

# Teaching the Saints

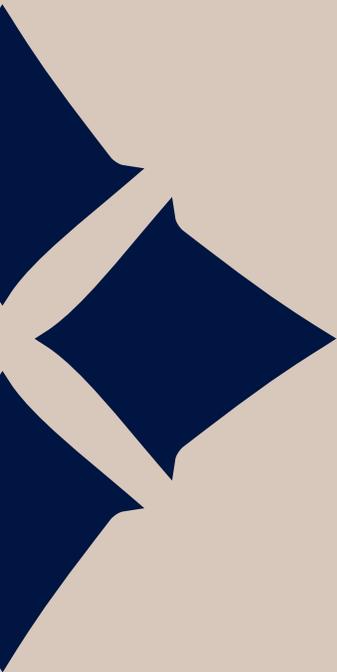
A Workbook for  
Faith Formation  
and Education

Saints for the month of  
**NOVEMBER**

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](http://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*

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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 November. 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. Martin de Porres

- ◆ 1579-1639; Peru
- ◆ Feast Day: November 3
- ◆ Patron Saint of Social Justice and Race Relations

Martin learned the occupation of physician, but his gifts went beyond medicine—he is believed to have had great powers of healing. Although he tried to hide his gift by pretending to heal the sick with medicinal treatments, people found out about his abilities.

Martin also had a deep spiritual wisdom and was able to give excellent advice that helped his order solve theological problems. Despite all of his talents and gifts, Martin lived a very humble life and never forgot to devote a large amount of time to prayer. He developed a very close friendship with St. Rose of Lima, who also ministered to the poor of Lima.

Martin died of a fever on November 3, 1639. We remember Martin for his unselfish charity, his love for all people and creatures, and his humble efforts to make a difference in his community.



Martin de Porres was born in Lima to a Spanish knight and a freed slave woman from Panama, whose darker complexion he inherited. He was born outside of marriage and was considered an “illegitimate” child when he was baptized. With this label of illegitimacy and the color of his skin, Martin could not expect a life of great social status or wealth.

Determined to live his life in the way he wished, Martin joined a Dominican monastery when he was fifteen years old. In 1603, he became a lay brother and spent the rest of his life at the monastery. Martin did important work for the monastery and for the people of Lima. He ministered faithfully to the sick, the poor, and the orphans. He helped people of all races. He also had a special place in his heart for animals. He truly loved all of God’s creatures.

*Lord, you led Martin de Porres by a life of humility to eternal glory. May we follow his example and be exalted with him in the kingdom of heaven.*

*Opening Prayer of the Feast of Martin de Porres*

# *Reflect*

What about St. Martin de Porres' life stands out to you?

Despite being considered 'illegitimate' and pushed aside as unimportant by others, Martin showed a remarkable ability to see the inherent beauty and worth of all God's creatures, especially the sick and the poor.

Who might you push to the side and marginalize in your own life? Consider those in your family, friend groups and the wider community.

# *Act*

Martin's inclination for healing came from his immense trust in and relationship with God. Healing can take many forms, like the healing of our bodies, our relationships, etc. This week, take a moment to think about a relationship you have pushed aside in your life. You might consider some of your immediate relationships, or even society at large. How might you pursue healing and reconciliation?

What might you need to be open to in order to facilitate healing in this relationship?

# St. Charles Borromeo

- ◆ 1538-1584
- ◆ Feast Day: November 4
- ◆ Patron Saint of Catechists and Catechumens



Born into a family of nobility in Italy, Charles Borromeo was given every opportunity to succeed in life. At twelve years of age, Charles was sent to a Benedictine monastery to receive an education. When he was twenty-one years old, his uncle was elected pope. His uncle, Pius IV, made him a cardinal and administrator of the diocese of Milan, even before he was ordained as priest or bishop.

Just as this had happened, the head of the Borromeo family, Count Frederick Borromeo, passed away. Charles was asked to be the head of the Borromeo family but turned this title down in order to be ordained a priest of the diocese of Milan. A year after this, he was ordained the bishop of the diocese.

During this time, the Church was in a period of great turmoil following the Protestant reformation. Charles helped reform the Catholic Church through the education of priests in seminary programs, the education of laity through the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD), and through greater care to the poorest in his diocese. Charles also founded an order of priests, the Oblates of St. Ambrose, which emphasized the importance of good preaching and holiness of life.

When Charles died, he was recognized as a man of great intelligence, passion, and, most importantly, holiness. In his leadership, Charles acted not as a man of great power from a wealthy family, but as a servant to each person in the diocese. In addition, he continued to reform the church through encouraging each priest and lay person to love God with all of their hearts. Charles Borromeo is a model of a priest, a teacher, a reformer, and a leader for the contemporary Church.

*Would you like me to teach you how to grow from virtue to virtue and how, if you are already recollected at prayer, you can be even more attentive next time, and so give God more pleasing worship? Listen, and I will tell you. If a tiny spark of God's love already burns within you, do not expose it to the wind, for it may get blown out. Keep the stove tightly shut so that it will not lose its heat and grow cold. In other words, avoid distractions as well as you can. Stay quiet with God.*

# *Reflect*

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

Charles placed great value in education and saw it as a way to respond to the new challenges to Catholicism brought through the Protestant Reformation. He encouraged priests and laity to seek greater understanding of their own faith through seminary education and programs of religious education (another name for CCD).

What role does education play in your own life?  
How has your own education made an impact on your life? Who has been a great teacher for you?

# *Act*

Despite positions of great responsibility which could have taken him out of contact with his people, Charles maintained a servant's heart with a gift for encouragement.

Our lives are filled with so much busyness. Take a moment this week to contact someone who has played a role in your education, a teacher or maybe even a friend or family member who has played some role in your development and growth.

# St. Elizabeth and St. Zachariah

- ◆ First Century
- ◆ Feast Day: November 5



All that we know about Elizabeth and Zechariah comes from the Gospel of Luke, chapter one. Luke's story about the conception and birth of Jesus begins with the announcement of the birth of John the Baptist, the son of Elizabeth and Zechariah. Zechariah, a priest of the Temple, received a visit from the angel Gabriel who told him that Elizabeth would bear a child and that they would name the child John. Elizabeth, however, was known to be barren and both she and Zechariah were advanced in age.

Zechariah could not believe this news and asked for a sign. At that moment, he was struck speechless.

Elizabeth did, indeed conceive a child. As the child grew within her, her cousin Mary also received a visit from the angel Gabriel and

learned that she would carry Jesus, the Son of God. At the request of the angel, Mary came to visit Elizabeth. As Mary approached, John leapt in the womb of Elizabeth. With joy, Elizabeth proclaimed, "Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb." Today, this exclamation is the second line of the Hail Mary. In turn, Mary proclaimed what we know as the Magnificat.

After a three-month visit with Mary, Elizabeth gave birth. On the eighth day, she found herself in an argument with friends and relatives over the name of the child. Elizabeth wanted to name him John, but others thought he should be named after his father. As they turned to Zechariah for his opinion, he wrote on a tablet, "John is his name." At that moment, Zechariah regained his speech and proclaimed a prophecy that spoke of what John and Jesus would mean for the people of Israel.

*Do not be afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall name him John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of [the] Lord.*

*The angel Gabriel to Zechariah, Luke 1:13-15*

# *Reflect*

What about Elizabeth and Zechariah's lives stand out to you?

While not much is known about the lives of Elizabeth and Zechariah, their lives bear a remarkable witness to the power of God. Elizabeth who was called 'barren,' conceives and bears a son, John.

This is John the Baptist, the one who preaches about the coming ministry of Jesus.

No doubt Elizabeth and Zechariah were surprised by this news from the angel Gabriel about the gift of their son John. Have you ever been surprised at something that God has done in your life?

What was it? What happened? What surprised you?

# *Act*

Have you ever received a gift that was unexpected and made your day? The delight of a gift, unexpected and freely given, can demonstrate our care and love for those special people in our lives.

This week, think about something you can give or something you can do for someone in your life.

It can be a friend, family member, neighbor. Be creative!

# St. Martin of Tours

- ◆ 316-ca. 400
- ◆ Feast Day: November 11
- ◆ Patron Saint of Soldiers



St. Martin was a Christian convert and an early conscientious objector. He was born around 316 AD to pagan parents in what is now Hungary. His father was an officer in the Roman army and the family was transferred to Pavia in Northern Italy.

In Pavia, Martin learned about Christianity. It was newly recognized as a legal religion in the Roman Empire yet not widely accepted among the higher classes of Roman society. At age ten, against the wishes of his parents he decided to become a catechumen and devote time to contemplative prayer.

As a veteran's son, Martin was required to join the army at age fifteen. One day while he was stationed at Amiens in Gaul (now northern France), he was riding into town and noticed a poorly clothed man begging for alms. Martin, who had nothing with him but the clothes he was wearing,

cut his woolen military cloak into two. Keeping himself warm with one half, he gave the other to the beggar. That night, he dreamt that he saw Jesus, accompanied by angels, wearing the cloak he had given away. In his dream, he heard Jesus say to the angels, "Martin, as yet only a catechumen, has covered me with his cloak." This vision drove Martin to be baptized at age eighteen.

Two years later, Teutonic tribes invaded Gaul, calling the Roman army into action. Martin decided his Christian faith prohibited him from fighting. He was jailed for his objection and was accused of cowardice. Martin agreed to go unarmed into battle but was released from prison after a truce was made. He then traveled to Poitiers where he was ordained a deacon.

In 371, after years of traveling to evangelize and convert people to Christianity, Martin was made bishop of Tours. Martin was reluctant to accept the position but continued to enthusiastically evangelize and call people to conversion, while maintaining a life of poverty and simplicity. Martin died on November 8 between the years 395 and 402. He requested to be buried in the Cemetery of the Poor.

*O God, who are glorified in the Bishop Saint Martin both by his life and death, make new, we pray, the wonders of your grace in our hearts, that neither death nor life may separate us from your love.*

*Opening Prayer of the Feast of Martin of Tours*

# *Reflect*

What about St. Martin of Tours' life stands out to you?

Martin grew up around the military. Although his father served as an officer in the Roman army, he decided that his faith would not allow him to serve. Take a moment to think about armed conflict. What causes it? What can we do to promote peace in our friendships and neighborhoods? In the world?

# *Act*

Do you know anyone who serves in the military? Make a list of all those you know who may be serving. Take a moment to pray for their safety and well being. You might consider sending a care package, writing a letter or volunteering through an organization that supports troops or veterans.

# St. Frances Xavier Cabrini

- ◆ 1850-1917; Italy
- ◆ Feast Day: November 13
- ◆ Patron Saint of Immigrants and Hospital Administrators



Frances Cabrini, the youngest in an Italian family of thirteen children, grew up with the burning desire to become a nun and a missionary in China. To her great disappointment, Frances was unable to join a religious order due to poor health. She never gave up her dream, however, and began to work as a school teacher in Italy.

One day, a priest offered Frances the opportunity to begin her own religious order of women devoted to missionary work. She would not think of passing up this chance, and in 1880 she formed the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart.

When Pope Leo XIII approved her order in 1887, Frances told him of her wish to pursue her work in China. The Pope had other plans

for Frances and her order, though. He sent her in the opposite direction from China to the United States so that she could tend to the large population of Italian immigrants there. Frances left her home country for New York City where fifty thousand Italian immigrants were living, many of whom lived in poverty and were not warmly welcomed into the Church. Working against many obstacles, the Missionaries ran schools, hospitals and orphanages in New York and soon began to spread to other parts of the United States and even to other countries.

In 1907, Frances became a citizen of the United States. When she died ten years later, her order was present all over the world. She eventually became the first American citizen to become a saint (Elizabeth Ann Seton was the first *American-born* saint).

*Lord, you are the one who acts. I am not even an instrument in your hands, as others say. You alone are the one who does all, and I am nothing more than a spectator of the great and wonderful works that you know how to accomplish.*

*St. Frances Xavier Cabrini*

# *Reflect*

What about St. Frances Xavier Cabrini's life stands out to you?

Frances Cabrini was called to missionary work and ran schools, hospitals and orphanages once she arrived in the United States. She is now the patron saint of hospital administrators. Think about a time you were sick or needed to visit a hospital. What was it like to rely on someone else's expertise and care?

# *Act*

There are many people who battle health struggles and even more who serve as their caregivers. Perhaps you know of people who fit into these categories. Consider sending a get-well card or making a phone call to someone you may know who is unwell. You might give blood or think about volunteering at a hospital or nursing home. Many parishes have opportunities to take the Eucharist to seriously ill members of the parish. Remember, visiting the sick is one of the Corporal Works of Mercy!

# St. Margaret of Scotland

- ◆ 1045-1093
- ◆ Feast Day: November 16
- ◆ Patron Saint of Scotland



The daughter of English royalty, Margaret was born while her father was exiled in Hungary, and she was raised in the very devout court of Andrew I. She returned to England with her family but soon had to depart again when the Normans conquered the throne.

She and her family sought refuge under the protection of the Scottish king, Malcolm III. Several years after Margaret's arrival, she and Malcolm were married, and they would go on to have eight children, three of whom would serve as Scotland's king.

As a wife and mother, Margaret had great influence over the leadership of her country. She encouraged her husband and sons to invite God into their leadership of Scotland, entreating

them to become holy and just rulers. Although himself not particularly religious, Malcolm admired his wife's piety, and presented her with a richly ornamented book of the Gospels. Margaret also worked to reform the Scottish church, unifying it more closely with the Church of Rome.

Margaret tended to the needs of the poor, serving food to the hungry every day before she ate. Much of her own time was spent in prayer and devotion, and she established a ferry to aid pilgrims visiting the relics of St. Andrew in Fife.

Margaret died in 1093 and was canonized by Innocent IV in 1250. She is a patron saint of Scotland and, because of her love for devotional reading, is often pictured with a book in her hands.

*Lord, you gave Saint Margaret of Scotland a special love for the poor. Let her example and prayers help us to become a living sign of your goodness.*

*Opening prayer of the Feast of Margaret of Scotland*

# Reflect

What about St. Margaret of Scotland's life stands out to you?

Margaret was an example to those around her, particularly her husband, Malcolm, and was known for her piety and love of reading. Depictions of her capture this and normally include her holding a book. What books or stories from the Bible are your favorite? Why?

# Act

Stories have a particular way of enchanting us and capturing our imaginations. That is why so many parents take the time to read stories to their children before going to bed. This was Jesus' own model too, as he taught using stories or parables.

Consider the ways in which you might create space for stories in your life. You might make a phone call to a grandparent and ask to hear about their favorite stories or visit a nursing home to do the same thing. Volunteer at your own school, parish, library or local community centers to read to their visitors. Open up the Bible to a favorite passage, or take the time to discover a new one!

# St. Elizabeth of Hungary

- ◆ 1207-1231
- ◆ Feast Day: November 17
- ◆ Patron Saint of Bakers and Nursing Homes



Elizabeth was the daughter of the king of Hungary. Given her royal status, her marriage to Louis of Thuringia was arranged when she was four years old and Louis was eleven. She moved to the court of Thuringia where she grew up with Louis and became his best friend. In 1221, Elizabeth married the man she had come to love very much.

Although she lived in the royal court, Elizabeth chose a life of simplicity, prayerful devotion, and service to the poor and sick. Louis supported her lifestyle even when, as one story tells us, he found a leper lying in their bed whom Elizabeth was nursing to health. She even used the basement of their castle as a hospital. Louis was patient with Elizabeth and loved her all the more for the life she led.

In 1227, tragedy struck when Louis died of the plague. Elizabeth had just given birth to her third child and was devastated by her loss. Elizabeth refused to remarry. She and Louis had promised not to marry another person if one of them should die. Instead, she joined the Franciscans as a tertiary, or secular, member of the order. She lived the rest of her life caring for the sick, the dying, and the poor at a hospice she established. She died at the young age of twenty-four on November 17, 1231.

*Father, you helped Elizabeth of Hungary to recognize and honor Christ in the poor of this world. Let her prayers help us to serve our brothers and sisters in time of trouble and need.*

*Opening Prayer of the Feast of Elizabeth*

# Reflect

What about St. Elizabeth of Hungary's life stands out to you?

Elizabeth opened her home quite literally to those in need and was passionate about putting the resources of the royal court toward care for her subjects, especially the most vulnerable.

Think for a moment about your own life. Do you have any causes, groups or organizations that you admire or are passionate about? Why?

# Act

Elizabeth was well-known for making trips to deliver bread to the poor in secret. While she could have sent others to do this for her, her deep care and love of God moved her to desire closer contact with them.

Millions of people in the United States struggle to put food on the table. At the same time, there are many churches and community organizations who work to fight hunger each and every day.

Might you feel called to volunteer at a soup kitchen or work more directly with these organizations?

On a smaller scale, large amounts of food are wasted every day.

Consider the ways in which you, your friends and family might be more conscious of the food you eat and what you throw away. Be vigilant as to where there might be opportunities to donate unused food to organizations who could use it.

## St. Cecilia

- ◆ Third Century
- ◆ Feast Day: November 22
- ◆ Patron Saint of Poets, Singers and Musicians



Cecilia, whose name means “lily of heaven,” is known for her ardent devotion to God. According to a fifth-century legend, Cecilia vowed to Christ that she would remain a virgin and devote her life to praising and following him.

However, her father refused to accept her vow and forced her to marry a pagan named Valerian. Cecilia married Valerian, but she was determined to remain faithful to her promise of virginity. On her wedding day, she wore clothing made of hair beneath her gown in an attempt to protect her body.

That night, she told Valerian that an angel was protecting her body and that he, too, could experience God’s love if he allowed Cecilia to keep her vow. Valerian promised to believe

Cecilia and to respect her wishes if he could see the angel for himself. This, Cecilia explained, could only happen if he first became baptized. Valerian received the sacrament of baptism from Pope Urban I and was granted a vision of the angel next to Cecilia.

Valerian converted to Christianity, but he soon died as a martyr for his faith at the hands of the Romans. Shortly after, Cecilia was also condemned after refusing to worship the pagan gods. After the Romans failed in an attempt to suffocate her, a soldier tried to behead her. He did a poor job, however, and she lived for three days before finally dying.

Cecilia has become an extremely popular saint and is best known as the patron saint of music. This role comes from the story that, on her wedding day, she heard heavenly music within her heart and was inspired to remain faithful to God and to her promise. When portrayed by artists, Cecilia is often shown with organ pipes in her hand.

*Lord of Mercy, be close to those who call upon you. With St. Cecilia to help us, hear and answer our prayers.*

*Opening Prayer of the Feast of Cecilia*

# Reflect

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

Cecilia chose to remain a virgin even after marriage. While others might have seen her commitment as a constraint, Cecilia saw it as a liberation. It freed her to devote her life even more fully to praising and loving God.

The lives of the saints might look odd to the outside observer. They often make commitments to practices that, in the eyes of the world, might no longer be in fashion or a prevailing norm. While they may be confusing, practices like virginity, voluntary poverty or living in solitude might actually be better understood as a type of refocusing. By 'giving-up' one thing, (marital relations, wealth or status, or a life lived in family or community), they free themselves to focus their energies and attentions elsewhere for the praise and glory of God.

What practices do you have that allow you to focus on the important things in your life:  
God, family, work, school, etc?

# Act

It is reported that on her wedding day, Cecilia heard music that inspired her to remain faithful to her commitment to virginity.

Music can be a great source of inspiration and prayer. The beauty and rhythm of a song's words, melodies and harmonies often communicate dimensions of beauty and wonder that speak to us in ways that other mediums cannot. Take time to listen to a favorite artist or song by yourself, or in a group of friends or family members. What might the music inspire you to do, act or say this week?



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