



50 Saints Everyone Should Know

Sarah Gallick

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This book is an introduction to fifty of the most notable saints of the Catholic Church. Most Catholics have grown up seeing images of these saints in their churches and religious institutions. And of course these saints have inspired some of the world's greatest art. Many of these saints are also venerated by other Christian denominations and even non-Christians are familiar with the names of Peter, Francis of Assisi and Mary Magdalene, yet few of us could explain exactly who they were and why they are worth our attention. I hope that the stories shared here will introduce you to these amazing people.

A brief word about the process of canonization:

The Catholic Church teaches that everyone who lives a life of grace in union with God will receive the reward of eternal life and join the communion of saints. Everyone in heaven is considered a saint. The fifty saints in this book are among the thousands of "canonized" saints of the Church. They are recognized as models or intercessors and venerated because they lived lives of heroic virtue or remained faithful to God through martyrdom.

The canonization process is long and detailed. In brief, there are four steps: First, there is an investigation into the individual's life by the local diocese. If that concludes well, the individual is designated a "Servant of God," and all the files and research are sent off to the Vatican's Congregation for the Causes of the Saints. In the next, second step, the Congregation begins reviewing this material while conducting its own investigation and welcoming any new information. Once a panel of theologians is satisfied, the individual is declared "Venerable."

Up until this point the process resembles a congressional investigation, but now the supernatural element takes on importance because for the third step, beatification, the Congregation must credit a miracle (usually a healing) to the intercession of the candidate. Father Pat McCloskey recently described the process in St. Anthony Messenger, "A reported miracle must be examined by three teams that work independently: doctors, theologians and several cardinals. If they and the Pope agree that the cure was miraculous, the person can be officially declared Blessed. (If the person is acknowledged as a martyr, no miracle is needed at this stage.)" The individual can be celebrated locally and within his or her religious community.

A second miracle must occur after the beatification and it requires the same process of approval. At that time, the Congregation recommends canonization and the Pope proclaims that we have another great example to look to as proof that heaven is reachable for us all.

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