



Teaching the **Saints**

A Workbook for
Faith Formation
and Education

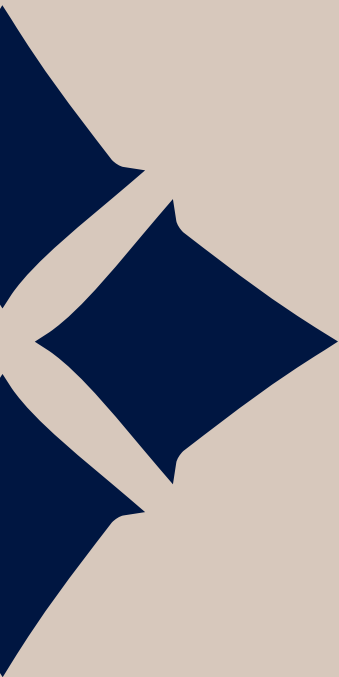
Saints for the month of
FEBRUARY



McGRATH INSTITUTE FOR CHURCH LIFE



Where higher learning meets faithful service.



The saints selected for this month are drawn from the "Witnesses to Holiness" collection from Notre Dame Vision, a high school conference hosted by the McGrath Institute for Church Life at the University of Notre Dame. Notre Dame Vision asks teenagers to consider their God-given talents and how they will use their gifts to respond to God's call for their life. For more information, visit vision.nd.edu.

The illustrations of saints used in this workbook were created by Julie Lonneman, who holds exclusive rights to the further distribution and publication of the art.

How to Use This Workbook

Turn to the witness and intercession of the saints to lead middle school and high school students toward a deeper sense of God's invitation to follow Him. This free teaching resource features the lives of the saints paired with short guided prompts for further reflection, discussion and action.

The worksheets can be used by youth, parents, teachers, religious educators and ministers to celebrate saint feast days during February. Adapt the worksheets for use in the classroom, home or parish to highlight the myriad and unique ways that God calls us to use our gifts to serve the Church and world.

Each worksheet includes the following:

- ◆ A short biography on each saint's life and witness
- ◆ A reflection inviting the student to consider ways each saint resonates with their faith journey
- ◆ A challenge prompting the student to put the saint's witness into action



St. Brigid

- ◆ ca. 450-525; Ireland
- ◆ Feast Day: February 1
- ◆ Patron Saint of Ireland

In Kildare, Brigid began a monastery that was soon opened to both men and women. Like Patrick, those associated with the monastery helped to spread Christianity throughout Ireland. Brigid is remembered as a woman of great generosity and charity. She always tried to help others in need, even when she had little to give.

Thanks to Brigid and Patrick, Christianity became firmly entrenched in the culture of Ireland. Their devotion to God and others always shone forth through their work.

St. Brigid is closely associated with St. Patrick, the second bishop of Ireland who had a major impact on Christianity's spread throughout the country. He converted thousands of people and established numerous Christian communities and monasteries.

It is said that Brigid was baptized by Patrick and developed a close friendship with him. As a young girl, Brigid felt called to be a nun. At this time, women who took vows of chastity remained at home with their families. But Brigid knew about Patrick's monasteries, and decided to begin a community of her own where people pursuing a religious life could live together.

*Mothers of our mother, Foremothers strong. Guide our hand in yours,
Remind us how to kindle the hearth; to keep it bright, the preserve the flame.*

—Saint Brigid Hearth Keeper Prayer

Reflect

What about St. Brigid's life stands out to you?

Brigid, inspired by the example of St. Patrick, founded a monastery at Kildare that provided a space for men and women to grow closer to God. Although Catholicism would have been relatively new at this time, Brigid built upon the evangelizing work of St. Patrick that had already inspired many.

Imagine yourself as one of the new men or women at Brigid's monastery who is on fire for their faith. The head of the monastery asks you to write a letter inviting others to consider the Catholic faith. What might you write in this letter?

Act

Kildare became a place of great learning, and included the founding of a school of art. No doubt Brigid knew of art's power to attract and lead the mind and heart closer to God.

The next time you are at Mass, take a look around the Church and find a piece of art or architecture that catches your eye. What is it about this piece that catches your eye? If you don't know much about the particular piece of art, consider asking someone like your priest or an individual from the parish about it. What might the piece reveal about God or God's life?

St. Paul Miki and Companions

◆ ca. 1564-1597; Japan

◆ Feast Day: February 6



Paul Miki was born in Tounucumada, Japan just as Jesuit missionaries were aiding the quick spread of Christianity. St. Francis Xavier had introduced Christianity to Japan in the 1540s, and by the 1580s there were approximately 200,000 converts. Emperor Hideyoshi, however, felt threatened by the rise of Christianity and ordered the banishment of Catholics in 1587. The Jesuits went into hiding and worked in secret.

During this time, Paul Miki received his education with the Jesuits and, at age 22, began the process of becoming a priest. He was known for his ability to preach intelligently and eloquently. In late 1596, just before Paul Miki's ordination, the emperor changed his strategy from banishment to persecution. He gathered and ordered the execution of 26 Christians, including Paul Miki and other Jesuits, Franciscans, and lay people.

On February 5, 1597, the 26 men and boys were paraded through the streets of Kyoto with blood streaming from their severed ears. The crowd reacted with great compassion and sadness. Many became Christians themselves after witnessing this tragedy. After marching through the streets, the group of Christians were taken to a hill near Nagasaki and strapped to crosses. Each martyr had an executioner at his side ready with a sword. At the same time, the executioners pierced the sides of the martyrs and killed them. Eyewitnesses collected their garments and saved them as relics.

Paul Miki and his companions were the first, but not the last, martyrs in the church of Japan. Christianity survived, but it went underground until 1865 when Japan opened itself to the outside world again. Christianity's survival in Japan is in no small way indebted to the courage and witness of the martyrs, the missionaries, and countless other brave Christians who held on to their faith in times of great difficulty and persecution.

Like my Master, I shall die upon the Cross. Like him, a lance will pierce my heart so that my blood and my love can flow out upon the land and sanctify it to his name.

—St. Paul Miki

Reflect

What about St. Paul Miki's life stands out to you?

The accounts of the martyrdom of Paul and his companions agree that the rise of Christianity in Japan was threatening to Emperor Hideyoshi. What do you think it was about Christianity or the witness of its followers that might have been threatening to him?

Act

Paul Miki was regarded as a brilliant preacher. Further, the words he preached were supported by the witness and example of his lived faith, a faith he stayed true to until the very end. Take a moment to think about a way you can better "practice what you preach" this week.



St. Josephine Bakhita

- ◆ 1868-1947
- ◆ Feast Day: February 8
- ◆ Patron Saint of Sudan

Venerated as a modern African saint, St. Josephine Bakhita exemplifies Christian hope.

Kidnapped and sold into slavery at age 7, this joyful woman was no stranger to human suffering. She was frequently traded between owners, and she experienced physical, mental, and moral abuse.

While living in Italy with the family of a diplomat, she and the diplomat's child were left in the custody of the Canossian Sisters of Venice. This simple experience would prove to be one of the most transformative encounters of her life. She refused to leave the convent and the issue was taken to an Italian court. It was decided that because slavery was not legal in her home country at the time of her kidnapping, Bakhita was never legally a slave. For the first time in her adult life, she was free.

In 1890, she was baptized and took the name Josephine Margaret. A few years later she entered the novitiate and on December 8, 1896, she took her vows as a Canossian Sister. For the next 42 years, she served in Schio as a cook, sacristan, and porter. She was very well known in the community for her charisma, gentle nature, and missionary spirit. During World War II, many people in Schio turned to her for comfort and protection.

The last years of her life were marked by illness, but when asked how she was doing she would respond "as the Master desires." She died on February 8, 1947 and is remembered as a symbol of the transformative power of God's love. Canonized by St. John Paul II in 2000, St. Josephine Bakhita is the only patron saint of Sudan.

If we had no hope in the Lord, what would we do in this world?

—St. Josephine Bakhita

Reflect

What about St. Josephine Bakhita's life stands out to you?

Despite her early suffering, Josephine maintained a cheerful and calming presence that endeared her to all she met, especially her religious order. Her joy and presence so affected the people in her town of Schio that they came to view her as a living saint and their protector.

What do you think is the place of joy in the Christian life? Who in your life has a joyful faith that affects all the people they meet?

Act

After experiencing cruelty at the hands of many masters who mistreated her, Josephine came to know and experience a tenderness and love in the hands of the Canossian Sisters that revealed to her the tenderness of God. It was so transformative that she courageously and boldly refused to leave, choosing instead to devote her life to God and the faith.

Consider a situation or a person in your life who might be deserving of more intentional kindness and gentleness. How might you live this out?



St. Scholastica

- ◆ 480-543
- ◆ Feast Day: February 10
- ◆ Patron Saint of Nuns

have to remain in the shelter with his sister. Only three days later, Scholastica died.

While Benedict had at first been annoyed by his sister's prayer, he eventually came to see that the greatest work that he could do was not to keep his rule to the exclusion of others, but to love each person he met by giving each person his full attention. Through their relationship as brother and sister, Benedict and Scholastica have taught the Church that the first vocation of the Christian is the love of God and neighbor.

St. Scholastica, the twin sister of St. Benedict, was born in Nursia, a small village northeast of Rome. Benedict was sent to Rome to receive an education in classical studies, while Scholastica remained at home. Early in his studies, Benedict fled Rome to become a hermit in the foothills of Rome. Scholastica would meet once a year with her brother, who wrote a rule of life for monks known today as the Rule of St. Benedict.

During their annual visit, Scholastica and Benedict would talk about God for hours. On one particular visit, after they had dined together, Benedict was preparing to leave, but Scholastica begged him to stay so that they might continue their conversation. But Benedict's Rule did not allow him to spend a night away from the monastery. Scholastica prayed to God that God might allow Benedict to stay for the evening. Suddenly, there was a huge rainstorm, so large that Benedict did

As we celebrate anew the Memorial of the Virgin Saint Scholastica, we pray, O Lord, that, following her example, we may serve you with pure love and happily receive what comes from loving you.

—Collect Prayer for the Feast of St. Scholastica

Reflect

What about St. Scholastica's life stands out to you?

One of the most commonly told stories about the life of Scholastica surrounds the annual tradition she and her brother, St. Benedict, shared. Scholastica, herself equally devoted to the monastic way of life, and her brother would meet once a year to discuss spiritual matters.

Imagine you could only see your closest family once a year. How would you feel? What would change about your day-to-day living?

Act

The Benedictine tradition of hospitality demands that each person be treated as if he or she was Christ himself. How can you better exercise a sense of hospitality and care toward someone in your family this week? What would you do? What would you say?

