

What is a Saint ?

A Saint is an ordinary person just like you and me who has lived a very good life and tried to follow Jesus. God gives everyone special gifts which help us to live good lives. The Saints are people who used God's gifts very well and in a special way.

How does someone become a Saint ?

When someone dies, and their friends and family think they were really good, the Church will investigate their lives. If the Church decides that they could be a Saint, the Pope agrees that they should be called "**Venerable**." The next step is to wait for a miracle. A person like you and me can pray to that holy person to ask for a special thing like healing. If a miracle happens, the Pope agrees that they should be called "**Blessed**." The last step is one more miracle. Then the Pope agrees that the person is now a **Saint**.

Do we worship Saints

No, we only worship God. The Saints are there to help us. The Saints bring our prayers to God. Mary is a Saint. When we pray the Hail Mary and ask Mary for something, she brings our prayer to God.

Saint Maximilian Kolbe



 *Fortitude (courage)*

Feast Day: August 14th

Born: 1894

Died: 1941 (age 47)

Country of Birth: Poland

Raymond Kolbe was born in Poland in 1894. As a teenager, he took the decision to join the Franciscan order and become a priest. It was at this point that he took the name Maximilian. Throughout his life Maximilian had a special devotion to Our Lady and when he was ordained a priest he added Mary to his name (Maximilian Mary Kolbe). Maximilian worked hard to share his love of Our Lady with others by setting up a magazine and building a centre in Poland (which housed nearly 800 Franciscans) to help people to come to know Our Lady better. He also set up similar centres in Japan and India.

During the Second World War the Nazis invaded Poland and in 1941 Fr. Kolbe was arrested and sent to Auschwitz. While he was there a prisoner managed to escape. To discourage others from attempting to escape, the soldiers decided to punish 10 prisoners by confining them to a bunker and starving them to death. One of the 10 was a young married man with a family. He begged the guards not to send him to his death for the sake of his young family. Fr. Kolbe intervened and offered to take his place.

Along with 9 other prisoners, Fr. Kolbe was sent to a bunker where he was starved to death. During the time in the bunker Fr. Kolbe prayed with and comforted the other prisoners. Fr. Kolbe was the last of the prisoners to die on the 14 of August 1941.

Saint Maximilian Kolbe demonstrated fortitude by giving up his life so that someone else could live. He faced suffering and persecution with faith and helped others to do this also. We can pray for the gift of fortitude to help us to stand up for what is right and confidently live as disciples of Jesus. We can also pray for St. Maximilian Kolbe's intercession when we are faced with challenging situations.

To watch a short video on the life of St. Maximilian Kolbe visit: http://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=370

St Francis of Assisi



Feast Day: October 4th

Born: around 1181

Died: 1226

Country of Birth: Italy (Assisi)

Patron Saint of: Italy, of merchants, ecologist and animals

Born in Assisi in approximately 1181, Francis grew up to be an attractive and wealthy young man. Throughout his teenage years he enjoyed partying and spending his money on clothes and fine things. After many years of living in this way Francis became ill. He realised during his time of illness that these things were not making him truly happy and decided to turn his attention towards serving Jesus. Francis gave his clothes and money to the poor and spent his time serving the sick in hospitals. He prayed, fasted and lived a life of poverty, offering all that he did to God. St Francis gave up all that he had to follow Jesus and many people decided to follow his example. St Francis founded the Franciscan order which has spread all over the world today.

Saint Francis of Assisi demonstrated wisdom by recognising the real value of things in his life. He could see that money, parties and nice clothes were not going to make him truly happy. He devoted his life to serving God and others and constantly tried to be humble. We can pray for the gift of wisdom to help us to know what God wants of us and to understand the value of things in our life. We can also pray for St. Francis' intercession when we are struggling to see what is really important in our lives and when we feel we are being distracted from God.

To watch a short video on the life of St. Francis of Assisi visit: http://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=50

St Ignatius of Loyola



Feast Day: July 31st

Born: around 1491

Died: July 31st 1556

Country of Birth: Spain

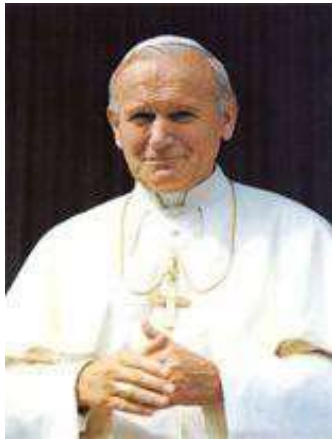
Patron Saint of: soldiers

Saint Ignatius was born in Spain to a wealthy family. As a child, he spent much of his time at the royal court where he worked as a page. Ignatius dreamt of becoming a great soldier who was renowned for his bravery. In his late teens, he joined the army and fought for his country in the battle of Pamplona. During the battle, Ignatius was badly injured and on his return home had to spend some time recovering in bed. Ignatius asked to be brought books and was given a book about the life of Christ and stories on the lives of the saints. As he read these books he was amazed at the great sacrifices that many of the saints had made for their beliefs. He was amazed at the good works, penances and prayers of the saints and realising that they were ordinary men and women like him he wanted to imitate them.

When Ignatius recovered, he returned to school to complete his studies and decided to use his gifts and talents to serve others. He encouraged others to pray and taught them about God. Gradually Ignatius gathered a small group of people who wanted to teach, preach and do good work as he did. In 1539 they were ordained priests and he and the others in his group became the founders of the religious order known as the Jesuits. Before he died in 1556 there were over 1000 members of the Society of Jesus.

In reading about Christ and the lives of the saints Ignatius learned more than just facts. He began to know God better and through prayer and reflecting on what he had read, Saint Ignatius came to a deeper knowledge of God and what he was being called to do in his life. We can pray for the gift of knowledge to help us to come to know God better. We can also pray for St. Ignatius' intercession when we are struggling to know what God is calling us to do.

Saint John Paul II



Feast Day: October 22nd

Born: May 18th 1920

Died: April 2nd 2005

Country of Birth: Wadowice, Poland

Patron Saint of: the Family and of World Youth Day

Karol J. Wojtyla, who would later become Pope John Paul II, was born in Wadowice, Poland in 1920. During the Second World War, aware of his call to the priesthood, he entered seminary in secret due to restrictions on Church activity at that time. After the Second World War he completed his studies at seminary in Kraków and was ordained a priest in 1946. Karol was a good student and a good priest. For the next thirty years Karol Wojtyla undertook many important roles in the Church and in 1978, was elected pope by his fellow cardinals. It was at this point that he took the name "John Paul II."

John Paul II was pope for nearly 27 years. During this time, he wrote many Church documents which helped to explain the church's teaching. His understanding of the teachings of the Church was not simply due to the fact that he was very intelligent. Through prayer, reflecting on scripture and participating in the sacraments Pope John Paul II grew in his relationship with God and gained a deeper understanding of the Catholic faith. Each morning Pope John Paul II would waken between 5 and 5:30am to make time for prayer. He would pray the rosary, followed by his personal prayers, and would then go to the chapel to prepare for 7:30 Mass. He often said that his sixty to ninety minutes of private prayer before Mass were the best part of his day. The Holy Father prayed almost continually throughout the day, even when moving from place to place he would enter into a time of prayer. He prayed several Rosaries each day, went to confession every week, and did not let a day pass without saying Mass and receiving Holy Communion. Pope John Paul II was taught a special prayer to the Holy Spirit by his father which he prayed every day asking for the gifts of the Holy Spirit and offering a Hail Mary and an Our Father for each of the seven gifts.

Through regularly receiving the sacraments, praying and reflecting on scripture Pope John Paul II grew in his relationship with God and came to a deeper understanding of the Catholic faith. At times in our lives we can find it difficult to understand scripture, the teachings of Jesus and why we believe certain things. We can pray for the gift of understanding to help us to make sense of these things in relation to our lives. We can also pray for St John Paul II's intercession to help us to grown in faith and understanding.

St. Gianna Beretta Molla



 *Counsel (right judgement)*

Feast Day: April 28

Born: October 4, 1922

Died: April 28, 1962

Country of Birth: Italy, Milan

Patron Saint of: mothers, physicians and unborn children

Gianna Beretta Molla was born in Milan in October 1922. She was one of thirteen children. Gianna worked very hard at school and went to study medicine at university. She was very active in her local parish and was always keen to help those less fortunate than her.

Once she graduated Gianna specialised as a paediatrician (a doctor who works with children). In 1955 Gianna got married and soon after she became a mother. In 1961, while she was expecting her fourth child, Gianna became very ill. In order to save her life, she would have to go through an operation, however this operation could endanger her unborn child. The doctors gave Gianna an option of an operation which would save her own life but take the life of the baby or an operation which would save the baby but could cause Gianna further health problems later. Gianna was certain that the baby should be unharmed and told the doctors to save the baby's life over her own. Gianna sought comfort in her prayers during this time and prayed fervently for her unborn baby. In April 1962 Gianna gave birth to a little girl. The doctors tried hard to save Gianna but one week after her baby was born Gianna passed away. Saint Gianna's was canonised (made a saint) by Pope John Paul II on 16th May 2004. Her daughter is still alive today and regularly tells her mother's story to raise awareness of protecting the life of the unborn.

Saint Gianna Beretta Molla demonstrated counsel by choosing to protect the life of her unborn child even when that meant she would lose her own life. She recognised that human life is sacred from conception to natural death and exercised her conscience with courage and trust in God. We can pray for the gift of counsel when making difficult decisions based on our beliefs and to help us to recognise right from wrong. We can also pray for St. Gianna's intercession when we are struggling to recognise what is right or when we find it difficult to make choices to live as faithful followers of Jesus.

To watch a short video on the life of St. Gianna visit: http://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=6985

Saint Jacinta Marto



Feast Day: February 20th

Born: 11th March 1910

Died: 20th February 1920

Country of Birth: Portugal

Patron Saint of: of bodily ills; captives; people ridiculed for their piety; prisoners; sick people

Saint Jacinta was born in Portugal on the 11th March 1910. Jacinta was a lively, energetic little girl who loved to dance. Along with her brother Francisco and her cousin Lucia she tended the family's sheep. One day, in the spring of 1916, an angel appeared to the children. The angel asked the children to pray and offer sacrifices to God. The angel appeared three times teaching the children how to pray. Almost eight months had passed since the last apparition of the Angel. Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta continued to practice what the Angel had taught them, praying and offering sacrifices to the Lord. Lucia was now ten years old, Francisco was almost nine and Jacinta had just turned seven, when on May 13th, 1917, Our Lady appeared to them. This was the first of six apparitions which took place between May and October 1917 during each of the apparitions Our Lady continued to encourage the children to pray.

As news broke of the apparitions many people in the village questioned and ridiculed the children as they did not believe them. The children however continued to follow Mary's requests, praying often and offering sacrifices such as giving their lunch to beggars and going without food themselves. Jacinta would regularly pray the rosary and adore Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. In 1918 she became ill and was admitted to hospital. Throughout her illness she continued to pray fervently. In 1920, at the age of 10, Jacinta died in hospital.

During her short life Jacinta learned to pray to God in true devotion and live a life holiness. In her daily life, she demonstrated a deep sense of respect for God and for the Church. At times in our lives we can find it hard to make time for God in prayer. We often pray, bless ourselves, genuflect and attend Mass as part of our routine but without taking the time to do so reverently. We can pray for the gift of piety to help us to grow in reverence and devotion. We can also pray for St Jacinta's intercession to help us to entrust our prayers to God.

Saint Francisco Marto



Fear of The Lord

Feast Day: February 20th

Born: June 11th 1908

Died: 4th April 1919

Country of Birth: Portugal

Patron Saint of: of bodily ills; captives; people ridiculed for their piety; prisoners; sick people;

Saint Francisco was born in Portugal on the 11th June 1908. He was the sixth of seven children of Manuel and Olimpia Marto. Francisco was a kind and gentle boy who loved to play with his friends. Along with his sister Jacinta and his cousin Lucia he tended the family's sheep. One day, in the spring of 1916, an angel appeared to the children. The angel asked the children to pray and offer sacrifices to God. The angel appeared three times teaching the children how to pray. Almost eight months had passed since the last apparition of the Angel. Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta continued to practice what the Angel had taught them, praying and offering sacrifices to the Lord. On May 13th, 1917, Our Lady appeared to them. This was the first of six apparitions which took place between May and October 1917 during each of the apparitions Our Lady continued to encourage the children to pray.

After the apparitions ended, Francisco was enrolled in school but often left as early as possible so that he could visit the Blessed Sacrament. He especially loved to go to church by himself and kneel before the tabernacle. He prayed to Jesus regularly in the Blessed Sacrament. In August 1918, as World War I was almost over, Francisco and Jacinta both contracted influenza. In April of the following year, Francisco, knowing his time was short, asked to receive Jesus for the first time in Holy Communion. The next morning he passed away.

St Francisco loved to spend time with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. His love for God was evident in his prayers and devotion. Francisco always wanted to do what was pleasing to God. Like a child who adores their father, Francisco dreaded disappointing God and desired to draw closer to Him, turning away from sin. We can pray for the gift of Fear of the Lord to make us aware of the greatness of God and therefore dread sin and fear offending Him. We can also pray for St Francisco's intercession to help us to know and love God as he did.

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