Saintly Scorecard

The Definitive Guide to Lent Madness 2021

Lent Madness Supreme Executive Committee

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Cincinnati, Ohio

The Biographies of the Saints

Absalom Jones

Set us free, heavenly Father, *from every bond of prejudice and fear; that, honoring the steadfast courage of your servant Absalom Jones, we may show forth in our lives the reconciling love and true freedom of the children of God, which you have given us in your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.* Amen.

Absalom Jones was born in Sussex, Delaware, in 1746. After being sold to a farmer, that owner sold Absalom's mother and the rest of his family to another slaveholder and moved with Absalom to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, when Absalom was sixteen. Absalom's owner was a member of Christ Episcopal Church, and when Absalom met and married his wife Mary, the priest of Christ Church married them in 1770.

Because children took the mother's status in the colonial states, Absalom purchased his wife's freedom so that their children would be born free. When Absalom was thirty-eight, his owner finally freed him. Absalom added Jones to his name since enslaved people were typically forced to take their owners' names, and upon freedom, assumed their own names.

The Methodist church allowed Black people to attend and lead, and Absalom Jones and his friend Richard Allen were among the first African Americans to be licensed to preach in the 1780s. But being allowed to do something doesn't mean being granted full authority and equality. When informed that they would be segregated to the church's perimeter and balcony, Jones and most of the other African Americans walked out.

In 1787, Jones and Allen founded the Free African Society, an organization created to provide the African American community's social, economic, educational, and spiritual needs in Philadelphia. The Free African Society established a strict code, including dues paid by all members to benefit those in need, mainly widows and orphans. The first African American church grew out of this organization's commitment to Christian community and ethics. When the yellow fever epidemic hit the Philadelphia area in 1793, twenty times more Blacks than Whites helped those afflicted, thanks to The Free African Society. When the Society began to establish The African Church in 1792, Jones founded the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas.

Ordained a deacon in 1795 and a priest in 1802, Absalom Jones is our first African American priest in the Episcopal Church. In 1973, the Episcopal Church established February 13 as the feast day for remembering and honoring Jones' ministry and life. No matter your race or ethnicity, we've all been blessed by his relentless pursuit to diversify the Episcopal Church.

Miriam Willard McKenney

ALBERT THE GREAT

O God, *by your Holy Spirit you give to some the word of wisdom, to others the word of knowledge, and to others the word of faith: We praise your Name for the gifts of grace manifested in your servant Albert, and we pray that your Church may never be destitute of such gifts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever.* Amen.

During the Middle Ages, there were few subject areas that Albert didn't study, contribute to, or lead the way in.

Albert the Great, also known as Albertus Magnus and Albert of Cologne, was a scientist, teacher, theologian, philosopher, prolific writer, physician, German Dominican friar, bishop, and diplomat.

Albert was born around the year 1193, somewhere in Bavaria to a wealthy German family. Albert was educated primarily at the University of Padua in northern Italy, where he began a lifelong interest in the writings of the great Greek philosopher Aristotle. Around this time, Albert reportedly was visited by the Virgin Mary, which convinced him to enter the Dominican Order.

He became a master of theology in 1245 and began to teach at the University of Paris, where the highly influential Thomas Aquinas was one of his students. Their relationship grew from teacher/student to friend and colleague. In 1254, Albert was elected prior for the Dominican Order German-speaking province, which kept him busy traveling and attending to the needs of the people. Six years later, he was named bishop of Regensburg, Bavaria, but resigned after three years. Again, his travels took him far, always on foot and never on horseback, thereby earning him the name "Boots the Bishop."

His lasting influence is far-reaching and ubiquitous. His contributions can be found in all the major scientific fields, from alchemy to zoology. Among his innumerable contributions to the world of knowledge, he is credited as discovering arsenic. Also of significance are his writings about Aristotle.

Albert died November 15, 1280, in Cologne, Germany. Since November 15, 1954, his relics have been located in a Roman sarcophagus in the crypt of the Dominican St. Andreas Church in Cologne. He was named a saint and a doctor of the church on December 15, 1931—one of only 36 named doctors. On December 16, 1941, Pope Pius XII anointed Albert as the patron saint of the natural sciences.

He is the patron saint of medical technicians, natural sciences, philosophers, scientists, and Cincinnati, Ohio—home to Forward Movement!

NEVA RAE FOX

Arnulf of Metz

O God, *our heavenly Father, who raised up your faithful servant, Arnulf, to be a bishop and pastor in your Church and to feed your flock: Give abundantly to all pastors the gifts of your Holy Spirit, that they may minister in your household as true servants of Christ and stewards of your divine mysteries; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.* Amen.

Very few saints have the pedigree of Arnulf (also Arnold, c. 582–642). He was born into the royal Merovingian dynasty and became the third great-grandfather of Charlemagne.

Arnulf's life and career began in politics. As an administrator and military officer, he was intimately involved in the palace intrigues and power plays of his day. This eventually led to his appointment as the bishop of Metz, a position imbued with both political and religious importance in the empire.

Whatever his faith life was before his ordination and consecration, the position seems to have transformed him. He was known to be generous with his wealth, redistributing it to those in need. The people of Metz faced constant threat of illness, so the bishop advised them to drink more beer, which was boiled in the brewing process, rather than the water of questionable quality. During one particularly virulent outbreak of illness, Arnulf plunged his pectoral cross into a brew kettle, telling his parishioners, "Don't drink the water, drink the beer."

Troubled by the violence among the royal houses and worried that he had contributed to the feuds, Arnulf tossed his episcopal ring into a river and prayed that God would return the ring to him as a sign that he had been forgiven for his earlier life. Legend has it that years later, a fisherman brought dinner to the bishop; cutting into the fish, they discovered the ring in its belly.

At about forty years old, Arnulf withdrew to the monastic life. With a few close friends, he lived as a hermit in the French mountains. The former courtier and bishop lived out the rest of his days in prayer and contemplation.

One more outpouring of grace awaited. In the middle of the summer of 642, a group from Metz traveled to Arnulf's mountain retreat to gather their beloved bishop's remains and return them to the city. Trudging over the hard terrain in the heat, the group came to an inn and stopped to refresh themselves. Unfortunately, the innkeeper only had enough ale for one mug. However, as they passed the one mug between themselves, the beer never ran out. All of them had enough and were refreshed. Arnulf reminds us of the importance of life's second act, and the value of a refreshing mug of beer.

David Hansen

Bartolomé de las Casas

Eternal God, *we give you thanks for the witness of Bartolomé de las Casas, whose deep love for your people caused him to refuse absolution to those who would not free their Indian slaves. Help us, inspired by his example, to work and pray for the freeing of all enslaved people of our world, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Redeemer, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.* Amen.

Bartolomé de las Casas was not impressed.

Dominican friar Antonio Montesinos had given an impassioned speech, which historian Justo L. González describes in the first volume of *The Story of Christianity* as the first open protest against the exploitation of the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. Montesinos had declared that colonizers were in mortal sin because of their "cruelty and oppression" of the people.

But Montesinos's speech did not sway las Casas. Las Casas owned what was called an *encomienda*, which included both land and the Indigenous people who lived there. The people were forced to work for him in exchange for his "guidance," which included "civilizing" them and teaching them Christian doctrine.

Las Casas was born in 1484 in Seville, Spain, and later settled on the island that now is Haiti and the Dominican Republic, where it's possible he was the first priest ordained in the so-called New World. He'd been in Santo Domingo for nearly ten years when he heard Montesinos preach. It would be three more years before las Casas had a radical change of heart at Pentecost about the treatment of Indigenous peoples. He gave up his *encomienda* and preached that others should do the same.

It would be years yet before he'd realize the same rights extended to enslaved peoples from Africa. "All the peoples of the world are humans, and there is only one definition of all humans and of each one, that is that they are rational," he said. "Thus, all the races of humankind are one."

Las Casas spent the rest of his life advocating for Indigenous peoples, arguing that the way colonizers had exploited them was incompatible with Christian faith. This included lobbying for legislation protecting Indigenous people in Spain. He also wrote a number of books detailing the atrocities he'd witnessed, which led many people to question the morality of the whole colonial enterprise.

Las Casas died in 1566. Today, he is remembered as a predecessor of the liberation theology movement and an early advocate for human rights. He reminds us to keep learning, repenting, advocating, and doing better.

Emily McFarlan Miller

Benedict the Moor

O God, *you have brought us near to an innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect: Grant us during our earthly pilgrimage to abide in their fellowship, and in our heavenly country to become partakers of their joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.* Amen.

If ever there were an appropriate champion of Lent, it would certainly be Benedict the Moor, OFM (1526-1589). Also known as Benedict the African and Benedict the Ethiopian, he observed seven "Lents" every year throughout his life—a total of 280 days of the year spent in fasting and repentance.

Italians brought Benedict's parents as slaves from Africa to Sicily, where he was born. Because of his parents' obedient servitude, Benedict was granted his freedom at birth. As a young adult, Benedict joined a community of Franciscan hermits living in the hills of Sicily. He quickly grew in reputation, becoming one of the community's leaders.

When Pius IV disbanded the communities of hermits, Benedict went with other monks to a nearby Franciscan monastery. There, his first work was as a cook, and his food was otherworldly! Angels were seen assisting Benedict in the kitchen as the food was multiplied to provide not only for the Franciscans but also for any visitors.

Benedict became known as a healer with the ability to read minds. So many people came for healing that Benedict got in trouble; he continued his ministry but hid in the bushes and healed visitors before they got into the monastery. The Franciscans admired Benedict's humility and spiritual discipline, and they elevated the uneducated and unordained monk first to the position of master of novices and then guardian of the community, both positions usually reserved for priests at that time.

At the end of his life, Benedict accurately predicted the day and hour of his death. He was so respected and beloved that the people of Palermo declared Benedict the patron saint of the city shortly after his death. King Philip III financed the construction of an elaborate tomb for the simple monk.

Even in his death, Benedict served as a beacon of the Franciscan ideals of caring for those in need. He was formally beatified by the Vatican in 1743 and canonized in 1807. It can be no accident that at the height of the African slave trade—when African children were being bought and sold as chattel—the Roman Catholic Church chose to canonize a faithful Black European saint. That act made him the first person of African descent canonized by the Vatican.

David Hansen

Camillus de Lellis

Heavenly Father, *whose blessed Son came not to be served but to serve: Bless all who, following in his steps, give themselves to the service of others; that with wisdom, patience, and courage, they may minister in his Name to the suffering, the friendless, and the needy, for the love of him who laid down his life for us, your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.* Amen.

Camillus began his life as anything but a saint. Born in 1550 in Italy, he was the son of a soldier who himself became a soldier of fortune. He had a well-deserved reputation for being a scoundrel, a gambler, and all-around trouble-maker. He suffered from a leg wound, but when he went to a hospital, Camillus was ousted because of his argumentative nature.

Ultimately, his leg wound brought his soldiering to an end, so he took up gambling. Destitute and desperate for food and a place to sleep, Camillus begged employ at a Capuchin friary in Manfredonia, Italy. After time with the order, he had a religious conversion. He applied to become a Franciscan three times but was denied because of his incurable wound and a lack of education.

The leg wound continued to plague Camillus, so he went back to the same hospital for treatment, working in exchange for a place to live. He eventually became the hospital's superintendent while growing in his faith through spiritual direction, confession, and prayer. He still occasionally gambled and brawled, as old habits die hard. But he was also committed to a life of love and service and was ordained to the priesthood in 1584.

Inspired by his time at the hospital, Camillus gathered a group of lay and ordained men to tend to the needs of the poor and destitute who were sick, wounded, suffering, and dying. He called this group Servants of the Sick. In 1591, Pope Gregory XIV changed the name to Order of Clerks Regular, Ministers of the Infirm. This new religious order wore black cassocks and capes with a red cross over the chest—the original red cross insignia.

Camillus organized his order to help wherever needed: private homes, jails, streets, and battlefields. In 1601 during a battle, the Camillans' hospital tent and all their supplies were burned to the ground except the red cross of one member's religious habit—surely, they thought, a sign of divine approval for their work to help the sick and dying.

Camillus was canonized in 1746 and is a patron saint for hospitals, those who are sick, nurses, and doctors. He also offers divine assistance for those struggling with a gambling addiction. This order takes traditional vows, as well as a vow of unfailing service to the sick, even at risk to their own lives.

Laurie Brock

Catherine Booth

Almighty and everlasting God, *we thank you for your servant Catherine, whom you called to preach the Gospel. Raise up in this and every land evangelists and heralds of your kingdom, that your Church may proclaim the unsearchable riches of our Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.* Amen.

The middle of the nineteenth century did not provide, by any stretch of the imagination, a fertile environment for the work of women in preaching and church leadership. Yet despite this hostile environment, Catherine Booth blazed a trail for others to follow in her role as the "Mother of the Salvation Army."

Born in 1829 to Methodist parents in Derbyshire, England, Catherine presented from a young age a deep aptitude for leadership in the church. By age twelve, she was said to have read the Bible through—eight times. In the midst of a controversy in English Methodism in 1850, she refused to condemn a group of Methodist Reformers and was expelled with others from the larger body of English Methodists. Among this group of reformists was William Booth, who would become her husband.

The Booths became active in the work of a church in West Yorkshire. During this period, she wrote a pamphlet *Female Ministry: Women's Right to Preach the Gospel.* She argued three primary points: first, that women are not inferior to men; second, that no scriptural authority exists to deny women public ministry; and that the action of the Holy Spirit had blessed and sanctified this ministry, in line with what we read in the Bible. She was eloquent, compelling, and ferocious in her defense of the right of women to preach the gospel. Her arguments won many converts – including her husband, who initially opposed her efforts.

She soon became a key partner in the ministry of The Christian Mission with her husband in London's East End. William preached to the poor; Catherine spoke to the wealthy and gained their support for their ministry. She organized the Mission's Food for the Million shops, where the poor could buy inexpensive meals throughout the year and oversaw Christmas distributions of meals to the needy.

In 1878, The Christian Mission became The Salvation Army. William Booth became known as the "General" and Catherine Booth as the "Mother of the Salvation Army." She played a key role in the organization, from helping refine its beliefs to the design of the uniforms. Catherine Booth was a pioneer and a trailblazer for the public preaching and teaching ministry of women, a fact that seems all the more remarkable at the height of the Victorian age.

David Sibley

Catherine of Bologna

Almighty God, *who gave to your servant Catherine special gifts of grace to understand and teach the truth as it is in Christ Jesus: Grant that by this teaching, we may know you, the one true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.* Amen.

If Advent is—as some have called it—a "little Lent," you'll want to remember this saint in your nativity scene later this year. After all, it was Catherine of Bologna who the Virgin Mary asked to hold baby Jesus, not the little drummer boy.

Born Catherine de'Vigri in 1413, in Bologna, Italy, Catherine joined her father in the court of Ferrara as a companion to the Marquis of Ferrara's daughter, Margaret d'Este. There, Catherine was educated alongside Margaret, learning to read, write, and paint. Catherine also felt called to religious life.

At thirteen, she joined a semi-monastic community of women following an Augustinian rule in Ferrara—but that didn't last long. The community split over whether to continue following the Augustinian rule or adopt a more austere Franciscan rule. In the end, Catherine and several others founded a convent of the Order of Poor Clares, following the first rule created by a woman, Saint Clare of Assisi. Like the order founded by her companion, Saint Francis of Assisi, the order named for Clare emphasized poverty. Later, Catherine was invited to become abbess of another new convent in Bologna.

As a nun, Catherine continued to paint, even illustrating her own breviary with portraits of the saints and about 1,000 prayer rubrics. She also wrote her most famous treatise, *The Seven Spiritual Weapons Necessary for Spiritual Warfare*. She wrote, "Whoever wants to go to God through sweetness and consolation is deceived." She also detailed several visions, including seeing Mary place her infant "graciously and with great kindness" into Catherine's arms.

During Lent 1463, Catherine became ill and died. People visiting her grave reported a sweet scent and miracles they attributed to her intercession. Her body was exhumed eighteen days later, discovered incorrupt, and placed in the chapel of the Poor Clares in Bologna. There, you still can find her, dressed in her habit and sitting on a golden throne.

Catherine was canonized as a saint by the Roman Catholic Church in 1712. Her feast day is March 9, and she is the patron saint of Bologna (the city, not the lunchmeat), artists, liberal arts, and against temptations.

Emily McFarlan Miller

Catherine of Genoa

Gracious God, *reveal to your church the depths of your love; that, like your servant Catherine of Genoa, we might give ourselves in loving service, knowing that we have been perfectly loved by you; through Jesus Christ our Lord.* Amen.

Catherine of Genoa (1447-1510) came from a life of luxury, but her path veered from her noble upbringing and toward the heights of heaven itself.

Growing up in a family connected to two popes, Catherine heard the call of God early in her life. At the age of thirteen, she attempted to enter a convent and become a nun but was denied because of her age. Her life then followed a well-trod path for women of her time and station: she entered into a marriage of political convenience.

Catherine's marriage was a train wreck, and her husband was a louse. Catherine was forced to endure his financial irresponsibility and infidelity, even as she remained childless. Continually hurt by her marriage, Catherine sought escape in pleasure and indulgence. Then at the age of twenty-six, after ten years of unhappy marriage, everything changed for Catherine. While in confession, Catherine experienced a mystical vision of God. Thereafter, Catherine continued to experience an inner relationship with God—directly communing with the divine without many of the formal institutional structures of religion and spirituality of the time. In addition, she took up the rare practice of receiving the sacrament of Holy Eucharist daily.

Catherine described her relationship with the divine in her *Dialogues on the Soul and the Body*, and her writings and visions influenced generations of mystics. She said, "On your part (God), you will grant your pure love, which will extinguish all other loves in me and will annihilate me and busy me so much with you that I will have no time or place for anything or anyone else."

Meanwhile, Catherine's husband declared bankruptcy. As he hit rock bottom, he discovered a new relationship with God. Together, Catherine and her husband began work with the poor and sick of Genoa. In 1478, at the beginning of a terrible four-year spike of the plague in Italy, Catherine and her husband moved into the hospital in Genoa. They not only cared for the sick, but also they lived among them. Catherine was so devoted to this work that she eventually was made manager and treasurer of the hospital.

Catherine's deep spirituality and the physicality of her service to those in need stand as an example to all who seek to remain connected to the divine while living out our faith on this earth.

David Hansen

Constantine

Almighty God, *you have surrounded us with a great cloud of witnesses: Grant that we, encouraged by the good example of your servant Constantine, may persevere in running the race that is set before us, until at last we may with him attain to your eternal joy; through Jesus Christ, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.* Amen.

Constantine the Great is a complex character in the history of Christianity. What is without debate is that he profoundly influenced the direction of Christianity. He is a saint in the Orthodox tradition.

Constantine was born in 272 CE in modern-day Serbia to one of Rome's four emperors, Constantius. His mother, Helena, was not of noble birth and may have been simply Constantius's concubine. She was a deeply pious Christian and, no doubt, shaped Constantine's relationship to Christianity. Constantine excelled as a military leader and ultimately succeeded his father as the emperor of Britain, Gaul, and Spain. A series of power struggles and civil wars led to his consolidation of power as the sole emperor of the Roman Empire.

One of the most significant battles was with Maxentius, a rival to the throne, on the Milvian Bridge. Shortly before the battle, Constantine had a vision in which he (and purportedly also his army) saw a cross of light in the sky with the words, "In this conquer." The following night, Christ appeared to him and told him to make his standards with the *chi-rho Labarum* ☧ (*chi* and *rho* are the first two letters of Christ in Greek). Constantine obliged and his army under that sign did indeed conquer.

Following this victory, one of Constantine's first legislative acts was to issue the Edict of Milan, which brought about the universal toleration of Christianity and the return to Christians of all property that had been taken from them. Whatever his personal convictions, his preferential treatment of Christians was a hallmark of his reign. He helped guide the Christian church through major controversies, including the Arian debate for which he gathered the bishops from across the Roman Empire for the Council at Nicaea—and funded the meeting entirely out of his coffers.

Constantine was also a major patron of the church—he gifted a villa that would become the foundation of St. John Lateran, he gifted the Vatican fields, and in Jerusalem he supported the construction of the important Church of the Holy Sepulchre and Church of the Holy Nativity. In 321, Constantine legislated that Sunday be a day of rest.

Constantine was baptized on his deathbed in May 337. Throughout the Middle Ages, he was revered as both a godly man and as a model ruler.

David Creech

Dunstan

Direct your Church, *O Lord, into the beauty of holiness, that, following the good example of your servant Dunstan, we may honor your Son Jesus Christ with our lips and in our lives; to the glory of his Name, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.* Amen.

The history of the church in England, like that of the church worldwide, is not a story of continual growth but of constant invention and reinvention. Saint Dunstan's great ministry was to preside over the reinvention of monastic life in England when its flame had nearly been extinguished by Viking invasions that began in the late eighth century.

Born to an influential family and raised in the household of his uncle, an Archbishop of Canterbury, Dunstan took a vocation to monastic life in 943, living at Glastonbury as a hermit within a five-foot by two-and-a-half foot cell. According to legend, he worked as a silversmith, a scribe, and a musician. Yet even as a hermit, his stature rose, and he became a fixture within the courts of Anglo-Saxon kings. Upon receiving two large inheritances, Dunstan used his newfound wealth for the restoration of monastic life in England. A political exile to Flanders proved to be transformative, as Dunstan encountered the Benedictine monastic revival.

When he returned to England after only a year of exile, Dunstan was ordained bishop of Worcester, then translated to be bishop of London, and ultimately in 960, he became Archbishop of Canterbury. He used his new influence and favor with the king to reform and restore abbeys at Glastonbury, Bath, and Westminster, among many others. Dunstan's monastics were "contemplatives in action"—particularly focused on the immediate concerns of church and state. They regulated liturgical worship, revived monastic life for women, sought education and discipline among the clergy, and brought the church into closer alignment with the royal power instead of the power of local lords. The revived monasticism also valued the arts, scriptoria, and workshops within monasteries.

Soon after his death, Dunstan's cult rose and grew to great prominence and was perhaps foremost in England until eclipsed by Thomas Becket in the thirteenth century; they shared a common site of pilgrimage at Canterbury Cathedral, where each was archbishop. Goldsmiths, jewelers and locksmiths claim him as their patron. Dunstan's work to revive monasticism would be a defining work of the tenth century in England; that same century would prove to be the cradle of the next five centuries of English history.

David Sibley

Egeria

Almighty God, *whose will it is to be glorified in your saints and who raised up your servant Egeria to be a light in the world: Shine, we pray, in our hearts, that we also in our generation may show forth your praise, who called us out of darkness into your marvelous light; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.* Amen.

Egeria was a fourth-century woman who traveled to the Holy Land and wrote about her experiences, leaving the world an invaluable record of the development of language, liturgy, and Christianity.

We don't know all that much about Egeria, the person. From her writing, it would appear that she had some status—the ability to travel from Europe to Palestine in the late 300s was not common. We also know she was a woman of deep faith, in that she undertook such a journey.

Her extant writing consists of a lengthy letter, now in two fragments, that she sent back to her community in Europe. Scholars are divided as to whether this community was based in Spain or perhaps France. She addresses them as "her sisters," which could signify a monastic community, but this was early enough that all Christians tended to address fellow believers with sibling nomenclature.

One fragment of her letter describes her approach from Mount Sinai to Constantinople, and the other fragment describes, in great detail, the liturgical practices of the church in Jerusalem and Galilee over a year. Egeria, it would seem, spent at least three years in Palestine, making notes and observations. This provides us with invaluable information about the liturgical life of the early church and how various reforms and ideas moved throughout the Christian world. Her letter, for example, gives us the first record of such familiar rituals as the Palm Sunday procession, the Easter Vigil, and the Good Friday remembrance.

Her letter also offers an important insight into the development of Romance languages. Because it's written in a casual form of post-classical Latin, it forms a bridge between what was classical Latin and what would become the Romance languages. (In fact, Egeria's letters feature some of the first known uses of the definite article.)

Egeria's bravery and creativity enabled the entire Western world to access the liturgical life we now enjoy, as well as the language we use every day.

Megan Castellan

Euphrosyne

Merciful God, *who looks not with outward eyes but discerns the heart of each: we confess that those whom we love the most are often strangers to us. Give to all parents and children, we pray, the grace to see one another as they truly are and as you have called them to be. All this we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, our only mediator and advocate.* Amen.

Many saints are born into wealthy families. It goes without saying that they are devout followers of Christ. It is also common for them to leave their wealthy, privileged lives when their families arrange a marriage that is distasteful. These saints all seem to be strong-willed, have a clear calling for God in their lives, and deeply want to serve rather than be served.

Saint Euphrosyne of Alexandria is no different. Born in fifth-century Alexandria, Egypt, Euphrosyne's parents were an older, wealthy couple who had been unable to have children. They called on the abbot of the local monastery to pray over their infertility. Shortly after that, Euphrosyne was welcomed with joy and awe and as a sign of a miracle from God. However, her mother died shortly thereafter, and she was brought up by her pious father, who took her to the local monastery for reading, writing, and theology.

Like many other girls of her time, she was promised to another family of equal social station in Alexandria, and her dad began planning the wedding festivities. Euphrosyne was not pleased. And so she prayed. Her prayers led her to a decision to run away to the local monastery (the same one that prayed for her birth), dress as a male, take on the tonsure, take on a new name of Smaragdus, and proceed to perfect an ascetic life. The word "Smaragdus" means emerald, and Euphrosyne is also known as "The Emerald of God."

People would pilgrimage from all over to learn from Smaragdus how to pray and center their lives solely on God. One of those individuals that traveled to the monastery to learn at the feet of Smaragdus was a man called Paphnutius. He was Euphrosyne's father but did not recognize Smaragdus in the habit and tonsure.

This deception weighed on Smaragdus's soul, and nearing death, Smaragdus told Paphnutius their identity. This commitment to Christ and willingness to serve God touched Paphnutius's heart, and he, too, was called to take up the tonsure and habit and live out the rest of his days in the same monastery.

In honor of this ministry and witness, the church recognizes the feast of Saint Euphrosyne of Alexandria on September 25.

Anna Fitch Courie

Evagrius the Solitary

O God, *whose blessed Son became poor that we through his poverty might be rich: Deliver us from an inordinate love of this world, that, inspired by the devotion of your servant Evagrius, we may serve you with singleness of heart, and attain to the riches of the age to come; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.* Amen.

Evagrius the Solitary (345-399 CE), also known as Evagrius Ponticus, was born to a country bishop in the region of Pontus in Asia Minor. His life intersected with and impacted many of "the greats" we know today. Evagrius was ordained a lector by Basil the Great. He traveled to Constantinople and was ordained a deacon by Gregory of Nazianzus around 380. He became a protégé of Gregory when he went the way of the Jerry Falwell Jrs. of the world and became embroiled in scandal.

In Constantinople, the handsome Evagrius had an affair with a married woman and had to flee when he was warned in a vision of her husband's impending revenge. Evagrius sauntered the streets of the Holy City until he had a mental and physical breakdown, ultimately finding refuge and the restoration of his health in a monastery in Jerusalem in 383.

It is only then, around the age of thirty-eight, that Evagrius left the monastery in Jerusalem to become a semi-eremetical monk in Nitria and later Kellia in Egypt. In this monastic arrangement, monks lived in individual residences under the supervision of an abba. Over the next sixteen years, Evagrius became a renowned spiritual teacher to this community of monks. His writings and teachings had significant influence on the development of western monasticism through translations from Greek to Latin and through his ardent admirer John Cassian, who, in turn, would significantly shape the Rule of Benedict of Nursia.

While Evagrius left many works, one of the most interesting (to me, anyway) is *Talking Back*, a treatise on the tactics needed to defeat the eight demons that undermine monastic life: gluttony, fornication, love of money, sadness, anger, listlessness, vainglory, and pride. This book is a collection of 498 biblical passages that a monk can use to "talk back" and cut off the demon. Evagrius is especially pointed on the demon called Love of Money. He argues that monks shouldn't confuse sufficiency with economic security and that they should live on the edge of poverty, giving any surplus to the poor.

Evagrius was rigorous and relentless in his thought and practice. Indeed, his bodily regimen proved to be so harsh that he exhausted his health within a span of just a few years. He died on the feast of Epiphany in 399 just sixteen years after arriving at the monastery in Nitria and Kellia.

Miguel Escobar

Henriette Delille

Almighty God, *You gave to your servant Henriette special gifts of grace to understand and teach the truth as it is in Christ Jesus: Grant that by this teaching we may know you, the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.* Amen.

Henriette Delille (1813-1862) had a very specific education. She was the Creole daughter of a freed woman and a European father in New Orleans. Her parents had a common-law marriage under the plaçage system. In this system, European men entered into a common-law marriage with women of color. When the man became financially established, then he would marry a white woman. There was an understanding that he would continue to provide food, shelter, and education for children of the common-law marriage.

Henriette lived in the French Quarter, and she was groomed to follow in her mother's footsteps and expected to marry a European man in New Orleans society. As a young woman, her mother educated her in literature, music, medicine, and dancing. Henriette wore fine gowns and made her rounds at the balls, while her mother hoped that she would make a match that would increase their family's security.

When Henriette was a teenager, she gave birth to two sons. Both of them died at a young age. Henriette also began to teach at the local Catholic school for girls of color. During this time, her dedication to the poor in the city grew, and she began to question the plaçage system.

While her mother tried to entice Henriette with the trappings of New Orleans society, children in poverty captured Henriette's attention. While the family tried to educate her so that she would be accepted in higher classes, she used her knowledge to educate slaves, even when the law prohibited their education. Henriette's brother urged her to stop working with the Creole community, because it highlighted the family's identity as formerly enslaved. While her family's property was supposed to establish her family in New Orleans' society, Henriette Delille used it to educate, care, and shelter.

Eventually, Henriette Delille found her identity in another family. She started the order of the Sisters of the Holy Family that was made up of free women. They provided nursing care for the elderly and a home for orphans. The order grew after Delille's death, and the parochial schools that the order founded became instrumental in educating children in the Jim Crow South.

Carol Howard Merritt

Hermione

Almighty God, *whose will it is to be glorified in your saints and who raised up your servant Hermione to be a light in the world: Shine, we pray, in our hearts, that we also in our generation may show forth your praise, who called us out of darkness into your marvelous light; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.* Amen.

Hermione was a saint of the second century who had an ability to both heal people—and avoid martyrdom.

According to church tradition, Hermione was one of the daughters of Philip, the deacon. She and her sisters had the gift of prophecy and were Christians from an early age. We know nothing about her childhood, but we know that when she became an adult, she and her sister Eutychia set out from Caesarea in Palestine to Ephesus, to seek out the apostle John to study with him.

Upon arrival, they discovered that John had died, so they studied instead with Petronius, a disciple of Paul's. From Petronius, Hermione learned about healing and began to minister to the sick of the city. Meanwhile, the emperor Trajan came to town on his way to battle the Persians. Encountering Hermione, he ordered her to renounce Christianity, but she refused. He ordered her to be hit in the face for hours on end. By all accounts, she withstood this undeterred because she had a vision of Jesus sitting enthroned in front of her, encouraging her. Seeing that she would not renounce her faith—and not wanting to be late for his war—Trajan finally let her go.

Hermione decided this would be a great time to start setting up hospices in Ephesus—a place that was half-hospital, half-hotel, where people could receive both spiritual and physical nourishment. She carried on her hospice work with vigor until the next emperor, Hadrian, came to town. He, too, decided to try his luck with Hermione and demanded she recant her faith. When this didn't work either, he ordered her to be boiled alive in a cauldron of boiling lead, tar, and brimstone. But one did not simply boil Hermione; an angel appeared and scattered the coals so that the cauldron went cold. Enraged, the emperor came forward and touched the cauldron to see if it had gone cold. (He burned his hand off.)

Not being one to take a hint, Hadrian ordered Hermione to be roasted on something like a big iron skillet. This also didn't work. He then told two servants to go and chop her head off. When they tried, their hands withered, and beholding the miracle, they immediately converted themselves. Hadrian declared defeat, and Hermione died of natural, non-martyrdom causes in 117.

Megan Castellan

Isidora the Simple

O God, *whose blessed Son became poor that we through his poverty might be rich: Deliver us from an inordinate love of this world, that, inspired by the devotion of your servant Isidora, we may serve you with singleness of heart, and attain to the riches of the age to come; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.* Amen.

Little is known of Isidora the Simple, a fourth-century nun. There are no biographical records of her, so her age and place of birth remain a mystery. But we know some details about her life in the Tabenna Monastery, the first religious house for women in Egypt.

At the monastery, she sought out the most strenuous and dirtiest of physical labor. She was nicknamed "the sponge" because of her willingness to do filthy tasks. She was considered mentally deficient by the other nuns, who ostracized and sometimes beat her. Hagiographers describe Isidora as a fool for Christ, not someone with a mental disability but someone who humbled herself to embody the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:18, "Do not deceive yourselves. If any of you think you are wise by the standards of this age, you should become fools so that you may become wise."

As part of her spiritual practice of humility and rejection of worldly rewards, Isidora did not dine with the other nuns. Legend says she was never seen eating or drinking but subsisted entirely on the crumbs of the other sisters' plates and the water she used to wash the dishes. Isidora wore a dishrag on her head rather than the nun's cowl the other sisters donned. Although she was mistreated by her fellow nuns, she never retaliated or complained.

The story of Isidora reveals her manner of devotion to be a willing self-humiliation. A very old desert hermit named Saint Piteroum had a vision that rather than being proud of his own sacrifices and devotion, he should go to Tabenna and meet a truly religious woman. In a scene that echoes Samuel's search for David, he met every woman in the monastery, and none wore the crown he'd been told to look for. He asked if there was another woman remaining, and so they brought out Isidora from the kitchen. Piteroum recognized the dishrag on her head as the crown he'd been told to seek and fell on his knees asking for her blessing. When the sisters realized she was not a fool but a devout spiritual leader, they repented and began to revere her. Isidora could no longer live humbly in the peaceful isolation of work and prayer, so she fled into the desert to live out her life as an anchoress.

Isidora's life is a reminder that service to others and true humility are the paths to intimacy with God. Her feast day is May 1.

Amber Belldene

Ives of Kermartin

Almighty God, *who gave to your servant Ives special gifts of grace to understand and teach the truth as it is in Christ Jesus: Grant that by this teaching, we may know you, the one true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.* Amen.

Ives lived, worked, and ministered in the thirtheenth century. As such, he could not have possibly known that he would have a lasting impact on the world, but he did, as evidenced by his nickname, Advocate of the Poor.

Ives is also known as Yves, Ivo, Yvo, Yves, Erwan, Iwan, Youenn, Eozenn, and Saint Ivo of Kermartin. He was a French priest and an important assistant to the bishop. He was also a lawyer, where he made his eternal mark.

Ives was born on October 17, 1253, in Brittany, France, the son of the lord of nearby Kermartin. After studying scripture, he was ordained in 1284 and served as a parish priest in Trédrez and Louannec, France. Ives studied civil law at the prestigious University of Paris and continued his education by studying canon law. He was known to lead a spartan life during his university years, focusing on learning, praying, and visiting the sick. Among his fellow students and colleagues was the great philosopher Roger Bacon.

Ives was tireless in his ministry of law. His life's work was based on fairness, justice, providing dignity, and respecting the rights of all people, whether poor or rich, young or old, man or woman. He earned his title "Advocate of the Poor" for his defense of widows, orphans, and the poor.

Ives's dedicated ministry sparked his appointment to the bishop's staff, becoming an ecclesiastical judge while continuing his defense of poor people. Following a long career dedicated to both civil and church law, he died in 1303. Pope Clement VI canonized Ives in 1347. His feast is celebrated on May 19.

Ives is the patron saint of attorneys, legal professionals, paralegals, advocates, abandoned children, and the Brittany region in France. The honors live on, with numerous law schools and lawyers' associations named for Saint Ives. He is often depicted with a money bag in his right hand, representing the assets he gave to the poor, and a scroll, signifying the law, in the other.

On his 700th birthday, Ives was honored with a tribute from Pope John Paul II: "The values proposed by Saint Ivo retain an astonishing timeliness. His concern to promote impartial justice and to defend the rights of the poorest persons invite the builders of Europe today to make every effort to ensure that the rights of all, especially the weakest, are recognized and defended."

Neva Rae Fox

Jacapone da Todi

O God, *whose blessed Son became poor that we through his poverty might be rich: Deliver us from an inordinate love of this world, that we, inspired by the devotion of your servant Jacapone, may serve you with singleness of heart, and attain to the riches of the age to come; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.* Amen.

All the world is a stage, and God needs the highly dramatic to play a part. God found this person in Jacopone da Todi. Born around 1230 into a noble family, Jacomo became a successful lawyer and married a deeply religious woman. Jacomo was anything but deeply religious, instead concerned with attaining all the wealth he could, regardless of the human cost. His wife decided to atone for his sins by fasting and wearing clothing to signify her penance for his sins. She was killed in a tragic accident, and when Jacomo discovered his wife's penitential practices on his behalf, he was shaken and stirred to focus his life on following God.

Following her death, he gave away all his possessions to the poor and entered a Franciscan Order as a layman and a wandering ascetic for almost a decade. During this time, Jacomo had some rather unusual prayer practices, including wearing a saddle, crawling on all fours, and appearing at a wedding tarred and feathered. Not surprisingly, he began to be known by the name Jacopone, which means "crazy Jim/James."

Jacopone, a name he embraced, sought to be admitted to the Friars Minor, but given his reputation, they were cautious. In response, Jacopone composed a beautiful poem about the vanities of the world. His use of language, particularly in the vernacular of his region, not only led to his admission to the order in 1278, but he also left a legacy of elegant, prayerful language that remains with us today. He used his poetry to capture sorrow, condemn church corruption, call out kings and clergy for ignoring the welfare of the common people, and inspire the faithful.

Jacopone continued to be controversial and dramatic, managing to get himself excommunicated and imprisoned for being on the losing side of a reformation movement within the Franciscans. During his imprisonment, he composed the famous Latin *Stabat Mater Dolorosa*, a hymn that gives voice to Mary as she witnesses her son Jesus' crucifixion, and is often sung on Good Friday in many Christian traditions.

At the end of his life, Jacopone retired to a convent of the Poor Clares. On Christmas Eve, in 1306, Jacopone sang a Christmas hymn, listened to the priest chant the Gloria at the beginning of midnight mass, and died.

Laurie Brock

Joan of Arc

Holy God, *whose power is made perfect in weakness: we honor you for the calling of Jeanne d'Arc, who, though young, rose up in valor to bear your standard for her country, and endured with grace and fortitude both victory and defeat; and we pray that we, like Jeanne, may bear witness to the truth that is in us to friends and enemies alike, and encouraged by the companionship of your saints, give ourselves bravely to the struggle for justice in our time; through Christ our Savior,, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever.* Amen.

Jeanne la Pucelle was born in 1412 in France, in the midst of the Hundred Years' War between England and its allies and France. When she was about thirteen years old, Joan began to have visions of saints that were so beautiful she said she wept after experiencing them. Over the years, these heavenly messengers shared with her the mission to help Charles of Valois (the king-in-waiting) claim the French throne. As a covenant of this mission from God, Joan took a vow of chastity. Her father promptly arranged a marriage for her, while Joan asserted she should remain unmarried.

As the visions continued, Joan argued with the heavenly messengers, saying she was only a poor girl who could neither ride nor fight. Saint Michael replied, "It is God who commands it." Joan went again to meet the French leaders. During this trip, Joan began to dress in clothing traditionally worn by male soldiers. Whether this was a choice by Joan or a protective measure as her party traveled through hostile territory remains unknown, but her clothing choice would later be among the charges of heresy and witchcraft.

Joan's message to Charles infused the war with a religious fervor, with France fighting on the side of God. Charles's advisors investigated Joan's faith and reported that she was a good Christian with virtues of humility, honesty, and simplicity. Court theologians suggested Charles put Joan to the test and see if she could, indeed, lead the French army to a divinely inspired victory at Orleans. In March 1429, Joan wore white armor, rode a white horse, and led French troops into battle in Orleans. France was victorious.

The French gained several victories under Joan's leadership, but she was captured in 1430. The English put her on trial, claiming she was a heretic and witch. King Charles, seeking to save his power, distanced himself from Joan. After the trial, Joan was burned to death at the stake on May 30, 1431.

Her fame and inspiring leadership, however, continued to grow, and twenty years later, the same Charles who did nothing to save her life ordered a new trial to clear her name. On May 16, 1920, Saint Joan of Arc was canonized.

Laurie Brock

Leo the Great

O Lord our God, *grant that your church, following the teaching of your servant Leo of Rome, may hold fast the great mystery of our redemption and adore the one Christ, true God and true Man, neither divided from our human nature nor separate from your divine Being; through the same Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.* Amen.

The fifth century was a time of turmoil in the Western Roman Empire. After the death of Theodosius in 395, the empire divided into Eastern and Western portions—and the Eastern Empire (centered in Constantinople) was more prosperous and secure than the Western Empire (centered in Rome).

It was within the unsettled west that Leo the Great served the church. The Western Empire was constantly under threat of invasion from the east and north. Around 440, Leo was sent to Gaul as a peacemaker between two generals whose bickering endangered Gaul's safety; while he was there, he received word that he had been elected bishop of Rome.

Service as Pope in the middle of the fifth century didn't carry the prestige it does today. Leo worked to assert the authority of the Roman pontiff as the successor of Peter: he asserted a strong hand in the furthest reaches of the Western Empire over recalcitrant bishops, and he worked energetically in Gaul, Spain, and Africa to combat the anathematized teachings of Manicheans, Pricillians, and Pelagians.

Yet while Leo built up the power of the Roman See, his gifts as a peacemaker left the most profound impression on Christianity as a whole. Debate had continued for centuries across the church as to the nature of Jesus Christ. Leo wrote with authority, dignity, and clarity that Jesus Christ is one person, the Divine Word, in whom human and divine natures are fully united without either confusion or mixture. The *Tome of Leo* was received by the Council of Chalcedon in 451; upon hearing it, the council is said to have remarked that "Peter has spoken by Leo."

Leo was not limited to keeping the peace in church disputes. When Attilla the Hun surrounded Rome in 452, Leo personally negotiated with him to accept tribute instead of plundering and destroying the city. Three years later, as the Vandals surrounded Rome, Leo again sought peace. This time his efforts failed, yet his intervention is credited with saving the city from burning and mass slaughter.

His care for the integrity of the church and the safety of the people entrusted to its care commend him to the memory of the church as one of its saints; his feast day is celebrated on November 10.

David Sibley

Marianne Cope

Bind up the wounds *of your children, O God, and help us to be bold and loving in service to all who are shunned for the diseases they suffer, following the example of your servant Marianne, that your grace may be poured forth upon all; through Jesus Christ our Lord; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever.* Amen.

Marianne Cope was an American nun who established hospitals throughout central New York and Hawaii.

Born Maria Anna in Germany in 1838, her family emigrated to Utica, New York before her first birthday. They took up residence within the parish of St. Joseph, and the children attended the local Catholic school. Because Maria Anna's father was sickly and unable to work, she dropped out of school and went to work in a factory after the eighth grade. Once her younger siblings became old enough to support themselves, Maria Anne pursued her dream of a religious life. She entered a Third Order Franciscan community in Syracuse, New York in 1862, changing her name to Marianne.

Once an official nun, Marianne became a teacher and quickly advanced, becoming the principal and then the head of her religious congregation by 1870. She helped to found two hospitals in central New York—insisting each time that medical care be offered to all comers, regardless of religion or creed (unusual for the time.). She became the superior general of the first public hospital in Syracuse and helped relocate the Geneva Medical College of Hobart College, where it became the medical school of Syracuse University.

In 1883, the king of Hawaii asked her to come and work with the lepers in Hawaii. More than fifty other congregations had already said no, but Marianne jumped at the chance. She landed in Hawaii in 1883 and set up a triage hospital for treatment of leprosy. She intended to spend only a few years in Hawaii, but she ended up serving there for the rest of her life, building hospitals and schools in the islands. She built a women's hospital in Maui (the first hospital on the island) and opened a home for the children of leprosy patients—children who had become homeless because of their association with such a dreaded disease. When Fr. Damien of Molokai, well-known for his work in the leper colony, developed the disease, she took care of him, and when he died, she took charge of his work in addition to the hospitals and schools she was already running.

Marianne died in 1918 and became one of only a few American women to be canonized by the Vatican.

Megan Castellan

Maryam of Qidun

O God, *whose glory it is always to have mercy: Be gracious to all who have gone astray from your ways, and restore them again like your servant Maryam, that with penitent hearts and steadfast faith they might embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of your Word, Jesus Christ; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever.* Amen.

Maryam of Qidun was a monastic woman with a story easily transformed into legend bordering on hyperbole. The scant, subjective information about her life leaves much to the imagination. Nonetheless, even when you remove all embellishment, we're left with a woman worthy of our deep contemplation.

Maryam's parents died when she was seven, and she went into the care of her uncle, Abraham, of Qidun, a desert village outside of Edessa, Turkey. Abraham was a monastic who gave his considerable wealth to the poor and lived the life of a hermit, entirely devoted to God. He raised his niece as part of his monastic cell, with him in an inner room and Maryam in an outer space. A small window between the rooms allowed Abraham to teach Maryam scripture and a rule of life, and they lived this way for twenty years.

One day, a man described as a monk "in name only" began to visit Abraham but set his intentions on Maryam. After a year of visits, the man convinced Maryam to leave her cell, at which point he "immediately contaminated and polluted her" due to his lust. Maryam immediately berated herself, believing herself unworthy of forgiveness. Considering her life over, she fled to a place where no one knew her and lived as a prostitute.

Abraham had two dreams that showed Maryam's fate. After two years, he finally discovered her location, borrowed the clothing of a soldier so that he would not be recognizable, and set out to find Maryam. Once Abraham found her, he asked to meet with her and ultimately went to her bedroom. Abraham then revealed himself to her as her uncle, lamented her leaving, and begged her to return. Abraham convinced Maryam that she could confess her sin and God would forgive her, and they returned to their cell.

Abraham put Maryam in the inner room and himself in the outer enclosure. Her weeping and cries of penitence inspired people to visit her to cry out to God alongside her. Many people were blessed by her salvation.

Most of us are unwilling to publicly repent for our sins, let alone be willing to confess and submit our lives to God. Maryam reminds us that the repentance of others can help us in our need to be forgiven. Her greatest lesson and gift: no one is devoid of sin except for God.

Miriam Willard McKenney

MATTHIAS

Almighty God, *who in the place of Judas chose your faithful servant Matthias to be numbered among the Twelve: Grant that your Church, being delivered from false apostles, may always be guided and governed by faithful and true pastors; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.* Amen.

"And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles." With that action, as detailed in Acts 1:26, Matthias joined the other Apostles, replacing the betrayer Judas Iscariot.

Other than the fact he was born in Judea, Matthias's early life is lost to history and not much is known about him. However, according to tradition, he had been one of Jesus' seventy disciples at the baptism by John the Baptist in the River Jordan. In fact, the witnessing of Jesus' baptism was a key element in Matthias's nomination to replace Judas. The other requirement was being present at the Ascension.

After the betrayal by Judas, the remaining apostles believed it was critical to keep their number at twelve, representing the twelve tribes of Israel. Two disciples met the standards for nomination; they cast lots, and Matthias was chosen. While Matthias's selection occurred after the ascension of Jesus, it was before the Day of Pentecost. Therefore, Matthias was with the group in the Upper Room at the descent of the Holy Spirit. As with the other apostles, his ministry blossomed following the miracle of Pentecost.

From Jerusalem, Matthias traveled far to spread the word of Jesus. Historians say his ministry focused near Cappadocia in modern-day Turkey and the area around the Caspian Sea. Some reports indicate he made his way to today's country of Georgia.

He died in 80 CE, but the particulars of his death vary greatly. Some report he was stoned to death and then beheaded in Jerusalem, while other accounts have him dying near Sebastopolis, now in Turkey, and still another stated he died of old age. As for his remains, some are interred in the Abbey of Santa Giustina, in Padua, Italy, thanks to Saint Helena, the mother of Emperor Constantine, who had them transported there. Other relics are located in the Abbey of St. Matthias, in Trier, Germany.

He is the patron saint of alcoholics; tailors; Gary, Indiana; and Montana. He is prayed to for hope and perseverance and in instances of smallpox. He is often portrayed holding an ax, widely believed to be the instrument of his death. His feast day is February 24.

NEVA RAE FOX

MELANGELL

O God, *whose blessed Son became poor that we through his poverty might be rich: Deliver us from an inordinate love of this world, that we, inspired by the devotion of your servant Melangell, may serve you with singleness of heart, and attain to the riches of the age to come; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.* Amen.

A poem penned in 1723 in the registry of the Welsh church named for Melangell reads: "Melangell with a thousand angels triumphs over all the powers of evil." Also hunters, as her story goes.

Melangell was the daughter of a sixth-century Irish monarch, as recorded in the book *Tours of Wales*. When her father attempted to marry her off to a nobleman in his court, Melangell, who wanted to pursue a life of prayer and solitude, fled Ireland. She found sanctuary deep in the Berwyn Mountains in what is now Wales, where she lived as a hermit for fifteen years.

Enter the hunter in our tale, the prince of Powys. While hunting a hare, the prince chased the animal into a "great thicket," where he was surprised to find instead "a virgin of surpassing beauty." It was Melangell, deep in prayer, with the hare seeking sanctuary beneath her robe. The prince's hunting dogs retreated, howling. Impressed by the hermit's courage and devotion, the prince not only let the hare go free, but he also gave the land to Melangell to be "a sanctuary to all that fled there."

Melangell founded an abbey on the land, where she remained abbess until her death. Her small religious community ordered its life around prayer and works of mercy, providing sanctuary to all creatures in need. Even the hares. After her death, she became known as patron saint of the hares and other small animals who continued to come to her. The hares became known in Welsh as "Wyn Melangell"—or St. Melangell's lambs. Centuries later, the *Tours of Wales* recounted, hunters still refused to kill hares in the parish.

Today, the land remains a sanctuary, ringed by trees estimated to be more than 2,000 years old. Some consider it a "thin place," where Celts believe heaven and earth seem especially close. The Shrine Church of St. Melangell calls it "a place beyond words and far from the rush of twenty-first-century life; a place where God speaks in the silence and where all people have an opportunity to experience a sense of the holy."

Anglican, Catholic, and Orthodox pilgrims visit the shrine, where bones that are believed to belong to the saint were discovered beneath the floor in 1958. Melangell is remembered on May 27.

EMILY MCFARLAN MILLER

Miguel Pro

Almighty God, *who gave to your servant Miguel boldness to confess the Name of our Savior Jesus Christ before the rulers of this world, and courage to die for this faith: Grant that we may always be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in us, and to suffer gladly for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.* Amen.

José Ramón Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez was born in 1891 in Guadalupe, Zacatecas. After entering the Jesuit novitiate and completing theological studies in Europe, Miguel Pro returned to Veracruz in 1926. His ministry quickly went underground on account of the violent anti-Catholic repression, and he signed his letters with his childhood nickname of "Cocol" to obscure his identity.

Telling the story of Miguel Pro requires entering into a fraught period of Mexico's history called the Cristero rebellion, when the Roman Catholic Church's official and unofficial institutions engaged in a ten-year, violent rebellion against the anti-Catholic regime.

For many Mexican Roman Catholics, including Miguel Pro, the Cristero Rebellion was the heroic story of the faithful engaging in overt and covert resistance against an extremely violent and repressive anti-Catholic effort. One of the most famous images is of railroad tracks in Jalisco lined by the executed bodies of Cristero rebels. The Cristeros are frequently presented by the Roman Catholic Church as heroes who took up arms against such repression.

In contrast, when I studied Mexico-U.S. border relations in el Tecnológico de Monterrey in Querétaro, Mexico, this period was presented as part of a broader set of internationally led efforts to undermine the 1917 Constitution, a socialist-inspired document whose agrarian reforms had aligned Mexico's elite Roman Catholic families with U.S. interests. Indeed, America's fingerprints are all over this conflict, from funneling money to the rebels to negotiating a peace agreement that led to the church's withdrawal of support for the Cristeros.

In 1927, an innocent Miguel Pro was executed without trial for the attempted assassination of former Mexican president Álvaro Obregón; photos of his execution became a rallying point in the final years of the rebellion. Miguel Pro was pointedly beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1988, a period when the Roman Catholic Church was once again deeply engaged in resisting socialist and communist governments and Latin American liberation theology.

At his execution, Miguel Pro raised his arms in imitation of Christ and shouted "Viva Cristo Rey!" —"Long live Christ the King!", the defying cry of the Cristeros.

Miguel Escobar

Nino of Georgia

Almighty God, *who called your servant Nino to be your apostle to the people of Georgia, to bring those wandering in darkness to the true light and knowledge of you; Grant us so to walk in that light, that we may come at last to the light of your everlasting day; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.* Amen.

Born in 296 CE, Nino (sometimes called Nina or Nune), is believed to be from a well-established and influential Christian family in the Roman province of Cappodocia.

She had a vision of the Virgin Mary, who told her to go to Caucasian Georgia, then known as Iberia, to preach the gospel. Legend held that Christ's tunic had been taken to Georgia for safekeeping. In her appearance, Mary gave Nino a cross made of grapevines, with down-slanting arms. This is now a symbol of Georgian Orthodox Christianity—a fitting homage since Georgia is the site of the oldest wine-making tradition in the world.

Nino made a treacherous journey through Armenia and narrowly escaped death to arrive in Georgia. In the Armenian tradition, she is the sole survivor of thirty-five Christian virgins slaughtered by a hostile king. Roman Catholic hagiography holds that Nino arrived in the mission field as a slave.

In Georgia, Nino ministered to the royal household of King Mirian and Queen Nana, teaching and performing healing miracles. First, Nana converted, then her attendants, including the Jewish Sidonia, and lastly, Nana's reluctant husband, who prayed to Nino's God after he was struck blind. King Mirian named Christianity the official religion of his country in 326, making Georgia the second state, after Armenia, to formally adopt the young religion.

At Mirian's request, Emperor Constantine sent clergy to Georgia to continue Nino's teaching and spread of the gospel. In Mtskheta, Mirian began construction on the first Christian church in his country. The UNESCO World heritage site Svetitskhoveli Cathedral now sits on that site. In Georgian tradition, Christ's seamless tunic is buried there.

Nino retired to Bodbe in eastern Georgia. She died soon after, around 338, and a monastery was immediately built in her name. It has survived the tumultuous history of the region in many forms and is now once again a monastery. In the late twentieth century, another monastery dedicated to Saint Nino was established in Phoka. A third, the Sacred Monastery of St. Nina, stands in Union Bridge, Maryland. It's easy to see in the ministry of these devout Georgian women the strength, bravery, and industry of the saint they revere and emulate.

Amber Belldene

Simeon the Holy Fool

Almighty God, *whose will it is to be glorified in your saints and who raised up your servant Simeon to be a light in the world: Shine, we pray, in our hearts, that we also in our generation may show forth your praise, who called us out of darkness into your marvelous light; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.* Amen.

Have you ever been a fool for Christ? Done anything stupid? Then you, too, are like Simeon. Holy fools have been known throughout time as those whose actions and words disrupt the status quo. Saint Paul declared himself a "fool for Christ." These "fools" often focus more on the teachings of Jesus than the social, political, or traditional construct of the time.

Saint Simeon (or Symeon) of Salus, is known as the Holy Fool. Born in the sixth century in Edessa, Simeon was a Christian monk who entered the monastic life at age twenty at the Abba Gerasimus Monastery in Syria near the Dead Sea. Simeon spent the next twenty-nine years developing his spirituality and a desire to serve others. Through his prayer, he found he was called by God to move to the town of Emesa and serve others in ways where he would not be thanked. He asked God to provide him a way to serve his fellow man and not be concerned with conventional mores.

Simeon developed a reputation as a madman, whereby he would turn over tables, throw food, and extinguish the lights in the church to gain people's attention. Sometimes he was found to be jumping around, sometimes limping, and sometimes scooting around on his backside. His goal was to flout societal conventions of what was "normal." He was taunted, jeered, and teased by this town, but his reputation grew as people saw his other actions of feeding the poor, tending the sick, and admonishing the sinner and calling them to repentance. He was a known healer and devout preacher of the gospel, one who cared deeply for the homeless and hungry. Many came to Christ through the care of Simeon in spite of, or perhaps because of, the craziness of his ministry. Simeon was a dichotomy. He would gladly flout society's conventions to bring attention to the spiritual works of mercy and grace.

Simeon's life calls us to do crazy things in the name of God, where our actions to others speak more loudly than craziness and the goodness of charity and love far outweigh foolish antics. If there were an epitaph of Simeon's life, it would be, "He was crazy, but he was kind and served God." Would your epitaph say something similar?

Saint Simeon's feast day is July 1, which is also known as Fools for Christ Day. He is the patron saint of ventriloquists and puppeteers and fools in general.

Anna Fitch Courie

Tarcisius

Almighty God, *by whose grace and power your holy martyr Tarcisius triumphed over suffering and was faithful even to death: Grant us, who now remember him in thanksgiving, to be so faithful in our witness to you in this world, that we may receive with him the crown of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.* Amen.

Very little is known about the young boy martyr, Tarcisius. Our earliest reference to him comes from Pope Damasus in the late fourth century CE. In a poem honoring martyrs, Pope Damasus writes of Tarcisius, "When an insane gang pressed saintly Tarcisius, who was carrying the sacraments of Christ, to display them to the profane, he preferred to be killed and give up his life rather than betray to rabid dogs the heavenly body." Tarcisius then, like Stephen, is a Christian witness who fell victim to mob violence.

Later stories fill in what might have transpired. According to those stories, during the reign of Valerian (253-259 CE), Tarcisius was a young altar server. Many Christians had been rounded up and put into jail for their belief. After the host had been consecrated in clandestine worship services, it was delivered to those who were imprisoned. Priests were easily recognized and targeted for harassment and arrest, so they would send others to deliver the consecrated host. One Sunday, young Tarcisius volunteered to deliver the eucharist to those in prison.

On his way to deliver the host, he passed a group of young friends who invited him to play a game. They were perplexed when he declined and began to jostle and tease him in good fun. They noticed he was clutching something to his chest, and they began to try to pry it from him. He knew the value of this treasure and the importance of his mission, and he held the host ever closer to his chest. The scrum, playful at first, grew more violent. In the tussle, one of the attackers saw a fish etched into the box holding the host. The playful abuse turned to violent assault as the boys began to pummel him for being a Christian.

A Roman soldier saw the disturbance and rushed over to rescue Tarcisius from the cruel gang. The Roman soldier revealed himself to be a Christian before little Tarcisius died in his arms. In some accounts, as he died, Tarcisius begged the soldier to finish his errand for him, and the soldier obliged. In other accounts, as he lay dying in the soldier's arms, the host simply disappeared.

Tarcisius is the patron saint of altar servers and first communicants. His feast day is August 15.

David Creech

Theodora of Alexandria

Almighty God, *whose will it is to be glorified in your saints and who raised up your servant Theodora to be a light in the world: Shine, we pray, in our hearts, that we also in our generation may show forth your praise, who called us out of darkness into your marvelous light; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.* Amen.

Theodora of Alexandria was a noble woman who was married to a wealthy Christian man. While her story is often conflated with Theodora of Egpyt, tradition says that Theodora of Alexandria became a target of the devil. Threatened by her piety, the devil brought her to the attention of another rich man who became enamored with her. He bought her gifts and sent her love letters, but she was unmoved. Finally, he sent a young woman, a sorceress in some accounts, who told Theodora that if she gave in to the rich man's advances at dusk or at night, God would not see. Theodora, in a moment of weakness, gave in and immediately felt guilt over her betrayal. She went to the local abbess who told her that God sees all, and she must perform penance. Theodora decided to join a monastery to do penance.

Worried her husband would find her if she joined a women's monastery, Theodora cut her hair, put on men's clothes, and joined a men's monastery as Brother Theodore. She lived as a monk, with no one suspecting her secret.

Some years after joining the monastery, Theodora was sent on an errand in a faraway town. On the journey, she stayed the night in another monastery. According to Orthodox tradition, the daughter of the abbot attempted to seduce her. Theodora resisted. The daughter slept with another man and became pregnant. She accused Theodora of fathering the child. Eventually, the child was sent to Theodora's monastery, and the abbot kicked her out with the child. Theodora saw the injustice as further punishment for her adultery. She tended to the child outside the walls of the monastery for seven years. Local shepherds gave her milk for the baby while she lived off of wild vegetables. When the abbot saw her persistence and fidelity, he invited her back into the monastery with the child.

After her return, Theodora lived two more years in the monastery until her death in 470. As the monks prepared her for burial, they discovered that she was a woman. The abbot called her husband to the monastery, and he became a monk and occupied her cell until his death. The boy she had raised and committed to God grew and followed her example of a virtuous life, ultimately becoming the abbot of the monastery.

David Creech

Theodora the Empress

O God, *who called your servant Theodora to an earthly throne that she might advance your heavenly kingdom and who gave her the wisdom to establish unity where there had been division; Create in your church such godly union and concord that we might proclaim the Gospel of the Prince of Peace, not only in correct theology but in right action; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.* Amen.

Theodora (500–548 CE) knew her way around the hippodrome of Constantinople. Her father kept bears there, and her mother performed as an actress. When she was about four, her father died, and Theodora also became an actress. Rumors swirl around her. She was a stripper and a courtesan. One unreliable account described Theodora performing a lurid dance involving geese. It's hard to know if these things are factually true or if the historian's imagination created these juicy tidbits because he didn't know how to get his head around understanding a woman of great power.

What we do know is that between the animal training and acting, Theodora learned how to soothe dangerous beasts and convincingly perform before great crowds, and both skills became the perfect training for an adept politician. Those talents paired with extraordinary intellect, ambition, and wit catapulted Theodora from humble beginnings to the empress of the Byzantine Empire.

Theodora married Justinian I around 525 and ushered the Byzantine Empire into its golden years. During Justinian's coronation, she was also crowned as an equal. She did not take the position of empress lightly. Her name can be found on every law that was passed at that time. And her commitment to gender equality extended beyond her self-interests. Theodora worked for gender equality, marriage rights, and anti-rape laws. She wrote papers against pimps and banished brothel-keepers from major cities. She opened a home for women and girls who wanted to transition out of sex work.

For our purposes, however, we should also consider her religious influences. Between Theodora's time at the hippodrome and meeting Justinian, Theodora joined a religious community in Alexandria and converted to the non-Chalcedonian church, believing that Christ had only one nature and was fully divine. The debate was boiling up at this time, and Theodora aided and sheltered the non-Chalcedonians and kept the peace between the factions of Christianity. During their reign, Theodora and Justinian I constructed more than twenty-five churches, including Hagia Sophia, the largest Greek Orthodox church for more than 1,000 years.

Carol Howard Merritt

Vincent of Saragossa

Almighty God, *whose deacon Vincent, upheld by you, was neither terrified by threats nor overcome by torments: Strengthen us to endure all adversity with invincible and steadfast faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.* Amen.

Vincent of Saragossa was the first Christian martyred in the country of Spain. He was killed under the persecution of the emperor Diocletian in the year 304 in the northeast of Spain.

Vincent was born in Huesca, near Saragossa. He was ordained a deacon and became a preacher and spokesman for the bishop of Saragossa, Valerius, who had a speech impediment. Together, they were brought to Valencia and tried by Dacian, the governor of Spain under Diocletian. Vincent suffered extreme torture—being stretched on a rack, torn at with hooks, and burned on a hot gridiron. Through it all, he remained peaceful and refused to denounce the gospel or burn the Bible. His tranquility while suffering such pain converted his guards, which is a common occurrence in the narratives of early Christian martyrs.

While the elderly bishop Valerius was punished with exile, Vincent died upon a bed of pottery shards. He was wrapped in a sack and thrown into the sea, but his fellow Christians recovered his body and carried it to a spot now called Cape Vincent in Portugal. It is believed that ravens protected his body from vultures, and they continued to guard the shrine where his relics were interred. When Arabs ruled the region, they named this shrine the Church of the Raven. In the twelfth century, Saint Vincent's body was exhumed and brought to Lisbon to buried at the cathedral.

Vincent is a widely venerated saint, thanks to many popular hagiographies of the Middle Ages. There are churches that honor him all over Spain, including Castres on the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela. When Christopher Columbus and his crew were the first Europeans to discover an island in the Caribbean on January 22, Saint Vincent's feast day. Columbus named the island St. Vincent to honor the saint. Vincent is the patron saint of Valencia, Saragossa, and Portugal as well as wine, vinegar, and brickmakers.

His popularity reminds us of the power of the stories of the early Christians whose bravery and faith were so great they inspired the growth of the church. Vincent's witness helps us remember not to oppress other minorities and reminds us that Christianity is a religion of peace, humility, and sacrifice, not domination or complacency.

Amber Belldene

Lent Madness Glossary

ALL BRACKETS' DAY: The day (which naturally follows All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day) on which the next year's Lent Madness bracket is revealed, usually falling on November 3.

ARCHNEMESIS: The relationship between Tim and Scott throughout the year except for Lent when they give up their archrivalry.

ASH THURSDAY: The official kick-off date for Lent Madness. Also known as the day after Ash Wednesday and the start of the Lenten season.

BRACKET: The annual visual list of saintly matchups. The current bracket is downloadable from lentmadness.org, appears as a handy-dandy fold-out in the back of this book, and can also be purchased in a poster-sized version from Forward Movement.

BRACKET CZAR: The Rev. Adam Thomas, who creates the actual bracket and is responsible for updating it after every match.

CELEBRITY BLOGGER: A term of endearment for the fabulous writers who teach us about the sometimes-obscure saints of Lent Madness. Do they have blogs? Sure. Are they celebrities? Of course. They're definitely church famous.

DISTINGUISHED CELEBRITY BLOGGER: A term of distinction for the amazing writers (and gluttons for punishment?) who have been writing with us for several years. The gold standard for all bloggers.

ELATE EIGHT: The quarterfinal round of Lent Madness; see also: SAINTLY KITSCH.

FAITHFUL FOUR: The four saints remaining after the first three rounds of Lent Madness.

FIRST ROUND: The initial round of Lent Madness, focused on basic biographical data about the thirty-two saints being featured during the tournament.

FORWARD MOVEMENT: A ministry of the Episcopal Church that hosts Lent Madness and is dedicated to inspiring disciples and empowering evangelists.

GOLDEN HALO: This is the culminating prize of Lent Madness toward which every saint in the bracket strives.

KITSCH KRANKS: Those who find the Saintly Kitsch round distasteful or who fail to see the humor in it. Tim and Scott like to remind people that Lent Madness is purely optional.

LENT MADNESS THEME SONG: Performed by renowned organist Shiloh Roby, the Lent Madness Theme Song can be heard on Tim and Scott's Monday Madness videos.

LENT MADNESS WITHDRAWAL (LMW): A serious disorder that affects Lent Madness devotees on weekends during Lent when there is no voting.

LENTORIUM: The tab on the Lent Madness website where you can purchase mugs, poster-sized brackets, the *Saintly Scorecard*, and other Lent Madness resources. It's really just the Lent Madness store, but we like to use a fancy name for things every now and then.

MONDAY MADNESS: Every Monday in Lent, Tim and Scott release a brilliantly produced video highlighting current Lent Madness news and information while simultaneously hawking coffee mugs, pint glasses, and really large teacups.

MUG SHOTS: Any photo of (actual or churchy) celebrities posing with a Lent Madness mug.

NOMINATIONTIDE: The week-long period after Easter in which the Supreme Executive Committee accepts nominations from the Lent Madness global public for the following year's bracket. This is a moveable feast—i.e. timing is based upon the whims of Tim and Scott.

PURPLE FRIDAY: The day after Thanksgiving when hot deals on Lent Madness swag abound.

QUIRKS & QUOTES: The criteria for the Round of the Saintly Sixteen that includes quotes by or about the saint along with any legends or interesting tidbits. See also: SAINTLY SIXTEEN.

SAINTLY KITSCH: During the Elate Eight, the Celebrity Bloggers scour the Internet to find and post pictures of odd or unusual items bearing the saint's likeness.

SAINTLY SCORECARD: Since you can't know the saints without a scorecard, this annual resource includes basic biographical data about all thirty-two saints in the bracket.

SAINTLY SIXTEEN: The second round in which the Celebrity Bloggers focus on Quirks & Quotes of the saints who survived the First Round.

SCOTT: The Rev. Canon Scott Gunn, executive director of Forward Movement and member of the Supreme Executive Committee.

SILVER HALO WINNER: Beginning in 2015 with Brigid, the runner-up in Lent Madness voting.

SPY WEDNESDAY: The Wednesday in Holy Week, so named because the gospel reading tells of Judas's betrayal of Jesus. More importantly, it's the final day of Lent Madness, and the Golden Halo winner is declared.

SUPREME EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (SEC): The mostly benign Lent Madness dictatorship comprising Tim Schenck and Scott Gunn. Their rulings are absolute, their control complete...and also caffeinated.

TIM: The Rev. Tim Schenck, creator of Lent Madness and member of the Supreme Executive Committee.

VOTER FRAUD: The occasional and unfortunate result of multiple votes from the same computer. The Supreme Executive Committee is watching and has been known to ban people from Lent Madness. Also, this will land you on Santa's Naughty List. And it will make Jesus so sad if you are a cheating cheater who cheats in a game about his friends. Don't make Jesus sad.

WALL OF FAME: The place on the website where you can view the results from years past and see pictures of retired Celebrity Bloggers.

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