESA OF ÁVILA

(1515–1582)

But when you pray, go to your inner room...and pray to your Father in secret.

MATTHEW 6:6

Teresa, a celebrated teacher on prayer and herself a model prayer, claims that she was a lackadaisical nun for twenty years. She says that she did not take her prayer life seriously until she was forty. But, once while praying the “Veni, Creator Spiritus,” Teresa heard the Lord invite her to pray more deeply. She felt as though angels were helping her to converse with him. So, Jesus came to her in a personal way and opened her to a lifelong intimacy with God.

Teresa’s holiness drew many women to join her. She organized them into the Carmelite religious order. She taught her sisters her ways of prayer. And Teresa handed her wisdom on to us in her profound and practical books: *The Interior Castle* and *The Way of Perfection*.

As this season of Lent opens, let’s dedicate ourselves to growing in prayer. In *The Interior Castle*, Teresa says that God “so deeply longs for our love that he keeps calling us to come closer. .[He] rejoices whenever we learn what he is trying to teach us.”

St. Teresa of Ávila, pray for us.

May you decide on a place and time every day to withdraw from busyness and pray, “go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret” (Matthew 6:6), just as Teresa and the Lord Jesus did so often.

FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

ST. CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE

(200–258)

But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face...

MATTHEW 6:17

Cyprian was a popular public speaker and lawyer in Carthage. He immersed himself in pagan culture, devouring the books of famous authors. But in 245 Cyprian gave his life to Christ and was baptized. And he renounced his attachment to secular values and literature.

Cyprian devoted himself to the study of Scripture and the great Christian writers. His divorce from paganism was so thorough that he never quoted a secular author in any of his books. The Christian community of Carthage chose Cyprian as their bishop in 248. At about the same time, the emperor launched a persecution that drove him into exile.

Cyprian taught his flock the basics of Christian living by letter. With word and example, he formed them in the fundamentals of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. “Those who pray,” he wrote, “should not come to the Lord with fruitless or naked prayers. Petition is ineffectual when it is a barren entreaty that implores God. ...thus Holy Scripture instructs us, saying, ‘Prayer is good with fasting and almsgiving’” (see Tobit 12:8).

Persecution continued, and, eventually, Cyprian was martyred in 258.

St. Cyprian, pray for us.

May you limit your fasting to *skip one, add one, repent one*. *Skip* something you like; *add* a practice like praying a psalm or reflecting on a Scripture; and *repent* of a persistent sin.

SATURDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

ST. PIER GIORGIO FRASSATI

(1901–1925)

But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing...

MATTHEW 6:3

As a teenager, Pier Giorgio served the poor of Turin, Italy. After school he went to slums where he greeted families and fell in love with them. He brought them food, shoes for their children, medicine for the sick, money for their bills and more. He had conversations with them that gave them respect and built their faith.

Pier Giorgio cared for his poor friends with a selfless passion. One winter, on a twelve-below-zero day, he gave his overcoat to a homeless man. When his dad confronted him, his only defense was to say, “But, Dad, it was cold.”

A friend once asked Pier Giorgio why the filthy environs he visited did not bring on revulsion for his part. “Jesus comes to me every morning in Holy Communion,” he said. “I repay him in my very small way by visiting the poor. The house may be sordid, but I am going to Christ.” With these few words, Pier Giorgio revealed the heart of his spirituality. He expressed his love for Christ in his service to the poor. And he encouraged his poor sisters and brothers, assuring them of Christ’s love for them.

Pier Giorgio was recently canonized during the Jubilee of 2025.

St. Pier Giorgio Frassati, pray for us.

May you pray today for the health and well-being of the poor in your parish or neighborhood. Consider donating your Lenten almsgiving to an organization that serves the poor.

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

ST. THÉRÈSE OF LISIEUX

(1873–1897)

You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.

MATTHEW 22:37

When Thérèse was three, she declared that she wanted to become a saint. And as a teen, she set loving God above all as her life's goal. "I care about one thing only," she said, "to love you, my Jesus!"

Thérèse's parents, Sts. Louis and Zélie Martin, created a homelife that fostered her holiness. For example, the family worshipped at daily Mass and prayed the rosary together. Her father took her to churches where they visited the Lord before the tabernacle.

In nine years as a Carmelite nun, Thérèse loved God in the pursuit of her ordinary duties. With the Lord first in her thoughts, she swept the choir loft, washed clothes, folded altar linens and escorted elderly nuns about the convent.

This holy nun, who lived a sheltered life in the 19th century, is a model of loving God for we who may live busy, and somewhat hectic, lives in the 21st century. Thérèse once said, "You and I must have a single aim—to grow in holiness while following the way God in his goodness has laid down for us."

St. Thérèse of Lisieux, pray for us.

May you set your heart on loving God above all. Today, may you go through your daily activities with the Lord first in your thoughts.

MONDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

ST. AELRED OF RIEVAULX

(1110–1167)

This is my commandment: love one another as I love you.

JOHN 15:12

St. Aelred governed a Cistercian abbey at Rievaulx in northern England for two decades. A gifted abbot, he cared for 150 monks and 500 lay brothers. Aelred ruled his men firmly but with gentleness. He was such an effective pastor that he never had to expel anyone from the monastery.

Aelred served his monks and brothers as their spiritual father. To get an idea about the saint's gift for friendship and leadership, we could identify him with a compassionate shepherd like St. John Paul II. Aelred loved his brothers, and they loved him as well. "As I was walking around the cloisters," he said, "all the brothers were sitting together. And in the whole throng I could not find one whom I did not love and by whom I was not loved."

Aelred helped shape monasticism by visiting other abbeys and sharing his pastoral wisdom. Encouraged by St. Bernard of Clairvaux, he wrote numerous books, including *Spiritual Friendship* and *The Mirror of Charity*, that readers still find helpful today. Severe illness confined him to his cell for four years before he died. His brothers kept watch around his bedside, soaking up his wisdom and love.

St. Aelred of Rievaulx, pray for us.

May you pray today for the grace to love family, friends and others as Jesus loves you. And for the grace to treat people you encounter with respect and love.

The saints are our heroes of the faith. In this daily devotional, readers will encounter a-saint-a-day through Lent. Discover new saints or get reacquainted with those who may be familiar. “Faith is caught, not taught” in this handy volume prepared with a reader’s journey through Lent in mind. Reading about the lives of saints and soaking in the wisdom found in their writings has been a fruitful spiritual practice for centuries. Known for years as a prolific writer, in *Walking With the Saints*, Bert Ghezzi offers years of careful research and his own special love of the saints to readers of all ages.



Scripture texts in this work are taken from the *New American Bible*, revised edition © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C. and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the *New American Bible* may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner.



By Bert Ghezzi. Design by Jamie Wyatt. Cover image: AdobeStock. © 2026 Creative Communications for the Parish, a division of Bayard. All rights reserved. Printed in the USA.



1564 Fencorp Dr., Fenton, MO 63026
800-325-9414 • www.creativecommunications.com



WS4

