# the encyclopedia of mystics, saints &

# sages

A guide to asking for PROTECTION, WEALTH, HAPPINESS, and EVERYTHING ELSE!

# Judika Illes

# The Encyclopedia of Mystics, Saints & Sages

A Guide to Asking for Protection, Wealth, Happiness, and Everything Else!



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# Dedication

To Rachel and Jordan, without whose love, patience, and support this book could not have been written.

## Epigraph

*The dead don't die. They look on and help.* D. H. LAWRENCE

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## Introduction

#### Your Friends, Allies, and Guardians from Beyond the Grave

I f you randomly ask people to identify their favorite saints, they may say Saint Anthony, Joan of Arc, or Saint Christopher, but they are also likely to name the head of their local animal shelter, a selfless physician, or even their long-suffering grandmother. Although all these people may be saintly, if they are still alive then, by definition, they are *not* saints—or at least, not yet.

A saint is someone who, having died, does not entirely depart this mortal coil but remains accessible in order to provide assistance and produce miracles for the living. That is the simplest and most technically accurate definition of a saint. Over the years, the word "saint" has acquired additional connotations and so the dictionary may list other definitions as well. However, from a spiritual perspective, a true saint must conform to two criteria:

- A saint is no longer alive.
- A saint has a history of producing or facilitating miracles from beyond the grave.

Once those two criteria are met, however, all bets are off. Saints come from all walks of life and all spiritual traditions. They derive from every ethnicity, gender, nation, and era. There are child saints and saints who achieved venerable ages. By any definition, many saints were "good" people while they were alive; they gave to the poor, healed the sick, fed the hungry, and sublimated their own personal desires to the needs of others. However, not all "saintly" people become saints after they die. Conversely, others who now fulfill all the requirements of sainthood may not have been particularly nice when they were breathing—some robbed, raped, pillaged, persecuted others, and even murdered.

The notion that not all saints were saintly or that saints may derive from spiritual traditions other than Christianity often surprises and even shocks people. Part of the confusion regarding saints derives from linguistic limitations. In the 21st century, the word "saint" is used to express multiple concepts, many having little to do with the original notion of sainthood.

Saint is used as a synonym for "extremely good," "selfless," or "longsuffering." Thus Mother Teresa was frequently described as a saint while she was alive and operating orphanages in Calcutta. However, now that she is dead, in order for her to become an officially recognized Roman Catholic saint, there must be evidence and testimony indicating that she has produced at least two miracles from beyond the grave. Being considered "exceptionally good" is not sufficient for being regarded as a true saint. "Saintly" and "saint" are not synonyms.

Another reason for the confusion that exists regarding saints is our general cultural reluctance to discuss spiritual matters, especially those with a supernatural tinge. This general disinclination to contemplate or discuss the mystical emerged with a vengeance in the 18th century with the birth of what is now called the Age of Reason.

During the Age of Reason, *how* people thought—the way they thought—was dramatically transformed, as were the topics they thought about. Things and concepts once accepted blindly and without question were now closely considered and analyzed. It was the beginning of a new age in which rational thought was revered as opposed to the faith valued by earlier generations. Myth busters and debunkers emerged, questioning previously deeply held beliefs, demanding evidence and proof. Among the topics reexamined and reassessed were the after-life, the soul, miracles, communication between the living and the dead, and paranormal powers—all subjects inextricably intertwined with sainthood.

Scientific method was formalized during this era. Scientific method is a system involving a series of clearly defined and mandatory steps, intended as a way of proving things to be true or false, fact or fiction. First a hypothesis is made—an assumption or statement to be proved or disproved. In attempts to prove or disprove this hypothesis, evidence is gathered and experiments conducted. In order for the hypothesis to be proven, results must be reproducible by other researchers. By definition, scientific method thus acknowledges and validates events, beings, experiences, and things that are standardized and predictable, while discounting others.

Sainte produce miracles and miracles hu definition are unique events that

defy reason and logic. To fully discuss saints—especially the extraordinary powers many of them demonstrated in life and the miracles attributed to them after their death—thus defies scientific method and social convention. By this reasoning, to demonstrate familiarity with this topic demonstrates familiarity with superstition. Thus, it is not surprising that many prefer to consider saints as role models rather than as miracle workers—at least during public discussion.

From the late 18th century through the 20th century, discussion relating to the supernatural or miraculous was generally avoided in polite, educated society. However, the beginning of the 21st century marked a new revolution—an explosion of interest in the paranormal, as well as a willingness to speak openly about topics previously only whispered. Many are no longer afraid to describe experiences they may have had that cannot be proved with conventional logic and reason. Television programming on many channels is dominated by ghost hunters. And so, it may be time for an honest and frank discussion of saints, our friends and allies on the Other Side.

Ironically, life's biggest mystery may be what happens after it ends. Philosophers, mystics, theologians, and religious leaders have debated this conundrum for millennia. Their responses can be boiled down to three options, although obviously many fine variations exist.

- Immortality: A person possesses an immortal soul that leaves the body at death and travels to an after-life realm like Heaven, Hell, Valhalla, Avalon, the Western Paradise, and innumerable others.
- Reincarnation: A person possesses an immortal soul that, through the process of reincarnation or transmigration, passes from one corporeal body to another, lifetime after lifetime, incarnation after incarnation. After you die, you will eventually and literally be born again, albeit in another form or as another person.
- Finality: Death is final. Individual existence terminates at death. Our bodies deteriorate and our lives fade from memory, although the names of exceptional or famous people, as well as the basic facts of their lives, may be recalled. Human life is as ephemeral as grains of sand dissolving in the sea.

Each of these theories has its proponents—billions of them. It is possible that each is correct—that different fates await different individuals. Some may pass into a new form and some may pass into

oblivion. This corresponds with the universal folk belief that souls of the dead differ in how they interact with the living. In other words, not all souls of dead people behave the same way.

Most dead people, whatever their after-life fate, are never heard from again. Most pass from this existence completely, living only in the memories of those left behind. These dead souls neither help nor harm the living. They are literally the silent majority of the dead, but there are exceptions. Saints are among those exceptions.

Certain souls of the dead do *not* depart—or at least not entirely. They linger among the living for varying purposes, sometimes beneficial, but sometimes not. The souls of the dead who remain concerned with the living for one reason or another have traditionally and in folklore been divided into categories:

- Ghosts
- Vampires
- Ancestors
- Spirit guides
- Saints

## Ghosts and Vampires

Ghosts are defined as souls of the dead who remain on the earthly plane, haunting the living because they have unfinished personal business. Something or someone keeps them tied to the realm of the living. There are also ghosts who reputedly linger because they are unaware that they are dead. Something in their transition process from life to death was botched. However, beyond their presence, which may be inadvertently frightening, these ghosts do not intentionally impact the living.

Some ghosts seek justice or vengeance, but not all ghosts are innately harmful. They may also remain in order to protect loved ones or just to linger in their presence. Other ghosts feel protective or attached to a specific location or object. Once a ghost's unfinished business is complete, it usually leaves and may never be heard from again, although some are very persistent.

Although many consider serious discussion of ghosts and vampires

challenging—perceiving that it stretches credibility—it is necessary in this context, if only because so many saints are praised for guarding against them. Alternatively, when Romanian folk tradition accuses Saint Andrew of being suspiciously sympathetic toward vampires, we must appreciate that this is meant sincerely. Whether or not one perceives ghosts and vampires as "real," discussion of traditional beliefs about them sheds light on the sacred power of saints.

Vampires are defined as souls of the dead who refuse to leave the realm of the living willingly and remain to prey upon it. They are parasitic beings. The incredible popularity of literary, cinematic, and television vampires has obscured the original folkloric being.

Popular culture identifies saints and sinners as opposite ends of a spectrum, hence the title of the 1963 jazz classic by Charles Mingus, *The Black Saint and the Sinner Lady*, as well as innumerable bars and clubs named Saints and Sinners. According to fairly universal folk tradition, however, it is the vampire who is the saint's true opposite.

- Saints overflow with such potent life energy that, even after death, they can use it to benefit the living.
- Folkloric vampires, on the other hand, drain the vital energy or aura of a living person, typically sucking the lifeblood, not actual blood.

Bram Stoker, the author of *Dracula*, did not invent vampires. The concept dates back thousands of years and is not restricted to Central and Eastern Europe. Legends and descriptions of predatory wraiths derive from all over the world and exist in the folklore, mythology, and folk religion of many cultures, although different names for this type of harmful dead soul may be used. This type of folkloric vampire remains extremely *real* to many people all over the world and has virtually nothing in common with the fictional vampire.

The vampires of folk tradition are not suave and sexy, and they definitely do not sparkle. They are not glamorous. They are clearly *dead*, albeit restless and destructive. Often, their very presence is believed to spread infectious disease. People are not doomed to become vampires simply because they are bitten by one. Instead, certain lifestyles, conditions, and spiritual predilections are believed to be the causal factors. In Christian Europe, factors traditionally believed to result in vampirism after death include:

- Illegitimate birth (being born outside the sacrament of marriage)
- Death by suicide
- Inadequate or improper burial rites
- Being born on Christmas Day (It was perceived as the utmost of arrogance for a soul to share a birthday with Jesus.)

Essentially, those who defied Church rules were believed likely to become vampires after death. Alternatively, those born with traits that, in pre-Christian Europe, would have indicated latent shamanic power—a caul, one or more teeth, or significant birth order, such as being the seventh son or daughter—were believed likely to turn vampiric after death.

Non-Christian societies, especially those of Asia, believe that predatory magical practitioners are likely to become vampires. East Asian alchemy is intensely focused on cultivating life energy with the ideal goal of achieving immortality. Alchemists who possess sufficient knowledge to drain energy from the living, but not enough to defeat death, are also believed likely to become vampires.

## Ancestors, Spirit Guides, and Saints

Horror movies to the contrary, baneful ghosts and vampires are not the norm. Most lingering souls of the dead are not dangerous; rather they are potentially extremely beneficial. Souls of the dead categorized as ancestors, spirit guides, and saints remain among the living for benign motives—including love, concern, kinship, and responsibility—or because, while still alive, they made sacred vows to protect, guide, and provide for people.

The souls of the dead known as ancestors or ancestral spirits maintain contact with their living descendents, providing guidance and protection from beyond the grave, but sometimes creating havoc if they feel forgotten, neglected, or disrespected. What anthropologists call "ancestor worship" ranks among the most ancient forms of religion and is still practiced. Certain spiritual traditions, both modern and ancient, possess detailed rituals for propitiating ancestors and communicating with them.

- Ancestral spirits are only concerned with their descendents.
- Saints potentially help anyone or everyone.

Saints remain accessible to the living, providing guidance and protection for vast numbers of people, not only their personal descendents. By definition, a spirit who lacks descendents is not an ancestor, so it is in an ancestor's best interest to maintain the health, well-being, and fertility of its descendents.

Spirit guides are souls of the dead who are concerned with the spiritual progress of individuals. Individual spirit guides are concerned with individual living people. There are an unlimited number of dead souls—more enter the pool daily—and so every single living individual may have his or her own unique personal spirit guide, similar to a personal and unique guardian angel. These spirit guides may be unknown to anyone else—they may manifest and identify themselves solely to the person they guide and protect. Once a spirit guide begins to communicate with and help the population at large, that spirit guide may be considered a saint. (For an example, see the encyclopedia entry for *Black Hawk*.)

Saints are miracle workers who offer both physical assistance and spiritual guidance. Saints are your allies from beyond the grave. Lest there be any confusion, this is not meant in any abstract way. For many people—right now and through the ages, well educated or otherwise, deriving from many spiritual traditions—*saints are experiential reality*. In other words, these people do not "believe" in saints; rather they have direct personal knowledge and experience of specific saints. When you travel to a popular saint's shrine—for example, that of the Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City or Canada's Sainte Anne de Beaupré—the countless plaques you see attesting to miracles are not intended as metaphor. In each case, the plaque's donor claims that the saint personally came to his or her assistance.

Saints, many of whom are instantly recognizable once you're familiar with them—which you will be once you've read this book—communicate with the living using various methods:

- They appear in dreams, in waking visions, and as apparitions.
- They may be accessed via meditation, prayer, ritual, and magic spells.
- They may communicate symbolically or through disembodied voices.
- They use people as vehicles of communication; living people are sometimes divinely inspired to deliver messages or provide assistance to

others.

• Most crucially, they communicate through the miracles that people beseech them to produce.

What does this mean in plain English? If you are desperate, if an illness cannot be cured by conventional methods or even diagnosed, if your problems seem insurmountable, if solutions are impossible, if you cannot find employment, true love, or bear a child, the saints exist to provide help—although you may have to locate the right saint and you may actually have to request that help. Saints sometimes offer help spontaneously, but more often they respond to direct appeals. (For an example, see the entry for *Saint Amico*.)

Saints serve as a bridge between the realms of life and death. They are liminal beings who walk in multiple worlds. They have access to after-life realms and to their inhabitants. They commune with angels and battle demons, and are able to draw near to the Creator to deliver your prayers and petitions. Having died, saints know the mysteries of the after-life, but because they have also lived, they possess empathy for human needs and desires that other, nonhuman, spiritual beings may not.

Does this sound far-fetched? People around the globe in every era and deriving from extremely different orientations have historically called upon the power of their saints and testified to miracles received. They continue to do so today.

Open today's newspaper, find the section devoted to classified ads, and count the testimonials to Saint Jude, the patron of impossible causes and among the most popular of modern saints. Travel to the many shrines associated with saints all over the globe and gaze upon the multitude of abandoned crutches and the masses of plaques testifying to miracles received—are all these people wrong or misguided?

Saints are not without controversy, however, beginning with the word used to identify them. The English word "saint" derives from an Indo-European root word, *sak*. Its immediate ancestor is the Latin word *sanctus*, meaning "hallowed" or "consecrated." "Saint," "sacred," and "sacrifice" are all etymologically related. "Saint" names a category of sacred, mystical beings, but it is also an honorific—a respectful term of address. In some traditions, informality and familiarity with saints are acceptable or even encouraged; many devotees lovingly address Saint Anthony of Padua as Tony or Saint Joseph as Joe. However, others consider it imperative to use an honorific when addressing a

saint. Similar honorifics exist in many spiritual traditions, although they may not mean precisely the same thing. (For examples, see the entries for *Lalla* or *Sidi*, honorifics used in North Africa.) Often, when people disagree about saints, what they are really arguing about are words and linguistics.

The word "saint" is intensely identified with Christianity. Because of this association, many people from other religious traditions dislike using the word for their own holy beings, even those perfectly matching the criteria that define a saint. The Christian cult of saints is also larger and more visible than that of other religions. Because sainthood is so closely associated with Christianity, many adherents of other religions angrily resent the suggestion that they, too, have "saints." Yet the concept of miracle workers from beyond the grave exists in virtually every spiritual tradition, including African Diaspora, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Spiritism, Spiritualism, and Zoroastrianism.

"Saint" is a neutral word indicating the venerated helpful dead, regardless of spiritual traditions—in the same manner that the word "religion" does not apply to one faith but encompasses a broad spectrum of practices.

In English, the word "saint" is commonly used to indicate miracle workers who are venerated in a manner similar to Christian saints—albeit often without statues or other visual imagery—and who produce the same kind of miracles, regardless of what spiritual tradition they're from. However, the word may not be a direct translation of the words actually used in these other traditions to name this phenomenon. Here are some examples:

- *Arhat*, a Sanskrit word frequently translated as "Buddhist saint," is more literally translated as "worthy one" or "destroyer of enemies." Those enemies include greed and delusion. The Arhats were the disciples of the historical Buddha, just as the Apostles were the disciples of Jesus Christ. Other languages use other names for the Arhats, for instance *Arahant* (Pali); *Lohan* (Chinese); *Nahan* (Korean); and *Rakan* (Japanese).
- *Bodhisattva*, another Sanskrit word translated into English as "Buddhist saint," is more literally defined as an enlightenment hero or heroine. According to Buddhist tenets, cycles of reincarnation are terminated when a soul reaches Nirvana. In plain English, this means that once a soul has achieved this spiritual epiphany, it will not be reborn in a new

form. A *bodhisattva* (pronounced: bo-dee-saht-vah) is someone who, having reached this pinnacle, refuses to accept this prize but vows to remain among the living in order to save them from suffering.

- *Kadosh*, sometimes spelled *Kedosh*, is a Hebrew word that literally means "holy" or "sacred" and is thus a genuine synonym for "saint." Feminine variants are *Kadosha* or *Kedosha*. The original Hebrew title of the 1996 Israeli movie marketed in English-speaking countries as *Saint Clara* is *Clara HaKedosha*. *Ha* means "the," so the original title literally means Clara the Holy Girl or Clara the Saint. The movie is based on a novel by Czech author Pavel Kohout entitled *Nápady svaté Kláry*. *Svaté* is a Czech variant of "saint," derived from the same Indo-European root word. Thus the translation to English brings the title back full circle. (The words are pronounced: kah-dohsh, keh-dohsh, kah-doh-sha, *or* keh-doh-shah. *Doh* is pronounced the way Homer Simpson says it.)
- *Sant* derives from a Sanskrit verb meaning "to be good" or "to be real." It is frequently used as an honorific corresponding to the traditional definition of "saint," although a *sant* may be alive or dead. *Sant* may be translated as "Hindu saint," but it is a distinct word, not a misspelling of "saint," a common presumption that raises the hackles of many Hindus.
- *Siddha* (pronounced: see-dah) is a Sanskrit word that is typically translated as "Hindu saint" but literally means "a perfected one," "one who achieved a goal," or "one possessing miraculous powers."
- *Tzaddik*, also spelled *Zaddik* or *Saddik* (pronounced: tsah-dick or tsahdeek), is often translated as "Jewish saint" but literally means "righteous" in Hebrew. Feminine variants are *Tzaddika*, *Zaddika*, or *Saddika* (pronounced: tsa-deek-ah).
- *Wali* (pronounced: wah-lee) is frequently translated as "Muslim saint" but derives from an Arabic root word meaning "nearness," indicating a special nearness to God. The wali is a friend or close companion of God. The wali's ability to perform miracles is understood as an indication of God's favor, proximity, and approval. Wali may also connote "guardian" or "intercessor."

Saints and sainthood are controversial for reasons that transcend linguistics. Historically, saints and their devotees have been the subject of bitter and sometimes violent disagreement—"saint" can be a fighting word, evoking powerful reactions among both opponents and adherents. The veneration of saints and the relics associated with them, as well as pilgrimages to saints' shrines, were among the practices that sparked the Protestant Reformation. Many church reformers perceived the veneration of saints as idolatry, an opinion shared by many modern Protestants. Likewise, many Jews resent the suggestion that there are "Jewish saints," because they understand Christian saints as being worshipped, thereby ignoring the injunction of at least two commandments. (See Glossary: *Intercessor*.)

The entire concept of sainthood is controversial among both Jews and Muslims. As with Protestants, many Jews and Muslims perceive the veneration of saints as idolatry or something veering dangerously close. The practice is not expressly forbidden by either the Koran or Torah, but neither is there an official authorized system to recognize saints as there is in Christianity. Thus certain factions within the greater Jewish or Muslim communities love their saints, expending much energy in their veneration, while others condemn the practice and still others just ignore it, often pretending it doesn't exist. Some may genuinely believe it doesn't exist. Veneration of saints is generally associated with Sufi and North African Muslim communities, and with North African Jews, but the practice also exists among Ashkenazi or European Jews.

Just as saints lie near the heart of the schism between Protestants and Catholics, they mark a distinction between Sunni and Shia Muslims as well. Saint veneration is permissible and even encouraged among the Shia but not by the Sunni. Disagreements among Christians regarding saint veneration are now largely relegated to history books, but for Muslims, this topic is current, controversial, and divisive.

Islamic scholar Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1792), the founder of Wahhabism or the Wahhabi branch of Islam, launched a crusade to purify and reform Islam, which he perceived had become corrupted by practices like the veneration of saints. As part of this crusade, saints' shrines were smashed, holy trees associated with saints were axed, and attempts were made to curtail ecstatic practices associated with saints.

This crusade continues. In 1996, when the Taliban, a Wahhabi-influenced political organization, seized power in Afghanistan, they locked Sufi shrines, denying access to devotees. Many shrines were destroyed. The Taliban specifically objected to women visiting these shrines, as they felt this promoted "obscenity." Just over ten years later, the Shabab, another Wahhabi-influenced political organization, began destroying the shrines of Sufi saints in Somalia and arresting their caretakers. During this same period, shrines associated with saints

were attacked or destroyed in Pakistan—for example, the shrine of Sufi poetsaint Rahman Baba was reduced to rubble on March 5, 2009. (See encyclopedia entry for *Rahman Baba*.)

Efforts to repress or terminate saint veneration stem from various motives, ranging from deep and sincere theological objections to embarrassment at something perceived as too "Old World" or primitive. And yet the veneration of saints evokes equal passion. People love their saints intensely and fight—sometimes literally—for their right to continue saint-related spiritual practices and retain access to shrines. Sufis in Somalia, traditionally a very peaceful community, have taken up arms to protect their saints' shrines.

To understand *why* saints evoke such passion, we must comprehend who becomes a saint after death, what exactly it is that saints do, and the different ways in which people venerate saints and attempt to communicate and make contact with them.

#### Stars and Martyrs

Many saints start receiving veneration from literally the moment they die, as if it's taken for granted that they will not fade into obscurity in the manner of most dead souls, but will instead start producing miracles immediately. Although there are surprises—some saints do appear unexpectedly, as if from out of the blue—in many cases, certain extraordinary people are widely expected to become saints after they die. These expectations are often, although not always, fulfilled. There are a variety of clues that indicate whether someone will take up the mantle of sainthood. In other words, someone's potential to become a saint can often be recognized or predicted while that person is still alive.

In general, people become saints either because of how they lived or because of how they died. Many saints were charismatic, dynamic people who radiated tremendous personal power while alive. This type of "personal power" doesn't mean merely being energetic or boisterous. The English language lacks a specific word to define or name this power or quality accurately, so we're forced to talk around it. The closest word is "charisma," which literally means "a gift," as in a gift of God. In traditional Greek Orthodox usage, "charisma" indicates the special grace conferred by God. In modern, colloquial English, however, the word may be used to indicate anyone with a magnetic, charming, or attractive personality. Any stage performer with presence is described as possessing charisma, so the original meaning of the word has largely been lost.

Other languages do possess words for this concept. *Baraka*, a variant of an Arabic word used in North Africa, the land of myriad saints from many spiritual traditions, refers to a type of intense, sacred spiritual power. This power may be possessed by the living but does not terminate at death or dissipate afterward. Instead, it may grow exponentially stronger.

This power may be used to heal or to contact the spirit realm. It is considered a blessing and a mark of divine favor. It permeates the creations and actions of the person possessing it—in other words, it can be transmitted. Amulets or talismans created by someone with *baraka* will be inherently more potent and effective. It is widely believed that someone displaying this type of sacred personal power while alive will become a saint after death.

This type of personal power is readily identifiable. No expert or authority is required to point it out officially. *You* can recognize this type of personal power, because you feel strengthened, revitalized, and empowered when in the presence of someone possessing copious amounts of it. This positive personal power may be manifested quietly and discreetly by a living person. They may be unaware of their effect on others.

All of us know people who consistently make us feel better just by being in their presence. Sometimes, this power is demonstrated dramatically, as with some faith healers, psychics, and spiritual leaders. Musicians, singers, or other performers who consistently deliver performances that leave us profoundly moved spiritually and emotionally—or even psychically healed—may also demonstrate this power. (See encyclopedia entries for *Coltrane, Saint John; Elvis; Gardel, Carlos; Gilda; Patton, Charley.*) In many cases, this power is apparent while a person is still alive and encourages expectations that he or she will later behave as a saint. Occasionally, however, the full magnitude of the person's power only emerges after death.

Saints are the souls of dead people who possess this intense, sacred power from beyond the grave and beyond the limitations of life. Death is not a stumbling block for saints; their actions and talents do not cease but rather increase in magnitude. Power of this magnitude is the chief intrinsic requirement for sainthood. In life, a saint's behavior may not have been consistently exemplary—or even exemplary at all—but it is expected that, in death, these powers will be used for the benefit of others.

<sup>•</sup> Some saints were meek and humble in life, easily overlooked. Others, the stars of the firmament of saints, demonstrated incredibly dramatic

abilities that might now be classified as "paranormal." The lives of these saints feature many fabulous stories.

- Some could reputedly levitate (often for extended periods), bilocate, or translocate.
- Others performed miraculous feats like handling fire without being burned.
- Some demonstrated powers of prophesy and clairvoyance.
- Some commanded the elements—rain, wind, and water, for instance.
- Some displayed the marks of the stigmata, the five bleeding wounds of Christ, although they themselves were not wounded.
- Many manifested miraculous healing powers; some even reputedly resurrected the dead.

These fantastic legends offer confidence to some but are stumbling blocks to others. The tales and the saints they describe are too supernatural, too unbelievable to be accepted as reality, too similar to stories also told of sorcerers and physical mediums, and too reminiscent of a stage magician's tricks.

For what it's worth, dramatic manifestations of this type of preternatural power have always been the source of controversy. Showy paranormal feats often make people, especially those in positions of authority, whether religious or secular, very nervous. This was just as true centuries ago as it is today. During their lifetimes, those demonstrating this sort of power were often suspected of being witches, a dangerous suspicion during the era of witch hunts. Catherine of Siena and Teresa of Avila are now among the most respected and respectable saints. Both have been made Doctors of the Roman Catholic Church, an honor that indicates they have had a lasting impact on the Church at large. While alive, however, they both battled rumors that they were witches.

Many of the saints who demonstrated these dramatic powers while alive were suspected of being frauds. They may have been scorned, mocked, or discounted. Frauds have always existed. The word "mountebank" is now a synonym for "charlatan" because the original community of mountebanks—medieval traveling faith healers, diviners, and medicine sellers—was so infiltrated with fakes that the word's very meaning was tainted. However, among the vast number of poseurs and imitators, there are a few whose actions and history are inexplicable, whose miraculous feats cannot be debunked or disproven. Sometimes, preternatural powers are genuine. The proof, at least when it comes to saints, becomes apparent in what occurs after death. Saints "do not go gentle into that good night"; after death, they return with even greater and more amazing displays of power. (See encyclopedia entry for *Pio, Saint*.)

When it comes to *baraka*, this sacred energy, some people are seemingly just born with it. Yet many others apparently receive it at death—or at least that's when they begin publicly manifesting it. Manner of death—how someone dies is also a key factor in predicting whether he or she is likely to become a saint. Violent, abrupt, or particularly horrendous deaths, especially when the victims are in the prime of life, are thought to produce saints. The life energy of these victims is perceived as so vital that it does not terminate at death but continues to radiate. It never had a chance to wind down, dissipate, or decrease gradually. This is particularly true when the victims are young women; the fertile, creative, life-producing power inherent in them is thwarted. The heightened emotions experienced during this type of death may also give the souls a kind of power surge.

Of course, this type of violent death also reputedly produces vengeful ghosts. Among the spiritual mysteries of the universe is why some murder victims become furious ghosts, while others become benevolent saints. Transcending theology, Christianity's beloved virgin martyrs—Agatha, Barbara, Lucy, and Agnes—experienced this type of violent death, as did the Jewish virgin martyr Lalla Solica.

There are other qualities that are characteristic of those who become saints:

- A spiritual calling: In some, this manifests very early in life; with others, it emerges late or in response to a profound crisis, as with Saint John of God.
- Profound commitment to helping others: Even those who notoriously live outside the law may become Robin Hood–like figures, like Jesús Malverde or Gaucho Gil. Some go far above and beyond the call of duty to help others.
- Empathy: Some saints are empaths who literally feel the hunger and cold suffered by others. In many cases, saints were also healers while alive.

The topic of saints is complex, sprawling, and messy. Just as many saints defy the rules of logic, some defy easy categorization. Nothing is simple or absolutely black-and-white when it comes to saints. And so, although a saint is accurately defined as the soul of a once-living person who now provides assistance and produces miracles for those left behind, exceptions do exist—not with regard to the miracles and assistance, but with regard to the definition of "person."

Christianity acknowledges three archangels as saints. While legends suggest that Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael walk the earth convincingly disguised as people, nothing indicates that they have ever been mortals. Likewise, some forbidden deities—gods and goddesses banished when new religions came to power—may linger among devotees in the now-acceptable form of saints, even though devotees may be unaware of the saint's secret identity. This extremely controversial point is discussed in greater detail later in this book. In addition, as you will read, a personified spirit of death and a loyal dog are venerated as saints, but these are the exceptions. (See encyclopedia entries for *Guinefort, Saint; Muerte, La Santissima*.)

So for accuracy's sake, we can say that, *in general*, saints are living people now deceased who demonstrate certain types of power and behavior. Their previous mortal existence is part and parcel of why the living love and depend upon saints so much. It is what creates the special bond between saints and their devotees. Because saints were also once alive, they understand what it means to be human, to have hopes, desires, needs, and hungers.

### Working with the Saints

Saints provide for our needs and desires. We request that they bless our enterprises and save us from danger. Saints are holy beings. This point cannot be overemphasized. To be in the presence of a true saint is to be in the presence of the sacred, even if that particular saint wasn't all that sacred while still a living person.

It's very easy to overlook this point as we contemplate which saints accomplish which practical tasks. In other words, while focusing on how Mary Magdalen and Saint Helena are invoked in love spells, how Saint Christopher provides travelers with safe passage, and how Saint Anthony helps find your lost keys or purse, it is crucial always to recall that these are sacred beings worthy of awe, not merely personal servants or some sort of robotic benefactors. To be in the presence of the saints is a gift and a blessing in and of itself. Saints don't have to *do* anything for a relationship with them to be profoundly significant. In addition to providing for our material needs, saints offer profound spiritual lessons, as well as lessons in love, courage, generosity, and selflessness. The tangible miracles saints produce are the bonus, not the end-all.

*How* you work with a saint depends on what you seek. Perhaps you expect or desire nothing. Maybe you have found a saint whom you like or admire or one who is identified as your patron saint—the saint who is supposed to serve as your spiritual parent. (See Appendix II for lists of patron saints.) It may be sufficient and potentially very soul-satisfying to dedicate a candle to this saint on his or her feast day, merely as a gesture of respect or affection. You may wear a medallion bearing this saint's image or carry a holy card because doing so provides peace of mind and that is sufficient for you. If you don't require actual, concrete assistance, then there's nothing you must do beyond enjoying the company of the saints.

On the other hand, if you're faced with a difficult situation and really need a little sanctified assistance, saints do provide miracles—that's their claim to fame. If this is true for you, there are three questions to consider:

- How do I request a miracle?
- How will I know my request was received?
- How do I know which saint to ask?

The last question is discussed in the next section of this introduction. Let's consider mechanics first.

Every religion that acknowledges saints also possesses approved methods of contacting and venerating them. "Veneration" is a key word. Saints are not worshipped like deities; they are venerated. The word "venerate" derives from the Latin *veneratus*. The dictionary defines "venerate" thus:

- 1. to regard with reverential respect or with admiring deference
- 2. to honor (as an icon or a relic) with a ritual act of devotion

Veneration may sound like a formal process, but nothing could be further from the truth. The word "venerate" is related to Venus, the Roman deity renowned as a goddess of love. Likewise, *venerate* is related to a root word that may be interpreted as "love." The most popular saints, those hailed as miracle workers, are loved. In the best possible situation, you will find one or more saints whom you love and who, in turn, will love you back.

Thus, the simplest method of establishing a relationship with a saint is by

veneration: the love you feel in your heart. Everything else is a formality. This book contains techniques traditionally used to communicate with saints and request their help, but never forget that you can simply speak your pain, needs, and deepest emotions to a saint. It is equally effective to utter words aloud or silently in your heart. Although rituals and magic spells are traditionally associated with some saints, *all* saints have historically responded to a heartfelt cry.

Many people journey to pilgrimage sites associated with a specific saint to speak intimately to the saint because of the traditional belief that a plea is more likely to be heard if delivered from certain places. Although you may get "better reception" at those sites, if you are unable to travel, don't worry; petitions have been delivered from any place and every place.

A saint and the statue of a saint are not the same. Statues are merely representations. This may seem obvious, but many forget or fail to comprehend that saints are not lifeless or man-made; they are vital and responsive holy beings. Saints are not products of the imagination or merely archetypes. You don't speak "at" them; you speak "to" them, and they potentially hear and respond. You can admire any saint from afar, but veneration is a deeper experience; it involves a relationship, and healthy relationships are mutually satisfying and reciprocal.

So what's in it for the saints? In many cases, the saint has made a vow to provide assistance; thus, there may be a spiritual component that transcends any gift a person can offer in return. However, relationships between saints and their devotees are reciprocal. Devotees offer veneration, while saints provide assistance. Sometimes, the person initiates the relationship; but the saint may do so as well. Saints may appear to devotees in dreams or in another fashion to volunteer their patronage.

Gestures of veneration are the simplest way for a person to initiate a relationship with a saint. The simplest and most traditional gesture of veneration is lighting candles, oil lamps, or incense. This can be done at a shrine, but for many devotees around the world, home altars are most convenient. (Instructions for constructing altars are found in the Glossary.) Individual saints may also be associated with specific, specialized rituals. (When applicable, these are described within the saint's personal entry in this book.) Some saints, especially the most popular ones, are celebrated annually with public festivals.

Different traditions possess different rituals. Roman Catholic saints may be petitioned or thanked via a nine-day prayer ritual known as a *novena* (see

Glossary). Orthodox saints are traditionally venerated using sacred images known as *icons* (see Glossary). Likewise, special rituals are incorporated into the veneration of Jewish saints. As with saints of other traditions, Jewish saints are traditionally venerated at their gravesites, either by reciting psalms or through written notes detailing needs and desires that are placed directly on the grave or into cracks in the stone.

Saints aren't always home. They may be out performing miracles or visiting celestial realms or possibly just socializing with each other. Leaving a stone on a saint's tomb is considered the equivalent of leaving a message. This is not done casually, but as part of a ritual:

- 1. Find a small stone that will fit into your hand. Never take one off another grave.
- 2. Charge and activate this stone by holding it in your hand and concentrating intensely on your needs or desires. Talk to the saint while holding the stone: don't be afraid to express your emotions. Cry into the stone; your tears bear your personal message.
- 3. When you're ready to leave, place the stone on the grave.

Veneration is a fluid process. Cultures and spiritual traditions borrow, learn, or even appropriate from each other. Many saints are not as denominational as their devotees may be. (More about this when we discuss finding your own personal patron saints.) If a tradition or practice feels right to you, use it or adapt it to suit your own spiritual needs.

What happens when you're really desperate and in need of a miracle? What do you do? What actions do you take? The most traditional and effective method is formally known as *La Promesa* (literally, "the promise") in Latin America, but the same method exists elsewhere and in virtually all spiritual traditions, albeit with variations. This is an extremely ancient method. The reality is that saints are venerated in much the same way that spirits have been for thousands of years. This ritual transcends denominations and involves a series of steps.

- 1. Request a favor of the saint. This can be done at the saint's shrine or anywhere.
- 2. Promise the saint something you will deliver if and when your request is fulfilled. Don't be vague. Be extremely specific. Tell the saint exactly what you will give and when to expect it. It may be immediately upon

receipt of a miracle, or after a specified period of time. If you are petitioning for pregnancy, for instance, advise that the gift will be delivered after a healthy baby is born, not merely on conception. (A popular offering in exchange for a long-awaited child is to name the child after the saint.) Be sure the time frame suits your personal situation.

The promise or payment may be lavish or very simple. Saint Jude, for instance, requests nothing more than public testimonial of his prowess, hence all those newspaper ads and Internet posts thanking him for favors received. The nature of the offering should reflect the magnitude of the favor requested. Small offerings may include candles to be lit at a shrine or at home. Purchase of a statue representing the saint or good works done in the saint's name are also appropriate. Historically, the most traditional offering is a pilgrimage to a site associated with the saint. An offering may be interpreted as a gesture of gratitude or respect, or as a bribe. Either way, it should be something pleasing to the specific saint and something that you are capable of giving. Do not offer what you know you will never be able to give. You are dealing with a holy being and, although most saints are quite merciful, some are adamant that all vows be fulfilled, no matter what. Remember, if and when your miracle or request is received, make sure to fulfill your promise promptly.

Entries for individual saints in this book include suggested offerings. Certain saints are associated with very specific offerings. However, most are satisfied with prayers, good deeds, charitable donations, testimonials, candles, and pilgrimages. The most important aspect of an offering is that it is given lovingly and respectfully, not grudgingly. True gifts of the heart are more valuable than lavish donations offered carelessly. Frank Graziano's *Cultures of Devotion: Folk Saints of Spanish America* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2007) describes a devotee's offerings to Argentinean folk saint San La Muerte. The devotee vowed to belly dance for seven consecutive years at the saint's annual fiesta, designing and creating special outfits and choreographing original dances. (See entry for *Muerte, San La*.)

Perhaps the most famous example involves entertainer Danny Thomas (1912– 1991), who, as a young man, requested direction and assistance from Saint Jude, promising, in return, to build him a shrine someday. Eventually, Thomas became the moving force in establishing the Saint Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis dedicated to caring for extremely sick children. In exchange for assistance, Thomas thus helped create a vehicle enabling Saint Jude to continue helping others. (See Glossary: *Ex-Voto: Milagro; Pilgrimage*.)

Less conventional methods of working with saints exist, as well. Many saints are invoked with magic spells, although this is controversial and rarely officially approved. Ironically, many of the saints most closely associated with magic spells—the so-called magical saints—are among the oldest, most widely venerated, and respectable official saints. These saints participate in magic spells that many of them would presumably have condemned during their lifetimes, at least if their hagiographies are to be believed. Perhaps they have reconsidered former attitudes in the after-life. Or perhaps they provide an officially approved facade that allows devotees to retain access to forbidden or subversive spirits, even if unknowingly. Not all saints are associated with magic spells, however. Spells associated with specific saints in this book are found within their individual encyclopedia entries, along with instructions. (See encyclopedia entries for *Agnes, Saint; Andrew, Saint; Helena, Saint; John the Baptist; Martha the Dominator; Peter, Saint.*)

There are many reasons why magic spells are controversial. Suffice it to say that although spells and prayers are closely related, a prayer is a request made to a holy being while a spell is a *demand*. (See Judika Illes, *The Encyclopedia of* 5000 *Spells*, HarperOne, 2009, for more information.) In the meantime, here are some simple lessons and rules:

- General magical philosophy suggests that there is no such thing as coincidence. Rather, what appear to be coincidences are signs indicating that further attention must be paid. Not all coincidences are equally significant; however, all are worthy of examination and consideration. So-called coincidences are among the ways saints communicate with devotees. For example, if you request help from Saint Martha in the morning and by lunchtime an unexpected postcard bearing the image of a dragon, one of Martha's symbols, has arrived in your mailbox, don't just dismiss this as coincidence. It may be a direct communiqué from the saint, advising that your petition has been received. Pay attention. Further messages may follow. Disregarding coincidences is equivalent to discarding messages unread.
- There are many ways to cast a spell and many styles of spell-casting. The crucial component of every spell is its goal—what is the spell supposed to accomplish? It must be something wholeheartedly, truly,

and deeply desired.

- Anyone can cast a spell. Experience is helpful but not needed. There is only one way to gain experience and there is such a thing as beginner's luck. Not every spell works, even for the most experienced, although they may be quicker to recognize lack of success and thus take further action. You don't have to hire a professional spell caster. Spells you cast for yourself are always the most powerful, because no one wants your goals more than you do. Spell-casting is a learned skill. While some may possess more innate natural talent than others, with effort, anyone can learn to cast a spell
- Focus intently on your desire while casting your spell. Your fear, desire, longing, or other passionate emotion is the fuel that activates your spell.
- During the process of spell-casting, "see" the goal of your spell as if it already exists or has already been accomplished. If you seek health, visualize yourself vital, pain free, and healed. If you seek fertility, visualize yourself happily cradling a baby. This is a necessary part of the process, even though it may be painful. Visualize whatever it is that you seek as if it were reality—even if that's not true yet, and even if you don't really hold out much hope. Force yourself to visualize the best possible outcome.
- Spells and affirmations are always spoken in the present tense, even if they are not yet true. For instance, say "My cancer is cured" instead of "My cancer will be cured." The future tense keeps your goals tantalizingly just out of reach.
- Spells complement mundane activity; they do not replace it. In other words, if you appealed to Saint Pancras for employment using his magic spell, you still have to show up for job interviews. Magical intervention is not a substitute for medical attention. If your house is burning, call on Michael Archangel, but call the fire department, too.

People who actively venerate the saints often use the terminology "working with the saints." Saint and devotee work hand in hand to fix solution-defying situations. The devotee is not merely a passive recipient of the saint's gifts. Saint veneration, or spell-casting in general for that matter, does not encourage passivity. Instead, it enables the living to help create and control their own destiny in partnership with the sacred blessed dead.

Although their instructions may be written in similar fashion, spells are not cake mixes they are not always predictable. If they were, they'd be science

cake mixes—mey are not anways predictable. If mey were, mey true science experiments, not magic spells. Sometimes, spells work better than anticipated; sometimes, they just work differently than expected. Sometimes, they don't work at all. The same can be said for miracles. If miracles were utterly predictable, they would no longer be miraculous. Sometimes, saints don't answer our pleas. Sometimes, a saint may explain why—perhaps in a dream or communication—but often the reason remains just another mystery of the universe, perhaps solved when you have also entered the after-life and can confront the saint in person.

What does it mean when a spell doesn't work or a miracle is not received? There are various explanations. Perhaps it was the wrong spell for you. Perhaps the spell was cast incorrectly and you should try again. (This is especially true if you had trouble focusing or lacked sufficient privacy while casting the spell.) Maybe, for some reason, the saint was angered.

Or perhaps you requested something that you think is best for you, but the saint knows is not. How many of us, years later, have been relieved that some wish, enterprise, or relationship did not work out as initially deeply desired? Sometimes, with the passage of time, we realize that what we sought for ourselves was not really in our own best interests. Sometimes, the saint knows there's something better up ahead for you that your request will negate or prevent. In other words, you may be praying for the preservation of an existing relationship, but the saint knows that a better partner awaits you once this relationship ends.

Sometimes, spiritual or personal growth entails pain that, given the choice, we'd much rather avoid. Then again, maybe the saint just hasn't received your appeal. Or maybe you invoked the wrong saint—the spiritual equivalent of barking up the wrong tree. Nothing *bad* will happen to you if you do this, but you may find yourself ignored. Spells, rituals, invocations, and appeals are most likely to succeed when you work with saints who are right for you—your own personal allies and guardians.

### **Finding Your Saints**

There are thousands of saints, so how do you find the right one for you? Luckily, various techniques exist to help identify your personal saints.

The simplest method is to read through the descriptions of the saints in this book. Pav attention to which ones resonate most deeply with vou. Whose story

touched you profoundly? If you find yourself spontaneously thinking of a saint late at night or can't get a story out of your mind, this may indicate a personal connection with that saint.

Some people are devoted to only one saint; others maintain relationships with a veritable pantheon of saints. Each individual's needs are different.

Saints possess "patronages," meaning that something or someone is under their charge and care (See Glossary: *Patron*). There are saints affiliated with professions, hobbies, ethnicities, locations, and virtually everything you can think of. For instance, if you are a mime, then Saint Julian the Hospitaller is your professional patron and may be appealed to for help.

Some saints patronize illnesses and conditions. Thus, if you suffer from Parkinson's disease, an appeal to Pope John Paul II may be in order. Saints who specialize in specific crises or disasters may assist in those situations even if they are not otherwise your saint-of-first-appeal. Thus, if a killer storm is approaching, you can invoke Saint Barbara even if she isn't technically your matron saint. Appendix II at the end of this book will help you identify your patrons.

Although this upsets some devotees, many, if not most, saints perform miracles for those who do not belong to their own original spiritual tradition. In death, many saints are much more tolerant than they ever were when alive. In North Africa, Muslims and Jews traditionally invoke each other's saints. The most famous wonder-working saints, like Rita or Anthony of Padua, perform miracles for all. Saints from spiritual traditions not your own may still assist you; never assume that they will not, particularly if other signs indicate some sort of bond.

There are other clues to determining your personal patrons:

Do you share the name of a saint? Many traditions consider that sharing a name creates an unbreakable bond. A saint whose name you share may be obligated to serve as your patron—one reason why so many name their children after powerful saints. (See Glossary: *Name Saint*.)

Were you born on a day associated with a saint? That, too, may indicate patronage. For example, if 17 January is your birthday, then beautiful

Roseline of Villeneuve, who celebrates her feast on that day, may be your saint. If you were born in one of the numerous locations or hospitals named after a saint, you may be able to claim that particular saint's patronage as well.

Rituals also exist to help establish the identity of your saintly spiritual guardian. Bibliomancy—the art of divination using a book as a tool, just as cartomancy utilizes cards—may be used:

- 1. Close your eyes and randomly flip the book open.
- 2. Keeping your eyes closed, stick your finger on a page or use a pin instead.
- 3. Now open your eyes and read what you're pointing at. It may be a name or it may be a clue pointing you in the right direction.

The book most commonly used in bibliomancy is the Bible. However, any large book, including *The Encyclopedia of Mystics*, *Saints & Sages*, can be used.

A different ritual brought the renowned 16th-century healer and Franciscan friar Geremia Da Udine local celebrity but also garnered him an invitation to speak with the Inquisition. His method, intended to provide healing and identify an ailing person's patron saint simultaneously, is easily reproduced and remains viable.

You must begin with a set number of saints. Fra Geremia relied exclusively on the Apostles, so this spell is traditionally cast with twelve. You can adopt his method exactly by using only the twelve Apostles, or you can select any twelve saints, or if you prefer you can select another number. Bibliomancy techniques can be used to determine the saints' names or you can select from among your favorites. This is a good technique when you don't know who will help.

- 1. Write each saint's name on a separate piece of paper, one name per slip.
- 2. Fold each paper.
- 3. Place the twelve folded slips into a hat and shake them up.
- 4. Select one paper and place it beneath the ailing person's pillow.

Should the condition improve within twenty-four hours, the saint whose name is on the paper receives credit and is identified as the person's patron. The healed person (or someone responsible for them—a parent, if the patient is a child) is person (or someone responsible for meni—a parent, if the patient is a clinic) is now required to honor that saint, although only after recovery is complete. In Fra Geremia's day, the traditional gesture of respect was to fast on that saint's feast day, but you can make other offerings instead.

If there is no improvement within twenty-four hours, burn that paper and choose another. If after twelve days, each paper having been attempted, there's been no improvement, a different solution or approach must be found.

Fra Geremia achieved tremendous success and popular acclaim with this technique, which caught the eye of the Venetian Inquisition in 1590. What troubled them? Burning the papers was perceived as disrespectful and potentially coercive, similar to the modern practice of turning statues of Saint Expedite upside down to make him hurry up and deliver. Conceivably, a saint might provide a cure just because he didn't want his name burned or his reputation besmirched.

### **Using This Book**

Because of the vast number of saints in existence, any book of saints undergoes an interior editing process driven by page constraints—some criteria to determine which saints are included and which, unfortunately, must be left out.

How many saints are there, you ask? There are literally tens of thousands of official Christian saints alone, and even more currently in the process of canonization. By their sheer numbers, Christian saints overwhelm saints of other traditions. There are just so many more of them. Because of the process of canonization, official saints are preserved, as opposed to other traditions where miracle workers who cease producing miracles gradually fade from memory.

*The Encyclopedia of Mystics, Saints & Sages* is focused on the practical interaction between saint and devotee. Thus it emphasizes those saints who are established and historically responsive miracle workers—the best friends you can have in times of disaster, trouble, and need. This book also includes the so-called magical saints—those saints closely associated with magic spells and rituals. In addition, saints who are associated with mystical topics made the cut. For instance, some saints are associated with Arthurian legends or the Merovingian lineage—famous from author Dan Brown's 2003 bestseller *The Da Vinci Code*, or the controversial 1982 book from which Brown drew inspiration, *Holy Blood, Holy Grail.* Saints associated with mystery traditions like Catharism

or the Black Madonna are also featured here.

Some more famous saints, like Saint Augustine, who are not known for personal interaction with devotees are not included in order to make room for more obscure saints like Colombe of Sens, Saint Genesius, or Teresita who do fit this criteria.

Each saint in this book has a personal entry that contains the following information:

- NAME: The name of the saint and alternate names. Many saints answer to more than one name and variants of the same name exist in different languages: thus Joan of Arc is known as Jeanne d'Arc in French and Giovanna D'Arco in Italian. She answers to all of them. These variations are included at the top of the entry as "Also known as." In many cases, "Also known as" really means "Also spelled in other ways." The names of many saints, particularly those from traditions that use different alphabets, have numerous spellings. Most are attempts at transliteration, meaning that there isn't necessarily one correct spelling, or at least not in our alphabet. The predominant spelling used in this book is either the most popular or the one easiest for readers of English to pronounce.
- EPITHETS: If the saint possesses famous or particularly significant epithets, they are included beneath the name. For example, Star of the Sea is among Mary's epithets.
- CLASSIFICATION: Saints are classified by religious tradition—for example, Jewish, Buddhist, Unofficial, and so forth. Whenever saints are only venerated by a specific branch of Christianity, this is specified. However, some saints, especially the most ancient, are venerated by most branches. No saint is venerated by all branches of Christianity, because some branches entirely reject the veneration of saints.

Some saints cannot be classified, at least not without taking sides in a religious argument. Occasionally, you will see entries that lack a classification. This is not an omission. It is a tip-off that some deeply divisive dispute regarding the identity, historical background, or spiritual orientation exists, which may be explained within the entry. If this book has an agenda, it is to promote happy, healthy relationships between saints and devotees, *not* to add fuel to painful, potentially violent, and patently un-resolvable religious disagreements.

• DESCRIPTION: The main entry describes the saints, gives their histories,

and tells what they do. Magic spells and rituals associated with specific saints are included in this section.

• SACRED SITES, FEAST DAYS, ATTRIBUTES, OFFERINGS, ASSOCIATIONS, AND FAVORED PEOPLE: Following the main entry is information pertaining specifically to each saint's shrines, attributes, feast days, and suggested offerings. This section is not consistent. The most widely venerated saints—those with huge followings and a reputation for being highly responsive, like John the Baptist or Saint George—have accumulated masses of detailed information over the years. More obscure saints may lack this type of detailed information. Do not let this discourage you from venerating a saint if you feel that he or she is the best match for you. You may gather more information through direct contact with the saint, advice from other devotees, or trial and error.

Saints who are closely associated with magic spells may have affiliations with specific days, colors, numbers, directions, or any manner of things used in veneration or spell-craft. Saints who lack these associations may also lack these affiliations. Where appropriate, these are listed in this section.

The Encyclopedia of Mystics, Saints & Sages is a general overview of miracle workers deriving from many spiritual traditions. It is not written from the perspective of any one specific religion. All religious traditions possess their own martyrs. Saints of one religious tradition may have met their end at the hands of devotees of other traditions. Each saint's story is repeated as it is traditionally told, albeit with explication. Some saints possess different audiences and thus also possess differing legends. The Lady of Guadalupe, for instance, has devotees from many religious perspectives; they do not all perceive her or tell her story in the same way. Be forewarned: there is probably something in this book to offend everyone. If a saint's character, history, or mythos offends or pains you, then it is possible that saint is not the saint for you. Conversely, it may mean that a bond already exists, hence the powerful reaction.

I use the term "favored people" in the entries rather than the more formal "patronage," because some of the information here is official, but some is not.

Saint Andrew's associations with fishermen are an officially approved patronage. His associations with vampires and werewolves derive from subversive folk religion and are quite adamantly *not* officially approved. If you identify with any of the saint's favored people, then you belong to that saint's special constituency.

Don't be afraid to start reading this book backward, especially if there's no time to lose! Appendix II: Saints and Their Patronages, located just before the Bibliography at the back of this book, will help you quickly identify your patron saints. There, you will find lists of saints who specialize in providing certain types of miracles and lists of saints who are most closely associated with specific ailments, professions, emergencies, and life situations.

One other element of the entries requires clarification—the sacred sites associated with a saint. In the case of unofficial, Zoroastrian, Hindu, Jewish, or Sufi saints, this is not a difficult topic; each saint may have only one or only a few public shrines. In the case of Christian saints, however, as well as the most popular *bodhisattvas* like Kwan Yin or Jizo, the most beloved may have thousands of shrines dedicated to them worldwide. There is no room to list them all here. Any shrine dedicated to a saint can classified as a sacred site. The most famous are listed here, as are those of special historical significance, like those in which a saint's relics are housed. These places are scattered all over the world, sometimes in relatively inaccessible places. If you desire to offer a grand gesture in exchange for a much-needed miracle, especially in cases where a saint's intervention determines life or death, a pilgrimage to one of the sites listed may be highly appropriate.

It is also important to point out that not all entries contain suggested offerings. Those given are suggestions. Do not be limited by them. Standard offerings for any saint deriving from any tradition include the lighting of a candle or incense in their honor, and good deeds done or charitable donations given in their honor.

Candles and incense can be lit at a public shrine or privately at home. Any good deed or charitable donation is appropriate, but one that matches a saint's mythos is most likely to please. Thus Saint Roch is the patron of dogs. If he helps you in any area of your life, a donation to a canine rescue society or something similar is appropriate. Saint Agatha is renowned for healing breast cancer. If she helped you, a donation or assistance on behalf of rape victims,

among Agama's lavored constituents, is a good way to repay her. remaya, among Santeria's Seven African Powers, is associated with the sea; efforts on behalf of marine creatures are sure to be appreciated.

Another offering that is always appropriate is to create something in honor of the saint and offer it to the public. Alternatively, public testimonials regarding miracles received—publicly attesting that you have had this experience—are also consistently appreciated offerings.

# Glossary

*The Encyclopedia of Mystics, Saints & Sages* includes saints from a wide variety of spiritual traditions and historical periods. Words and concepts that appear frequently, but that may be unfamiliar to many readers, are clarified in the Glossary.

### All Saints' Day

All Saints' Day is an annual feast day celebrated on 1 November by the Western Christian Church. This feast honors *all* saints, both those known and those as yet unknown. The Feast of All Saints is officially called the Solemnity of All Saints. Other names for this feast include the Feast of All Hallows and Hallowmas. The word Hallows can be translated as "saints." The feast's eve, the night of 31 October, is known as All Hallows Eve or Hallowe'en. Another name for Hallowe'en is All Saints Eve.

The Feast of All Hallows, or All Saints' Day, was originally celebrated in May, not in November. The origins of this feast date back to either 609 or 610 when, on 13 May—the date is definite, even if the year is not—Pope Boniface IV consecrated Rome's Pantheon to Mary, the Blessed Mother, and to all Christian martyrs. This date was not chosen randomly.

The final day of the *Lemuralia*, the annual Pagan Roman festival dedicated to the *Lemures*, or the restless dead—those dead souls who did not rest in peace—was 13 May. The Lemuralia was intended to pacify and propitiate these agitated and potentially dangerous ghosts. It was not a religious ritual that many Romans felt comfortable abandoning, even after conversion to Christianity. Unpropitiated Lemures were known to be hostile, destructive, deadly ghosts. In response, the Church replaced the final rites of the Lemuralia with the Feast of All Saints, a tribute to guardian saints, many of them renowned exorcists.

The Feast of All Saints was moved to its present date, 1 November, by Gregory III, who was pope from 731 to 741. By then, the Lemuralia had been largely forgotten. Instead, a substantial number of Celts were converting to Roman Catholicism. The day coincided with Samhain, the traditional harvest festival honoring the beginning of the dark half of the Celtic year. Samhain was also a time to propitiate and placate restless souls of the dead. Many of the secular traditions associated with modern All Hallows Eve (Hallowe'en), like trick-or-treating and jack-o'-lanterns, derive from pre-Christian Celtic rituals. Ironically, the Irish Church originally did not celebrate All Saints' Day on 1 November, but on 20 April.

The day following All Saints' Day, 2 November, is All Souls' Day, which officially commemorates the faithful dead. It is a holy day set aside to remember deceased family and friends and to pray for souls in Purgatory.

Those who venerate a wide variety of saints may celebrate All Saints' Day by honoring all of their own personal patron and matron saints. For those unsure when to honor a particular saint, All Saints' Day is ideal, as it is a day dedicated to all saints.

Unofficially, however, this focus on the dead is shared by All Saints' Day. In Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America, the Feast of All Saints is incorporated into the lengthy festival known as Los Días de los Muertos: the Days of the Dead. The actual Day of the Dead is 2 November, or All Souls' Day. Depending on local tradition, Los Días de los Muertos may last days or even weeks.

All Saints' Day is a Holy Day of Obligation, meaning that the faithful are obliged to participate in a Mass. Ancient ghost-pacifying rituals have, however, been incorporated into folk religion.

- It is traditional to visit the graves of relatives and loved ones on All Saints' Day, as well as on All Souls' Day.
- Candles are lit for loved ones at graveside, at home, or in public shrines.

There is also an Eastern Orthodox Feast of All Saints, but theirs is a movable feast celebrated on the Sunday following Pentecost, the Christian feast that falls seven weeks after Easter Sunday. Eastern Orthodox All Saints' Day is based on different traditions than the Western feast. When the Byzantine Church prevented Byzantine emperor Leo VI (886–912) from dedicating a church to his

late wife, the very devout empress Theophano, he instead dedicated it to "All Saints" in the belief that if Theophano was a saint, as he believed her to be, then she would thus be honored as well. Leo inaugurated the annual feast following Pentecost, also originally an attempt to honor Theophano, who was, in fact, eventually glorified, the Eastern Orthodox variant of canonization.

The term "All Saints" may also be a euphemism for the Seven African Powers.

See encyclopedia entries for *Laveau*, *Marie*; *Seven African Powers*; *Theophano the Empress*.

#### Altar

The traditional religious definition of an altar is a structure on which votive offerings are placed. From a magical perspective, an altar is a tableau or arrangement of specific articles carefully chosen for a purpose. An altar is a designated place for offerings to saints or other spirits, but it also can serve as a focal point for worship. Altars can be found in buildings dedicated to worship, like churches, temples, or shrines. Altars can also be constructed at home for private devotions.

An altar may also be called an offering table. The word *boveda*, which literally means "a vault" in Spanish, refers to an altar in the Espiritismo and Santeria traditions. *Mesa*, which literally means "table" in Spanish, has the additional implication of "offering table" in Espiritismo circles. *Mesa blanca*, literally "white table," may also be used, referring to the white cloths that often cover such altars. The term *mesa* has become so popular that it may be used in Spiritualist circles that incorporate no other Spanish words.

An altar may be lavish or elaborate. Traditional Vodou altars may take up an entire room, with each item carefully chosen. Nothing placed on an altar is random. Altars may also be extremely modest. The simplest, dedicated to ancestral spirits, display only a single candle and an uncovered glass or dish of water.

Altars may be erected temporarily, for instance, for the duration of an appeal to a saint. They may also be left standing permanently. They may be placed out in the open for everyone to see, or be discreetly placed within a cabinet or behind a curtain, screen, or other room partition.

An altar for a saint usually includes an image of that saint. Those

uncomfortable with graven images can use a saint's attributes instead. For instance, Joan of Arc may be represented by a sword. Other objects associated with the saint can also be added, creating a tableau. An altar is a place to put offerings to a saint, but the altar itself is an offering.

An altar is also a vehicle of communication. When you wish to request a favor from a saint, often the first step is either a journey to a preestablished altar or the construction of a home altar. This altar is the equivalent of a line of communication, a connection between holy being and devotee.

Altars offer limitless opportunities for individual creative and spiritual expression. The goal is to create something spiritually powerful and aesthetically beautiful. (The place in a traditional Russian home where the household altar is located is called "the beautiful corner.")

Most saints play well with each other, as well as with sacred beings from other spiritual traditions. Thus a single altar can serve an individual's personal needs. All the saints and spirits he or she venerates can be served by that one altar. Statues or other images can be placed side by side or otherwise arranged to suit the individual's spiritual situation.

There are exceptions, however. A few saints demand their own altars or will only share space with very specific saints. When this is the case, it is noted in the saint's individual entry in this book. Certain saints are traditionally associated with unique altars or may expect certain types of objects to appear on altars. Where this is the case, it has been noted in the individual entries.

See encyclopedia entries for Joan of Arc; Joseph, Saint; Muerte, San La; Muerte, Santissima and Glossary: Attribute; Icon; Shrine.

#### ANCHORITE

An anchorite is someone who has made a religious vow to live a life of solitude and contemplation, usually in a small room or cell attached to a church. Anchorites may be male or female. A female anchorite may be called an anchoress. Ascetic monks like the desert fathers who lived a life of solitary prayer in nature may also be categorized as anchorites.

See encyclopedia entries for Anthony of the Desert, Saint; Hildegard of Bingen; Julian of Norwich; Martinian, Saint; Mary of Egypt; Pelagia, Saint; Viridiana, Saint.

#### Apparition

The word "apparition" derives from the Latin *apparere* and is related to "appearance." Rather than just any old appearance, an apparition usually indicates some sort of unusual, unexpected, impossible, or ghostly appearance. If you have ever seen a ghost, then you have witnessed an apparition.

Apparitions may be clearly supernatural in appearance, or they may be totally and convincingly lifelike. Often, people who witness an apparition do not realize until later that what they saw was not a regular human being. When someone is described as seeing an apparition of Elijah the Prophet, that means they really *saw* him, even if that seems impossible.

By definition, apparitions are visual. Disembodied voices, sounds, or fragrances may genuinely indicate a spiritual presence, but they are not apparitions. An apparition may or may not also speak or otherwise communicate. Apparitions may be witnessed by one person or be simultaneously witnessed by more than one person, sometimes by crowds. The most famous apparitions are the so-called Marian apparitions, apparitions of Mary, the Blessed Mother.

See encyclopedia entries for Acarie, Madame; Bernadette, Saint; Elijah the Prophet; Guadalupe; Mary; Michael Archangel, Saint; Nicholas, Saint.

# ATTRIBUTE

An attribute is something that represents a saint or other holy being. An attribute may be understood as the equivalent of a calling card intended to identify a saint. Saints are virtually always portrayed with at least one of their attributes. (Some saints possess many, while others may have only a single attribute. Saints deriving from spiritual traditions that discourage visual imagery typically lack attributes.) In the days before universal literacy, someone could look at an image and identify a saint by his or her attributes.

For example, Saint Barbara's attribute is a tower. She is virtually always accompanied by a tower. It is a safe bet to assume that any religious image of a pretty woman with a tower portrays Barbara. (The tower may be full-size, or she may hold a miniature in her hands.) Let's say you wanted to create an image of Barbara, but you're not an artist and you're illiterate so you can't write her name. Simply drawing a stick figure accompanied by the semblance of a tower

should be sufficient for the faithful to recognize her. It's the attribute (in this case, a tower) that serves to differentiate this particular stick figure from any other. If you drew a stick figure bearing a plate of severed breasts, on the other hand, the faithful would immediately recognize your drawing as an image of Saint Agatha.

Attributes are never random symbols. Instead, they convey significant information about a holy being. Construction of a tower is central to Barbara's mythos and the saga of her martyrdom. This attribute also serves to remind us that Barbara is the matron saint of architects and that she provides fire safety, protecting devotees from burning buildings. Attributes exist in all spiritual traditions that use visual imagery to identify holy beings. Thus, the *bodhisattva* Kwan Yin is frequently portrayed holding a pomegranate, indicating that she performs miracles of fertility.

If you are unsure what sort of offering to give a saint, his or her attributes can lend hints. Place small towers or pictures of them on Barbara's altar. Offer Kwan Yin pomegranates. Attributes can substitute for an altar image. If you haven't yet found the perfect statue of Saint Sebastian, use an arrow, his primary attribute, to represent him until you do. Alternatively, for those who object to the use of graven images, an attribute can serve as a permanent symbolic altar image.

Attributes are also vehicles of communication. If you have requested a favor from a saint, sudden and unexpected appearances of that saint's attributes may be a response or a message. Pay attention; analyze the context. For example, if you have requested healing from Saint Roch and a strange dog unexpectedly breaks free from its leash to lick you with enthusiasm, that's a good omen, because dogs are this saint's constant companions and messengers, and thus are one of his attributes. Each saint's attribute or attributes are included in his or her entry in this book.

See encyclopedia entries for *Agatha*, *Saint*; *Barbara*, *Saint*; *Kwan Yin*; *Roch*, *Saint*; *Sebastian*, *Saint* and Glossary: *Altar*.

# BLACK MADONNA

At its most basic expression, the term "Black Madonna" refers to a cult of mysterious and miraculous statues, icons, and paintings. Not every miracleworking image is a Black Madonna, even those that are miraculous images of Mary. Although some Black Madonna imagery clearly portrays women of sub-Saharan ancestry, many do not. Conversely, not every black or dark-skinned Madonna is a Black Madonna. A *black* Madonna may or may not be a *Black* Madonna.

In fact, not all Black Madonnas are black; some are gray, brown, silver, or other colors. Some were once black but have since been literally whitewashed painted white. Some Black Madonnas are portrayed alone, but many, if not most, are portrayed holding the Holy Child. Sometimes the Madonna is black and the child is white. Although many Black Madonnas are carved from ebony or other very dark wood, the term "Black Madonna" is more than a mere physical description: it is also an attempt to name something mystical and metaphoric.

The word "black" as applied to Black Madonnas may best be understood in the context of the mysterious Shulamite in the biblical *Song of Songs*, who describes herself as "black but comely" and who may be the Queen of Sheba. "Black" may also be understood in the context of ancient Egypt. The name Egypt derives from a Greek word—the ancient Egyptians called their country KMT or "the black land." Black, in Egyptian cosmology, was the color of fertility and life everlasting—the color of good, rich soil without which there is no survival.

Currently, there are approximately 250 identified Black Madonnas with most located in France, Italy, Switzerland, and Spain. Others are scattered throughout the world, mainly in Europe and Latin America. Most Black Madonnas are small rather than life-size statues—intended for personal altars, not churches although some of the most famous are icons like Poland's Black Madonna of Czestochowa and Russia's Black Madonna of Kazan.

Black Madonnas are usually identified by their location. Many have been destroyed—for instance, during the French Revolution or during France's religious wars. Others may be hidden in church vaults or exist in private collections; some may languish unidentified in museums.

The entire concept of Black Madonnas is controversial; many deny that they exist, insisting that they are simply unusual portrayals of Mary and nothing more. Those who acknowledge and love Black Madonnas come from very different spiritual and religious backgrounds; thus there is vehement disagreement about the nature and identity of these images.

Within the context of conventional Christian iconography, Black Madonna imagery is odd. These images and statues do not subscribe to standard portrayals of Mary but instead contain subversive elements. Some believe this to be pothing more than creative license. Others believe this to be intentional a message to viewers that there is something significant, unusual, and unconventional about the images.

The history and provenance of many Black Madonnas is murky. Their legends suggest that they appeared mysteriously and sometimes spontaneously in caves, trees, wells, and even on ghost ships. Rasputin's favorite Black Madonna, the Black Madonna of Kazan, appeared in a little girl's dream to reveal accurately where she was hidden, directing the girl to unearth her. Other statues were reputedly brought to Europe from the Levant by returning Crusaders. A few, like the Black Madonna of Czestochowa, were reputedly created by Saint Luke and, according to legend, are actual portraits of Mary, although historians scoff at such legends.

Exactly *who* is portrayed in Black Madonna imagery is an even more controversial topic and one likely to raise hackles. Each of the following possibilities possess passionate adherents:

- Black Madonnas portray Mary, Mother of Christ. Many are affronted at the suggestion that they could depict anyone else.
- Black Madonnas portray Mary Magdalen. In this case, Jesus is the father of the child she holds and the child may be interpreted as a daughter, not a son. This identification reflects the sacred bloodline theory familiar to many from *The Da Vinci Code*.
- Black Madonnas may mask secret, hidden veneration of forbidden Pagan goddesses like Athena, Kybele, Demeter, Persephone, Rosmerta, Aphrodite, and especially Isis. Ancient images of Isis nursing her baby, Horus, served as the prototype for Christian Holy Mother-and-Child imagery. Ancient images of Isis were frequently carved from black stone.
- Many Black Madonna images may have been crafted originally to represent Pagan goddesses. In the wake of Christianity and the banning of Pagan religions, these statues were hidden to keep them safe, in hopes perhaps that someday they could be retrieved. Rediscovered centuries later, these images were appreciated for their innate beauty and sacred power. However, those who found them interpreted them in the context of their own religious beliefs.
- Regardless of whom they were originally intended to portray, Black Madonnas are vessels of the sacred feminine and the divine mother.
- Black Madonnas may be some or all of the above.

According to legend, Black Madonna images often choose their own shrine sites. Sometimes, they disappear and mysteriously reappear at a certain site, no matter how many times they are moved—and even if placed within locked trunks or cabinets. Conversely, sometimes they literally cannot be moved from where they first mysteriously appeared—they become too heavy to be lifted by even the strongest man—so the decision is made to build a shrine at the site. Then the image instantly becomes light enough to lift.

Images of certain saints like Saint Roch frequently and consistently appear in shrines housing Black Madonnas. Various esoteric theories suggest that hidden political and spiritual histories may be revealed and comprehended by analyzing these shrines, their motifs, and their saintly inhabitants.

Black Madonnas are associated with every kind of miracle—healing, preventing disasters, providing fertility, and resuscitating dead babies, at least long enough for them to be baptized. They provide safety for travelers and release those who are imprisoned. The traditional gesture of gratitude is a pilgrimage to the specific shrine associated with a particular Black Madonna.

For more information, see Ean Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin* (Arkana Books, 1996). See encyclopedia entries for *Amadour, Saint; Anne, Saint; Anne of Beaupré, Saint; Anthony of Padua; Colombe of Sens; Mary, Mary Magdalen; Meinrad, Saint; Rasputin; Roch, Saint; Sarah, Saint and Glossary: Icon; Iconography; Shrine.* 

#### BOTANICA

A *botanica* is a Latin American store selling herbal, magical, and spiritual supplies. Many have shelves stocked with images of saints, official and otherwise, as well as candles and other products dedicated to the saints. If you seek a seven-day or nine-day candle encased in glass and decorated with an image of Maximon or La Madama, a botanica is a good place to begin your search.

The word *botanica* has entered the English lexicon, so any store selling similar spiritual wares may be called a botanica, regardless of ethnic orientation. Another name for a botanica is a *yerbería* or, in Venezuelan terminology, a *perfumería*, although elsewhere this may indicate a perfume store.

See encyclopedia entries for Lazarus, Saint; Madama, La; Maximón.

# CURANDERISMO

*Curanderismo* is a traditional Mexican system of healing incorporating herbalism and other forms of therapy along with divination, magical practice, and faith healing. The invocation of saints is incorporated into these healing practices.

- A male practitioner of curanderismo is a *curandero*.
- A female practitioner of curanderismo is a *curandera*.

Both are literally someone who cures. It is as much a spiritual as a therapeutic occupation. A curandero may heal spiritually induced illnesses, as well as those with straightforward physical origins. Each healer may practice somewhat differently. Some practitioners of curanderismo have been elevated to sainthood, albeit typically as unofficial saints. Examples include Don Pedro Jaramillo, Teresita, and El Niño Fidencio (see their individual entries for more information).

# Djinn

Djinn are indigenous spirits of North Africa and the Middle East. The word *djinn* may be singular or plural. In Morocco, the plural is *jnoun*. Other alternative spellings for this type of spirit are *jinn*, *djinni*, and *genie*. Fans of the old American television series, *I Dream of Jeannie*, may recall her adversary, the Blue Djinn.

Although djinn predate Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, they have traveled the world with Islam and are now found in locales far from their original habitat. Djinn are spiritual devotees as well; it is believed that there are Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and Pagan djinn. The offerings they accept reflect their religious beliefs. Muslim djinn may not accept offerings of liquor. Jewish and Muslim djinn may only accept kosher or halal meat, respectively. Christian djinn reputedly eat anything—or at least so suggests Muslim folklore. All djinn despise and rear san and iron. If you want to avoid or reper djinn, san and iron are your primary tools. Djinn may be more likely to assist—or at least not harm —humans who share their religious proclivities.

There are benevolent, malevolent, and ambivalent djinn. They are generally considered to be volatile spirits, and their relationships with humans are tenuous. Although djinn can provide favors and assistance—as, for instance, the three wishes promised to Aladdin by the genie—they can also wreak havoc and cause death and destruction. Djinn are believed able to cause infertility as well as certain ailments and illnesses.

Legend suggests that Israel's King Solomon coerced a work-gang of djinn into serving as his construction crew. King Solomon remains renowned as a djinn master, and certain saints share this reputation. They can command djinn to do their bidding, banish or summon them as needed, and remedy damage and illness caused by them. If you run into trouble with djinn, these are the saints to invoke. In general, the djinn-master saints are Sufi or Jewish—perhaps because Christianity does not distinguish between djinn and demons. Thus the only acceptable way to get rid of them is permanent exorcism, and not the long-term relationships shared by some saints and djinn.

For more information on djinn in general, as well as details about some of the most famous like Aisha Qandisha, Aisha Sudaniyya, and Lalla Mira, see Judika Illes, *The Encyclopedia of Spirits* (HarperOne, 2009). See encyclopedia entries for 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani; Amadou Bamba, Sheikh; Lalla; Sidi; Sidi Ahmed Dghughi; Sidi Ali ben Hamdush; Sidi Mohammad ben Aïssa; Wazana, Rabbi Jacob.

# Ех-Vото

An ex-voto is an object used to request or fulfill a vow. The term derives from the Latin word meaning "from a vow." Another Latin term used to indicate votive offerings is *donaria*, related to "donation." Ex-votos come in several traditional forms. Typical votive offerings include:

- Votive plaques describing miracles, as, for example, the modern *retablo*
- Small images or charms

The most common modern ex-votos are the charms known as *milagros*. The

word *ex-voto* is now sometimes used synonymously with *retablo* or *milagro*. During the Middle Ages, ex-votos, including what would now be called *milagros*, were mass-produced from materials including metal, wood, stone, clay, wax, and bread dough. Later, paper ex-votos became popular. Fabric has also been used intermittently. Some ex-votos are still mass-produced, but they are also very easily handcrafted. Forms and possibilities are endless. Most ex-votos are crafted from inexpensive materials, although lavish ones may be offered in gratitude for major miracles received.

See Glossary: Milagro, Retablo.

### Feast

Saints typically have an official feast day, usually coinciding with the date of their death or some other highly significant date—the translation of their relics, for instance. Although saints may be venerated at *any* time, the feast day is considered the optimum time to make requests or fulfill vows.

With very few exceptions, feasts of saints commemorate the anniversary of their deaths, the day they transitioned from human being to spirit being.

- In Christian cosmology, a saint's date of death commemorates his or her rebirth in Heaven.
- In Jewish cosmology, a saint's date of death commemorates the day he or she was wedded to the divine.

The Yiddish word *yahrzeit* (rhymes with *far sight*) explicitly expresses this concept of a commemorated anniversary of death. Lighting candles is a traditional gesture of commemoration.

Saints may be venerated at home or locally, but if you are considering a pilgrimage to a special shrine, mass festivities and rituals are most likely to coincide with feast days. If you seek to commune with other devotees, this is the moment. Many saints' feasts have become tremendous tourist attractions. Secular festivities like fairs are often incorporated into feast-day celebrations. Lodgings are often completely sold out far in advance, although, depending on authorities, many pilgrims prefer to maintain all-night vigils at the shrine itself.

The term "feast" typically refers to Christian saints, but Muslim and Jewish

saints are also commemorated in like manner. In Egypt, rural religious festivals dedicated to saints are known as *mulids* or *moulids*. Muslims may also use the word *urs*, indicating a sacred ritual. The word derives from the Arabic for "nuptial" but is sometimes used colloquially to indicate a saint's feast. In North Africa, the equivalent of a feast is called a saint's *moussem*. This is essentially a Muslim term, although sometimes Jews use it, too. The more common North African Jewish term is *hillulah*, etymologically related to *hallelujah*, a praise song. This word has entered into common usage in Israel, although the Ashkenazi *yahrzeit* also remains in common usage.

The most popular Christian saints may have multiple feasts—commemorating the anniversary of their death, as well as the date their relics were translated, for instance. Different branches of Christianity may subscribe to different religious calendars and may thus designate different dates as feast days. For example, the Western Church celebrates 29 October as the feast day of Saint Simon, whereas the Eastern Church honors him on 10 May. If a saint has rescued a community from disaster or epidemic, that community may, as an act of gratitude, designate an additional local feast.

Religious feasts are often scheduled according to traditional calendars, even in nations that otherwise use the standard Western calendar. See Appendix I in the back of this book for information on these calendar systems.

### FOLK RELIGION

Technically *all* religion is folk religion. After all, religion is a human construct and humans are folks. However, the term "folk religion" is almost invariably a euphemism for local spiritual traditions that may or may not be authorized or approved by religious authorities.

Folk religion tends to emphasize interaction between people and spiritual beings, including saints, as opposed to a more impersonal, abstract emphasis on ethics. In general, when it comes to folk religion, saints must do more than offer spiritual sustenance. Practical results are demanded. Saints must provide healing, prosperity, protection, and other human needs and desires. Subversive practices like magic spells and divination may be incorporated into folk religion, even when officially condemned. Veneration of unofficial saints is virtually by definition folk religion. The material found in *The Encyclopedia of Mystics*, *Saints & Sages* is largely based on folkloric religious practices.

### HOLY CARDS

Holy cards are small, usually mass-produced, devotional pictures. Holy cards are not standardized. Most are approximately the size of playing cards but may also be substantially larger or smaller. The front of the card features a portrait of a saint or other holy image. The back may be blank but more often features a biography of the saint or a prayer. For this reason, holy cards are sometimes known as prayer cards.

Holy cards are typically associated with Roman Catholicism, but are also produced for unofficial saints deriving from Catholic societies whose devotees seek to venerate them in the same manner as any other saint. Thus Pancho Villa and Madre María Salomé appear on holy cards in the same manner as Saints George or Agnes. Centers of holy card production include Belgium, France, Germany, and Italy. In recent years, holy cards have become increasingly popular among Orthodox Christians as well.

The earliest holy cards appeared in the early 15th century in the form of portable woodcut prints. It was traditionally considered important to possess an image of your patron saint. Prints made this practice accessible to the masses—those who were otherwise unable to afford a fine, handcrafted work of art. In 1796, the invention of lithography enabled the mass-production of holy cards. Antique or collectible holy cards may cost a pretty penny, but most such cards are inexpensive. Holy cards may be distributed for free by someone wishing to honor a saint or increase that saint's veneration.

A holy card can serve as an inexpensive altar image. In addition to being used for devotional purposes, holy cards are sought by collectors; many are very beautiful. Holy cards are sometimes used (if *very* unofficially) for fortunetelling, in a manner similar to other types of cards.

See encyclopedia entries for *Agnes*, *Saint*; *George*, *Saint*; *Maria Salomé*, *Madre*; *Martha*, *Saint*; *Pancho Villa*.

# HOLY FOOL

Holy fools abandon convention to dedicate their lives entirely to God. They

pursue their spiritual paths as they are called to do, regardless of societal or other conventions. A holy fool may abandon home, clothing, money—anything or everything. Holy fools behave in ways contrary to the values of standard society. Some perceive them as mad, while others consider them touched by God. Still others perceive holy fools as both.

The term "holy fool" derives from a quote from Saint Paul in 1 Corinthians 4:10: "We are fools for the sake of Christ but you are wise in Christ." In reference to that quote, Christian holy fools are also known as Fools for Christ, but this tradition is not limited to Christianity. Many Hindu and Sufi saints are also characterized as holy fools. The tradition of holy fools is especially associated with Russia, where they are known as *yurodivy*.

See encyclopedia entries for Alexander the Charcoal Burner; Alexius, Saint; Ksenya, Saint; Mirabai; Paul, Saint; Rasputin; Seraphim the Wonder Worker.

### HOLY WATER

The term "Holy Water" may indicate spiritually empowered water, water that is innately sacred, or water that has been made sacred. Holy Water is used for many purposes:

- For protection and to repel evil or danger
- To cleanse and bless altars, shrines, and magical or ritual tools
- To activate holy images like statues, medallions, and holy cards
- For healing or blessing
- For exorcisms or banishing spells

The most famous Holy Water in the world is that associated with Christianity —water that has been blessed by a priest or bishop and is used in sacraments including baptism. This Holy Water may consist of blessed water alone, or blessed salt may be added. Many Christians also consider water from the Jordan River to be holy, as Jesus was baptized in that river. Because the use of Holy Water in Christian rites is so famous, when you see Holy Water used to exorcise demons in a movie or television show, it is invariably Christian Holy Water, even if the setting is otherwise secular.

However, the concept of Holy Water is not unique to Christianity. Sacred, spiritually empowered water predates Christianity and is shared by many different traditions, although the type of water may differ. For instance, ancient sanctuaries of the goddess Isis once contained Holy Water in fonts similar to those now found in churches.

Folk religion, Christian or otherwise, acknowledges different types of Holy Water, which may be gathered or created by lay people. According to British folk tradition, rain falling on Holy Thursday may be gathered and used as Holy Water. Rain falling on a saint's feast day may also be used in this way and may possess the spiritual powers and properties associated with the specific saint. Thus rain falling on Saint Lucy's Day may have restorative powers for eye ailments or enhance clairvoyance.

Certain times of the year, especially Saint John's Eve, are considered so spiritually powerful that rain may not even be necessary. Tradition has it that if you fill crystal or stone bowls with pure springwater on Saint John's Eve and leave the bowls outside overnight (ideally in the moonlight), by morning, the contents will have transformed into Holy Water.

Rituals may transform plain water into Holy Water—for instance, the rinse water used to launder Guatemalan saint Maximon's clothing. Some believe that water in vases of flowers dedicated to saints is magically empowered and transformed into Holy Water. It should thus be preserved, rather than discarded.

Church-blessed Holy Water is kept in fonts and stoups in Catholic and many other churches. It is sold in church shops and botanicas and by many independent spiritual merchants. (Buyer beware: it is very easy to label a bottle "Holy Water" and fill it with tap water. Patronize reputable merchants only.) Stores catering to Israeli and Jordanian pilgrims and tourists frequently sell bottled Jordan River Holy Water.

See encyclopedia entries for Agatha, Saint; Colonia, Sarita; John the Baptist; Laveau, Marie; Maximón.

#### ICON

The word "icon" derives from a Greek word that literally means "image." In 21st-century cyber-speak, icon theoretically refers to any pictographic symbol, but the classical, traditional meaning of the word specifically indicates a divine, holy, or sacred image. Icon is sometimes used as a generic term to indicate any kind of divine image deriving from any spiritual tradition, but it also specifically refers to the sacred imagery of Orthodox Christianity. Traditional subjects of

Orthodox icons include members of the Holy Family, saints, and angels.

The subject of the icon is often painted with very prominent, staring eyes that look directly at the viewer. Hands perform gestures of blessing or point, indicating sacred lessons and messages.

The standard Orthodox icon is an oil painting on wood, but ceramic, enamel, mosaic, and textile icons also exist, as do icons painted as frescoes. Icons epitomize the Byzantine style of art. They are characterized by a flat quality—both in terms of the media on which they are created and the nature of the image itself—because of the almost total lack of Western perspective (fore-shortening). This effect is deliberate and not because artists lacked technical expertise. Early Christianity struggled with the injunction of the Second Commandment, which forbids the creation of idols. At what point does a sacred image become idolatry?

Early Greek Christians associated statues (three-dimensional imagery) with Paganism and idolatry, but perceived flat two-dimensional images as safe and potentially sacred tools. (Roman Christians were not constrained by these objections, hence the extensive use of statuary in the Roman Church.) Icons are painted on flat surfaces; they are not *graven* and so, technically, they do not break the Second Commandment, which prohibits the making of graven images. Still, icons remained controversial. In 730, the Byzantine emperor Leo Isauricus ordered the destruction of all icons with the intent of rooting out idolatry.

Icons are sacred images. They are not intended to be realistic. The goal is to emphasize the sacred aspect of the subject, not to create a realistic portrait. Neither are they meant to be admired passively or to serve as mere inspirational pictures. Instead, icons are doors to the spiritual realm, gateways to the divine whether for prayer and petition or simply as a way to connect to the sacred. Icons serve as points of communication between a devotee and a sacred being, a window between worlds.

The standard icon is a flat painting, but painted panels may also be folded to form diptychs, triptychs, or more complex constructions. Icons for personal use are usually small enough to be portable, sometimes even small enough to wear or carry as an amulet.

Icons are typically placed on a shelf or hung on a wall. Although icons may be incorporated into any sort of altar, they traditionally serve as the focal point of what is known in Russia as the "beautiful corner" of a home, an area devoted to spirituality. One single icon may be displayed, or many. Each icon may depict one or any number of holy beings. Icons are also hung over beds for spiritual protection, but that's an expression of folk religion, not official usage. Larger icons are built into the walls of Orthodox churches.

Some icons are famous, perceived as possessing great mystical or even magical power. Many are believed to produce miracles. Reproductions of the most famous icons are readily available in various sizes. Legend has it that some of the most famous and powerful iconic portraits of Mary were painted by Saint Luke on wood taken from tables crafted by Jesus Christ himself.

Because they do not conform to standards of classical Western art, until very recently icons were not appreciated in the West but were dismissed as lesser crafts or folk art. In the mid-19th century, the British Museum stored icons in the basement together with Mexican and Peruvian folk art.

Although this practice is adamantly condemned by the Orthodox Church, icons are used in folk magic, especially for purposes of healing. For example, paint scraped from personal icons is incorporated into traditional medicines.

See encyclopedia entries for Luke, Saint; Mary; Michael Archangel, Saint; Mychal Judge, Father; Nicholas, Saint; Paraskeva, Saint; Rasputin; Seraphim the Wonder Worker; Simeon of Verkhoturye, Saint; Simon, Saint and Glossary: Black Madonna.

#### ICONOGRAPHY

This word literally means "image-writing," thus iconography is the visual language of saints. Some, although not all, saints are associated with specific visual images used to identify them. Attributes may be incorporated into iconography or the image may portray a pivotal moment in a saint's life or legend. Iconography may involve any kind of visual image: paintings, statues, postcards, and other forms. The point is that it is *visual*. During eras and in places where a vast number of people may be illiterate, iconography serves to identify saints. No need to read words; the image itself reveals who is depicted. For instance, if the image portrays a regal older man gazing sternly at a snake, it's probably Saint Patrick, who is credited with driving all the snakes from Ireland. A young woman with short hair dressed in a knight's armor is probably Joan of Arc, while a man pointing to a wound on his leg and accompanied by a dog is most likely Saint Roch, whose life was saved by a faithful canine friend.

The concept of iconography—images used to portray and identify saints—is

snared by all religious traditions except those rew that completely reject imagery. There is a chicken-and-egg aspect to iconography. Iconography may reflect how saints have appeared to people in dreams, visions, or apparitions. Saints, aware of what people expect to see, may be able to match their appearance to their traditional iconography in order to be more readily recognized.

Iconography can also evolve. Older images of Saint Martha depicted her in the company of a dragon in reference to a legend. Dragons may no longer be viewed as suitable for sacred imagery, as newer depictions of Martha typically omit the dragon in order to focus on scenes of her life from the New Testament. Iconography can also be tricky. Those to whom an image is extremely familiar may assume that everyone else looking at that image sees the same thing; in fact, this is not so. Iconography enables syncretism. Thus some people gazing at an image of a snake charmer may see the African goddess Mami Wata, whereas others see the folk saint Martha the Dominator.

See encyclopedia entries for Amadou Bamba, Sheikh; Joan of Arc; Martha, Saint; Martha the Dominator; Patrick, Saint; and Roch, Saint.

### INCORRUPT

Ashes to ashes; dust to dust. It is usual for a corpse to deteriorate after death. Except that sometimes it doesn't. An incorrupt body is not the same as a mummified corpse. No outside intervention is required to produce an incorrupt cadaver; it is perceived as a supernatural event. Thus no matter how lifelike her corpse, Santa Evita is not incorrupt, because she was embalmed. The body of Saint Agatha, however, was reputedly unearthed in the 11th century and discovered to be incorrupt without human intervention.

An incorrupt body remains lifelike in appearance. The quality of being incorrupt is associated with two vastly different types of dead souls. Vampires are traditionally believed to remain incorrupt because they feed on the living. Yet, incorruptibility is also perceived as a special mark of sanctity, the signal that someone may be a saint. Incorrupt saints may also give off the odor of sanctity, described as a sweet, floral scent completely different from rotting flesh. The bodies of incorrupt saints may be placed on display as proof of their sanctity and as sacred inspiration.

See encyclopedia entries for Agatha, Saint; Alodia, Saint; Barbara, Saint;

Bernadette, Saint; Cecilia, Saint; Evita, Saint; Germaine Cousin, Saint; Lucy, Saint; Rita, Saint.

#### INTERCESSOR

When you request or receive spiritual assistance, who is really helping you? Do saints actually produce miracles or do they facilitate miracles by passing on your request to a higher power who is ultimately responsible? If it's the latter, that saint is behaving as your intercessor.

Although many devotees disagree, official Christian, Muslim, and Jewish dogma argues that only the Creator can actually produce results. Saints can't be petitioned to produce actual miracles, as that would be idolatry or worshipping false gods. It is, however, permissible to request that they serve as your lobbyist or intercessor, personally conveying your message to the Creator, ideally arguing persuasively on your behalf. Intercessors are advocates, serving as brokers between a petitioner and the Almighty. Saints are petitioned, not for miracles, but to put in a good word for you with God.

Intercessors play complex roles. On one hand, Jewish saints are clearly no more than intercessors. On the other hand, there is a traditional Jewish belief that the Creator will not refuse a saint. As there are no similar guarantees for the living, intercession becomes crucial. If a saint presents your petition, it will be granted. So the challenge becomes having the intercessor hear and act upon your petition.

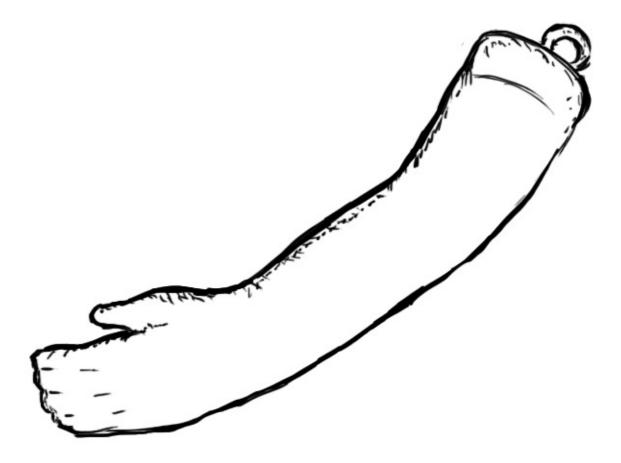
The Roman Catholic belief that saints offer prayers on behalf of individuals was affirmed at the 16th-century Council of Trent in response to the Reformation. Lesson 31 of the Baltimore Catechism, the Catholic school text in standard use in the United States through the 1960s, teaches that it is not forbidden to pray to saints, defined as "asking of their help and prayers."

See encyclopedia entry for *Gabriel Archangel*, *Saint; Meir Ba'al Ha Ness*, *Rabbi; Shatzer Rebbe*.

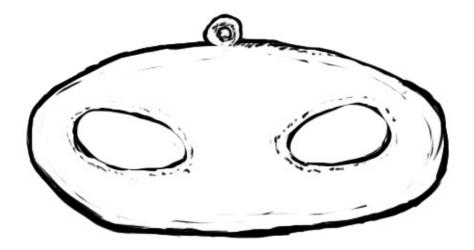
### MILAGRO

*Milagro* literally means "miracle" in Spanish but also refers to a type of ex-voto,

essentially a charm, that is traditionally offered to a saint in exchange for a miracle. A milagro symbolizes the specific miracle requested. Most of these miracles involve healing, thus the standard milagro is a little image in the form of an isolated anatomical part—eyes, hands, heads, feet, legs, breasts, male and female genitalia, ears, or noses. Choose a milagro that best symbolizes your needs.



Milagros are *not* actual body parts; they resemble charms on a charm bracelet and may be incorporated into jewelry for spiritual or fashion purposes. Milagros are magical tools intended for many purposes. They serve as amulets and votive offerings, and as spiritual communication devices. Milagros may be used to request miracles other than healing. A heart-shaped milagro just as easily represents a plea for love or a romantic miracle as it does a request for relief from heart disease. Tiny baby-shaped milagros may indicate the quest for conception. Small male- or female-shaped milagros may indicate a request for a lover or spouse, or they may be used to represent the petitioner.



The terms milagro and ex-voto are sometimes used synonymously, but there are many types of ex-votos. Milagros are the most popular type of ex-voto; the Spanish name has entered the English language, perhaps because no specific English word exists to express this concept. Words do exist in other languages—for example, the modern Greek *tamata*.

The standard modern milagro is made from some inexpensive silvery metal but may also be made from bread dough, wax, precious gems, or metals. More expensive milagros are *not* more effective. Expensive ones are usually intended as repayment for favors received rather than for initial requests. Most are tiny representations, but life-size versions are popular in Brazil, where they are known as *milagre*, the corresponding word in Portuguese.

Milagro is a modern name, but the concept is ancient. Similar offerings are among the oldest archaeological finds, dating back at least to the Bronze Age. Milagros traditionally accompany petitions as part of an exchange:

- They are presented in public shrines.
- Many cathedrals or shrine churches have areas reserved for them.
- There may be a velvet-backed board on which to pin milagros, or they may be pinned to a statue's clothes or other draped fabric.
- Milagros may also be presented on a home altar.
- Depending on the saint, they may also be buried in the earth or tossed in water, especially holy wells.

Milagros are traditional components of repayment vows. Sometimes, an inexpensive milagro is presented as part of an original petition, together with a vow to give the saint a more expensive version if the petition is fulfilled.

Sometimes, a miniature milagro is given to mark a request, with a life-size version promised as repayment if the miracle is received. Thus someone requesting assistance from Saint Lazarus regarding a kidney transplant may initially offer a miniature kidney made from base metal to mark the request. If the transplant is successful, the person may donate a life-size image of a kidney. Depending on the person's initial desperation and financial means, the life-size image may be silver, gold, or some other precious material. Examples of such massive milagros can be viewed at the shrine of Saint Lazarus in Cuba.

For more information, see Martha Egan, *Milagros: Votive Offerings from the Americas* (Museum of New Mexico Press, 1991). See encyclopedia entry for *Lazarus, Saint, Well Saint*.

#### $M_{\rm YTH}$

The word "myth" is not a synonym for falsehood or lie. It does not mean "too fanciful to be true"—although, in the context of popular language, it is frequently intended or assumed to convey those meanings. In fact, myth, the root of mythology and mythos, means "sacred." It indicates that what is being discussed is not mundane. Mythology means "sacred story" or "sacred study."

Myths are complex narratives that may be understood on many levels. Some myths may be factually true or, at least, contain some accurate factual information, but their primary purpose is to convey sacred truths and nourish the soul. Many people associate mythology exclusively with long-gone cultures like ancient Greece or Egypt. Because they understand "myth" to mean "untrue," they are taken aback to see the word applied to their own religion. It is crucial to understand that myth is not a disrespectful word—quite the opposite. Its appearance signals that we are venturing into sacred territory.

In the context of this book, the words "myth" and "mythos" refer to the lore and legends that have accumulated around a specific saint—essentially everything above and beyond historical facts. For example, Nicholas of Myra is a historical person. Contributing to his mythos are the numerous undocumented legends told of him, including his rescue of young girls from unsavory careers and his resurrection of young boys who were not only dead, but had already been pickled and brined.

For more information, see encyclopedia entry for Nicholas, Saint.

# NAME SAINT

An ancient belief, shared by many spiritual traditions, suggests that naming a child after an ancestor, saint, or other holy being creates an irrevocable bond between them. The supernatural being is considered obligated to serve as the child's patron, responding to calls for assistance as needed.

- In some cases, children may be named after a parent's favorite saint.
- In other cases, children may be named after the saint who facilitated their conception or somehow intervened during pregnancy or childbirth.
- However, many people are named after the saint whose feast day coincides with their birthday.

Christian saints are organized according to a "calendar roll of saints." This is literally a calendar, with each day of the year honoring one or more saints. Typically, there are several to choose from—male and female, famous and obscure. For instance, 4 July is the feast day shared by Saints Isabel of Portugal, Ulrich, Bertha, Aurelian, and Odo the Good. A child born on that day may be named after any of those saints or given a variation of one of their names. What this means is that a high percentage of children born on a given day in societies that maintain this tradition will share a name as well as a birthday.

In some countries, at least until recently, only names that appeared on the calendar roll of saints were legally permissible. In other words, you might be addressed by any nickname, but your legal name—the one that appears on an official birth certificate—had to correspond to that of a saint on the calendar roll. There is also a Christian folk belief that only those bearing the name of a saint will be permitted entry to Heaven—the name serves as a sort of sacred passport.

If you are named after a saint or share a saint's name, then that saint is your "name saint," even if you are not born on that saint's feast. Your name saint's feast day is your name day, even if it is not your birthday. In some parts of South America and Central and Eastern Europe, it is customary to celebrate your name day instead of, or in addition to, your birthday. Gifts are given and parties held. You don't have to be Christian to celebrate a name day. Although the roots of the tradition are Christian, in many places the concept of the name day transcends religion and is now a shared cultural or national phenomenon.

See encyclopedia entry for *Thomas*, *Saint*.

# Novena

A novena is a nine-day or nine-night prayer ritual dedicated to a saint. Novenas are a Roman Catholic ritual, but the practice is easily adapted to any spiritual tradition. A novena may be done as part of the process of requesting a favor from a saint or of giving thanks for one received. It may also be a gesture of love, performed with no expectation of personal benefit.

The word "novena" derives from a Latin root word meaning "nine." However, the ritual may be adapted for a greater or lesser amount of time, as desired. Choose a number of significance for you, your situation, or the saint. A gesture of gratitude for a major miracle may involve extending the ritual beyond nine days, nights, or weeks. Venezuelan folk tradition offers seven-part "novenas" dedicated to Maria Lionza, because she is associated with the number seven.

There are different ways of performing a novena: it can be performed for nine consecutive days or nights, or it can be performed for nine consecutive weeks. In other words, the novena can be performed for nine consecutive Tuesdays or other day of the week. The two standard components of a novena are prayer and candles.

Certain saints have specific novena prayers associated with them. Saints bearing reputations as great miracle workers—Saint Rita, for instance—may possess multiple standardized novena prayers, with different prayers being used for the different kinds of miracles associated with that saint. Saint Rita has a specific novena prayer for the gift of traffic safety, as an example. Novena prayers are not generally secret:

- There are published books containing novena prayers for different saints.
- Churches may provide this information, as will websites dedicated to specific saints.
- Holy cards frequently display novena prayers on their reverse sides.

However, ultimately, a novena prayer is a sincere prayer from the heart that was originally composed by a human being. If you cannot find an appropriate novena prayer, then compose a new one. A new prayer may be an excellent offering for a spint UITETHING TOT a Sallit.

Here is an example of a standard Roman Catholic novena prayer dedicated to Saint Dymphna:

Oh God, we beseech You
Through your servant, Saint Dymphna,
Who sealed with her blood the love she bore You,
To grant relief to (name of person seeking help) from mental afflictions and nervous disorders
Oh, Saint Dymphna, helper of those who are mentally afflicted, please pray for (name).

This style of prayer may be adapted as needed. The prayer or cycle of prayers is repeated on each day or night of the novena schedule. In general, people attempt to maintain the same time schedule for the entire novena period. Thus, if you begin the novena at 4:00 in the afternoon on a Tuesday, then the second day of the cycle would begin either the following Tuesday at the same time, or the following day at that time.

Never leave burning candles unattended and always be aware of fire safety. Children and pets should not be left alone without adult supervision in the presence of burning candles.

Novena prayers may be lengthy or brief. They may be accompanied by repetitions of a rosary. They are usually accompanied by candles. A fresh candle may be lit on each of the nine days or nights. There is also a mass-produced candle known as a "novena candle" that is designed to burn for a nine-day period. Traditionally, this type of candle is not extinguished but allowed to burn out in its own time.

Botanicas and spiritual supply merchants sell novena candles in glass sheaths featuring images of specific saints. Sample prayers may be found on the back. Mass-marketed novena candles are a measure of a saint's popularity; only candles for the most popular or in-demand saints are easily found. Once the candle has burned down, the glass sleeve may be preserved and used again, as desired, simply by inserting a new candle.

Do not despair if you love or owe a debt of gratitude to an obscure saint. It is possible to purchase loose nine-day candles in a multitude of colors. If possible, coordinate the color with that accordinate the color with the saint.

want to perform a novena honoring Saint Gennaro, use a red candle, this saint's favored color. However, if you can't find a specific color candle or if you don't know what color best suits a particular saint, you can always use a white candle.

Blank glass sleeves are also easily obtained. Personalize one to suit the saint you seek to honor.

- Write the saint's name on the sleeve with glass paint.
- Attach a copy of a picture or holy card to the sleeve.
- Decorate the sleeve in whatever manner seems appropriate to you. Just make sure that it is fire-safe.

Novenas may be public or private. They may be performed at home on a personal altar either alone or in a group. Novenas may also be done in a church or shrine. Some churches allow you to sponsor novena prayers that are performed on your behalf. Many Jewish spiritual organizations, especially those associated with the shrines of saints, will also make arrangements to sponsor prayer rituals.

See encyclopedia entries for Dymphna, Saint; María Lionza; Rita, Saint.

### Path

In the context of saints, "path" is an esoteric term indicating that a holy being may manifest in distinct and unique ways. The word "road" is sometimes substituted. The Spanish word *camino* may also refer to the same concept. It is important to emphasize that these are not literal roads or paths upon which you can tread. Instead, "path" refers to an abstract concept. Paths may be understood as facets of one being—different sides of the same entity. Humans also sometimes manifest different sides—some people are consistently grumpy in some situations but friendly and charming in others. When it comes to saints and other holy beings, however, this concept is exponentially more complex.

Sometimes saints behave in very distinct ways, especially in different locations. They may patronize different people, possess different interests, and even use different symbols. Their personalities may be different. These distinct manifestations are known as paths. Saint James the Greater has several paths he may manifest as a humble pilgrim or as an eternally victorious warrior. The existence of paths may indicate that a saint is particularly complex or that a forbidden spirit was once secretly venerated under the guise of the saint. For example, in parts of Germany, Saint Vitus behaves very differently than this boy saint does elsewhere, resembling instead the Germanic deity Wotan. It is also possible that a saint may simply manifest different personalities to suit the needs of distinct constituencies.

Some devotees may acknowledge all the paths of their favorite saint, but others may venerate one to the exclusion of others. This is particularly true of Mary, Christianity's Holy Mother. Some people are especially devoted to Our Lady of Guadalupe, while others adore Our Lady of Mercy, the Stella Maris, or the Mystic Rose.

Not all saints have paths. This is an esoteric topic. Don't worry if you don't understand it, as long as you appreciate that a saint's path is not a literal road or street. To further complicate matters, Saint James the Greater—a saint possessing several paths—is also associated with a famous pilgrimage route, the Road to Compostela.

See encyclopedia entries for Agueda, Saint; Anne de Beaupré, Saint; Bartholomew of the Sea, Saint; James the Greater, Saint; Mary; Tara; Vitus, Saint.

# PATRON AND MATRON SAINTS

The word "patron" derives from classical Latin juridical terminology and refers to a defense attorney or a lawyer for the defense. A patron saint, thus, defends you. Patronage is not random or arbitrary. Bonds of patronage include name, birthday or other significant day, who you are, and what you do.

More detailed information exists regarding Christian saints than about those of other traditions—not because Christian saints are necessarily more active, but because of the nature of the Church. The Church considers and announces patronages—in other words, it identifies which saint patronizes which problem, cause, profession, or disease in a detailed manner not shared by other religious traditions.

Not all patronages are officially authorized or approved. Folk religion may designate patronages that the Church does not acknowledge or that the Church may refute. For example, the folk belief that Saint George is the patron saint of assassins is clearly not official doctrine. Patronages may be very specific. Look at Appendix if in the back of this book to see which samts patronize norarians, bomb technicians, and beekeepers. These patronages usually reference something in an individual saint's mythos or history but may derive from miracles already produced. Patronage is an evolving process. Your own patron saint or the saint you love most can always be asked for any kind of assistance or favor.

The word "patron" also shares etymological roots with words like "paternal" and "patriarch." A patron saint behaves like an ideal father. Because patron is an inherently masculine word, although female saints perform the function of patronage, they cannot technically be patrons. Older sources tend to address this by referring to female saints as "patronesses," but this, too, is an innately masculine word. In this book, I have used the corresponding female term "matron," which is etymologically related to "maternal" and "matriarch," for female saints—those who behave like ideal mothers.

### Pilgrimage

A pilgrimage is generally defined as a journey taken to a sacred destination for a purpose. That purpose may be spiritual or social. Incentives to make a pilgrimage include:

- Spiritual fulfillment or curiosity
- As a demonstration of love and devotion to a holy being or place
- Adventure, fun, or companionship
- To request favors from a saint or other holy being
- In gratitude to a saint or other holy being
- To fulfill a vow or promise

Okage-Mairi is a Japanese term, which, in Shinto context, literally means "travel or pilgrimage to give thanks or blessings" and "pilgrimage of gratitude."

There seems to be an innate human instinct for pilgrimages—the concept of the pilgrimage is shared by virtually all religions. The most famous religious pilgrimage may be the Hajj to Mecca. Secular pilgrimages exist, too, as for instance to New York City's Ground Zero or to Pearl Harbor

וווסומווכב וט וזיביש דטוא טונץ ס טוטעווע בבוט טו וט רבמוו וומוטטו.

Because saints were people who actually lived and died, a pilgrimage to a saint's grave is a very common and ancient method of requesting assistance or fulfilling a vow; a saint's grave is her or his home on Earth. The process of being recognized as a saint is facilitated if pilgrimage sites exist that are relatively accessible and where devotees can converge. Gravesites are typical. Homes or scenes of death are also traditional. Someone lacking a pilgrimage point may become a saint but it is less likely and typically less immediate. It waits to be seen whether, in the era of the internet, virtual space will compensate for actual space.

See the encyclopedia entries for *Bernadette of Lourdes*, *Saint; Guadalupe; Pio, Saint* and *Glossary: Saint, Unofficial* 

# RELICS

Relics are objects closely associated with saints. The closer the association, the more potent the relic. Relics may include:

- An actual physical part of a saint, such as a bone or lock of hair
- A belonging or piece of clothing owned or worn by a saint
- "Sacred dust"—dust or dirt taken from a saint's shrine or tomb

The word "relic" derives from the Latin *reliquiae*, meaning "remains." Before something may be considered a relic, the holy person with whom it is associated must be deceased. (Objects associated with living spiritual masters are considered amulets, talismans, and power objects but are not relics until the master dies.)



The Sanskrit word *sarira* (literally "body") expresses a similar concept and is commonly used to refer to Buddhist relics. The Tibetan word *rinsel*, or *ringsel*, specifically refers to bone relics found among the cremated remains of Buddhas or Buddhist masters.

The concept of the relic is shared by many spiritual faiths, although not every tradition reveres the same kinds of relics. Muslims and Jews generally avoid direct bodily contact with remains (bones) but value items belonging to a master, including fabric and dust. (The exception is hair, which is treasured and perhaps not perceived as bodily remains.) Any tradition that reveres saints, holy people, or spiritual masters will treasure objects closely associated with them, whether or not this is officially sanctioned.

The most public and organized veneration of relics is associated with Christianity. In 787, the Second Council of Nicea decreed that no church could be consecrated without relics and thus they became a necessity—every church needed at least one. Relics were placed in the crypt, within the altar, under the altar, or within a reliquary.

Roman Catholicism organizes relics into classes.

• First-class relics are items directly associated with the life of Christ (fragments of the True Cross, for instance) or that are actual physical remains of a saint. like bones or teeth.

- Second-class relics include anything worn or owned by a saint or frequently used by one.
- Third-class relics are the most common. These include anything that has touched a first- or second-class relic. Another word for third-class relic is *brandea*, which technically refers to fabric that has touched the bones of a saint. The term is now often used, however, to indicate anything that has touched anything intimately associated with a saint, including a reliquary or tomb.

A "reliquary" is a container intended to house one or more relics. Because of its function, and through proximity with the relic within, a reliquary can also become a sacred, spiritually charged talisman. Reliquaries vary greatly in shape and size, ranging from as small as a locket to as large as a cabinet or chest.

For many secular people in the 21st century, relics may seem macabre or even grotesque, but it is crucial to comprehend that they are not intended as some kind of fetish. They are perceived as transmitters of holy power. Relics are considered direct links to the sacred. They may serve as oracles, as in shamanic traditions that preserve ancestral skulls or skeletons. Relics are often believed capable of bestowing miracles or of possessing magical powers; hence they are deeply coveted. Many believe that saints are present wherever relics belonging to or associated with them are housed. Towns once fought violently over the remains of dead saints. Relics were given as gifts and captured during war.

The correct terminology for the transportation of relics is "translation." Thus relics are not "moved"; they are translated. Translation, although in modern usage most commonly associated with languages, literally means "carries over" and is etymologically related to words like "transport" or "transfer."

A lucrative trade in faked relics once flourished. Thirteen different European churches once claimed possession of Christ's foreskin. However, people can also create genuine relics by touching fabric or other items to a saint, a saint's tomb, or a particularly powerful votive image. The item is thus transformed into a relic.

• North African Muslims drape fabric over a tomb during a saint's feast; it is then believed to be imbued with the saint's special sacred power (*baraka*).

• Jews cut saints' shrouds into small pieces, which are then considered amulets; these are auctioned and the proceeds given to charity in the name of the saint. High bidding is perceived as honoring the saint and perhaps as a method of petitioning for spiritual favors.

See encyclopedia entries for Amadour, Saint; Foy, Saint; Jacobus de Molensis; Joan of Arc; Joseph of Arimathea; Magi; Nicholas, Saint.

# Retablo

The modern retablo is a small painting with religious imagery, usually intended to serve as testament to a miracle, and usually painted on sheets of tin or other inexpensive metal. Newer retablos may be painted on Masonite boards. Retablos are popular throughout Latin America—especially in Mexico, where they are also sometimes called *laminas*.

There really is no specific English word that accurately conveys the concept of the retablo—no single word for a small oil painting on tin or other inexpensive material that serves as testament to a miracle received.

These small oil paintings are votive offerings, traditionally placed on home altars or brought to shrines as acts of public testimony. Creation or presentation of a retablo is a traditional method of repaying saints for favors received. Shrines of miracle-working saints may be covered with retablos.

Traditional retablos are stylized and conform to certain artistic conventions. The standard retablo depicts the moment of the actual miracle. If it is a miracle of healing, the recipient may be shown lying in a hospital bed. If the recipient was rescued from an accident or disaster, then the actual scene will be depicted, sometimes with great attention to detail. Someone saved from a fire may be shown fleeing the burning building covered in flames.

Hovering in the air over the scene is the holy being held responsible for the miracle, typically Jesus, various manifestations of the Madonna, saints, or angels. Testimony written directly on the painting accompanies the pictorial depiction. The general formula is something like: "Jane Doe offers infinite gratitude to Saint Anthony for finding her a wonderful husband." Information

identifying specifically when and where the miracle occurred is also typically included.

What does *not* appear on the retablo is significant as well: churches and clergy are uniformly absent. When Saint Barbara chases away demons or rescues someone from a fire, she personally appears at the site of the miracle. The retablo records direct interaction between human being and holy being—no middlemen needed.

In fact, if any middleman exists, it is the artist who crafts the milagro. Retablos, generally inexpensive paintings, are traditionally commissioned from an artist. A professional crafter of retablos is called a *retablero* ("maker of retablos") or a *milagero* ("maker of miracles"; these may be either painted retablos or anatomical charms). A *retablero* is more than an artist. The craft is a sacred occupation.

Although retablos are theoretically simple enough for anyone to paint, masters of the art are acknowledged. *Infinitas Gracias: Contemporary Mexican Votive Painting* (Chronicle Books, 2003) features the retablos of Alfredo Vilchis Roque and sons and is an excellent introduction to the subject.

The tradition of creating retablos began sometime in the early 19th century. Thousands of retablos were painted during the peak of their popularity from approximately 1820 to 1880. As older retablos are now perceived as valuable expressions of folk art, many have been stolen, especially those from relatively unguarded shrines. Once presented to the holy being, the retablo belongs to the holy being. Before purchasing antique retablos, please check their provenance to guarantee that you are not receiving a saint's stolen goods.

In response to popular demand, there has been a renaissance in retablo painting. Modern retableros operate with fewer restrictions or, alternatively, have a broader consumer base. Subject matter for the paintings is now virtually unlimited. Saint Sebastian is openly thanked for helping gay lovers. Other saints may be thanked for preventing a spouse from discovering extramarital affairs, helping a *lucha libre* wrestler become champion, or saving someone from alien abduction—all depicted with wonderful, often good-humored, imagery.

There is also another type of retablo. In Peru, the word retablo indicates a small shadowbox—easily portable wooden boxes containing images of saints. Merchants and other travelers carried these retablos through the Andes for spiritual protection and to use as portable altars.

To add to the confusion, Mexican retablos—the little paintings— are sometimes called *milagros*, because the central theme of the painting almost

inevitably involves a miracle (in Spanish: *milagro*). However, the metal charms known as milagros are never called retablos.

See encyclopedia entries for *Barbara*, *Saint*; *Kahlo*, *Frida*; *Sebastian*, *Saint* and Glossary: *Ex-Voto*; *Icon*; *Milagro*.

### SAINT, OFFICIAL

Saints can be categorized as official and unofficial, although to some extent, this is an artificial division. The concept of saints is ancient. The Old Testament describes how, thousands of years ago when Caleb first entered Canaan, he stopped at the Cave of Machpelah, the still-extant grave-shrine of the Jewish patriarchs and matriarchs, to seek the blessings of those buried there in the *exact* same manner that pilgrimages to saints are conducted today. However, until the emergence of Christianity as a state religion, the concept of "official" saints did not exist.

Church hierarchy is responsible for the transition from locally acclaimed miracle workers to saints. Christianity is the only religion that officially endorses saints. In fact, the entire concept that saints *can* be officially endorsed derives from Christianity. This process emerged gradually over the centuries and continues to evolve. We'll take a closer look at that process shortly.

Because Christianity banished the veneration of spirits in general, when people all over the world became Christian, they abandoned contact with other deities of all kinds—ancestral spirits, fairies, goddesses, or any kind of spirit they may have worshipped or with whom they communed. Entire nations converted to Christianity en masse, often as directed by their rulers. While many may have been genuinely sincere, enthusiastic converts, others converted under duress and may have longed for previously beloved spirits. Saints were often officially and directly substituted to fill this spiritual void because, in many ways, saints provide the same functions and services as spirits—a direct personal connection to supernatural and sacred powers.

This created a dilemma for Christian authorities. Although on one hand they encouraged saint veneration, on the other they did not want this to evolve into heresy or a backsliding into Pagan practices. People are often very offended by the suggestion that certain saints are simply a Christian interpretation of Pagan deities, but that isn't some sort of New Age reevaluation. The Church, concerned about this over 1000 years ago, attempted to maintain control by developing the concept of officially approved saints.

In order to receive formal and public validation of their sainthood, saints must meet a set of standard criteria, but they must also correspond to the ideals of the Church. Christian saints, whether Catholic or Orthodox, must fulfill certain expectations before official sainthood is conferred.

Canonization is the process by which a Roman Catholic saint is officially recognized. The Church has a list, or a "canon roll," to which saints are added when they are canonized. They may also be removed. The procedures by which saints are acknowledged by the various branches of Christianity are similar but not identical. The equivalent Orthodox term is "glorification."

The earliest Christian saints were martyrs, recognized the old-fashioned way by popular acclaim and only later confirmed by local bishops. Martyrs' graves were considered sacred sites. Churches were built over them—hence the stillexisting tradition of naming churches for saints.

Christian saints are not *made;* they are *recognized* through a lengthy bureaucratic process initially formalized in the 10th century. Since the 12th century, the pope has claimed sole authority for canonizing Catholic saints. In approximately 1170, Pope Alexander III sent a letter to Sweden's King Canute chastising a local bishop for tolerating the cult of a monk killed in a drunken brawl, even though local Christians testified to receiving miracles through this monk's intercession. This monk may have been behaving like a saint, but from the Church's perspective, he was not suitable for Christian veneration. The pope insisted that thenceforth only saints officially approved by the Vatican would be acceptable. By the next century, a complex bureaucratic system for approving saints had been established:

- No consideration of sainthood until a certain amount of time has passed following the candidate's death. Originally, it was fifty years, but this was later reduced to ten and is now five. Exceptions are sometimes made, as for Pope John Paul II.
- The initial petition to begin the canonization process must be submitted by the local bishop in whose territory the candidate died and no one else.
- Official investigators are then appointed to collect and evaluate information about the candidate.
- The case assembled by the investigators is submitted to the Congregation of Rites for evaluation. *If* the Congregation renders a positive judgment, the pope issues a Decree of Introduction, beginning another lengthy

process of investigation.

- The process of beatification, which recognizes a dead person's capacity to intercede on behalf of the living, begins.
- At some point before beatification, the body of the candidate is exhumed and examined. If it is found to be "incorrupt," meaning that it has not deteriorated or rotted in the standard manner of corpses, this enhances the argument for sainthood but is not essential. An incorrupt body is considered a mark of sanctity, a divine sign of sainthood; however, most saints are not incorrupt.
- Two miracles are required for beatification. It must be established that no doubt exists that these miracles are divine in origin and that they occurred because of the intercession of the candidate. Medical miracles are most common, and qualified medical experts are consulted as part of the examination process. Martyrs do not need a miracle attributed to their intercession in order to be beatified. Martyrdom itself is sufficient for beatification, but to be considered full-blown saints, martyrs must have miracles attributed to them and verified.
- *If* results are favorable, the candidate is approved for beatification by a general meeting of the Cardinals of the Congregation in the presence and with the acquiescence of the pope. The candidate is then officially a Servant of the Church who may be referred to by the honorific "Blessed" but is not yet officially a saint. Thus, before his 2010 canonization, Saint André of Mount Royal was popularly known as Blessed Brother André.
- Following beatification, no further official action is taken until another miracle is verified. (Before 1983, two additional miracles were required for canonization.) It is common for the process to stall at this point, unless the candidate has fervent devotees who will assertively and actively pursue their candidate's cause. Behind every saint canonized since the 12th century stands a devotee or community of devotees who worked very hard to ensure that their saint would be officially recognized.

The process of canonization involves a lot of "ifs." It's not easy to become an official saint. For devotees, this lengthy bureaucratic process can be frustrating. The human impulse to work with saints—especially those reputed to be miracle workers—may be too strong to wait for permission, especially when someone is

in need. This isn't a problem in traditions with no concept of "official " sainthood. Essentially *all* Jewish saints are unofficial if only because there's no central authority to confer a similar seal of approval. Popularity conveys the equivalent of official status.

But what happens when official status is highly valued? What happens when people recognize a saint's capacity to work miracles, yet that saint lacks official recognition? Will people be patient and wait for the official stamp of approval or will they begin to venerate this dead soul anyway? Desperate people tend to be impatient—hence the existence of unofficial saints.

See encyclopedia entry for *Gregory the Wonder Worker* and Glossary: *Retablo; Saint, Unofficial.* 

# SAINT, UNOFFICIAL

The concept of an "unofficial" saint only exists in traditions that also recognize "official" or "authorized" saints. Once upon a time, all saints were recognized by popular acclaim alone. This informal process of conferring sainthood still exists in most religious and folk traditions. The exception is Christianity, which over the centuries has developed a complex bureaucratic system by which saints are officially acknowledged—or not. Thus unofficial saints either are Christian or derive from spiritual traditions whose devotees are heavily influenced by Christianity or perceive themselves as Christian even if the Church disapproves of some of their practices.

An unofficial saint has not received the official stamp of approval for any number of reasons. A Latin American term for them is *Santos Caseros*, "homemade saints." Many devotees may be unaware that these saints are unofficial, assuming that they possess the same status as canonized saints. Some local churches discreetly incorporate veneration of unofficial saints, although in some cases, aggressive attempts may also be made to suppress this veneration.

There are many reasons, beyond the obviously spiritual ones, that official recognition is important. There are economic ramifications to sainthood. Saints, especially those renowned for producing miracles, stimulate pilgrimages to shrines and pilgrimages stimulate local economies. Pilgrims travel from great distances, bringing an influx of fresh cash. Pilgrimages tend to coincide with feast days and festivals and are thus fairly predictable. Crowds throng to the shrine of Guadalupe in Mexico City every December, while Catania, Sicily,

braces for the crowds celebrating Saint Agatha annually in February. Local economies are often driven by these pilgrimages. One reason for the hostility often shown to unofficial saints is that they deprive official shrines of cash and commerce.

Some unofficial saints—Joan of Arc, Padre Pio, Isabel of Portugal, or Seraphim the Wonder Worker—eventually become official saints, even if the Church is initially unwilling to confer the status. Some, however, are never canonized, either because they were in conflict with the Church while they were alive, or because they do not correspond to Christian ideals, or perhaps because they were never even Christian. Many were not necessarily noted for spirituality while alive; their popular sainthood may have been conferred because of their manner of death, in conjunction with miracles produced afterward.

In some cases, however, this is precisely *why* unofficial saints are petitioned, venerated, and beloved—it is believed that they will do things that official saints will not, like blessing illegal or unethical enterprises, or severely punishing enemies. Some unofficial saints are perceived as being more empathetic to basic human needs and desires than official saints, especially those who were extremely pious, devout, and ascetic in life.

A saint's official status, or lack thereof, is only significant to those for whom such official endorsement is important. It must be noted that many unofficial saints were exceptionally devout Christians. There can be many reasons why a saint has not been canonized, including technicalities. Many assume that the saintly abbesses Hildegard of Bingen and Julian of Norwich are canonized saints, but they are not. Both remain unofficial.

Latin America is home to a vast variety of unofficial saints and possesses many terms to express this concept:

- Almas milagrosas (miraculous souls)
- Animas (souls or spirits)
- Animitas (little souls or little spirits)
- Canonizaciones populares (popularly canonized)
- Muertos milagrosos (the miraculous dead)
- Santos paganos (Pagan saints)
- Santos populares (popular saints)
- Santos profanes (profane saints)

Popularly venerated saints for whom the canonization process has begun remain unofficial until the process is complete especially before beatification Thus Saint Joan of Arc was an unofficial saint for centuries. Although there are exceptions, the length of time it takes for a saint to be canonized may reflect Church attitudes toward that particular saint. If there is ambivalence, canonization may take a very long time or the process may be stalled indefinitely. Joan of Arc is the perfect example; it took five centuries for her canonization. Many saints who died long after she did were canonized long before she was.

There is a basic conflict embedded in the process that confers official sainthood:

- The Church prefers saints who are saintly and scandal free.
- The general populace seeks active and responsive miracle workers.

The result is often an attempt at compromise. Hagiographies—legends and histories of individual saints—may be sanitized in an attempt to make miracle workers appear more "saintly." This tends not to be an issue among unofficial saints, especially those not expected to ever be canonized. Although some devotees of Mexican folk saint Juan Soldado insist that he is innocent of the crimes for which he was convicted, many others don't care one way or the other, providing he keeps producing the miracles for which he is acclaimed.

Unlike canonized saints, there is no official process or waiting period to mark the emergence of folk saints, a gentler term for unofficial saints. Wide-scale veneration may pop up literally overnight, especially if the miracle worker was a beloved and well-known celebrity.

In the 21st century, Diana Princess of Wales (1961–1997) and the singer Michael Jackson (1958–2009) are among those most widely expected to manifest as full-fledged and active folk saints. Both were charismatic people beloved by multitudes, even while simultaneously evoking profoundly negative reactions from others. In both cases, their unexpected deaths evoked intense public grief and mass mourning.

Both Diana and Michael were associated with healing. When AIDS first emerged and people feared any sort of contact with the victims of this deadly disease, Princess Diana cradled AIDS-afflicted babies in her arms, bravely demonstrating these fears to be unfounded. Michael Jackson habitually visited ailing children in hospitals. Those who reject the accusations of pedophilia made against Jackson instead perceive that this generosity left him vulnerable to false accusations and persecution.

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Both Diana and Michael possess locations suitable for pilgrimages. Essentially, both already possess shrines: Michael's Neverland Ranch and Diana's gravesite at Althorp. Neither will ever be official saints, not least because neither was Catholic, but also because their lives were controversial and frequently scandalous. Although they both displayed public interest in spirituality, neither was a religious leader. However, both are emerging as folk saints and intercessors, with miracles of healing already attributed to Jackson.

The fact that popular personalities can be considered saints should not be surprising. Many of the earliest official saints—Maurice, Sebastian, George, or Victor—were Christian soldiers, not monks or priests, similar to the popular modern Russian unofficial saint, Yevgeny. Murder victims and those perceived as having been unfairly executed for crimes are also popularly venerated as saints.

Because there is a tremendous magical, spiritual, and healing component to music, singers and musicians are also historically elevated to the status of saint. Several popular singers are folk saints in Argentina. In the United States, Elvis Presley has already evolved into an intercessor reputedly responsible for miracles of healing. If I were to venture a prediction as to who will emerge from the world of music as its next powerful saint, it would be James Brown, the King of Soul (1933–2006).

Although he was a brilliant entertainer who evoked profound reactions from listeners, James Brown, also known as the Godfather of Soul, was more than that. He was simultaneously a social leader, renowned as an activist who encouraged education and provided employment. He is credited with personally preventing rioting in Boston following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. Perceived as caring profoundly about people while he was alive, there is no reason why Brown should stop being a provider now that he is gone. Officials hope that Brown's grave site in Georgia will attract tourists or, in other words, devotees. Brown has even left behind catchphrases readily used in petitions seeking his aid: "Please, Please, Please!" or "I feel good; I knew that I would."

See encyclopedia entries for Albertus Magnus; Anastacia; Difunta Correa; Dubois, Emile; Gaucho Gil; Gaucho Saints; Guglielma; Hildegard of Bingen; Jaramillo, Don Pedro; Isabel of Portugal; Jesús Malverde; Joan of Arc; José Dolores; Juan Soldado; Julian of Norwich; María Soledad; Maurice, Saint; Maximón; Muerte, San La; Muerte, Santissima; Pancho Sierra; Pancho Villa; Pio, Saint; Teresita; Victor, Saint; Yevgeny.

### SANTERIA

*Santeria* is a rapidly expanding African Diaspora spiritual tradition whose name literally refers to devotion to the saints. The saints of Santeria, however, may or may not be who they superficially appear to be.

The roots of Santeria lie mainly in Yorubaland, now within the boundaries of modern Nigeria. During the slavery era, vast numbers of Yorubans were kidnapped and transported to the Western Hemisphere to labor on sugar plantations in Cuba alongside slaves from other African nations. The Yoruba carried their indigenous spirits, known as the *orishas*, with them. However, in Cuba, they were forbidden to practice their own religion and were instead baptized as Roman Catholics. They received minimal religious instruction, but they were given chromolithographs of saints, whom they were encouraged to venerate.

Some became exclusively and devoutly Catholic; others, seeking to maintain devotion to ancestral spirits, engaged in subterfuge. They looked at chromolithographs and recognized orishas where they were intended to see canonized saints.

The classic example involves the beloved orisha Shango and the virgin martyr Saint Barbara. Many chromolithographs of Barbara depict her with a lightningstruck tower. Shango is associated with lightning. When his devotees saw images of Barbara, their primary focus was on the lightning, not on the pretty young girl in the picture. Shango was thus identified with Saint Barbara, and images of the saint were used to represent Shango. On her feast day, Shango's devotees celebrated their orisha in the guise of the saint, referring to Shango as Saint Barbara.

This process of identification and syncretism is fairly transparent for the first generation. However, religious and cultural traditions are passed down from parent to child. Because it was not safe to discuss syncretism openly, over the centuries, saints and orishas blended—at least for some people.

Some devotees considered the saints are merely masks for the orishas whose original identities are not forgotten. The masking of orishas as saints is understood as necessary because of historical circumstances, but the two types of spiritual being are considered distinct. For others, the individual identities of saint and orisha eventually merged, creating one blended spiritual being. Thus Shango and Saint Barbara are understood as being truly one, with various types of explanations and rationales for why this is so. The word "saint" may be used exclusively, instead of orisha. Furthermore, orishas who may have had human incarnations—like Shango, who was once a king of a Yoruban city-state—may be considered saints by any definition of the word.

Complicating the situation are those who do not perceive themselves as Santerians, but as exclusively Roman Catholic. They deny the validity of the orishas, even though their veneration of saints is tinged with Santeria practices. Thus, those who deny any connection with Santeria may simultaneously favor images of Saint Barbara dressed in red and riding a white horse—associations that derive squarely from Shango's mythos. These devotees are not Santerians, but many Santeria practices have been absorbed into Caribbean folk religion.

There are also devotees of Santeria who perceive that the era of orishas forced to masquerade as Christian saints is over. They choose to discard the masks, preferring African images. Thus the orisha Yemaya, Queen of the Sea, is shown as a black woman or mermaid rather than as the Virgin Mary. These devotees may also reject the name *Santeria*, with its direct reference to saints, in favor of *Lucumi*, a Yoruba name.

Vast numbers of enslaved Yorubans were also transported to Portuguesespeaking Brazil, where *Candomblé*, a similar religious tradition, evolved. The Portuguese spelling is *orixa* (pronounced: or-ee-sha). Depending on location and tradition, different saints may represent different orishas. Thus, in Brazil, Saint Barbara is usually syncretized to the orisha Oya (Yansan) rather than Shango. The orisha Eshu-Elegbara may be represented by Saint Anthony of Padua, Saint Peter, or the Anima Sola.

See encyclopedia entries for Anastacia; Anima Sola; Anthony of Padua; Barbara, Saint; Barbara Africana, Saint; José Negro; Lazarus, Saint; María Lionza; Mary; Peter, Saint; Santiago Matamoros; Seven African Powers and Glossary: Vodou, Voodoo, Hoodoo.

#### Shrine

A shrine is a place of veneration. Shrines may be elaborate or simple, planned or spontaneous. Some shrines are spontaneously erected at the site of tragedies as people bring candles, flowers, notes, and gifts to mark the spot. The most common shrines are gravesites or, if there is no grave, the place where a death occurred. According to legend, part of a person's soul remains there, commanded by God to do favors for the living if asked, thus bypassing the

Church and the beatification process.

Mexican roadside shrines are known as *descansos*. Once upon a time, coffins were carried by pallbearers to the *camposanto*, or cemetery. They were heavy and, periodically, the coffin was laid on the ground giving the pallbearers an opportunity to rest (*descansar*). It became traditional to mark these resting spots with a flower, a cross, or some other marking. In Chilean parlance, an *animita* is a roadside shrine marking the death of a loved one. Candles and flowers are customarily brought to the *animita* in remembrance, and also to beseech favors from the dead.

A shrine is sacred because of associations with a saint or holy being, but its sacred quality is also enhanced by the presence of those who strive and struggle to visit.

See encyclopedia entries for Difunta Correa; Jesús Malverde; Juan Soldado; Romoualdito.

### STIGMATA

The stigmata are bleeding wounds, marks, sores, or feelings of pain in the parts of the body that correspond to some or all of the Five Holy Wounds suffered by Jesus Christ during his crucifixion. Someone bearing these wounds is known as a stigmatic. These Holy Wounds include two in the feet and two in the hands or wrists, corresponding to where nails were driven into Christ's body. The fifth wound corresponds to the lance thrust into Christ's side.

Technically, "stigmata" refers specifically to these five wounds, but some stigmatics may also be afflicted by wounds of the head corresponding to those caused by a crown of thorns. Others display wounds on the shoulder, as if from carrying a large, rough wooden cross, or scourge marks on their backs. These wounds may be ulcerated or bleeding. Some resemble crosses.

*Stigmata* is the plural of the Greek word *stigma*, which refers to a mark or brand like those used to identify slaves or livestock. The first reference to stigmata derives from the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians, which biblical scholars date to approximately 50 ce. In 1224, Francis of Assisi, now among the most beloved Roman Catholic saints, became the first recorded stigmatic.

There have been over 500 recorded stigmatics—most, but not all, devout Roman Catholics. Famous stigmatics include Saint Pio, Saint Rita, Gemma Galgani, John of God, and Anna Maria Taigi. One of her disciples claimed that she had seen and touched the stigmata borne by the unofficial saint Guglielma.

The subject of stigmata is controversial even within the Roman Catholic Church. For example, when, on Good Friday in 1697, the future saint Veronica Giuliani (1660–1727), then a Capuchin nun, received the Five Wounds of Christ, her local bishop did not hail it as a miracle; he insisted that she seek medical treatment. Physicians, however, were unable to provide relief or a cure.

Stigmatics have been accused of self-mutilation. Allegedly, if stigmata are genuine, the blood flows freely, does not clot, and cannot be stopped by medical means. Bleeding may defy gravity. The blood is allegedly a combination of that of the individual and that of Jesus. Thus many believe that modern medical technology should be able to document that the blood from two distinct individuals flows from one single wound.

See encyclopedia entries for Catherine of Siena; Francis of Assisi, Saint; Gemma Galgani, Saint; John of God, Saint; Pio, Saint; Rita, Saint; Rose of Lima; Taigi, Anna Maria; Therese Neumann.

### Syncretism

What happens when a new religion takes power and bans previously worshipped deities and holy beings? Will people simply abandon them? Quite frequently, they will, especially those people who were never particularly religious or devout. On the other hand, inevitably there will be those who make a public stand protesting such policies: every religion possesses martyrs. Many, however, have historically chosen subterfuge, appearing to venerate a new deity while keeping another secretly in their hearts, a practice that typically results in syncretism.

Syncretism is the process by which two or more sacred beings fuse, as forbidden spirits masquerade under the guise of those that are authorized. Religious authorities may or may not be aware of syncretic practices. They may or may not tolerate them. In many cases, religious authorities encourage syncretism in order to maintain peace or to stimulate acceptance of new deities through associations with older ones. Authorities may also encourage syncretism in order to discourage devotion, as, for example, associations of horned spirits, especially goat gods, with the Christian devil. For instance, the word used for "devil" in the Hungarian language is *ördög*, the name of the horned spirit who rules subterranean realms in the traditional Hungarian pantheon. Ördög, the deity, was deliberately identified with the devil, so that he would be feared and avoided.

Syncretism is ancient and may be a natural human reaction, whenever one religion is banished and another substituted. Certainly it occurred in Europe during the transition to Christianity, sometimes with the complicit knowledge of the Church. Saints offer devotees direct, personal contact with the divine, fulfilling many of the same functions as Pagan spirits and they are thus easily syncretized.

Syncretism is sometimes logical. The West African spirit Ogun is frequently syncretized to Michael Archangel. Ogun is the spirit of iron and Michael is inevitably depicted with a sword. Their syncretism is comfortable: both are warrior spirits. Likewise, the Egyptian goddess Isis, a mourning, compassionate mother, was syncretized to the Virgin Mary, another mourning, compassionate mother.

Syncretism may also create very odd bedfellows. Thus, Shango, the intensely masculine West African spirit of potent virility and sexuality is syncretized to Saint Barbara, the young, female virgin martyr. How did this occur? Shango is a storm spirit and Saint Barbara's iconography typically includes a lightning bolt. When Shango's devotees saw images of Barbara, it was that lightning bolt that captured their attention. The existence of a myth in which Shango disguises himself in women's clothing in order to escape his enemies also encouraged the association.

The first generation practicing syncretism is conscious of the practice. However, because syncretism tends to be a secretive practice, it is rarely discussed openly. After several generations, the forbidden spirit may be submerged completely within the identity of the acceptable one. The only clues to the existence of syncretism may be that this acceptable spirit behaves unusually in certain locales or that characteristics and interests of the earlier deity have been absorbed.

See also Agatha, Saint; Agueda, Saint; Artemidos, Saint; Artemis, Saint; Barbara, Saint; Boris and Gleb; Brigid, Saint; Catherine of Alexandria; Christopher, Saint; Cyrus and John; Difunta Correa; Elen of the Roads; Gregory the Wonder Worker; John the Baptist; Kwan Yin; Lazarus, Saint; Margaret of Antioch; Maria Lionza; Mary; Maximon; Michael Archangel; Nicholas, Saint; Pascal Baylon, Saint; Pascual, El Rey; Pascualito; Patrick, Saint; Quiteria, Saint; Seven African Powers; Vitus, Saint; Walpurga, Saint and Glossary: Black Madonna; Folk Religion; Iconography; Myth; Santeria

# Tertiary

A tertiary is a person who is a lay member of a Roman Catholic religious order. They are permitted to wear the uniform or habit of the order and follow the order's rules, and may participate in the workings of the order. However, tertiaries often do not live in the monastery, convent, or other housing belonging to the order, and may not be required to fulfill or obey all expectations and rules of the order.

The word "tertiary" derives from the Latin *tertius*, or third.

- The first order consists of priests or other consecrated male religious.
- The second order consists of nuns or other consecrated female religious.
- Tertiaries are the Third Order.

Saints Catherine of Siena and Rose of Lima were tertiaries of the Order of Saint Dominic, also known as the Dominicans. See their individual entries for further information.

# Vodou, Voodoo, Hoodoo

Despite the confusing similarity in spelling, each of these three words refers to something different, albeit related. The word *Vodou* literally means "spirit" in the Fon language of West Africa. When the devotees of these spirits, adherents of traditional, indigenous African religions, were transported to the Western Hemisphere as slaves, they desperately and fervently attempted to maintain their religious practices. However, this was forbidden by law. Instead, slaves were baptized en masse, typically given new names, and ordered to practice a new religion.

Typically they were not taught to read or given extensive religious instruction, but they were given holy cards or lithographs of saints. In many cases, devotees recognized their own forbidden spirits in these images. In other words, slaves were forbidden to worship the Dahomean snake spirit Damballah. But when they saw an image of Saint Patrick inevitably portrayed with snakes, not knowing Patrick's legend, they recognized the image as simultaneously evoking Damballah. Just as the slave had received a name change, so did Damballah. In this way, Vodou, a new syncretic religious tradition, was born in Haiti. (Similar traditions exist elsewhere.) It wasn't a secret; authorities were aware that the slaves were evolving new traditions that were heretical from a Christian standpoint. However, up to a point, the practice was ignored and tolerated. Outsiders heard repeated use of the word *Vodou*, which eventually became the name of the faith. *Vodou* may also be spelled *Vodoun*. Following the Haitian revolution (1791–1804), the Vodou-inspired uprising of slaves who threw off their shackles, many devotees of Vodou migrated to New Orleans. Here, the religious tradition continued to evolve, absorbing other magical, cultural, and spiritual influences and becoming New Orleans Voodoo.

Practitioners in Haiti resent the spelling "Voodoo," as it evokes offensive Hollywood exploitation movies.

- In this book, the spelling "Vodou" refers to Haitian traditions.
- The spelling "Voodoo" is used in this book to distinguish the specific tradition practiced in New Orleans.

Hoodoo is a system of North American folk magic largely based on African traditions—West as well as Central African. The system also incorporates Native American and European practices into a unique blend. Hoodoo was born in Protestant-dominated regions where saint veneration was discouraged or forbidden. Hoodoo is not, in itself, intrinsically religious; it is a system of practical magic. That said, Hoodoo practices vary depending on region, and some practitioners do incorporate veneration of saints. In the 21st century, Hoodoo is undergoing a renaissance of popularity and thus also an evolution in practices—saint veneration among them.

Many of the practices of New Orleans Voodoo and Hoodoo are very similar, and some use the terms interchangeably. However, Voodoo refers specifically to traditions of New Orleans, whereas Hoodoo may derive from anywhere in the continental United States.

See encyclopedia entries for John the Conqueror; Laveau, Marie; Senjak; Seven African Powers.

# MYSTICS, SAINTS, AND SAGES: A– Z

# A

# ∾ 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani

Also known as 'Abd al-Qâder; Abdelkader; Abdelqader al-Jilani; Abdul Qadir Jilani; Abdelkadar Jilali; Abdelkader Ghailani.

**PRONOUNCED**: ahbd-ahl-kah-deer-ahl-jill-ah-nee.

**EPITHETS:** Sultan of the Saints; The Supreme Helper; The Rose of Baghdad; Standard Bearer of the Way; The Grey Falcon; The Radiantly Shining Lamp.

CLASSIFICATION: Sufi saint.

Renowned as a miracle worker during his lifetime, Moulay 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (c. 1077–1166) is now widely considered to be among the greatest of all Sufi saints. He is referred to as *Sheikh* or *Moulay*, honorifics and terms of respect.

- *'Abd al-Qadir* is his personal name meaning Servant of the All-Powerful.
- Al-Jilani is his surname, indicating his place of birth in the Iranian district of Jilani.

Moulay 'Abd al-Qadir went to study in Baghdad, then the center of learning in the Islamic world. He initially pursued the sciences, until he experienced a tremendous spiritual awakening. He left Baghdad to spend twenty-five years wandering Iraq's deserts in spiritual pursuits. He was over fifty when he returned to Baghdad, a city packed with mystic teachers, holy people, and miracle workers.

Legend has it that when Moulay 'Abd al-Qadir arrived at the city limits, he

was greeted by a coalition of teachers bearing a vessel filled with water, indicating that the city was already filled to the brim with spiritual leaders and that there was no room for him. He accepted the vessel and, in the middle of winter, out of season, materialized a perfect rose to place within it, indicating both his exceptional powers and that room would be found for him. The awestruck mystics instantly acclaimed him as a master and welcomed him, naming him the Rose of Baghdad.

People were tremendously moved by Moulay 'Abd al-Qadir's teachings; his reputation grew. Eventually, facilities were built that incorporated a home for the holy man and his extensive family, as well as a guesthouse and classrooms for students. He authored several books and lived to a ripe old age.

Moulay 'Abd al-Qadir is invoked for any type of assistance, especially healing, but is renowned for preventing miscarriage.

Moulay 'Abd al-Qadir founded the Qadiriyya, the first organized Sufi *tariqa*. *Tariqa* is typically translated into English as "brotherhood" but literally means "the way." Although he never traveled to North Africa, he is intensely venerated there by various mystical brotherhoods (*tariqas*), perhaps in less conventional ways than this conservative man may have envisioned while he was alive. Among them are the Jilala Brotherhood and the Gnawa Brotherhood.

The Jilala Brotherhood, an offshoot of the Qadiriyya, is an order of Dervish musicians renowned for trance dancing. When entranced, they dance over burning coals. The Jilala are also renowned for their ability to provide spiritual and physical healing, especially of seizure disorders. They exorcise malicious spirits and perform rituals of purification. In Paul Bowles' 1962 short story, "The Wind at Meni Midar," some dancing Jilala cause a young soldier to become very nervous.

The Gnawa Brotherhood, another Sufi order, considers Moulay 'Abd al-Qadir to be the Sultan of Saints. He is also classified among the spirits they call the *mlouk*. The seven mlouk are a conglomeration of powerful saints and spirits who possess the power to control and banish the potentially dangerous spirits known as *djinn*. Each mlouk is associated with a specific color, incense, and rhythm. Moulay 'Abd al-Qadir is the White Mlouk, Master of Djinn. He is the first of the mlouk to be summoned during Gnawa rituals.

RITUAL: According to Gnawa tradition, Moulay 'Abd al-Qadir is the White

Mlouk who liberates djinn from their captivity on the twenty-seventh eve of Ramadan. On this night, the Gnawa Brotherhood honors the saint with festivals, burning black benzoin resin as incense, which is believed to assist in opening the spiritual gates.

COLOR: white.

SACRED SITE: His mausoleum in Baghdad, once his madrassa, remains a place of pilgrimage. His sanctuary has fifty-five doors. Legend has it that every time his name is invoked, each door's knocker spontaneously knocks to alert the saint that his help is required.

**OFFERINGS**: Light candles in honor of Moulay 'Abd al-Qadir. Appropriate promises or repayment for favors granted include donations to charity in the saint's name, or pilgrimages to his shrine in Baghdad or his festivals in Morocco.

SEE ALSO Moses and Glossary: Djinn.

# 👡 Abihatsira, Rabbi Makhluf Ben Yosef

Also known as Abuhatzeira; Abihatzira; Abuchatzeira; Abu-Chatzeira; Abihsera.

**PRONOUNCED**: mahk-loof ben yo-sef ah-beh-ha-tsee-rah. (The "kh" sound in *Makhluf* is guttural, similar to the "ch" sound at the end of the German word *ach*. However, if you are unable to articulate that sound, then pronounce it as "k.")

CLASSIFICATION: Jewish saint, also venerated by Moroccan Muslims, who call him Bayo.

Call this miracle worker Baba Rabbi Makhluf ben Yosef Abihatsira, or just Baba Makhluf. *Baba* is a term of love and respect, meaning literally "Father" or "Daddy." Rabbi Makhluf ben Yosef is among the most beloved scions of the Abihatsira clan, a family renowned for producing saints. The progenitor of this dynasty of miracle workers, Rabbi Yaakov Abihatsira, was, according to legend, born in Israel but flew to Morocco on a mat, a humble equivalent of a magic

carpet. (*Hatsira* means "mat" in Moroccan Arabic.) The dates of Baba Makhluf's birth and death are unavailable.

In life, Rabbi Makhluf was a miracle worker of magical proportions. He demonstrated powers of prophesy and translocation—the ability to magically, inexplicably, instantly change locations. Rabbi Makhluf was able to do so through his knowledge of the Creator's ineffable name. With this knowledge, he was also able to cause or enable others to travel in this way as well. He could allegedly control weather, and could raise storms and winds at will.

While he was alive, Rabbi Makhluf protected his community, providing miracles of safety, healing, and fertility. After death, he continues to produce miracles. He is renowned for healing, but his specialty is fertility, especially for providing male children. He may be petitioned for fertility or specifically for a son. If he responds to you, he expects the baby to be named in his honor.

Rabbi Makhluf is an active saint and a particularly articulate communicator. He visits devotees in their dreams to dispense advice, respond to petitions, and request that they visit him at his shrines. Baba Makhluf expects promises to be kept and has acquired a reputation for appearing in dreams to order procrastinators to fulfill their vows.

SACRED SITES: Rabbi Makhluf has shrines in Tarkellil, Morocco, and in Kiryat Gat, Israel. Devotees from around the globe visit his shrines year-round, but the crowds come for the hillulah. Visit his shrine at Kiryat Gat on the eve of the new moon to receive his blessings.

FEAST (Hillulah): first day of the Hebrew lunar month Tebet.

SEE ALSO Baba Sali and Glossary: Feast.

#### ∾ Abu Ishaq Al-Kazaruni

**PRONOUNCED**: ah-boo ee-shahk ahl kah-zah-roo-nee.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Sufi saint.

The full name of this saint is Abu Ishaq Ibrahim bin Shahriyar al-Kazaruni; however, devotees usually address him as Abu Ishaq, which literally means "Father of Isaac." Abu Ishaq (963–1033) founded the Kazaruni order of Sufis, named for his hometown in Iran. The Kazaruni were the first Sufi brotherhood (*tariqa*) in Iran. Particularly zealous missionaries, the Kazaruni had brethren around the world, including in China, India, and Turkey, as well as in their native Iran. Abu Ishaq is traditionally invoked for safety at sea.

Sea passengers experiencing fear (of pirates, waves, weather, or other dangers) made financial promises to Abu Ishaq, requesting his blessings and assistance. As part of the petition process, they wrote out promissory notes explicitly stating how much money was owed the saint. Once the ship docked, members of the Kazaruni Brotherhood came aboard collecting on those notes. They then used the funds to clothe and feed the needy.

The Kazaruni Brotherhood no longer meets ships, but you can still write Abu Ishaq a note. Once safety is achieved, use the promised amount of money to provide directly for the poor, hungry, and needy. When your promise is fulfilled, place the note under a candle and burn it in honor of Abu Ishaq. Alternatively, present the note to him at his tomb.

SACRED SITE: Abu Ishaq's mausoleum is in Kazerun, near Shiraz, Iran.

#### no Acacius, Saint

Also known as Acacio; Agathius; Acat; Agario; Agazio; San Cuenca.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint; Eastern Orthodox saint.

According to legend, Saint Acacius (died c. 303) came from Cappadocia, which is now in modern Turkey. He was a Roman centurion who converted to Christianity and was martyred during Diocletian's persecution of Christians. Various legends of Saint Acacius and his martyrdom exist. According to the most famous, he deserted the Roman army together with 10,000 other soldiers who fled en masse to Mount Ararat in Armenia. Roman authorities pursued them and martyred them all. At their moment of death, God granted these 10,001 martyrs the power to bestow good health and worldly goods on anyone who invoked them.

Saint Acacius is widely venerated. Some of his relics were moved to Cuenca, Spain, and he is sometimes known as San Cuenca. Emperor Constantine built a church in his honor in Constantinople. He is one of the Fourteen Holy Helpers and is invoked to cure headaches, including chronic migraines. **FAVORED PEOPLE**: soldiers, including those away without leave, as well as anyone suffering from severe headaches; the terminally ill.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Acacius is generally portrayed in the garb of a Roman soldier or as a knight.

**ATTRIBUTES**: crown of thorns (one legend suggests he was impaled on a thorn tree); sword.

**BOTANICAL**: acacia. The saint may be named after the spiny plant with which he was whipped while being tortured.

FEASTS: 8 May; 16 January.

SEE ALSO Fourteen Holy Helpers and Glossary: Relics.

#### 👡 Acarie, Madame

Also known as Marie of the Incarnation; Marie Acarie; Barbara Aurillot; Barbara Avrillot.

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

Barbe Acarie, née Avrillot, was born in Paris on 1 February 1566, the daughter of a government official. Educated at her aunt's convent, she demonstrated spiritual inclinations from an early age. At age sixteen, she married Pierre Acarie, an aristocrat and treasury official. She bore six children. One son entered the priesthood; three daughters became Carmelite nuns.

Pierre Acarie, a devoted member of the Catholic League, actively opposed the ascension of the Huguenot prince Henry of Navarre to the French throne. When Henry did indeed become King Henry IV, he retaliated by confiscating the Acarie estates, impoverishing the family, and exiling Acarie from Paris. Barbe, who remained in Paris with their children, was left to deal with the creditors. She went to court to protest and was able to regain some of the family fortune, even eventually endearing herself to Henry IV.

Barbe devoted herself to charitable works until a fall from a horse left her an invalid. Although she retired from active life, Barbe developed a reputation as a holy woman possessing supernatural gifts. People began to flock to her,

including the future saint Francis de Sales, who became Madame Acarie's spiritual advisor.

Shortly after reading a biography of Teresa of Avila, Barbe witnessed an apparition of Teresa, who told her that God wanted her to bring Teresa's order, the Discalced Carmelites, to France. Teresa continued to appear to Madame Acarie, who established five convents between 1604 and 1609. When her husband died in 1613, she became a Carmelite lay sister, adopting the name Marie of the Incarnation. She died on 18 April 1618 of natural causes. Madame Acarie was beatified on 5 June 1791. Her canonization remains pending.

Madame Acarie is invoked against poverty and against the separation of parents and children, whether because of death or for any other reason.

FAVORED PEOPLE: widows; the impoverished.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Madame Acarie is typically portrayed in the garb of a Carmelite sister with her hands clasped in prayer.

FEAST: 18 April.

SEE ALSO Francis de Sales; Teresa of Ávila and Glossary: Apparition.

#### No. Adjutor, Saint

**EPITHET:** Skipper Supreme.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Saint Adjutor (c. 1070–30 April 1131), son of the Count of Vernon, set off in 1095 to fight in the Crusades. Trapped in an ambush, he prayed to Mary Magdalen, promising that if she saved him and if he managed to return to France, he'd donate his hunting lodge on the banks of the Seine to a local monastery and build her a chapel near his home. Immediately, a violent thunderstorm arose. In the confusion, Adjutor was able to launch and win a counterattack.

Seventeen years later, still a Crusader, Adjutor was captured in Jerusalem, bound with extraordinarily heavy chains (he irritated his captors, so they doubled his chains), and thrown into a tiny, dank prison cell. Again, he prayed fervently until one night he experienced a miracle. Mary Magdalen perhaps tired of waiting for her chapel, appeared to him, together with Saint Bernard of Tiron. They stood one on each side of him and, lifting him chains and all, they flew with him back home to Pressagny, near Vernon-sur-Seine, where his hunting lodge was located.

For the rest of his life, Saint Adjutor followed a spiritual path, fulfilling his promises to the Magdalen, living like a monk in the chapel he had built in her honor. He healed the sick, helped the poor, and performed miracles. During a siege of Vernon, the town was encircled by flames. Adjutor spoke to the flames, telling them to return where they came from and—*voilà!*—the flames surrounded the enemy instead.

When the Seine River suffered a terrible boat-swallowing whirlpool, Adjutor convinced the wary archbishop to get in a boat and venture out to the whirlpool. The archbishop threw in holy water; Adjutor deposited his chains from Jerusalem. The whirlpool immediately vanished and the Seine was once more safe for navigation, earning Adjutor the title of Skipper Supreme.

Buried beside his mother in Pressagny, he continues to perform miracles of healing and fertility. He is invoked to heal virtually any disease or physical condition but is especially petitioned against drowning.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: swimmers; lifeguards; those who own, operate, or work on barges, riverboats, and yachts. Those who have almost drowned may consider themselves his spiritual children.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Adjutor is envisioned as a crusader hermit.

**ATTRIBUTE:** chains.

**SACRED SITE:** He protected Vernon, France, in life and continues to do so from beyond.

FEAST: 30 April.

SEE ALSO Mary Magdalen and Glossary: Holy Water.

#### ∾ Adrian of Nicomedia

Also known as Hadrian; Adriano.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Saint Adrian (died on either 4 March or 8 September 306) was once one of Europe's most popular soldier saints, having served as a Herculean guard under Roman emperor Galerius Maximian, Diocletian's son-in-law. While presiding over the torture of Christians, Adrian was so impressed with their faith and comportment that he spontaneously and publicly confessed his own faith, although he had not been baptized. He was, of course, immediately imprisoned.

Adrian was tortured and killed—hacked to pieces on an anvil before being beheaded. (An alternative version suggests that his limbs were broken on the anvil with a hammer.) An attempt was made to burn his body along with those of other martyrs, but a thunderstorm suddenly arose. The rain extinguished the flames and lightning killed those who would have incinerated him. Christians were able to bury him, except for one hand that was kept as a relic by his wife, Saint Natalia, with whom he is often venerated.

Saint Adrian is invoked to protect against infectious disease, especially bubonic plague.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: butchers; arms dealers; military personnel; prison guards.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Saint Adrian is usually depicted as a soldier, armed and in armor. Adrian and Natalia appear together on Orthodox icons.

SPIRITUAL ALLY: Saint Natalia.

**ATTRIBUTES**: anvil; sword; helmet; palm branch symbolizing martyrdom.

FEASTS: 4 March, 26 August (Eastern Church); 8 September (Western Church).

SACRED SITE: the Basilica of Sant'Adriano al Foro in Rome.

SEE ALSO Natalia, Saint and Glossary: Icon; Relics.

#### ∾ Afra, Saint

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Afra's family, originally from Cyprus, settled in Augsburg, now part of modern

Germany but once the capital of the Roman province of Raetia. She was a devotee of Aphrodite and allegedly ran a bordello in the goddess' honor. Whether this was an ordinary house of prostitution or one dedicated to sacred, mystical rites is now unknown.

During Diocletian's persecution of Christians, a fleeing bishop hid in the bordello, allegedly unaware of the nature of the house. He converted Afra, her family, and the various employees. Eventually, authorities tracked the bishop down, but Afra refused to surrender him or her new faith, so she was tied to a tree and burned to death in 304. Her mother, Hilaria, erected a chapel by her tomb in Augsburg, for which action she, too, ran afoul of the law and was killed along with three employees. Or so goes the legend. No documentation regarding Afra exists prior to the fifth century. Pilgrimages to Afra's shrine are documented from the sixth century.

Another more subversive version of Afra's story suggests that she was a temple courtesan, a priestess of Aphrodite who may have been killed by Christians. After death, she began producing miracles and achieved great local popularity. Her myth was eventually revised to make her a Christian martyr, so that invoking her remained permissible to Christians.

Saint Afra is the matron of all medicinal herbs, including those that have historically been used as approdisiacs and to prevent conception. She is invoked by prostitutes and sex workers seeking a different life.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Saint Afra is depicted in the process of being burned at the stake.

FEAST: 5 August.

SACRED SITE: Saint Ulrich's and Saint Afra's Abbey in Augsburg.

#### ∼ Agabus the Prophet

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Agabus, a soothsayer or prophet from Jerusalem, is mentioned in the Book of Acts (11:28 and 21:10). He accurately predicted the famine of 45 ce. In 58 ce, he warned Paul that he would be captured, although Paul did not take his advice. Agabus also accurately prophesied his own death. He is believed to be among the Seventy-two Disciples mentioned in the Gospel of Luke and to have been

martyred in Antioch. Agabus may be the narrator of Robert Graves' controversial 1946 novel, *King Jesus*.

#### Fortuneteller's Better Business Spell

This spell is best cast on one of Agabus' feast days; however, it can be performed at any time and whenever needed.

- 1. Dedicate a candle to Saint Agabus.
- 2. Hold the candle in both hands, focus on your needs and desires, and make your plea to the saint.
- 3. Light the candle.
- 4. Place something representing your trade next to or before the candle: cards, runes, or astrological charts, for instance.

**FAVORED PEOPLE:** fortunetellers; seers; prophets.

FEASTS: Roman Catholics celebrate Agabus on 13 February; different branches of the Orthodox Church hold his feast on either 8 March or 8 April.

COLORS: purple; white.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; offerings on behalf of the poor or needy; readings to a needy person in his honor.

SEE ALSO Paul, Saint.

#### 👡 Agatha, Saint

Also known as Agata; Agate; Agueda.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated by most branches of Christianity.

Saint Agatha, a Sicilian martyr, died in approximately 250 ce. Even by the standards of martyrdom, her death was particularly horrific and prolonged. Agatha, a beautiful, wealthy, young woman secretly converted to Christianity and committed her virginity to Christ. Depending on the version of her story,

either she refused to marry an important Pagan official or he attempted to blackmail her, demanding sex in exchange for keeping her Christian identity secret.

In either event, Agatha was steadfast, refusing all sexual advances or offers of marriage. She was sent to a brothel and repeatedly raped. Deprived of food and water, she was racked and beaten and ripped by iron hooks. Her breasts were first crushed, then severed, and she was burned with torches. Agatha was locked up in a dungeon, bleeding, mutilated, and suffering, when Saint Peter, accompanied by a youth carrying a torch, appeared in a vision of light and healed her. (In some versions of her legend, he reattaches her breasts.)

Rather than being awed by this miracle, her captors determined that they hadn't tortured Agatha enough and proceeded to roll her naked over live coals mixed with burning embers and sharp, broken potsherds. Agatha, tortured beyond endurance, prayed for release. The area immediately suffered a massive earthquake and Agatha died.

An alternative version describes how Agatha, in the throes of pain, commanded the volcano Mount Etna to erupt, which it immediately did. The crowds panicked and begged authorities to stop torturing Agatha. She was returned to jail, where she died. She is believed to have been approximately twenty years old.

Early Christian icons depicted Agatha carrying her severed breasts on an offering plate. They were eventually confused for bells, so Agatha today is the matron saint of bell makers. She protects against snakes, fire, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and natural disasters in general.

Saint Agatha's veil was taken from her tomb and preserved. It allegedly keeps Mount Etna, Europe's largest active volcano, magically under control. The annual display of her veil during her festival in Catania, Sicily, is accompanied by tambourine performances reminiscent of those once offered to goddesses like Isis or Kybele.

References to Pagan goddesses may not be coincidental. Agatha's iconography and attributes (snakes, metal implements, bells, even breasts) bear a powerful resemblance to that of the goddesses once venerated in Sicily prior to the advent of Christianity, in particular Isis, Demeter, or Aetna, the goddess of the volcano with which Agatha is so closely associated. Many of Agatha's functions overlap with those performed by these goddesses. Agatha's name, which means "good," echoes that of Agathadaemon, the good snake spirit once worshipped in Sicily. Some devotees and scholars suggest that secret veneration of one or more of these deities may hide beneath the saint's veil.

The term Bona Dea, literally "the good goddess," refers to a class of goddesses worshipped exclusively by women. The most famous are the goddesses Fauna and Maia. Because all surviving written documentation of the pre-Christian era comes from male writers who, by law, lacked access to these cults, virtually no information regarding these goddesses currently exists. A Bona Dea named Agatha whose specialty was healing infertility was worshipped at Mount Etna. She may have traveled in the retinue of the healing deity Asclepius, along with the goddesses Hygeia and Panacea.

Saint Agatha heals those who suffer from afflictions of the breast, including breast cancer, but also mastitis, cysts, or any condition that interferes with breast-feeding. She may also be petitioned for assistance with infertility.

French tradition suggests that women should refrain from working on the day of Saint Agatha's feast, and should especially refrain from doing the sort of chores once classified as "women's work." Those who don't comply risk being confronted by an aggressive, angry cat—really Saint Agatha in disguise!

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: metal smiths; nursing mothers; wet nurses; victims of rape and torture; those who pursue justice for rape and torture victims; jewelers; weavers; nurses; firefighters and those involved with fire prevention; bell makers, ringers, and collectors.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Agatha carries her breasts on a plate or holds the palm of martyrdom. She may be wearing her veil. Sacred images of Agatha typically depict Mount Etna, frequently drawn to resemble a huge breast, threatening to overflow with milk rather than lava. Agatha was also a favored subject of medieval and Renaissance painters, who depicted her being tortured, usually in various states of undress.

**ATTRIBUTES:** bell; brazier filled with smoking coals; iron tongs, pincers, and other smith's tools; a pair of severed breasts; long red veil; sword.

FEAST: 5 February.

**FESTIVALS**: The largest annual festival in Catania, Sicily, honors Agatha. Although the festival technically runs between 3 and 5 February, celebratory

preparations begin on 1 February. The festival features candlelit processions, fireworks, and poetry and music competitions. Catania holds a second festival honoring Agatha on 17 August commemorating the date her body was returned from Constantinople, where it had resided for eighty-six years.

Drink Holy Water on Agatha's feast day and allegedly snakes won't harm you all year.

**RITUAL FOOD**: Special breast-shaped pastries called Saint Agatha's Breasts are eaten on her feast day.

SACRED ANIMAL: snake.

TREE: olive.

**BOTANICAL**: primrose.

SACRED SITES:

- the Cathedral in Catania, Sicily, where Agatha's relics and veil are housed
- Palermo's Church of Sant'Agata La Guilla, which houses her braided hair
- the Church of Sant'Agata La Pedata in Palermo, which claims to have her footprint left in a limestone block
- Rome's Church of Saint Agatha of the Goths, originally built circa 460
- Saint Agatha's Crypt in Rabat, Malta, where Agatha reputedly prayed
- the Church of Saint Gadea in Burgos, Spain
- the Church of Saint Agatha in Cremona, Italy
- Mount Etna
- Bell foundries

**OFFERINGS**: candles; bells; images of snakes; red and white carnations.

According to legend, Agatha attempted to flee persecution in Sicily by escaping to nearby Malta. Her stay there was brief. She spent most of her time in prayer in the crypt at Saint Paul's Church in the city of Rabat. She eventually decided to return to Sicily and the martyrdom that awaited her. After her death, Malta's Christian community named the crypt in which she prayed in her honor. Saint Agatha's Historical Complex now incorporates this crypt, catacombs, and a historical museum.

SEE ALSO Agueda, Saint; Lucy, Saint; Mary; Paraskeva, Saint; Peter, Saint and Glossary: Attribute; Holy Water; Iconography; Milagro.

# ∼ Agnes of Rome

Also known as Ines, Inez, or Ynez.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated by most branches of Christianity.

Very little is actually known about Saint Agnes. Although she allegedly died in approximately 304, her legend was not written down until over a century later. Various versions of her martyrdom exist. This one is fairly standard:

Agnes was a very young (twelve or thirteen years old) Roman girl from a patrician, but secretly Christian, family during Diocletian's reign (284–305). She was beautiful, noble, and wealthy: a fine marital prospect.

A prominent Pagan suitor proposed and was rejected, presumably by Agnes' father, the paterfamilias, whose decision as to his daughter's fate was law. Agnes may have consecrated her virginity to Christ or the suitor may simply have been unsuitable to her family, or both. The suitor, who was aware that the family was Christian, betrayed Agnes to authorities, who punished her by sending her to labor in a brothel. Miracles began to proliferate:

- As Agnes was dragged naked through the streets, her hair miraculously grew long enough to cover her modestly.
- Those in the brothel who approached her sexually were instantly struck blind and knocked down by an angel who remained invisible to all but Agnes.
- One of the blinded men begged Agnes for mercy and she prayed for him: his sight was instantly restored. Roman authorities most likely did not perceive these as religious miracles but as evidence of illicit magic. Agnes was condemned to death, possibly on charges of witchcraft.
- She was thrown into a fire but remained unharmed.
- She was then thrown to lions, who didn't harm her.
- A man (possibly the rejected fiancé) attempted to goad the lions into attacking Agnes; instead they killed *him*.

Agnes was beheaded by a sword on 21 January, singing hymns while an executioner hacked at her neck. Miracles were attributed to her almost immediately. She was buried in catacombs beyond the city walls. On her birthday, 28 January, an apparition of Agnes appeared to her parents who were mourning at her grave, advising them that she was fine.

Agnes is traditionally invoked to protect against infidelity and disloyalty.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: young women; rape victims; those who have taken vows of chastity; engaged couples.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: a young girl holding a lamb; a young girl with a sword pointed at her throat; a young naked girl covered by her long hair; a young girl naked beneath a long white cloth held over her by an angel.

ATTRIBUTES: lamb; palm branch symbolizing martyrdom; crown of thorns.

#### SACRED SITES:

- Sant'Agnese in Agone (Saint Agnes in Agony), a basilica built on the site, once Diocletian's Circus, where Agnes was killed
- Saint Agnes Outside the Walls, the Roman basilica where her bones reputedly rest

**SACRED ANIMAL**: Agnes (meaning "chaste") is very similar to agnus (meaning "lamb"), now her most popular attribute.

SACRED DAY: Friday.

COLORS: white; light blue; red and white.

**SACRED PLANT**: Christmas rose, also known as black hellebore (*Helleborus niger*).

**FEAST:** 21 January. Saint Agnes' Eve, the night preceding her feast day, is traditionally dedicated to divination and magic rituals, usually intended to predict a young girl's future marital prospects. This tradition is commemorated in poems by John Keats ("The Eve of Saint Agnes") and Alfred Lord Tennyson ("Saint Agnes' Eve"). Various rituals are associated with Saint Agnes' Eve and can only be performed on that night. Here are some examples:

- 1. Sprinkle a bit of your own urine three times over a sprig of rosemary and a sprig of thyme.
- 2. Place one sprig in each of your shoes.
- 3. Place each shoe on either side of your bed, near the head.
- 4. Get into bed and chant: "Sweet Saint Agnes, to lovers so kind, come and ease my troubled mind."
- 5. Go to sleep. Allegedly, you will now dream of your true love or hear him or her whispering in your ear.
- 6. Be utterly silent from the time you utter the rhyme until you wake up and record your dream.

#### Saint Agnes Dream Divination #2

- 1. Walk to your bed without looking behind you, even once.
- 2. Get into bed; lie on your back with your hands behind your head.
- 3. If you can retain this pose while sleeping and if you can remain silent until dawn, your true love should appear in your dreams, kiss you, and feast with you.

#### The Fast of Saint Agnes

- 1. Fast all day on 20 January, concentrating on your desires.
- 2. At night, before proceeding to the next part of the ritual, get ready for bed. Bathe; put on night clothes; fix your bed.
- 3. The following part of the spell demands *complete* silence. Do not utter a sound until it's time to chant the incantation.
- 4. Hard-boil an egg. When it's ready, cut it in half and remove the yolk.
- 5. Fill the egg's cavity with salt.
- 6. Put the two halves back together and eat the egg and salt. (Traditionally, the shell is left on the egg and also consumed, but this is up to you.)
- 7. Walk backward to bed chanting:

Sweet Saint Agnes, work your fast In my dreams, let this spell be cast. If ever I should marry a man or a man marry me I hope this night his face to see!

8. Resume silence until morning; the oracle should appear in your dreams.

Although 21 January is Saint Agnes' primary and official feast and the one associated with her magical eve, some devotees of Saint Agnes also celebrate her birthday, 28 January, as a second feast.

SEE ALSO Emerentiana, Saint and Glossary: Apparition.

#### 👡 Agrippina, Saint

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic and Orthodox saint.

Agrippina, a patrician Roman woman who betrothed herself to Christ, was allegedly martyred in approximately 256 ce. She was flogged with rods until her bones were crushed. An angel appeared to comfort her. Death was caused by either beheading or scourging.

Three young holy women removed Agrippina's corpse from Rome, carrying it until they arrived in Mineo, Sicily, on 17 May 261, where Agrippina was laid to rest. Her remains exuded a sweet odor of sanctity for the duration of the trip. Angels accompanied the little entourage. Agrippina began demonstrating her power over malevolent spirits during this journey. Her very presence swept demons out of their path, while the sight of her reliquary alone was allegedly sufficient to perform exorcisms.

A shrine was built for her and Agrippina commenced producing miracles. Although Saint Agrippina was removed from the official Roman Catholic roster of saints (for lack of historical documentation), she retains her fame as a miracleworking exorcist. The Orthodox Church still considers her an official saint.

Agrippina banishes ghosts and demons. She can terminate cases of involuntary spirit-possession and possesses the power to command and control malicious spirits. Agrippina also has dominion over thunderstorms, leprosy, and bacterial infections.

FAVORED PEOPLE: exorcists; spiritual counselors.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Agrippina is portrayed as a beautiful, crowned, blonde woman.

**ATTRIBUTES:** cross; palm frond symbolizing martyrdom.

COLORS: blue; red.

**SPIRITUAL ALLY:** Michael Archangel.

FEAST: 23 June.

**FESTIVAL:** Since 1914, during the first weekend in August, an annual feast is held in Agrippina's honor in Boston's North End. For more information, go to *http://www.saintagrippinaboston.com/*.

#### SACRED SITES:

- Church of Saint Agrippina in Mineo, Sicily
- Chapel of Saint Agrippina di Mineo in Boston

**OFFERINGS**: candles; pilgrimage to her Sicilian sanctuary or her Boston festival.

SEE ALSO Michael Archangel, Saint and Glossary: Incorrupt; Relics.

## 👡 Agueda, Saint

The name *Agueda* is the Spanish variant of Agatha. Saint Agueda *is* Saint Agatha; however, her veneration in Spain is unique. Although Agueda shares Agatha's feast day and mythos, Agatha does not necessarily share Agueda's attributes and rituals. Like Saint Agatha, Agueda's assistance is invoked for breast-feeding, but she is also invoked against headache and chest pain.

FAVORED PEOPLE: married women; lactating women.

**ATTRIBUTE:** a silver lamp with which she lights the way for mariners and others who ply or travel the sea

SPIRITUAL ALLY: Saint Agueda may be venerated with Saint Blaise.

SACRED SITE: Santa Agueda, also known as Half-Moon Mountain, in Menorca,

Spain, is a 254-meter-high mountain once used for military surveillance by the Romans. It was also the last point of resistance for the Moors of Menorca. Women traditionally climb the mountain to offer prayers and petitions to Saint Agueda.

**FESTIVALS**: An annual festival honoring her is held in Segovia, Spain, in February. Agueda is celebrated with circle dances. Women play primary ritual roles during her festival, which is unusual for a Roman Catholic festival. There is also an annual festival held for her in Guam.

FEAST: 5 February.

SEE ALSO Agatha, Saint; Blaise, Saint and Glossary: Attribute.

### ∾ Aharon Ha-Cohen, Rabbi

Also known as Sayid Aharon; Sidi Harun; Sidi Mul L'Brakhat (My Lord, Master of Blessings).

**PRONOUNCED**: ah-ha-rone ha-ko-hayn.

CLASSIFICATION: Jewish saint.

Rabbi Aharon ha-Cohen (literally, Rabbi Aaron the Cohen or Rabbi Aaron the Priest), a renowned miracle-working rabbi, is buried in Demnate, Morocco, where he is venerated by both Jews and Muslims. His grave is traditionally visited on Fridays. (Rabbi Aharon's birth and death dates are unavailable.)

Rabbi Aharon performs miraculous cures from beyond the grave. His specialties include healing snake bite, blindness, and other visual disorders. He is also renowned for helping women find husbands. Jewish and Muslim women wishing to marry spend overnight vigils at his grave. Should he ever be displeased with someone, Rabbi Aharon's traditional mode of punishment is to strike him or her insane.

A group of saintly yeshiva students, known as the Mwalin El-Gomra (literally, Masters of the Gemara, which are Torah commentaries), are buried near Rabbi Aharon. They were his students in life and they continue to study together. They may be petitioned in conjunction with Rabbi Aharon.

SEE ALSO Sidi.

#### 👡 Ailbe, Saint

Also known as Ailbhe; Albeus; Elvis.

**EPITHET:** The Wolf Saint.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

When Ailbe was a baby in fifth-century Ireland, his father abandoned him in the forest. A mother wolf found him, nursed him, and raised him with her pups. Literally raised by wolves, Ailbe grew up living and communicating like a wolf.

One day, a prince hunting in the woods discovered the naked little boy running on all fours. The prince picked him up and carried him home, kicking and screaming the whole way. Ailbe longed to remain with the wolf pack. The wolf mother heard his cries and came to his rescue, but she was unable to outrun the prince's horse.

Ailbe went from living in the woods to living in the palace; he learned to walk upright and speak like a person, and he received an education. He became a disciple of Saint Patrick and eventually the first bishop of Emly, Ireland. Saint Ailbe was famed for his charitable nature and his talents as a preacher.

Ailbe himself never engaged in hunting, but others did. One day, a ragged old she-wolf chased by a pack of hunting hounds ran right up to Bishop Ailbe. He immediately recognized her as his mother and drew his bishop's robe over her, granting her sanctuary from the hunters. He then spoke to the wolf (in the wolf tongue), inviting her to dine with him. Every day after that, the mother wolf and some of her wolf children visited with Ailbe and shared a meal with him. Near the end of his life, Ailbe boarded a mysterious ghost ship and set sail to discover the secrets of death, eventually returning to Emly, where, in 528, he died and was buried.

Request Ailbe's help if you are lost in the woods—literally or metaphorically. He is invoked to protect abandoned children. He may also be petitioned on behalf of wolves and by those who oppose hunting. FEAST: 12 September.

SACRED SITE: Saint Ailbe's Church in Emly, South Tipperary, Ireland.

**OFFERING:** charitable works and good deeds on behalf of wolves.

SEE ALSO Patrick, Saint.

### 👡 Albertus Magnus

Also known as Albertus of Cologne; Albert the Great.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Albertus Magnus, Count of Bollstadt, Dominican bishop, alchemist, astrologer, philosopher, scholar, saint, and alleged master magus, was born to a wealthy, noble family in Lauingen, Swabia, now part of modern Germany. His date of birth is unknown. Various birth years have been suggested, from as early as 1193 to as late as 1206.

Albertus was educated mainly in Padua. In approximately 1221, he joined the Dominicans, against the wishes of his family. He taught at various German universities and went to Paris in 1245, where he earned a doctorate and a reputation as an exceptional scholar. He became known as Albertus Magnus during his own lifetime, an acknowledgment by his peers of his brilliance. (*Albertus Magnus* literally means "Albert the Great.")

In his Divine Comedy, Dante placed Albertus Magnus among the lovers of wisdom in the Heaven of the Sun. According to author Mary Shelley, the writings of Albertus Magnus were among those that inspired the young Victor Frankenstein.

Albertus studied theology, metaphysics, botany, medicine, and zoology, utilizing Arabic, Aristotelian, Jewish, and Neoplatonic sources. He was appointed bishop of Ratisbon (Regensburg) in 1260. In 1262, he taught at the University of Cologne, lecturing on the Pagan philosophers Aristotle and Plato, a somewhat racy topic at that time. Thomas Aquinas was among his students at Cologne. Albertus is credited with being the first to apply Aristotelian philosophy to Christian thought րппозорну го Спизиан шоидиг.

Albertus Magnus died in Cologne of natural causes on 15 November 1280. From the time of his death until his canonization in 1932, he was widely venerated as an unofficial saint.

Rumors of his magical activities may be why it took so long for Albertus to be canonized. Even though he was a bishop who publicly proclaimed that his inspiration derived from the Virgin Mary, during his lifetime many suspected him of consorting with Satan. They believed his true allegiance was to diabolical witchcraft. Although never charged with witchcraft, Albertus Magnus was widely believed to be a sorcerer, alchemist, and necromancer.

The typeface Albertus is named in honor of Albertus Magnus.

Albertus Magnus publicly asserted that he did not believe that knowledge of magic was harmful. He wrote that astrologers do not acknowledge "fatal necessity" and thus astrology and Christianity are not irreconcilable. Albertus considered astrology to be the basis for all divination and was a firm believer in the power of engraved gems, crafted to astrological specifications. He is considered the founder of what is now called "planetary magic."

During his lifetime, many believed that Albertus had managed to produce the legendary Philosopher's Stone, the alchemical elixir of immortality. He also reputedly created and used an oracular brazen head—a talking, sentient brass head. It was widely rumored that he had succeeded in attempts to transform base metal into gold (although he kept his success secret). Albertus definitely did discover how to prepare caustic potash, used in the manufacturing of modern soap.

The published writings of Albertus Magnus consist of at least thirty-eight volumes devoted to theology, chemistry, zoology, phrenology, physiology, botany, geography, and logic, as well as astrology and astronomy, considered one unified subject at that time. Five alchemical treatises and two grimoires (*Le Grand Albert* and *Le Petit Albert*) are also attributed to him. The book *De Alchimia* (Alchemy) is believed to have been written either by him or produced under his direction. Apparently, at least parts of the grimoire *The Secrets of Albertus Magnus* may genuinely have been written by him as well.

The Vatican initially denied that Albertus possessed any interest in alchemy, suggesting that alchemical treatises attributed to him were forgeries. However, based on analysis of various manuscripts written in what is conclusively his hand, it is now generally acknowledged that Albertus Magnus was an alchemist, if not also a master magician.

Words of wisdom from Albertus Magnus: "The alchemist must be silent and discreet. To no one should he reveal the results of his operations." And: "Avoid all contact with princes and rulers."

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: alchemists; metaphysicians; occultists; scientists; philosophers; students; medical technicians.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Albertus Magnus is usually portrayed as a bishop or as a Dominican friar wearing a hat that, in Christian iconography, indicates that he is a doctor.

ATTRIBUTES: book; pen.

FEAST: 15 November.

SACRED SITES:

- Church of Saint Andreas in Cologne—his tomb is in the crypt
- Cologne Cathedral, which contains his relics

SEE ALSO Mary and Glossary: Saint, Unofficial.

# ∾ Aldegund, Saint

Also known as Aldegonde; Aldegundis; Orgonne; Adelgund; Aldegonda; Aldego.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Saint Aldegund of Maubeuge (c. 630–30 January 684), born in what is now northern France, was a Frankish nun who recorded her visionary experiences and her transcendent love for Christ, her celestial husband. Sometimes described as the most important female Christian visionary of the Merovingian Age, Aldegund came from a wealthy, socially prominent, devout family related to the Merovingian royal line: her mother, father, sister, and niece were all eventually considered saints.

Aldegund's visions, which began in childhood, encouraged her not to get

married, but instead to consecrate her life to Christ and heavenly, rather than temporal, rewards. An angelic voice advised her: "You will have no husband other than the Lord Christ." Aldegund had a vision of Christ in the form of a beautiful boy offering her a precious robe. He held a palm branch in one hand and, in the other, a crown of woven gold and jewels that she was made to understand was not crafted by human hands. (An angel periodically appeared in her visions to make sure that she understood what she saw and experienced.)

Aldegund left home by walking across the Sambre River, near what is now the Belgian-French border. She was instrumental in founding a convent, now known as Maubeuge. In addition to visitations from Christ and the angel, she had visionary encounters with the Holy Ghost, Saint Peter, a young girl sent by the Virgin Mary, and the devil, who came to taunt, tempt, bully, and persecute her, but also to engage her in theological arguments.

Aldegund became the first abbess of Maubeuge, where her relics were translated in the ninth century. She died of breast cancer. She is invoked against demonic possession, sudden death, cancer, childhood illnesses, and eye disorders. She is petitioned to heal wounds, especially those that resist healing.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Aldegund appears as a crowned Benedictine abbess. A dove holding a veil usually hovers near. Alternatively, she is depicted walking on water or walking with an angel.

FEAST: 30 January.

SEE ALSO Mary; Peter, Saint and Glossary: Relics.

### ∾ Aldric, Saint

Also known as Saint Elric.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Aldric (c. 800–c. 856) spent his early life at the court of King Charlemagne, entering the priesthood at age twenty-one. Following his ordination, he served as chaplain at the court of Charlemagne's son, Louis the Pious, before becoming bishop of Le Mans. Aldric was implicated in the Forged Bull of Gregory IV, also known as the Le Mans Forgeries, which were drawn up at Le Mans around 850 and so traditionally, if unofficially. Spint Aldric is the patron of counterfaiters and so traditionally, it unornerally, same Alurie is the pation of counterreners and forgers.

FEAST: 7 January.

**OFFERINGS**: Light a green or gold candle for him. Offer him some currency, true or false.

👡 Alejo, San

**PRONOUNCED**: Ah-lay-ho.

**EPITHET:** Saint Away.

For details of the life and death of San Alejo, please see Alexius, Saint.

Alejo is the Spanish variant of Alexius (Alexander). In Spanish, the name resembles the verb *alejar*, whose meanings include "to estrange," "to remove," "to withdraw," or "to move farther away," i.e., "to banish!" In Spanish folk religion, San Alejo fulfills more than just Saint Alexius' traditional role of warding off enemies; he is the saint of removals, petitioned to remove enemies, but also troublesome people, troublesome situations, and general negativity. If someone or something needs to go, San Alejo is the saint who can help.

San Alejo Banishing Spell #1

This spell is ideal for relatives or houseguests who have overstayed their welcome. They're not enemies; it's just time for them to leave. This spell removes them, sending them to a happier, more suitable place for them without causing harm:

1. Hold a silver candle in your hand and make a vow to San Alejo. (A silver candle is best, but if you are unable to obtain one, substitute pink or white.) Appropriate vows include alms to beggars, gestures on behalf of the homeless, even a bigger candle. Mass-produced seven-day San Alejo candles are readily available online or from spiritual supply stores.

- 2. Light the candle, chanting "San Alejo, Alejelo" ("Saint Away, away with it!") seventeen times while visualizing the accomplishment of your desired goal. (Pronounced: san ah-lay-ho ah-lay-hay-lo.)
- 3. Remember to fulfill your vow if the saint comes through for you.

A more elaborate version of this spell utilizes a gray candle. No promises are made as to what will befall the banished party. This spell is recommended for truly troublesome or dangerous people, as well as for situations and problems that will not otherwise dissipate or leave.

### San Alejo Banishing Spell #2

Steps 1 to 3 of this spell—creation of a magical powder—must be done outside your home or office. The container holding the powder cannot be opened within your own home or residence, as it is believed that San Alejo may then come and remove all your belongings, taking what you wish to keep, as well as what you seek to lose.

- 1. Write the name of whoever or whatever needs to be banished on a small piece of paper seventeen times.
- 2. Burn the paper.
- 3. Blend the ashes from the paper with corn starch, arrowroot powder, talcum powder, or powdered chalk to form a gray powder. Place the powder in a closed container. If using an envelope, seal it.
- 4. Inscribe the name of whoever or whatever is to be banished on the candle vertically, beginning at the bottom. In other words, the last letter will be near the top. (Write the letters right-side up.)
- 5. To light the candle, strike a match and, with the lit match in your hand, very quickly make the sign of the cross over the candle seventeen times, each time announcing "San Alejo, Alejelo!" (Make the sign of the cross horizontally over the candle, parallel to the floor, not vertically as is usual.)
- 6. After the last cross has been described in the air, light the candle.
- 7. While the candle burns, leave your home, taking the powder with you. Once outside, you can safely open the container. Sprinkle the powder somewhere where the target will touch it or step over it. If you are attempting to eliminate a situation or problem, consider a symbolic place to sprinkle the powder.
- 8. Return home and let the candle burn out.

San Alejo serves in the Celestial Court of María Lionza.

SEE ALSO Alexius, Saint; María Lionza.

### 👡 Alena, Saint

Also known as Saint Alène.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox saint.

Alena (died c. 640), the young daughter of prominent Pagans living near Brussels, was baptized secretly. She slipped out at night, also secretly, to attend Mass at a chapel in Vorst (also known as Forest, now part of the modern city of Brussels).

Her father realized something was going on and ordered guards to follow her discreetly. They watched Alena walk across the River Senne to reach the chapel and reported back to her father, who became convinced that Christians had bewitched her. He ordered the guards to go bring his daughter back, but their attempted rescue mission was botched. Alena resisted and, in the struggle, her arm was severed, causing her death.

An angel picked up the severed arm, carried it to the chapel, and placed it before the altar. Alena's parents were immediately converted to Christianity. Saint Alena began producing healing miracles and the chapel with her relics became a pilgrimage destination. She is the matron of Vorst, Belgium, and is petitioned to heal toothache and dental and eye disorders.

**MANIFESTATION**: She is often described as a princess. Her father may have been a local chieftain. Alena appears as a young woman wearing a crown. She may have one or two arms.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Alena is depicted as a beautiful young crowned woman missing an arm or with her severed arm. She may be accompanied by an angel.

ATTRIBUTE: her severed arm.

FEAST: 24 June.

# No Alexander the Charcoal Burner, Saint

Also known as Alexander of Comana.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Gregory the Wonder Worker headed a council charged with appointing a bishop for the city of Comana in Pontus (now in modern Turkey). Frustrated by the caliber of the candidates, Gregory advised the council members to ignore *everything* but a man's spiritual nature. Probably as a joke, someone suggested Alexander, the local charcoal burner. Gregory, a man renowned for his miraculous feats and psychic vision, responded by saying he'd like to interview this charcoal burner. Alexander was promptly dragged before the council.

Crafting charcoal is a filthy job. Alexander arrived completely covered (saturated!) with charcoal dust. However, after some hesitation, he answered Gregory's complex religious questions with erudition and revealed that he was a charcoal burner by choice. He had run away from his family to live as a holy fool, becoming a charcoal burner because it was the humblest profession he could find. He had lived a devout, celibate life, supporting himself, but dedicated to God.

Gregory ordered Alexander cleaned up and dressed in clerical robes. Beneath the dirt, he was apparently a very handsome, charismatic man and the council appointed him bishop of Comana. He was martyred, burned alive, at Comana c. 275.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: charcoal burners; also those who labor incognito in positions theoretically beneath them, whether for spiritual, economic, political, safety, or other reasons.

FEAST: 11 August.

**OFFERINGS**: light candles; provide for the poor and needy in his honor.

SEE ALSO Gregory the Wonder Worker, and Glossary: Holy Fool.

### 👡 Alexius, Saint

Also known as Alexis: Aleio: Alexei: Alex: Alexios.

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EPITHET: The Man of God.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint in most branches of Christianity.

The legend of Saint Alexius is unusual because tales of saints fleeing from parentally arranged marriages tend to be told about young women. Like many of those female saints, young Alexius had secretly dedicated himself to God.

Alexius was a Roman senator's only son whose parents had arranged his marriage. Unlike the fathers of Saints Barbara and Dymphna, Alexius' parents are described as exceptionally kind, charitable people. Whether he argued with them or protested is unknown, but, on his wedding night, rather than consummate the marriage, Alexius had a long talk with his bride, who released him from his wedding vows.

Alexius fled to Edessa, now Urfa in modern Turkey, among the first places where Christians worshipped openly. He lived there next to a church as a mendicant beggar—a holy fool—for seventeen years. One day, an apparition of the Holy Mother appeared, pointing him out to a crowd and calling him a "Man of God." This caused a fuss and drew a lot of attention toward Alexius, who just wanted to live an anonymous, spiritual life. He fled back to Rome, continuing to survive by begging.

One day, he knocked on his parents' door. No one recognized him and he did not identify himself but, being kind people, his parents offered him food and hospitality. (His wife was still living in his parents' house awaiting his return.) Alexius lived in a corner beneath their stairs for seventeen years, sleeping on a mat, praying, and giving religious instruction to small children. No one ever recognized him, but when he died, a note found on his body revealed his true identity and how, since his wedding, he had lived each day dedicated to God.

*Saint Alexius inspired painter George de la Tour's masterpiece* The Discovery of the Body of Saint Alexis (*c*. 1640*s*).

Petition Saint Alexius to keep enemies far away. He is invoked to protect against any harm plotted or even merely desired against you.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: beggars; pilgrims; wanderers; travelers; gatekeepers; doormen; nurses; belt-makers.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Saint Alexius is depicted as:

- A man holding a letter
- A dying man holding a letter
- A man, possibly dying, lying beneath a staircase
- A pilgrim with a staff

COLORS: pink; silver; gray.

NUMBER: 17.

FEASTS: 17 July (Roman Catholic); 17 March (Eastern churches).

SACRED SITE: The Agia Lavra Monastery near Kalavryta, Greece, houses the skull of Saint Alexius and is open to visitors. Each year, on the morning of 17 March, the skull is carried in a sacred procession to the Metropolitan Cathedral of Kalavryta and returned to Agia Lavra.

**OFFERINGS:** Saint Alexius wants nothing beyond your righteous, good behavior. Light candles in his honor; give generously to beggars; feed, clothe, and care for the homeless.

**SEE THE ENTRY FOR** *Alejo, San* for banishing spells associated with Saint Alexius. **SEE ALSO** *Adjutor, Saint; Barbara, Saint; Dymphna, Saint* and Glossary: *Apparition; Holy Fool.* 

# ∾ Alkelda, Saint

Saint Alkelda (died c. 800) is associated with a holy well in Yorkshire. She may have been a Saxon woman in Middleham in the Yorkshire Dales. She may have been a princess. She may have been a nun. She may have been all or some of the above or she may never have existed.

Earliest surviving documentation of her dates from the late 13th century. According to legend, Alkelda was strangled by two Danish women, possibly during a Viking raid. Two churches are dedicated to her, as is Alkelda's Well, once a pilgrimage destination. (The well no longer exists.) The Saxon word *haeligkeld*, etymologically identical to Alkelda, literally means "holy well," and it is theorized that Alkelda *is* the holy well itself, or possibly a pre-Christian spirit attached to it whose true name is now unknown. Christian legend may have evolved so that visiting the well would not be condemned. Saint Alkelda's Well was located just west of a church in Middleham, North Yorkshire. Its therapeutic waters were reputedly beneficial for those suffering visual ailments.

### SACRED SITES:

- the Church of Saint Alkelda in Gigglesworth, North Yorkshire
- Church of Saints Mary and Alkelda in Middleham, North Yorkshire is reputedly the site of her grave.

FEASTS: 28 March; 5 November.

**SEE ALSO** Well Saints.

# 👡 Alma Bendita

NAMES: Also known as Anima Bendita.

For every Alma Bendita who is famous, there are hundreds more who are anonymous, known only to those on whose behalf they labor. You may know an Alma Bendita—someone who faced a lifetime of hardship and suffering with serenity and resignation and who died completely and totally lacking bitterness and resentment. *Alma Bendita* literally means "blessed soul" in both Spanish and Portuguese; the concept of the Alma Bendita as a spiritual intercessor is widespread throughout Latin America. These blessed souls may never be canonized. In fact, they may not even be Catholic. But because the Alma Bendita demonstrated ideal saintly behavior, God allows them to intercede on behalf of the living. Blessed Anastacia is an example of someone widely considered to be an Alma Bendita.

- It is traditional to light white candles in their honor.
- Treat them as you would any revered saint.
- Some Almas Benditas are pleased by charitable donations made in their honor; others, eager to work, expect you to testify to their miracle-working prowess in order to attract new petitioners.

SEE ALSO Almita; Anastacia.

### 👡 Almita

The Spanish word *almita* literally means "little soul" or "little spirit." In Argentina, Almita is a reverential term indicating a spiritual intercessor, similar to an unofficial saint. The term is both loving and affectionate, but also diminishing—an Almita is a miracle worker but not a saint, official or otherwise. (Many unofficial saints bear the title "saint," albeit unofficially. Argentina's Eva Peron, for instance, is known as Santa Evita.)

To be a saint implies spiritual vocation; many Almitas are young murder victims whose life force was so strong and who died so tragically and traumatically that they transformed into spirits who offer protection, healing, and blessings from beyond the grave. It's not necessarily how they lived that makes them Almitas; it's how they died. The word may be used similarly elsewhere in Latin America or Almita may also refer to the souls of dead children.

The difference between an Almita and an Alma Bendita is subtle. The Alma Bendita lived an exemplary life, serving as an example of how to bear pain and suffering with dignity and fortitude. The Almita never had a chance; life was snuffed out abruptly and brutally at a reasonably early age. In general, Almitas were ordinary people whose deaths were so physically and emotionally traumatic that they transformed into beings of great supernatural power.

SEE ALSO Alma Bendita; Almita Visitación Sivila; Evita; Godelieve, Saint and Glossary: Saint, Official; Saint, Unofficial.

### ∾ Almita Visitación Sivila

**CLASSIFICATION:** Argentinean Almita.

On June 1, 1908, Visitación Sivila set off for the market in Jujuy, Argentina. A man made sexual advances toward her, which she rejected. (He may or may not have stalked her previously.) Looping a rope around her neck, he pulled her into the bushes where he raped, murdered, and mutilated her.

When Visitación failed to return home, her husband contacted authorities, who searched for her. They discovered her murderer in the process of literally consuming Visitación (one version suggests he barbecued her thigh). Since her death, thousands of miracles have been attributed to her. SACRED SITES: She has two sacred shrines:

- her tomb at San Salvador de Jujuy, Argentina
- the roadside site of her murder

FEAST: 1 June.

SEE ALSO Almita.

## 👡 Alodia, Saint

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Saint Alodia (died 22 October 851) was born the daughter of a Muslim man and a Christian woman in Huesca, Aragon, now in modern Spain, but at that time under Moorish rule. Alodia and her sister, Nunilo, were raised as Christians. Her father died and her mother then remarried another Muslim man who, unlike his predecessor, objected to the girls' Christian practice. Regardless of how the girls had been raised, as the daughters of a Muslim father, they were by law considered Muslim and so were guilty of apostasy.

Alodia and Nunilo were imprisoned and eventually beheaded. Legend has it that their bodies were thrown onto a garbage heap but did not decay, nor would vermin touch them. Their bodies were then transferred to the local gallows hill, where common criminals were left to rot. The resident vultures not only refused to eat the girls, they took turns guarding their bodies, which were emanating a brilliant light. Authorities buried them, but their bodies continued to emit light from underground. The girls were exhumed and thrown down a well from whence they would eventually be removed by Christians, their bodies still incorrupt. Their bodies were transferred to the Monastery of Leyre.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: victims of child abuse; run-aways; those ridiculed for piety and religious devotion.

ATTRIBUTE: palm frond symbolizing martyrdom.

**SPIRITUAL ALLY:** The two sisters lived and died together and are traditionally venerated together.

SACRED SITE: A reliquary containing their heads is in the Cathedral in Pamplona.

FEAST: 22 October.

SEE ALSO Charbel, Saint; Nunilo, Saint and Glossary: Incorrupt.

## ∾ Amadou Bamba, Sheikh

Also known as Serigne Touba, which means Master of Touba in Wolof, the predominate language of Senegal.

EPITHETS: The Holy Man; Master of Touba; Possessor of Grace.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Sufi saint.

Sheikh Amadou Bamba (1853–1927), born in the village of Mbacké in Senegal, demonstrated extraordinary spiritual inclinations and gifts from his earliest infancy. A scholar, religious leader, mystic, pacifist, author, and poet, he actively participated in the mass conversions from traditional religions to Islam in Senegal.

Sheikh Amadou Bamba founded the Senegalese Sufi movement known as the Mouride Brotherhood. Mouridism, or the Mouride Way, is based upon Sheikh Amadou's teachings. It is now practiced by over four million Senegalese, half of Senegal's Muslim population, as well as by many others around the world. Mouridism emphasizes charity, humility, piety, peaceful coexistence, and the need to labor to provide for one's family.

The Mouride Brotherhood and leadership were in the forefront of pacifist resistance against French rule in Senegal. French colonial authorities were extraordinarily threatened by Amadou Bamba, perceiving him as a major danger, even though he advised them that the only jihad in which he engaged involved his own soul. He was a lifelong, committed pacifist, his weapon a pen, not a gun.

The French persecuted Sheikh Amadou, exiling him to Gabon in 1895 for seven years, seven months, and seven days. Permitted to return in November 1902, he was again exiled and sent to Mauritania from June 1903 until 1907. Although he was then allowed to return to Senegal, he was periodically held under house arrest. It has been argued that the French transformed him into a martyr and symbol of Senegalese resistance, increasing his influence rather than defusing it as they intended. His exile acheed the Prophet's flight to Medine and marked Amadou Bamba as a saint to his devotees.

The French considered Sheikh Amadou their prisoner. His perception, however, was that he was on a divine mission. Legend has it that while aboard the ship transporting him to Gabon, a European woman taunted him, remarking that although the first hour of prayer approached, he lacked permission to pray on the ship.

Sheikh Amadou threw his prayer rug overboard and descended to the waters. The other passengers assumed this was suicide. They underestimated him. The archangel Gabriel appeared in company with other angels to hold up the prayer rug on which Amadou Bamba prayed. Fish emerged to receive the saint's blessings. When he finished his prayers, he re-boarded the ship.

When he arrived in Gabon, French authorities sent Sheikh Amadou, together with another important political prisoner, to Wir-Wir Island, a tiny rock in the sea about eight hours away by boat. The prisoners were not expected to return. The uninhabited island was only dry at low tide. Its sole residents were cranky, solitary djinn who had deliberately sought a place where they would be left alone.

The men were dropped off on the island. Bamba calmed the djinn (earning him a reputation as a djinn master), then the two men prayed. Amadou Bamba grabbed the bag containing his voluminous writings, told the other man to climb on his shoulders, and transported them both back to the mainland, arriving before the boat that had left them on Wir-Wir returned.

"Pray as if you will die tomorrow and work as if you will live forever." —Sheikh Amadou Bamba

- Recitation of odes written by Sheikh Amadou Bamba is believed to repel the Evil Eye.
- His image is credited with the power to bless, heal, and protect. It attracts good fortune, repels evil, protects travelers, and transmits the saint's *baraka*, his intense spiritual power.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Only one photograph of Sheikh Amadou Bamba exists, taken by colonial authorities in approximately 1913, possibly while he was under house arrest. It may have been intended as a mug shot or as an attempt by the French to humiliate Bamba, but the image took on a life of its own and is now ubiquitous throughout Senegal. Images of Amadou Bamba appear on murals, posters, glass

paintings, automobile windshields, trucks, and all sorts of public transportation.

In the photograph, the saint's face is shadowed. A white cloth over his head further obscures his face. He wears a long, vividly white robe. His hands are hidden by shadows and the robe's long sleeves. All other depictions of Sheikh Amadou derive from and are based on this one photo, although artists may embellish it. It has been adapted to show Sheikh Amadou calming a lion or blessing fish in the middle of the ocean. He is often shown in the company of the archangel Gabriel and his disciple, Sheikh Ibra Fall.

SACRED SITE: Amadou Bamba founded the city of Touba in 1888, now the second-largest city in Senegal. His tomb is in the Grand Mosque.

SACRED DATE: The Grand Magal of Touba occurs annually on the eighteenth day of the Muslim lunar month Safar, honoring the date in 1895 when Amadou Bamba was exiled to Gabon. There are several other pilgrimages to Touba; however, this is the big one. Attended by over two million people, it is estimated to be possibly the largest pilgrimage in West Africa.

A Saint in the City: Sufi Arts of Urban Senegal by Allen F. Roberts and Mary Nooter Roberts explores the image and influence of Sheikh Amadou Bamba and features an abundance of illustrations.

SEE ALSO Bousso, Mame Diarra; Fall, Ibra; Gabriel Archangel, Saint and Glossary: Djinn.

## 👡 Amadour, Saint

Also known as Amador; Zaccheus; Roc D'Amadour.

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

Amadour is a mysterious figure who is sometimes venerated alongside the Black Madonna of Rocamadour in southwestern France, and who may possibly be responsible for her veneration. The mysteries of Amadour are nothing new; he has been the subject of speculation ever since 1166 when Benedictine monks discovered an ancient sepulcher containing a man's well-preserved body in a cave near the Black Madonna's chapel. The body was identified as that of a hermit who had lived in the cave centuries before.

The monks were given responsibility for the little chapel in the 11th century. Why did it take so long for them to find the body or at least announce that it had been found? Whose corpse had they found? Various explanations exist. Any one or a combination of the following explanations may be true.

Although the body was called Amadour, the monks claimed that its true, if secret, identity was that of Zaccheus of Jericho, the short, wealthy tax collector who, according to the Gospel of Luke 19: 1–10, climbed a sycamore tree to get a good look at Jesus. Zaccheus later spoke with Jesus, who then created a scandal by dining in the house of the loathed tax collector the night before his arrival in Bethany. (Beyond standard dislike of taxes, Judean tax collectors were employed by Roman authorities and thus perceived by their fellow citizens as collaborators.)

It is unclear why the Benedictines associated the body found in the cave with the biblical Zaccheus. If there was actual evidence, it was never publicly revealed. The legend that has since sprung up suggests that Zaccheus traveled from Judea to France, landing at Soulac carrying the statue now known as the Black Madonna of Rocamadour reputedly carved by Saint Luke. It has also been suggested that Zaccheus himself carved the image. Angels guided him to a cave shrine dedicated to the goddess Sulevia, where he removed the statue of Sulevia and replaced it with the Black Madonna. Zaccheus became the caretaker of the shrine, living in the cave until his death in approximately 70 ce.

Other sometimes contradictory legends exist, too. Amadour is also the name of the first bishop of Marseille. Although most scholars insist that there are two different Amadours—the bishop and the hermit—some are convinced that they are one and the same. Amadour the bishop *is* a canonized saint.

- One legend suggests that Zaccheus may have owned land in the Sinai Desert where wheat miraculously grew, transforming the desert into a thick field in order to protect Jesus and Mary during their flight to Egypt. Some identify this story as testament to Christ's divinity. It is very reminiscent of the myth of Isis hiding her son, baby Horus, in the tall grass of the Nile swamps, leading others to understand this story as covertly identifying the Black Madonna of Rocamadour as Isis.
- Zaccheus/Amadour may not always have been so solitary. Some legends suggest that he was married to a woman named Veronica (who may or may not be Saint Veronica of the Veil). Some say they traveled together from Judea to France and may have visited Rome together, witnessing the

martyrdom of Saints Peter and Paul.

The names associated with Saint Amadour contribute to his mystery. Some believe them to be codes revealing his identity or the true identity of the Black Madonna. *Zaccheus* is the Greek version of the Hebrew *Zakkai*, indicating purity. The region where the cave is located was a Cathar stronghold; *Cathar* also means pure.

*Rocamadour* literally means "lover of rock" or "lover of the rock." (An alternative theory suggests that the name may derive from the Arabic *Amad-Aour*, "the just.") Virtually nothing is known of Sulevia beyond her name, which some scholars identify as another name for the goddess Kybele, who was venerated in the form of a rock. Even the name Veronica contributes to the mystery if we interpret it as meaning "true image." Whose true image is at Rocamadour?

Miracles are attributed to Saint Amadour. Ask for what you need.

**SACRED SITE:** Rocamadour, France. The tomb of Saint Amadour is in the Chapelle Miraculeuse.

FEASTS: Originally 1 May, coinciding with the Pagan holiday known as Walpurgis or Beltane. Any hint of Pagan associations was considered inauspicious for this mysterious saint. His feast day was changed to 20 August, but many devotees celebrate both days.

Amadour is sometimes associated with Cathar and Templar mysteries. His arrival in France coincides with that of Mary Magdalen, Saint Martha, and the Marys of the Sea. Some consider him to have been a caretaker of a Magdalen shrine or of mysteries smuggled out of Judea or Egypt.

SEE ALSO Joseph of Arimathea; Luke, Saint; Martha, Saint; Mary; Mary Magdalen; Marys of the Sea; Paul, Saint; Peter, Saint; Veronica, Saint and Glossary: Black Madonna.

∾ Amand, Saint

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic and Orthodox saint.

When he was twenty, the future Saint Amand (born c. 584 in Poitou, France; died c. 675 in Elnone, now Belgium) became a monk, much against the wishes of his wealthy, noble French family. Fearing that he was under the influence of a cult, they kidnapped him and attempted the seventh-century version of deprogramming. It didn't work; Amand returned to his vocation and spent the next fifteen years living in a cell, subsisting on bread and water.

Sent to France as a missionary, Amand aggressively converted Pagans. He apparently had little luck until he resurrected a hanged criminal, earning a reputation as a miracle worker. He then became a prominent churchman. When he criticized the Merovingian king Dagobert I on moral grounds, he was summarily kicked out of France.

Dagobert later apologized and requested that Amand come serve him at court. Amand declined the honor. He founded over twenty monasteries and died peacefully in bed at approximately ninety years old.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: bartenders; brewers; vintners; wine merchants; inn and hotel keepers; anyone laboring in any aspect of wine production or the liquor industry; Boy Scouts; those whose parents or families don't understand their chosen spiritual path.

**SACRED SITE:** Given a large land grant in Elnone on the banks of the River Scarpe near some mineral hot springs, Amand built an abbey. After his death, the town was renamed Saint-Amand-les-Eaux.

FEASTS: 1 February; 6 February.

**OFFERINGS:** candles; one of the many beverages named for the saint, including Saint Amand French Country Ale and Saint Amand bottled mineral water. The Saint Amand brewery utilizes water from the mineral springs that were renamed in his honor.

### 👡 Amaro, Saint

Also known as Saint Amarus.

#### **EPITHET:** The Pilgrim.

#### **CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Amaro, navigator extraordinaire, an abbot who sailed off to a paradise, is the star of the epic *The Life of the Blessed Saint Amaro and of the Dangers That He Encountered until Reaching the Earthly Paradise*, which was published in Burgos, Spain, in 1552. It is unclear when Amaro actually lived—or if he, in fact, existed. The Church of Santo Amaro in Beja, Portugal, dates from the late fifth century.

Amaro's tale is a mysterious saga, more reminiscent of Homer's Odyssey, legends of the Grail Quest, Celtic tales of the Isles of the West, or a shamanic journey than of a standard saint's hagiography. It also recalls Jewish folktales about what's really behind the gates of Eden. The region from whence Amaro is said to have sailed and where he remains most deeply venerated was long under Celtic rule and influence.

Amaro, a Christian of noble ancestry, passionately longed to see Heaven for himself. (An alternative version says he longed to see whether the Celtic mythic realm, the Blessed Isles of the West, really existed.) God appeared to Amaro in a dream, revealing a sea route and instructions to build a boat and follow the sun's path across the sky.

Amaro and a friend sailed for seven nights, until they reached a beautiful island containing beautiful cities and beautiful women. They stayed for six months, until Amaro heard a voice telling him it was time to move on. They sailed to another beautiful, peaceful island, but after only a brief stay, an elderly woman ominously advised Amaro to leave before it was too late.

Taking her advice, the men again took to the sea. This time, they sailed endlessly with no land in sight. They passed several vessels that had been taken over by monsters that had killed their human crews. Finally, an apparition of a woman appeared and advised Amaro to empty all his bottles of oil and wine into the sea—perhaps as offerings, although this is not specified—and to fill them with air instead. (This is reminiscent of Odysseus' bag of winds.) Amaro does as directed and is rescued from the doldrums. Eventually, after further adventures, the men land on another island where they are greeted by a monk who says he has been waiting for Amaro, having had a vision of his arrival. Finally, Amaro arrived at his true destination—the portal to paradise was near. The monk guided Amaro and his companion to a convent named Flower of the Ladies atop a mountain, where two holy women named Baralides and Brigid offered instructions regarding the journey to paradise.

They dressed Amaro in white and brought him to a beautiful, jewel-encrusted castle. The castle's gatekeeper explained that the castle *was* paradise and that no one still living could enter, but he let Amaro peek through the keyhole. Amaro saw the Garden of Eden and the Tree of Life. He saw musicians playing unknown musical instruments and beautiful women, adorned with flowers and dressed in white, dancing in the company of Mary.

Amaro, who had come so far and faced so many perils, again begged the gatekeeper to let him enter, but the gatekeeper refused, advising him that three centuries had passed since he first put his eye to the keyhole. Shocked, Amaro rushed back to the convent to discover that all his companions were gone and that the city had been renamed for him. He lived in the city for several years, until he died and was buried beside Baralides and Brigid.

The story reads like a shamanic journey, and that's what some believe it to be. It may also be a Christian gloss on a Celtic legend or a fusion of the two traditions. Many details of the tale, in particular the emphasis on women who are holy, beautiful, and in positions of clear spiritual authority, are more in keeping with Celtic sagas.

Various hermitages and churches are named in Saint Amaro's honor. He remains especially popular in Spain, Portugal, Brazil, and the Madeira Islands. He is traditionally invoked to heal rheumatism and joint pain and disorders.

#### **SACRED SITES:**

- the Saint Amaro Chapel in Oeiras, Portugal
- the Saint Amaro Church in Beja, Portugal

**RITUAL**: attempt to re-create Amaro's journey using guided visualizations.

FEAST: 15 January.

**OFFERING:** Amaro is traditionally given two distinct types of offerings. Offer cakes shaped like limbs (arms, legs) in petition for his protection over those parts of the body. Alternatively, offer him dried figs, nuts, and pinecones—although it's said, at least in Portugal, that the saint will only accept these if they've been stolen.

### 👡 Amico, Saint

Also known as Amicus.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Amico, believed to have lived in the 11th or late 10th century, was the scion of a wealthy, elegant Italian family. He became a monk and a hermit and was famed for his miracles and prophesies. He moved into a cave near his family home, subsisting on mushrooms and wild berries for twenty years. Amico passed the end of his life at the monastery of Fonteavellana, allegedly living until he was 120 years old.

Amico loved animals, which are featured in many of his legends. He forced a wolf who ate his donkey to labor in its stead. Amico was particularly fond of dogs and shared his cave with a substantial pack. The dogs apparently continue to accompany him after death. Offerings on their behalf may accompany offerings made directly to the saint. The sound of phantom barking when no dogs are present may be a sign that Amico has heard your petition.

Long famed for miracle healings, Saint Amico allegedly personally appeared in Louisiana in 1906 to heal an ailing child. The child's grateful father, who recognized the saint, helped erect a shrine for Amico near Donaldsonville, Louisiana. For decades, a barefoot procession was held in his honor on the Sunday following Easter.

Saint Amico is invoked for any kind of healing, but especially to prevent and heal hernias. He may also be requested to heal and protect animals.

MANIFESTATION: His apparition in Donaldsonville is described as "a dark man."

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Amico is envisioned in the garb of a hermit.

ATTRIBUTE: a dog holding a piece of bread in its mouth.

**SACRED SITE:** His stone tomb is beneath the altar in his shrine in the Church of Saints Peter and Paul in San Pietro Avellana, Italy.

ALTAR: Light a white candle for Saint Amico and offer bread for his dogs.

FEAST: 3 November.

**OFFERINGS:** Feeding stray and hungry dogs or sponsoring dog shelters and rescue societies will put you in the saint's good graces. Make donations on behalf of poor people.

# ∾ Amin ud-Din, Sheikh

**CLASSIFICATION:** Sufi saint.

Sheikh Amin ud-Din, a Sufi mystic and poet, lived in India in the early 17th century. He continues to perform miracles and is especially renowned for healing mental disorders as well as other ailments. He is venerated by both Muslims and Hindus. Sheikh Amin welcomes all. His name means Reliable in the Faith.

**MANIFESTATION**: Sheikh Amin ud-Din has been witnessed among the crowds at his shrine. He appears as a man dressed in a white robe, wearing an orange turban and a green scarf. He also appears to devotees in their dreams.

SACRED SITE: his mausoleum near Bijapur, India.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; incense; coconuts. If he fulfills a petition for you, a pilgrimage to his shrine may be in order.

## ∾ Amram Ben Diwan, Rabbi

**EPITHETS:** The Saint of Last Resort; Life or Death.

CLASSIFICATION: Jewish saint.

Rabbi Amram Ben Diwan was born in Palestine. According to legend, at the beginning of the 18th century, his young son, also now a saint, lost his eyesight and became extremely ill. Rabbi Amram wanted to pray for his son's recovery at the Tomb of the Patriarchs at the Cave of Machpelah in Hebron, but at that time

Jews were forbidden entrance to the shrine.

Rabbi Amram planned. Every Friday he gave the shrine's guard some money. After several weeks of accepting these donations, the guard finally inquired as to Rabbi Amram's motivation. The rabbi told him that he wished to bring his son to the shrine so that they could pray for a miracle. Could anything be arranged? The guard suggested that Rabbi Amram return on the following Friday with his son and enter discreetly alongside the Muslims coming to pray.

Rabbi Amram did as advised. The guard admitted father and son. Almost immediately, the son's eyesight was restored, but there was no time to celebrate. The guard double-crossed them, announcing loudly that Jews were in the shrine and causing a huge uproar among the crowd.

As Rabbi Amram searched for an escape route, three elderly bearded men approached and, taking their hands, led father and son through a gate. When Amram and his son walked through the gate, they found themselves safely in Morocco. (The bearded men are implied to be Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whose graves they were visiting.)

In Morocco, Rabbi Amram earned a reputation as a miracle worker specializing in hopeless causes. Miracles continued after his death. His areas of expertise are life and death. He is renowned for providing miracles of fertility but is also a healer whose specialty is terminal cases.

Rabbi Amram Ben Diwan is the saint of last resort. When all other avenues have been attempted and all else has failed (go ahead and try other spiritual avenues first), when desperation is high, it is traditional to beseech Rabbi Amram for "life or death." He is requested either to heal the ailing person or, if that is not possible, to provide a quick, peaceful, easy death.

Rabbi Amram Ben Diwan is an excellent communicator, frequently appearing in people's dreams. He expects vows made to him to be fulfilled promptly and in full.

Rabbi Amram prophesied his own death and requested to be buried beside the wild olive tree that still remains near the grave and with which he is closely associated. (An alternative version suggests that the tree sprang up after his burial.) Rabbi Amram is buried beneath a cairn, a large stone. Petitioners leave small stones near his big rock, which is standard Jewish graveside tradition but also represents individual petitions. His tree remains an integral part of the shrine; petitioners traditionally hang ribbons, cloth, and ornaments from its branches. Those who have attempted to harm or injure the tree have been struck.

with paralysis. Some have died.

Rabbi Amram Ben Diwan is extremely popular, venerated by Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike. He provides miracles for all and does not discriminate. His grave is always well visited, but especially during his annual *hillulot*, when thousands come to pay homage. The shrine has been modernized and is trilingual: Arabic, French, and Hebrew. Those invoking Rabbi Amram's assistance sometimes sleep beside his shrine. The appearance of doves or snakes, in real life or in a dream, indicates that the saint has heard your petition.

**MANIFESTATIONS:** Rabbi Amram most frequently manifests as a man but may also appear in the form of a snake or a dove or other bird.

SACRED SITES: His primary shrine remains his mausoleum at Azjen, near Oezzane, Morocco, which is visited by thousands during his hillulah. The pilgrimage to his tomb is now under the patronage of the Moroccan government. A synagogue named in his honor in Givat Olga, Israel, also holds an annual hillulah. However, he is venerated at various shrines. Rabbi Amram appears to people in dreams, advising that he is protecting them and informing them where best to venerate him. Other Moroccan shrines are located in Ksar El-Kebir, Salé, and Sefrou.

**FEASTS:** Rabbi Amram Ben Diwan has three feasts, or *hillulot* (plural of hillulah).

- He is celebrated on the holiday of Lag b'Omer on the eighteenth day of the Jewish lunar month Iyar.
- His memorial on the fifteenth day of the lunar month Av, corresponding in time to the zodiac sign Leo.
- The first day of the lunar month Elul, corresponding in time to the zodiac sign Virgo.

**OFFERING**: Light candles in his honor. Give generously to charity; pilgrimage to one of his shrines. If you request fertility, name the baby in his honor.

**SEE** Glossary: *Feast*.

👡 Anastacia

Also known as Blessed Anastacia; Anastacia the Slave; Escrava Anastacia.

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint; Alma Bendita.

Once you see the standard votive image of Anastacia, you will not forget it. It depicts a beautiful black woman wearing a brutal face mask and iron collar. She gazes out, meeting the beholder's eyes with dignity, pride, and fortitude. It is the only image ever used to represent this folk saint, so she is instantly recognizable. The only variation is in the color of her eyes, which may be portrayed as brown or dazzling blue.

Anastacia is venerated throughout Brazil. It is impossible to determine the number of her devotees accurately, but it is estimated that she is venerated by at least twelve million people. In the 1980s, she was the subject of several extremely popular Brazilian radio and television series that prompted the development of a *massive* following that transcends class and color. Anastacia has a huge number of Roman Catholic devotees. She is often referred to as Blessed Anastacia, leading some to assume that the official canonization process has begun, but this is not so. She is also venerated by devotees of Kardecian Spiritism and Umbanda, as well as the unaffiliated.

Anastacia was a folk saint whose veneration was originally centered almost exclusively in the Afro-Brazilian communities of Rio de Janeiro. Documented veneration of Anastacia goes back to at least the 1940s, although it is unclear whether she was identified with any image at that time.

In 1968, Rio de Janeiro's Museum of the Negro mounted an exhibition marking the 80th anniversary of the abolition of slavery in Brazil. Among the items featured was an engraved image of a brutalized, silenced, tortured woman. The image evoked a profound reaction. Some viewers identified the image as Anastacia, explaining that they recognized it from her legend.

In 1971, reactions to this image became even more visceral when the remains of Princess Isabel, who signed the law abolishing slavery in Brazil, were placed in the museum for a two-week vigil, attracting thousands. Throngs of new visitors made the pilgrimage to the museum, where they saw the engraving. People soon began to visit the museum specifically to see the image. Spiritual petitions were offered directly to the image and to the saint many believed it portrayed.

Word of miracles spread. The image—and, by extension, Anastacia developed a reputation as a miracle worker. The museum director, Yolando Guera, observing the crowd's reaction, began to research the image, which is an engraving by Jacques Arago, a French artist and traveler, entitled *Punishment of Slaves*, *Brazil*. The engraving was made between December 1817 and January 1818, the two months Arago spent in Brazil creating a series of images of the slaves he observed in Rio de Janeiro.

No other identifying information regarding the engraving's subject exists. Some scholars insist that the original image depicts a man. No documented evidence for Anastacia's existence has been found, nor is there any evidence directly linking the legend to the engraving. However, absence of proof is not proof of absence, and *many* people who saw the image in the museum identified it as Anastacia. All current votive images of Anastacia are based on this engraving. A former slave confirmed Anastacia's identity to Guera, who then wrote several articles for Spiritist magazines, which stimulated further interest and devotion.

There are many versions of Anastacia's legend. The earliest documented version derives from María Salomé, a Spiritist medium and member of the Brotherhood of the Rosary, who said that she received information and instructions directly from a spirit who identified herself as the subject of the engraving and claimed the name Anastacia. (The name Anastacia was frequently bestowed on female Brazilian slaves, as it means "one who is reborn through baptism," indicating their new life as Christians.) María Salomé wrote and published a book revealing that Anastacia had been born in Angola and was brought to Brazil as a slave.

In this book, Anastacia is described as alluringly beautiful in the classic manner of a sub-Saharan black woman. There is no mention of blue eyes. A woman of inner and outer beauty, she was put to work on a sugarcane plantation where she was violently and repeatedly raped, but not by the plantation's owner. He was surprisingly kind to her, leading his wife to suspect that he was falling in love with Anastacia and would take her as his mistress. The wife conspired with the plantation overseer to keep Anastacia away from her husband. While laboring in the mill, Anastacia dared to taste the cane. She was caught—the overseer was watching her—and placed in the face iron as punishment.

In early versions of her myth, Anastacia doesn't die but is rescued—often by spiritual means—and brought to Rio de Janeiro where she serves as a selfless healer. In some stories, she becomes a member of the Brotherhood of the Rosary. In later versions, she dies of torture, gangrene, or tetanus caused by the mask.

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In 1504, several famous Brazman soap-opera accresses publicly annihed men devotion to Anastacia. These devotions were eventually incorporated into program story lines. In 1986, Anastacia was the subject of a 100-episode radio dramatization in which she was born in Brazil, the daughter of a slave owner and the slave he loved. The slave owner treats his daughter with affection, although he does not free her.

The slave owner's wife reacts to the close relationship between father and daughter with extreme anxiety and jealousy. As a result, she lies, telling her husband that Anastacia is leading a slave revolt. Anastacia is tortured to death, but before she dies, her father realizes the deception and requests her forgiveness, which Anastacia gives.

By the 1980s, votive images had appeared featuring Anastacia with vividly blue eyes. As versions of her mythos continue to proliferate and evolve, Anastacia's eyes become progressively bluer and the slave owner's wife progressively more villainous. The slave owner himself is often depicted as kind, considerate, and reasonable, even though he is the one ultimately responsible for Anastacia's servitude and torture.

In 1990, Anastacia was the subject of a three-part, three-hour television miniseries, at that time the costliest miniseries in Brazilian television history. The program captured a huge audience, further expanding Anastacia's reputation. In this version, Anastacia is a Nigerian princess whose blue eyes indicate that the Yoruba orisha spirit Oshun has endowed her with miraculous healing powers.

Oshun charges Anastacia with the mission of bringing spiritual liberation to Brazil's slaves. Anastacia eventually physically liberates the sugar plantation's other slaves, allowing them to escape, while she herself stays to face the music. For the crime of releasing slaves (and of rejecting the slave master's sexual advances—he's not so nice in this version), Anastacia is tortured and forced to wear the face mask. As she lies dying of gangrene and starvation, she heals all who come to her, including the slave master's son, who is dying of pneumonia.

In the context of saints, official and otherwise, Anastacia is unusual in that she resisted sexual advances, not to preserve her virginity, but to preserve her dignity and autonomy. Anastacia is invoked against rape, domestic abuse, abusive employers, and sexual harassment. She is petitioned by those who seek to maintain dignity in degrading situations. She reputedly performs miracles of healing.

FAVORED PEOPLE: Anastacia is generous and benevolent and provides assistance

to all. Certain people, however, are especially devoted to her. She is particularly favored by hairdressers and those invested in destroying the concept that only smooth, straight, flowing hair is beautiful and desirable. She is venerated by nurses, who perceive her as a selfless healer. She has a strong devotee base among prisoners, for whom her fortitude, patience, endurance, and lack of bitterness are an inspiration.

SACRED DAY: Monday, traditionally the Day of the Blessed Dead in Brazil.

**ALTARS:** Anastacia is believed to radiate healing power. Objects, especially flowers, placed on her altars allegedly absorb this potency and possess strong curative abilities.

FEAST: 12 May.

**OFFERINGS:** The traditional vow to Anastacia is to name an enterprise in her honor if she fulfills your petition. For instance, several private schools and snack shops and *many* hair and beauty salons are named for her. The Brazilian band, Didá Banda Feminina, honored Anastacia by wearing leather face masks similar to hers in concert. Candles, white carnations, and roses in all colors are also appropriate.

Anastacia and her iconography and mythology are explored in John Burdick's 1998 book, Blessed Anastacia. She is the inspiration for Anastacia-Escrava y Martir Negra, a mixed-media collage and oil painting by American artist Lezley Saar. Anastacia's traditional engraving has been translated into a votive statue that is readily available from Brazilian spiritual supply merchants.

SEE ALSO Agnes, Saint; Alma Bendita; Goretti, Maria; Seven African Powers; Zumbi and Glossary: Iconography.

# 👡 Anastasia, Saint

**EPITHET:** Deliverer from Potions.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Anastasia is given unusual honors as a saint: she is commemorated at the second Mass of Christmas and the first Eucharistic prayer. However, little documented information about Anastasia exists, although she is the subject of a detailed legend.

Anastasia's father was a Pagan, but her mother, who had secretly converted to Christianity, arranged for Anastasia to be tutored by Chrysogonus, who would also later become a Christian saint. Following her mother's death, her father arranged Anastasia's marriage to a Pagan man named Publius. Anastasia preserved her virginity by pretending to be too sick to consummate the marriage.

Anastasia disguised herself as a beggar and, accompanied by only one servant, visited the prisons where Christians were held. She fed and bathed them and ransomed them when possible. Eventually, Publius became suspicious and questioned the servant, who spilled the beans. Enraged, Publius beat Anastasia and locked her up. She began corresponding secretly with her old tutor, Chrysogonus, who counseled patience, prophesying that Publius would soon die at sea. The prophecy was accurate; Publius drowned while on a voyage to Persia. Anastasia began to distribute her property to the poor, or so goes her legend. It is unclear whether a Roman would have been in a legal position to distribute property belonging to her husband's family.

Anastasia's epithet, Deliverer from Potions, indicates her power over malevolent witchcraft and her ability to break spells and curses.

FAVORED PEOPLE: widows.

ATTRIBUTES: cross; flask.

#### **SACRED SITES:**

• the Cathedral of Saint Anastasia in Zadar, Croatia

• Her head and hand are in the Monastery of Anastasia near Mount Athos.

FEAST: 22 December.

SEE ALSO Theophano, Saint.

### 👡 André, Saint

Also known as Blessed Brother André; Saint Frère André.

EPITHET: The Wonder Man of Mount Royal.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Brother André was born Alfred Bessette on 9 August 1845 to a poor family in a village east of Montreal, Canada. His father was a woodcutter. The eighth of twelve children, André was a frail baby who was baptized at birth for fear he wouldn't survive. Growing up, he suffered from chronic stomach pains and digestive difficulties and was unable to eat solid foods. His health was fragile throughout his life.

Orphaned at age twelve, André was sent to live with an uncle who insisted that the boy earn his keep. André spent thirteen years wandering from job to job, working as a farmhand, baker, blacksmith, shoemaker, and in a factory. His education was so minimal that he was barely literate.

In 1870, he joined the Congregation of the Holy Cross, a teaching order. He assumed the name André as part of his spiritual commitment. Owing to his poor health and lack of education and stamina, the Congregation soon requested that he leave. André was devastated, appealing to the bishop, who promised him that he could stay.

The only thing that André knew how to do was pray. What was the Congregation to do with him? André was appointed porter (doorkeeper) at Notre Dame College in Mount Royal. During the day, he fulfilled this position; at night, he visited the sick. He quickly demonstrated an amazing ability to heal and soon the sick were visiting him.

Miraculous cures were attributed to him. André became known as the Wonder Man of Mount Royal, although he himself modestly attributed all cures to the intercession of his own patron, Saint Joseph. He advised people to pray to Saint Joseph and, as part of his healing ritual, anointed the ailing with oil from the lamp burning perpetually before the altar of Saint Joseph in the college chapel.

Brother André's personal dream was to build an oratory for Saint Joseph. However, the Archbishop of Montreal would only give him permission if he raised the funds to pay for the chapel. In July 1904, working with a small crew, Brother André began construction on the slopes of Mount Royal, right across the street from Notre Dame College. Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal is now the largest church in Canada. Its dome is the third largest of its kind.

André died on 6 January 1937. At his funeral, one million people filed past his coffin. His shrine in the church he helped build quickly became a pilgrimage site. André was canonized on 17 October 2010. He is honored in the church to

which he devoted his life. Pope John Paul II prayed before his tomb in 1984.

André always worked within the religious system and never courted controversy, despite the hostility and skepticism he encountered throughout his life. People had a very hard time believing that such a simple man could produce such miracles and be such an effective healer. His superiors were uneasy with his skills. Physicians described him as a quack. Although now honored as a miracle-working saint, during his earthly life, André was never more than the order's doorkeeper—officially speaking anyway. He used to joke: "When I entered the community, they showed me the door and I stayed there for forty years."

Saint André is invoked for healing miracles. Thousands of cures that reputedly defy medical explanation have been attributed to him.

**SPIRITUAL ALLY:** André achieved his dream of honoring Saint Joseph. They may now be venerated together.

#### SACRED SITES:

- The Chapel of Saint André, built in 1904, is located within the grounds of Saint Joseph's Oratory of Mount Royal in Montreal. A wall inside the chapel is covered with canes and crutches, testimonials from those whom Brother André has healed.
- The room in which he lived has been preserved exactly as André left it.
- André's tomb and heart are in the Oratory. His tomb is behind the central lamp stand in the Votive Chapel near a statue of his beloved Saint Joseph.

**FEASTS:** 6 January. The Oratory also holds a Feast of Thanksgiving in André's honor on 9 August.

SEE ALSO John Paul II; Joseph, Saint.

## 👡 Andresito, Fray

Also known as Fray Andrés.

**EPITHETS:** The Beggar Saint; Charity's Apostle.

CLASSIFICATION: canonization in process and pending.

Andrés García Acosta (10 January 1800–14 January 1853), born in the Canary Islands, was over thirty when he immigrated to South America, initially laboring as a farmer. Within a few years, he joined the Franciscans in Montevideo, Uruguay, taking a vow of poverty.

Andresito is the affectionate diminutive for Andrés, a Spanish variant of the name Andrew. The honorific Fray literally means "brother" and refers to his status as a Franciscan friar.

In 1838, when the government ordered the closing of the Franciscan order, Andresito moved to Chile—first to Valparaiso and then to downtown Santiago, where he lived in the convent of the Recoleta Franciscans. He worked in the convent kitchen but was also a mendicant friar—meaning that he begged for alms in the streets. There, Andresito became intimately familiar with the plight of the urban poor.

By 1847, Fray Andresito had evolved into a deeply committed social activist, praying with workers and delivering comfort and charity to prisons and hospitals. He became a very beloved figure on the streets of Santiago. Andresito developed a reputation as a holy man and miracle worker. He was still alive when people began requesting his intercession.

Fray Andresito accurately predicted the date of his death from pneumonia. Thousands flocked to his funeral. In 1855, his corpse was exhumed and found to be incorrupt. His body was exposed for three days for public veneration at the foot of Saint Philomena's altar in the Church of the Recoleta Franciscans in Santiago. He was then put forth for canonization.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: He is the patron of workers. If you are a working stiff, then Frey Andresito is your saint.

**SPIRITUAL ALLY:** Fray Andresito was tremendously devoted to Saint Philomena; they may be venerated together.

FEAST: 14 January.

### SACRED SITES:

- The center of his veneration is the Recoleta Franciscana Church in Santiago, Chile.
- His childhood home on the island of Fuerteventura is also a pilgrimage site.

SEE ALSO Philomena, Saint and Glossary: Incorrupt; Intercessor.

### ∼ Andrew, Saint

Also known as Anders; Andras; Andrés; Andreas; André; Andrea; Andrius.

**EPITHET:** The First Called.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint in virtually all branches of Christianity.

Andrew, a Galilean fisherman and disciple of John the Baptist, is the first of the Apostles. He was invited to be a disciple of Jesus even before his brother, Peter, was called. The brothers met Jesus through John the Baptist.

At the beginning of Jesus' public life, Andrew and Peter apparently shared a home in Capernaum (in Hebrew: Kfar Nahum) on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. After the crucifixion of Jesus, Andrew traveled widely—reputedly as far north as Kiev, where he mingled with Scythians. He allegedly died in approximately 60 ce, but the exact circumstances are nebulous. According to legend, he was crucified on an X-shaped cross, now his principle symbol.

Perhaps because fish are an ancient and reasonably universal fertility symbol, Saint Andrew is invoked by women seeking to conceive. He is also invoked against sore throats, neck problems, swollen glands, and goiters. In Greece, Saint Andrew is invoked to strengthen and protect frail children. He is an appropriate saint to ask to guard a premature baby. Saint Andrew heals speech impediments. Californians may request his protection from the San Andreas Fault.

That's all part of his "official story." What's unofficial is Saint Andrew's association with magic, divination, and the denizens of the dark. Andrew is among the foremost of the magical saints.

Exactly why Saint Andrew possesses these associations is unknown and subject for debate. Perhaps other suppressed spirits lurk under the mask of the dedicated Apostle. Among those suggested are Norse deities Freyr and Odin, for whom the X-shape is also significant. (Andrew's strong associations with the X-shape only began in the 10th century, a time coinciding with mass converions to Christianity in Odin's old territory. Before the 10th century, Andrew is generally depicted with a standard Latin cross.)

It is also possible that depending upon locale, different spirits masquerade under the guise of the venerable saint. Alternatively, perhaps Saint Andrew himself is more complex than the official story says. Or maybe it's just that the timing of his feast falls squarely into what was for millennia considered a particularly magical time of year, and those associations were transferred to the saint.

Be that as it may, Saint Andrew's Eve, the night preceding his feast on 30 November, is considered among the most magical nights of the year and an extremely powerful time for any sort of fortunetelling and divination. Saint Andrew is the subject of much folk magic. From a magical perspective, the feast of Saint Andrew begins on the night of 29 November, continuing through the official feast on 30 November and only terminating at midnight on the 30th. The midnight hour dividing the 29th from the 30th is considered the most magically potent moment.

In German folk religion, Saint Andrew is a patron saint of lovers. Saint Andrew's Eve is thus the perfect night for love magic and divination regarding true love. Allegedly, if you fling the door of your room open at precisely midnight on Saint Andrew's Eve, you will catch a magical glimpse of your true love. In Hungarian folk tradition, if a girl fasts all day on Saint Andrew's feast day, consuming only three drops of water and three crumbs of bread, she will then dream of her true love.

Saint Andrew's Eve is considered among the finest nights of the year for *ceromancy*, divination using hot melted wax, tin, or lead. Wax is the easiest and most accessible medium, but commercially available ceromancy kits typically include small tin pellets. To divine using ceromancy:

- 1. Invoke Saint Andrew. Request that he bless you with love, good health, good fortune, or whatever you desire. Think about what you want the oracle to reveal, and request Andrew's assistance in obtaining signs and accurate interpretations.
- 2. Carefully melt the wax or tin. A double boiler or *bain marie* may be necessary.
- 3. Once the wax or tin has liquefied, pour it carefully into a bowl of ice-cold water. The wax will harden upon impact, forming some sort of shape.
- 4. Allow the wax or tin time to solidify before removing it from the water, as initially it's very pliable. The original shape may be destroyed or altered if you handle it too quickly.
- 5. Remove the wax or tin and interpret what the shape means.
- 6. If it's an auspicious shape, like a heart, add it to an amulet bag or place it on Saint Andrew's altar.

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Saint Andrew reputedly protects against all manner of evil spirits and malevolent creatures, but ghosts, vampires, and werewolves celebrate Saint Andrew's Eve, too, allegedly roaming free for the duration of the holiday. In rural Romania, Saint Andrew has a bit of a subversive reputation. It's rumored that he favors the vamps over people, or at least on this night. As they may possess the saint's protection, vampires may be especially active, brazen, and aggressive. People are advised to take precautions:

- Rub fresh garlic over door frames, windows, and keyholes to keep vampires from slipping through.
- Hang fresh garlic blossoms if you have them. Dried blossoms may be reasonably effective, too.

Of course, Saint Andrew is active all year, not only on his feast. The following actions may be accomplished at any time.

- Since he was crucified upside down on an X-shaped cross, Saint Andrew is believed able to overturn what is known as a "crossed condition." (This may mean that someone has been deliberately cursed or hexed, or it may indicate a very unfortunate person whose entire life is a cross to bear, regardless of reasons why.) Invoke Saint Andrew to remove that cross from your shoulders and bless you with good fortune.
- An X can signify cancellation, as if you were drawing an X over a contract, nullifying it. Have you signed contracts you regret? Whether these are actual legal contracts or contracts with the wrong spirits, Saint Andrew has the power to cross them out. Ask for his help.
- Traditionally, X marks the spot—as on a treasure map. Ask Saint Andrew's assistance for locating missing treasures, buried or otherwise. He can locate missing people, missing mines, missing documents, missing goods, or anything else that you can imagine.

### FAVORED PEOPLE:

- officially: those who fish; fishmongers; old maids; unmarried women; women seeking to become mothers
- unofficially: lovers; vampires; werewolves; witches

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Andrew is usually portrayed as an older man with long, sometimes disheveled, white or gray hair and an equally long beard.

**ATTRIBUTES**: Official attributes include fish, fishing nets, and the saltire (X-shaped cross). Unofficial attributes include bears and wolves.

**SPIRITUAL ALLIES**: his brother, Saint Peter. Orthodox lore suggests that Andrew traveled and preached together with Saint Simon.

**SACRED SITES:** As befits a crucially important saint, Andrew has many sacred sites associated with him:

- Andrew may have been crucified in Patras, Greece; his relics are now housed in the Basilica of Saint Andrew in Patras.
- Saint Andrew's Basilica in St. Petersburg, Russia
- Kiev's baroque Cathedral of Saint Andrew is reputedly built on the site where the saint erected a cross during his travels.
- The ruins of Saint Andrew's Cathedral, once Scotland's largest church, are open to the public. Some of Andrew's relics were once housed here but disappeared during the Reformation. There is debate as to whether they were destroyed or removed to safety.
- The Basilica of Saint Andrew in Mantua, Italy, was constructed in order to house what many consider the most crucial Christian relic, the Blood of Christ, brought to Mantua by Longinus who preserved the blood at the crucifixion.
- The seaside sanctuary of San Andrés de Teixido is perched on a cliff on the Costa da Morte (Coast of the Dead) in northwestern Spain. A local legend explains that Saint Andrew was dismayed by how few people visited his remote shrine, especially compared to the hordes thronging to the shrine of Saint James at Compostela. Andrew complained to Jesus, who compensated him by promising that no one would enter paradise before visiting Teixido. If you don't visit while alive, your soul will be forced to make the trek after

death, possibly in the form of an insect, bird, or lizard, or so goes the legend. This shrine is renowned for miracles, especially healing chronic pain and averting death from terminal illnesses and dangerous occupations. Local vendors sell bouquets of *hierba de enamorar*, a local flower rumored to be a love charm. The shrine also features an ancient sacred well. Make a wish and then drop a piece of bread into the water. If it floats, your wish will come true. If it sinks, try again—but only on a subsequent visit. GEMSTONE: chalcedony.

**FEAST:** 30 November, a day associated with fertility, fortune, happy marriage, good health, and good luck. Andrew may be petitioned for any or all of these. Because he is patron of those who fish, Saint Andrew's Day is considered an extremely auspicious day to petition for a safe, prosperous year with an abundant catch.

ALTAR: Place a net over his altar rather than an altar cloth.

**OFFERINGS**: Fish! Feed him fish dishes; offer him fish-shaped amulets and charms. Serve him Galilean wine, or arak, the beverage tough Galilean fishermen were probably drinking way back when. He reputedly likes Scotch whisky, too. Burn cross-shaped candles in his honor or to request his magical uncrossing services.

SEE ALSO Apostles; James the Greater; John the Baptist; Longinus; Peter, Saint; Simon, Saint: Triduana, Saint and Glossary: Relics.

## 👡 Anima

Anima literally means "soul" or "spirit." In the context of some Latin American spiritual traditions, it indicates souls of the dead who are still interested in the realm of the living. As such, they can be petitioned for assistance. Animas may have passed on to the next realm or may linger in ours. In the cosmology of folk Catholicism, they rank below saints but are still powerful.

Although Animas, Almitas, and Alma Benditas are all souls of the departed invoked to intercede on behalf of the living, there are fine distinctions between them. They are not identical or interchangeable.

- An Alma Bendita is the epitome of saintliness, more so than many canonized saints.
- An Almita possesses her saintly power because of how she died, not how she lived.
- An Anima may have any sort of history, personality, nature, and interests.

Many Animas are dead souls with unfinished husiness among the living so they

do not depart the earthly plane as dead souls should. Although some are generous, benevolent, and pure of heart, others possess malevolent intent and impulses.

Animas can be very appreciative and grateful for any help given them, which may manifest in blessings and protection. They may also cause trouble for individuals, families, and entire communities if they feel frustrated or thwarted.

SACRED DAY: Monday.

SEE ALSO Alma Bendita; Almita; Anima Sola.

# 👡 Anima Sola

*Anima Sola* literally means "lonely soul" or "solitary soul." It refers to a very specific votive image, now standardized and mass-produced in the form of chromolithographs, prints, and postcards, but based on older Roman Catholic votive statues. This image is particularly popular in Latin American spiritual traditions. It depicts an imprisoned woman standing amid flames eternally burning yet never consumed. (In the chromolithograph, she's surrounded by flames, but not actually burning. Subjects of older votive statues sometimes look a bit charred.) She gazes upward, holding her chained hands up, presumably toward Heaven. She is beautiful and apparently naked. Her image could be—and has been—construed as erotic.

Once upon a time, this image was intended to portray souls in Purgatory amid purifying flames. Old carved wooden statues depict both males and females in the role, often gazing directly at the viewer as if delivering a warning. However, once the image became standardized as a chromolithograph, it took on a life of its own.

Many of those attracted to this powerful, evocative image were unaware of the finer details of Roman Catholic after-life proceedings. The image was interpreted in two ways:

- As a soul burning in Hell
- As a woman burning with love

Eventually, the two concepts merged to become the modern Anima Sola—a soul who burns in Hell because once she burned too fervently with love. The Anima

Sola traded eternal salvation for the joys of love. She swore she'd pay any price, even burn eternally in Hell, in order to have the love she desired.

Another legend suggests that the Anima Sola is the solitary soul condemned to remain in Purgatory forever as punishment for mocking Christ en route to Calvary.

The Anima Sola is venerated as a folk saint or an Anima. Some believe that she can be invoked to assist those suffering in Purgatory. Through the Anima Sola's intercession, the purgatorial process can be accelerated, thus hastening the liberation of the soul. The Anima Sola may also be requested to create a living hell or purgatory for enemies. She is invoked in a desperate love spell:

- 1. When you want someone so badly that nothing else matters and you'll pay *any* price, gaze at the image of the Anima Sola and speak to her.
- 2. Promise that in exchange for the love you seek during this lifetime, after you die, you will assume her place among the purgatorial flames.
- 3. No need to offer the Anima Sola anything now. She'll be waiting for you.

There is nothing overtly Christian in the mass-produced chromolithographic image. There are no crosses or other obvious symbols. If you were totally ignorant and unaware of the Christian legend, the image is easily interpreted as a beautiful woman who is eternally burning with love but never consumed. The love she experiences never flags and is never reduced to ashes, but burns bright, true, and *hot* forever. It can be an extremely romantic image. Those who understand the Anima Sola in this way (and for whom Hell or Purgatory is not a reality and so not feared) may invoke the sacred fiery lover to help spark the flames of passion. Ask her to help you find all-consuming, eternal love.

As a child, when I saw the Anima Sola in the shop display windows of local spiritual supply stores, I assumed it was a picture of Joan of Arc. I'm not the only one to have made this mistake. In fact, this image is sometimes used to represent Joan, albeit unofficially. (You can see the Anima Sola in this context on the cover of the tribute CD, *Tower of Song: The Songs of Leonard Cohen*.) In the context of Santeria, the image of the Anima Sola sometimes represents the great crossroads spirit, Elegba, or his mother, while in Haitian Vodou, this image may be used to represent Ezili La Flambeau, a spirit of burning love.

FAVORED PEOPLE: lovers; those who died in sin.

SACRED DAY: Monday.

COLORS: pink; red.

**OFFERINGS:** Anima Sola votive candles and images; bottles of water.

SEE ALSO Anima; Joan of Arc; Seven African Powers and Glossary: Santeria; Syncretism; Vodou, Voodoo, Hoodoo.

## 👡 Anna Pendragon

Also called Anna of Gwent; Anna of Oxenhall.

CLASSIFICATION: Arthurian saint; Roman Catholic saint.

In the context of physical healing, either Morgan le Fay or the Lady of the Lake may have tended the wounded King Arthur, but Anna Pendragon (born c. 445) is the saint who literally nursed him, serving as his wet-nurse. Anna was the second wife of the Welsh noble known in Arthurian romances as Sir Ector. When Merlin brought baby Arthur to their home as a foster child, Anna nursed him along with her own many babies. (Anna's grandfather may be the tyrannical Vortigern who first publicly exposed the young boy Merlin as a magician.) Sir Kay, Arthur's foster-brother—in Welsh, *Cai Hir*—is among Anna's children. (According to Welsh tradition, Sir Kay became a hermit and was venerated as a saint, complete with shrine, after his death.)

When Arthur became king, Anna and family spent much time at his court. After the death of her husband, she married a prince of Brittany with whom she had another three children, including Saint Samson. Anna is the grandmother of Saint Teilo by one of the daughters of this second marriage. Samson eventually persuaded his parents to enter the religious life.

SACRED SITES: Various places throughout Wales may be named for Anna. She may or may not be associated with several healing wells, including the Holy Well of Saint Anne in the Woods at Brislington, near Bristol. (Others argue that the Saint Anne associated with this well was Jesus' grandmother, not Teilo's.)

# 👡 Anna Selbdritt, Saint

Anna Selbdritt is German for "Saint Anne with two others." The two others in question are Mary and Jesus. Anne, Mary, and Jesus—grandmother, mother, and son—formed a trinity that was venerated especially in the German lands. Anna Selbdritt was a popular subject of paintings and carved images.

However, Anna Selbdritt names more than just an artistic theme. Saint Anna Selbdritt was the subject of a spiritual tradition dating back to the 14th century. The name Anna Selbdritt was used to indicate the entire grouping of three. It is no accident that the images are named Anna Selbdritt and not Jesus or Mary Selbdritt. Inevitably, Saint Anne is the most prominent figure depicted.

Although variations exist, usually both Mary and Jesus are portrayed sitting on the lap of the substantially larger Anne. She serves as the throne for Mary and Jesus, both of whom may be depicted as children. (Mary may also be shown as a young woman.) Some of the Anna Selbdritt images are reminiscent of Russian *matryoshka* nesting dolls, with each figure progressively smaller than the next.

The images were extremely popular. However, some perceived the images, as well as the cult of Anna Selbdritt, as subversive and controversial. Emphasis was placed on Christ's female lineage and on veneration of Anne who, in this spiritual tradition, was regarded as the root of all salvation.

The Anna Selbdritt tradition considered Anne to be the mother of Mary Cleophas and Mary Salomé as well, and thus the grandmother of many saints. Popular veneration attributed characteristics of a Pagan Great Mother Goddess to Anne. Martin Luther was extremely offended by this devotion to Anne and he specifically attacked Anna Selbdritt imagery.

Anna Selbdritt was a popular subject for various Northern Masters, including Albrecht Dürer. Although an unusual subject for Italian painters, she was a popular theme for Leonardo da Vinci, who sometimes included John the Baptist in the grouping.

SEE ALSO Anne, Saint; John the Baptist; Mary; Marys of the Sea.

👡 Anne, Saint

Also known as Ann; Anna; Hannah.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint in virtually all Christian traditions.

Saint Anne is venerated as the mother of Mary and the grandmother of Jesus. Technically, nothing is known of Mary's parentage. Her parents are not mentioned in any of the official Gospels. The first source to name Anne and her husband, Joachim, as Mary's parents is the apocryphal Gospel of Saint James, which may have been written in the second century, although the earliest surviving copy of the book is from the third. It is the earliest surviving document attesting to veneration of Mary.

According to legend, Anne and Joachim were elderly when Mary was born and had been childless for a very long time. Depending on tradition, Mary may be believed to be Anne's only child, although other traditions suggest that Anne was married three times and bore a daughter to each husband—in which case, her other daughters are Mary Cleophas and Mary Salomé. Arguments are also made that there was no historical Saint Anne:

- Female lineage was rarely recorded in first-century Judea.
- The story of Mary's childhood may be based on that of the prophet Samuel, whose mother was also a once-barren woman named Anna.
- Samuel, like Mary, was dedicated to the Temple at age three.

Be that as it may, Saint Anne is renowned for the miracles she produces. Veneration of Anne as a saint began in the Eastern Church in the sixth century, when Emperor Justinian dedicated a church to her in Constantinople. In the eighth century, Pope Constantine introduced veneration of Anne into the Roman Catholic Church, but she was not widely venerated in Catholic regions until the late Middle Ages. Her feast remained unofficial until 1584.

When a woman's body was discovered in France during the reign of King Charlemagne (768–814), a previously mute boy suddenly announced: "Here lies the body of Anne, mother of the Blessed Virgin Mary." Accepting that his sudden ability to speak was both a miracle and divinely inspired, the head was sent to Cologne as a relic.

Anne is beloved. Possibly because Anne is one of the few female saints who

is not a virgin or a martyr but was wife, mother, and grandmother, many devotees identify with her and—perhaps more significantly—perceive that she will be sympathetic to common people with everyday problems. Her veneration is extremely widespread. In some areas, it is conventional and within sanctioned church boundaries; elsewhere, a subversive element may exist. It is theorized that her great popularity in parts of Europe, sometimes overshadowing that of Mary and Jesus, derives from syncretism with suppressed Pagan spirits, possibly because her name resembles those of previously worshipped goddesses.

- In Ireland, for example, she may be syncretized with the solar goddess Aine.
- In other Celtic regions, devotion to Anne may have absorbed the previous veneration of mother goddesses like Anna, Dana, and Nonna.
- In rural Europe, especially Brittany, Anne's feast is celebrated with torch-lit processions and rituals that resemble those once dedicated to Greek mother goddess Demeter and her daughter, Persephone.

Many healing wells are dedicated to Saint Anne. Saint Ann's Well at Buxton, Derbyshire, England, once associated with the Celtic goddess Arnemetia, was rededicated to Anne when a miracle-producing statue was discovered in the well. Although the statue may possibly have been a hidden votive image of outlawed Arnemetia, the devout Christians who discovered it identified the statue as Saint Anne. (It was destroyed during the Reformation. There is no way now to determine the image's original identity. No images of Arnemetia survive or have yet been unearthed and identified.)

Likewise, in 1625, Yves Nicolayic, a farmer, was plowing a field in Morbihan, Brittany, when he unearthed a statue of a woman holding two babies. Although it may have been a previously buried Pagan statue, to the eyes of the Christian farmer, it resembled a saint. He brought the image to the local Carmelite monks, who identified it as Saint Anne and built her a chapel. The image was destroyed during the French Revolution; however, a new basilica was built on the site of the original chapel in 1870.

In France, Anne is sometimes associated with what can be described as Black Madonna images. The oldest votive object in France known to be continuously black since its creation—as opposed to whitened Black Madonnas—as well as the largest image in Chartres Cathedral is the window of Saint Anne donated in the 12th century by Saint Louis.

According to New Orleans folk tradition, Saint Anne provides husbands for women who seek them. Rhyming chants beseech her aid: "Saint Anne, Saint Anne, bring me a man!" and variations like, "Saint Anne, Saint Anne, find me a man!" or "Saint Anne, Saint Anne, send me a man!"

Anne oversees childbirth, providing safety to mother and child during labor. She grants freedom to prisoners and is invoked for a peaceful death. There is allegedly no miracle she cannot produce. Her path of Saint Anne de Beaupré provides miracles of healing and safety at sea. In the Dominican African Diaspora spiritual tradition known as the Twenty-one Divisions, Saint Anne is identified with the spirit (*metresa*) Anaisa Pyé.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: crafters of brooms and besoms; cabinetmakers; carpenters; grandparents; women who wish to wed; childless people; pregnant women; mothers; lace makers; miners; seamstresses; equestrians; vintage and second-hand clothes dealers.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Anne is frequently depicted in the company of her young daughter, Mary. In some Italian traditions, she is portrayed wearing a green mantle.

ATTRIBUTES: book; door.

SACRED DAY: Monday.

SACRED PLANTS: chamomile; Queen Anne's lace; roses, especially red ones.

COLORS: white; red; green.

**RITUAL**: Saint Anne's Chaplets—prayer beads used in rituals and petitions dedicated to Saint Anne—are traditionally formed from one Saint Anne medal and three groups of five beads, with each grouping separated by one larger, or distinct, bead, for a total of eighteen beads. The single larger beads may be in the shape of a rose.

#### SACRED SITES:

- Saint Anne's Church in Jerusalem
- National Chrine of Caint Anna in Useanay Dhilippines

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- Saint Anne's Cathedral in Belfast
- Saint Anne's Cathedral in Leeds
- the Chapel of Saint Anne in Rocamadour, France
- the Basilica of Saint Anne d'Auray in Brittany
- Lac Sainte-Anne in Alberta, Canada, where a large shrine stands beside the lake, previously known as Spirit Lake and considered sacred by local Native Americans. The lake reputedly has healing powers and miraculous cures have been attributed to bathing in it, as well as from drinking the water.
- Basilica of the National Shrine of Saint Anne in Scranton, Pennsylvania
- the Saint Anne Shrine in Fiskdale (Sturbridge), Massachusetts, which incorporates the Saint Anne Shrine Memorial Gardens
- Saint Anne's Shrine on Isle Lamotte in Vermont's Champlain Islands
- The Saint Ann Shrine on Ursulines Avenue in New Orleans, which was dedicated in 1902. A grotto replicating that of Lourdes was eventually incorporated. Although the original shrine still exists and may be visited, it was decommissioned in 1971 when the National Shrine of Saint Ann was transferred to Metairie, just outside New Orleans.

FEASTS: 25 July (Eastern calendar); 26 July (Western calendar).

**REALMS**: Anne has dominion over subterranean realms, including mines and caves, and by extension, wombs.

**OFFERINGS**: chamomile tea; water; wine; flowers; candles, especially white ones.

SEE ALSO Amadour, Saint; Anna Pendragon; Anna Selbdritt; Anne of Beaupré, Saint; Louis; Mary; Marys of the Sea; Non, Saint and Glossary: Black Madonna; Path; Relics; Syncretism.

## 👡 Anne de Beaupré, Saint

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

In 1650, Breton sailors caught in a bad storm near Quebec vowed to build a sanctuary for Saint Anne if she helped them reach shore and safety. She heard their plea and the sailors built the shrine of Beaupré, now expanded to a basilica, thirty miles east of Quebec City.

The votive statue of Saint Anne of Beaupré is called the Statue of Miracles. It may be a Black Madonna. (This is a controversial topic; others swear vociferously that she is not.) Thousands of pilgrims visit her annually, leaving petitions at the base of her image.

Saint Anne de Beaupré is credited as the source of countless miracles, the first occurring during construction of the church. According to legend, if you climb the stone steps on your knees, Saint Anne will grant the favor you request. The stairs are littered with abandoned braces, crutches, and wheelchairs. Still more are on display in the shrine.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: sailors and anyone who needs her. She is the matron of Canada and Canadians, especially Canadians at sea, literally or metaphorically.

**OFFERING:** Grateful devotees make the pilgrimage on foot from Montreal.

SEE ALSO Anne, Saint and Glossary: Black Madonna; Path.

### ∼ Anthony of the Desert

Also known as Anthony of Egypt; Anthony Abbot; Antonio Abad; Anthony of Qozhaya; Anthony the Great; Anthony the Anchorite.

**EPITHET:** Father of All Monks.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by virtually all branches of Christianity.

Saint Anthony (c. 251–17 January 356), prototype of the desert hermit, was born to wealthy Christians in a small village south of Memphis, Egypt. When he was eighteen, his parents died. Anthony, their heir, made some financial arrangements on behalf of his sister and then sold all his possessions, including home and land. He gave the proceeds to the poor and took a vow of poverty.

Anthony joined a nearby community of anchorites, moving into an empty crypt. Seeking solitude at around age thirty-five, he retreated to the desert, where he lived alone in an abandoned fort for the next twenty years. His reputation as a miracle worker was already established and people journeyed to see him, seeking assistance. Sometimes Anthony barricaded the fort so they'd leave him alone. He was unable, however, to barricade the door against the demons who assailed him, sometimes physically attacking him almost to the point of death. Anthony taught, founded monasteries, and ultimately retired to a cave on Mount Kolzim near the Red Sea, where he died of natural causes. After he died, his friend and future fellow saint Athanasius wrote an account of his life. It is the primary source for all information regarding Anthony. Saint Anthony is frequently described as the "father of monasticism."

Because Anthony valued solitude so much, he is petitioned to banish house guests:

- 1. Hold your broom in your hands while invoking Saint Anthony.
- 2. When you're finished, turn the broom upside down and lean it against the back door.
- 3. It wouldn't hurt to simultaneously burn a candle for Anthony. If he comes through for you, make charitable donations or feed the hungry in his name.

Saint Anthony banished demons when he was alive and may be petitioned to do so now.

Don't get your Saint Anthonys confused. Saint Anthony of Padua is the goodnatured, tolerant one who reconciles gay lovers and lets you turn his image upside down. Saint Anthony of the Desert was an ascetic, severe, judgmental man in life and remains so in death. Don't fool around with him. Don't even think of turning *his* statue upside down. This saint is feared as much as he is loved and is known to curse as well as bless. Always treat him with respect.

Consider the legend of the young man standing in the crowd during an Italian processional honoring Saint Anthony of the Desert. The votive statue suddenly appeared before him, startling him, so he jokingly offered Anthony a cigarette. He was immediately struck blind and mute. (Not deaf, you'll note—the saint made sure the young man would have to listen to endless discussions of why he had been cursed but be unable to respond.) Because he can be such a harsh saint, it is traditional to swear oaths before Saint Anthony in the belief that no one would ever lie, as his punishment is so swift and severe. There are many legends regarding people who disrespected Anthony and then burned to death in mysterious, inexplicable fires.

Saint Anthony is invoked to heal skin ailments and to protect domestic animals. He is petitioned against all sorts of rashes, shingles, eczema, psoriasis, and skin cancers. If a skin ailment cannot be diagnosed, Anthony may be able to help. Saint Anthony would be the spirit to invoke in case of emergencies like flesh-eating bacteria or gangrene.

Saint Anthony's Fire may refer to ergotism, erysipelas (a highly contagious bacterial skin infection), or shingles (herpes zoster). Saint Anthony of the Desert is credited with miraculously healing all these conditions.

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The historical Anthony had very little to do with animals. He once confronted a hyena and a monster with a donkey's foot; they were later revealed to be demons. When wild animals damaged Anthony's garden, he banished them, abjuring them to leave in the name of Christ and never return. He is sometimes described as a vegetarian, but that's an understatement. He subsisted on nothing but bread and water, a reflection of his extreme ascetism, not because he was the ancient equivalent of an animal rights activist.

That said, Anthony is now renowned as the guardian of domestic animals, especially pigs. Anthony himself is rarely seen without his companion, a pink pig. Animals are traditionally blessed in churches on his feast day. Invoke him if any sort of livestock needs healing. Associations of Anthony with animals emerged during the medieval era. Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*, written c. 1350, references Saint Anthony protecting livestock. A legend first documented in 1534 describes Saint Anthony teleporting to Barcelona, where a sow had invoked him to heal her ailing piglet.

One theory suggests that because lard was a traditional salve used for skin ailments, pigs were added to Saint Anthony's votive imagery to indicate his role as a miraculous healer of these ailments. Those unfamiliar with the medicinal properties of lard misunderstood the imagery, began petitioning Saint Anthony for assistance with their animals, and found the saint helpful and amenable.

Pigs were as repugnant to devotees of traditional Egyptian religion as they are to modern Jews and Muslims. Swineherds, of whom Anthony is a patron, were the equivalent of untouchables in ancient Egypt. It was a pariah occupation. Anthony's close association with pigs may identify him as a Christian, the only occupant of the Egyptian desert who would associate with pigs. Alternatively, the path of Anthony who protects animals may really be a suppressed Pagan spirit wearing the mask of the desert father. Yet another theory suggests that the image of the ascetic monk beside the fat pink pig is emblematic of victory over gluttony and temptation.

Ironically, although while he was alive, Saint Anthony ate almost nothing, as

a saint, he is associated with magical ritual foods:

- Eating dried chestnuts on his feast day allegedly protects against mosquitoes.
- In Italy's Piedmont, Anthony's feast is celebrated with *foccacce* that has been colored gold with saffron. *Foccacce*, the plural of *foccaccio*, are flat breads that resemble modern pizza crust. These are not intended for consumption but are preserved as talismans to help sick animals. If animals become ill, they are fed bits of this blessed bread to heal them.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: bakers; basket makers; butchers; brush makers; cemetery workers; gravediggers; monks; hermits; those who wish to be left alone; swineherds; firefighters; bell ringers and bell makers.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: He is virtually always accompanied by a pig.

**ATTRIBUTES**: bell, book, and crutch; tau cross (also called Saint Anthony's cross) or tau cross with a bell attached.

COLORS: white; pink.

SACRED ANIMAL: pig.

FEAST: 17 January.

**SACRED SITES:** In life, Anthony preferred remote desert locations. Shrines dedicated to him include:

- Saint Anthony's Monastery (Coptic) at the foot of Al-Qalzam Mountain near Al Zaafarana, Egypt, founded in 356 ce just following the saint's death and the oldest active monastery on earth
- Saint Anthony's Cave, his dwelling, is a two-kilometer hike from this Egyptian mountainside monastery.
- Church of Sant'Antonio Abate in Velletri, Italy
- the Monastery of the Tau in Pistoia, Italy
- the Monastery of Saint Anthony in Lebanon's Wadi Qadisha (Holy Valley) where the Cave of Saint Anthony, known locally as "the cave of the mad," once sheltered those brought to the shrine so that Anthony could exorcise their demons and heal mental illness.

**OFFERINGS:** 

- If you identify with the strict desert father, offer him bread, water, lots of prayers, candles, and charitable deeds. Offer to fast if he fulfills your petition. Offer some sort of severe penance.
- If you identify with the more jocular, animal-loving version of Saint Anthony, then offer him pink marzipan or peppermint pigs as well.
- If he does a substantial favor for you—healing melanomas, flesh-eating bacteria, or gangrene—make a pilgrimage to one of his shrines or, if you can't, make some sort of charitable donation in his honor.

SEE ALSO Anthony of Padua; Rafqa Rayess, Saint; Seven African Powers and Glossary: Anchorite; Path.

### ∾ Anthony of Padua

Also known as Antoine; Antal; Anton; Antonio; Antanas.

**EPITHETS:** The Wonder Worker; The Marrying Saint.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic Saint.

Saint Anthony (1195–13 June 1231) was born in Lisbon, Portugal. Rejecting his wealthy background, he became a poor Franciscan but eventually left the order, traveling to Morocco as a missionary. Shipwrecked in Sicily, he lived in a cave for a while, leaving only to attend Mass and sweep a neighboring monastery.

One day when a scheduled speaker failed to appear, the other monks convinced Anthony to preach instead. His words were so impressive that he began traveling constantly, preaching and speaking throughout France and Italy. Anthony was fluent in several languages and was allegedly so eloquent that even fish stopped to listen to him. He developed a reputation as a miracle worker that continues to this day.

A much-loved son of the Church, Anthony of Padua was canonized on 30 May 1232, less than a year after his death at age thirty-six. He is sometimes described as the "fastest saint," indicating the speed of his canonization as well as his famously quick response to favors requested. He was proclaimed a Doctor of the Church on 16 January 1946.

That's the official story. Unofficially, Saint Anthony is renowned in folk Catholicism as a tireless provider of miracles. He has developed something of a reputation as a witch doctor and is invoked in countless magic spalls. His special gift is locating lost items. He may be invoked on behalf of anyone or anything that is lost, ranging from misplaced keys to lost love to lost souls. He is invoked with a rhyme:

Tony, Tony, look around! Help me find what must be found!

There are many variations of this rhyme, for instance:

Tony, Tony, look around! Something's lost and must be found!

- If a rhyme seems insufficient, attach a representation of the missing object to a candle dedicated to Saint Anthony and request its return.
- If the rhyme seems too casual, a more official version suggests reciting the prayer, *Si quaeris miracula (If Thou Seek a Miracle)*, composed by Fra Giuliano da Spira in 1252 for the purpose of requesting the return of the lost.

Anthony's reputation is based on a legend that credits him with using his spiritual powers to recover items stolen from his monastery. Although Saint Anthony's assistance may be invoked for anything, his gift for locating the lost has led to his reputation as "the marrying saint." After all, what is more elusive than true love or a compatible spouse? Consequently, Saint Anthony is invoked in as many love spells as Aphrodite.

He may also be petitioned for lost memories or lost powers (speech, mobility, independence). He helps insomniacs find sleep. Petition him to locate missing people or to return run-away brides or grooms.

Anthony also allegedly helps women help men find lost potency. He may be petitioned to break the notorious curse cast by aiguillette, which affects male sexual ability, but apparently only if asked to do so by a woman. Reginald Scot, the 16th-century author of *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, recorded a magic spell in 1584 that tells a woman to craft a wax image of her husband's member and place it on an altar dedicated to Saint Anthony, petitioning that it be endowed with better disposition, courage, and ability.

Call Saint Anthony's name aloud nine times to obtain his blessing

#### and protection.

Although they share the same name, iconography, and feast day, some believe that magical Saint Anthony is not identical to official Anthony of Padua. Instead, they believe that a forbidden spirit may have donned the mask of the official saint. In real life, Saint Anthony was not meek but had a blistering tongue. His background was aristocratic, not humble. He did not indulge in love spells. So who is responding to all the spells and delivering miracles?

Some believe it to be a now unknown Italian spirit. Others argue that it's the trickster Hermes in disguise. Alternately, it may be Adonis under the mask, a spirit intimately acquainted with matters of love:

- Adonis was worshipped by Phoenicians in what is now Portugal.
- Adoni, as the name may have been pronounced by Phoenicians, resembles Anthony.

The figure of Saint Anthony is somewhat androgynous; some have even suggested that it may derive from images of the goddess Kybele holding her baby, Attis. Saint Anthony is also syncretized to various African Diaspora spirits, including Elegba and Ogun. He serves in the court of María Lionza.

People can be very cruel to Saint Anthony. If he isn't working fast enough, some traditions advise turning his image upside down to encourage him to work faster. (Some believe he likes it rough.) Alternatively, some suspend his image upside down from the ceiling on a rope, refusing to turn it right side up until the saint has produced the desired miracle. In Peru, a spell to reconcile lovers involves taking the infant from Saint Anthony's arms and announcing that it won't be returned until Anthony pays the ransom—that is, until he effects the desired reconciliation.

You can also petition Saint Anthony for financial assistance:

#### Petition Saint Anthony for Financial Assistance

- 1. Write the names of everyone in the household on small slips of paper. (Alternatively, write only the names of breadwinners or potential breadwinners.)
- 2. Place the name papers in a fireproof bowl.
- 3. Sprinkle them with dried basil, cinnamon, and parsley, and cover with

sufficient olive oil.

- 4. Add a floating wick, or add one wick for each name paper.
- 5. You have created a magic lamp that should be burned on an altar dedicated to Saint Anthony on a Tuesday.
- 6. Repeat this for nine consecutive Tuesdays accompanied by prayer and petition to Anthony. It wouldn't hurt to make some sort of charitable donation in his name as a show of good faith, too.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: Saint Anthony is an exceptionally generous spirit and accepts petitions from everyone; however, he is specifically the patron saint of amputees (those who have lost limbs), the oppressed, orphans, Native Americans, those born on a Tuesday or on the thirteenth day of any month, those who have been drafted, expectant mothers, women who are unable to conceive, the elderly, those who work with spices, fishermen, mariners, employees of all aspects of the travel industry, merchants, shopkeepers, and thieves.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: A man in the brown robes of a Franciscan holds a baby in one hand and a lily in the other. (According to legend, Anthony was busy studying when he saw the infant Jesus playing. Anthony offered to carry him and has been holding him ever since.)

**ATTRIBUTES**: fish; infant; lilies.

**SPIRITUAL ALLIES:** Anthony is frequently invoked along with Saint Lucy and Saint Martha.

**SACRED DAY:** Anthony is reputedly most generous on Tuesdays. Tuesday evening is allegedly the most effective time to contact him. Anthony's body was returned to Padua as he desired on a Tuesday and so it is his favorite day.

FEASTS: 13 June; 12 June in Brazil.

NUMBER: 13.

**FESTIVAL:** An annual feast at the end of August honors Anthony in Boston's North End, the largest Italian religious festival in New England.

COLOR: brown.

SACRED SITES:

- The Basilica of Saint Anthony in Padua houses Anthony's body and is visited by more than five million pilgrims annually. Relics including Anthony's tongue, vocal chords, and chin are on display. In 1991, the chin was kidnapped and held for ransom, but Italian police broke the Venetian mob cell responsible for the crime and the relic was recovered.
- His tomb was originally in the Chapel of the Madonna Mora, a Black Madonna of Padua. Anthony may have brought this Black Madonna from France himself.
- Saint Anthony's Chapel in Pittsburgh houses over 5000 relics, reputedly the largest collection open for public viewing.
- Saint Anthony Cathedral in Istanbul is the largest Roman Catholic cathedral in Turkey.
- The Church of Saint Anthony in Uvari, Tamil Nadu, India, is home of a miraculous statue of Saint Anthony. The crew of a Portuguese ship sailing near Uvari approximately 450 years ago contracted cholera. The ship's carpenter carved an image of Saint Anthony and the crew miraculously recovered. When they docked in Uvari, they created a small shrine for Anthony. In the 1940s, villagers built a church for the statue, which allegedly produces miracles daily.
- Saint Anthony's Shrine in Colombo, Sri Lanka, houses a miraculous statue that contains a piece of Anthony's incorrupt tongue.
- the Shrine of Saint Anthony in Ellicott City, Maryland, near Baltimore
- the National Shrine of Saint Anthony in Cincinnati, Ohio

**OFFERING**: Offer him a single lily when making your request; a larger, more lavish bouquet should be presented upon fulfillment. Give him heart-shaped exvotos if invoking him as the patron of broken hearts. Saint Anthony also appreciates charitable donations and efforts on behalf of hungry people and the welfare of domestic animals. A big cigar and a stiff drink may be appreciated, too.

SEE ALSO Anthony of the Desert; Expedite; Lucy, Saint; María Lionza; Martha, Saint; Seven African Powers; Zita, Saint and Glossary: Black Madonna; Syncretism.

# ∾ Antonietta Meo, Venerable

Also known as Nennolina; Antonietta of Jesus.

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint, canonization pending.

Antonietta Meo was born in Rome on 15 December 1930. Described as a lively, mischievous, intelligent, and charismatic child, she came from a deeply religious, middle-class family. Her nickname was Nennolina, the name by which many of her devotees now address her. She demonstrated precocious spiritual inclinations, composing letters to Jesus nightly from the time she was four.

At age five, while playing, Antonietta fell and hurt her knee. Although the injury did not initially appear serious, it did not heal and so she was taken to a physician who diagnosed bone cancer (osteosarcoma). Antonietta's leg was amputated on 25 April 1936. She was fitted with a heavy prosthetic so that she could continue to play with other children.

The cancer spread throughout Antonietta's body. Despite the severity of her illness and pain, Antonietta bravely maintained her high spirits, as well as an innate spiritual maturity. She has been described as serene in the face of death. Antonietta embraced her pain, considering it an offering to Jesus and telling her father: "Pain is like fabric; the stronger it is, the more it is worth."

When Antonietta was five and a half years old, she requested that she be allowed to participate in the Roman Catholic sacrament of confession. She prayed that Jesus would send her a good confessor, as she desired to become a saint. Her parents, fearing the worst, moved up the date for her first communion. In preparation, her mother began giving her religious instruction every night. She had her first communion in December 1936. Antonietta Meo died on 3 July 1937. She was six years old.

In the final months of her life, Antonietta began writing letters to Jesus, Mary, and God, first dictating them to her mother or older sister, but eventually writing letters and poems by hand. (She also wrote one letter to Saint Agnes and another to Thérèse of Lisieux.) Antonietta wrote or dictated over 100 letters, which were left underneath a small statue of the Divine Child that stood at the foot of her bed. Although many were lost, some of Antonietta's letters and poems have been preserved and theologians describe her as a "mystic" based on these, as well as the visions she experienced and described.

On 2 June 1937, just a month before her death, Antonietta wrote: "Dear Jesus, I thank You for having sent me this illness because it is a means to get to Paradise. Dear Jesus, tell God the Father that I love Him, too. Dear Jesus, I want

to be Your lamp and Your lily, dear Jesus. Dear Jesus, give me the strength to bear this pain that I offer to You for sinners . . . Dear Jesus, tell sweet Virgin Mary that I love Her so much and I want to stay with Her on Calvary because I want to be Your victim of love . . ." That letter is now printed on the back of holy cards bearing Antonietta's image. The lamp and lily serve as her attributes.

Antonietta was deeply attached to Thérèse of Lisieux, the saint known as the Little Flower, who promised to send showers of roses as signs of her grace. In turn, Antonietta promised that showers of lilies would be her symbol. On 23 June 1937, Antonietta underwent the resection of three ribs with only local anesthesia, as her condition was too poor to permit anything stronger. When her mother attempted to comfort her, telling Antonietta that when she improved they'd visit the beach, Antonietta responded by telling her mother to be happy because she would "be out of here in less than ten days." The night before her death, Antonietta appeared to her mother in a dream to advise her of her imminent departure. She told her mother in the dream that she should have lived a few days longer, but that Thérèse had said, "It's enough." Shortly after Antonietta's death, her mother had a vision that reassured her that her daughter was in Heaven.

The drive for Antonietta's sainthood began immediately after her death. Within a year, two biographies of the little girl were published in Italy. In December 1938, her father requested that Antonietta's amputated leg, which had been buried separately after the operation, be exhumed and placed beside her corpse. The leg, discovered to be intact and incorrupt, was enclosed in a box and buried near Antonietta.

The cause for Antonietta's sainthood was opened in 1942 but was controversial because of her age. After much discussion and debate, in 1981, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints published an official declaration recognizing that even young children are able to realize heroic acts of faith, hope, and charity and can thus be declared saints. On 18 December 2007, Pope Benedict XVI authorized the Congregation to publish and circulate the decree of Antonietta's "heroic virtue." Should Antonietta Meo be canonized, as it is widely believed she will be, she will be the youngest Roman Catholic saint who is not a martyr.

Miracles are attributed to her. One has been verified by the Vatican. A woman from Indiana who suffered from hepatitis C attributes her healing to Antonietta's intervention.

FAVORED PEOPLE: ailing children; the terminally ill.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Several photographs of Antonietta survive, including a picture taken at her first communion. The most popular photograph shows a dark-haired little girl with a pageboy hairstyle, large dark eyes, and a pensive smile.

ATTRIBUTES: lamp and lily.

**SACRED SITE**: Her remains are housed in a shrine near the Chapel of Relics in Rome's Basilica di Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, where she was baptized. Her body was moved within the walls of this church on 5 July 1999, the anniversary of her 1937 funeral.

**FEASTS**: 3 July, the date of her death; 5 July, the anniversary of the transfer of her relics.

**OFFERINGS**: lilies; candles; gifts appropriate for a little girl, including religious jewelry like a rosary or cross.

SEE ALSO Agnes, Saint; Charlene; Cyr, Saint; Mary; Thérèse of Lisieux and Glossary: Attribute; Relics.

## 👡 Apollonia, Saint

CLASSIFICATION: Coptic, Eastern Orthodox, and Roman Catholic saint.

For centuries, the city of Alexandria, Egypt, was beset with contentious religious turmoil, periodically erupting in violence and rioting. In 249 ce, a mob attacked a group of Christians including Apollonia, a deaconess and street preacher. Her teeth were smashed out with a club. An alternative legend suggests she was tortured by having them extracted with pincers. She either was then pushed into a bonfire or escaped her captors by jumping into one rather than renouncing her faith as demanded. Because technically she may have committed suicide, Apollonia's status is controversial; however, she is an official saint and is venerated as a Christian martyr.

Just prior to her immolation, Apollonia vowed that anyone who recalled her faith, pain, and suffering in their prayers would never suffer toothache. She is invoked in all matters of dental health and can miraculously heal dental pain. By the 15th century, Apollonia was among the most popular of all saints.

Apollonia has long inspired artists. The Royal Dental Institute of Stockholm possesses a collection of over 150 portraits of Apollonia donated by a Stockholm dentist. In the summer of 2009, an art exhibit entitled "Santa Apollonia" was held in Venice featuring portraits of the saint by artists Andy Warhol and Omar Galliani. Warhol was fascinated by Apollonia's tale and completed a series of four prints dedicated to her in 1984.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: dentists; dental hygienists; anyone working therapeutically with teeth.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: a woman wearing a gilded tooth on a chain. Although Apollonia is described as an older woman, she is usually portrayed as youthful. A wooden statue housed in London's Science Museum portrays her as a beautiful young girl standing between two tormentors. One binds her with rope while the other brandishes her pulled tooth in his pliers.

**ATTRIBUTES**: pincers holding a huge molar; a gold tooth; sometimes her tooth glows as if lit from within; martyr's palm branch.

FEAST: 9 February.

SACRED SITES: The church dedicated to her in Rome near the Basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere no longer exists, but its square, the Piazza Sant'Apollonia, remains. Apollonia's head is preserved at the Basilica of Santa Maria in Trastevere. Other relics are distributed throughout churches around the globe. Other churches dedicated to her include the Church of Saint Apollonia in Salerno, Italy, and her shrine in Beaumont-les-Autels, France.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; dental tools; teeth; contributions and assistance for those needing dental healing. It is traditional for dentists to visit her shrines and churches on her feast day.

SEE ALSO Fourteen Holy Helpers.

∼ Apostles, The

Also known as The Twelve

The word *apostle* derives from a Greek word meaning "person sent." In the context of Christianity, "apostle" refers, in general, to the earliest missionaries. However, "*the* Apostles" refers specifically to the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ. The list of these disciples' names varies in the different books of the gospel. Saints Luke, Paul, and Matthias may also be counted among them, but in terms of folk magic, it is the original twelve who are considered together.

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The list, according to the Book of Matthew 10:2–4, includes Andrew, Simon Peter, James the son of Zebedee, his brother John, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James the son of Alpheus, Judas Thaddeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot. With the exception of Judas Iscariot, each of the Apostles is venerated as a saint in most branches of Christianity. (Judas Iscariot is considered an unofficial saint in some regions.) However, the Apostles are also venerated and invoked together as a team. Perhaps because the twelve Apostles resemble a twelve-member jury, they are invoked in magic spells involving justice and legal issues.

John George Hohman's *Book of Pow-Wows: The Long Lost Friend*, first published in 1820, is a compendium of Pow-Wow lore, a combination of German folk magic, high ritual magic, Kabbalah, Gypsy magic, and Native American healing traditions. *The Book of Pow-Wows* recommends writing the names of the Apostles on sage leaves. Slip these into the shoes you wear, especially when in the courtroom, so that they travel with you to provide support, victory, and justice.

The Apostles may also be requested to provide a hung jury—a divided jury unable to come to a consensus. After all, only eleven Apostles shared a common goal and consensus. Judas Iscariot pursued an independent agenda:

- 1. Write the names of eleven Apostles, excluding Judas Iscariot, in two columns on a small slip of paper. One column will have five names; the other will have six.
- 2. Fold this paper and place it inside your right shoe.
- 3. Write "Judas Iscariot" on another slip of paper and place this one inside your left shoe.
- 4. Request that the Apostles transfer their contentiousness to the jury.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: The Apostles are envisioned dressed as bishops or else barefoot and wearing the garb of first-century Judeans.

**ATTRIBUTE**: Their shared attribute is a scroll or book, although each Apostle also has individual attributes.

**FEAST:** 15 July is the feast of all the Apostles, but each one also has his own personal feast.

SEE ALSO Andrew; Bartholomew; James the Greater; Judas Iscariot; Jude; Myrrh Bearers, Holy; James the Just; John the Revelator; Luke, Saint; Paul, Saint; Peter; Simon; Thomas.

#### 👡 Aquilina, Saint

CLASSIFICATION: Maronite, Orthodox, and Roman Catholic saint.

Aquilina was born in the city of Byblos in approximately 281. Byblos is now in modern Lebanon but was then under Roman rule. Her name means "little eagle." She was a fervent Christian who was actively preaching by the age of twelve. Her activities, combined with her youth, drew the attention of authorities, who apparently imagined that a warning would be sufficient to scare her. The magistrate ordered Aquilina to stop preaching and prove her obedience by making public offerings to Pagan deities or else face dire punishment. Aquilina refused, announcing that she aspired to martyrdom.

Aquilina was beaten, stripped of her clothing, and flogged with rods. Asked whether she had reconsidered her decision, she adamantly refused to stop preaching. She was then tortured with a small, sharp rake. When she fainted from pain, heated iron rods were forced through her ears, causing her brain to spill out through her nose. She appeared to be dead, although she was not. Her torturers tossed what they assumed to be her corpse outside the city wall to be consumed by feral dogs. In other versions of her legend, Aquilina was actually buried alive.

An angel rescued and healed Aquilina. Rather than run away, she returned to the magistrate, who, instead of hailing her apparent resurrection as a miracle, accused her of being a sorceress. She was imprisoned and ordered beheaded the next morning. When guards arrived on 13 June 291 to carry out the death sentence, they discovered Aquilina already dead in her cell. They beheaded her anyway, perhaps to ensure that this time she was really dead.

Local Christians buried the twelve-year-old girl's body outside the city. Her

grave soon evolved into a shrine and a pilgrimage site, renowned for miracles. Aquilina's body was eventually transported to Constantinople and housed in a basilica built in her honor near the Forum of Constantine.

Perhaps because she was accused of being a witch or perhaps because she appeared to have risen from the dead, Aquilina has, unofficially, become associated with the dangers of the after-life:

- She reputedly guards people against ghosts and vampires.
- She banishes dead souls who haunt the dreams of the living.
- She may be requested to break deathbed curses.
- In some folk traditions, Aquilina is invoked to prevent the dead from rising in the form of vampires.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: vampire hunters; ghost hunters; those who seek to prevent the dead from rising; victims of torture.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: A young girl kneels in prayer outside the gate of a city or within a jail cell; an angel hovers in the air before her. At her feet are a sword, a small rake, and iron rods, the instruments of her torture.

SACRED SITE: Church of Saint Aquilina in Byblos.

FEAST: 13 June.

COLORS: red; white.

SACRED ANIMAL: eagle.

BOTANICAL: Cedar of Lebanon; Atlas cedar.

SEE ALSO Andrew, Saint; Foy, Saint.

## ∼ Archangel Saints

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as saints by most branches of Christianity.

Saints, by definition, are born human, but exceptions exist. Among those branches of Christianity that acknowledge saints, three archangels—Gabriel,

Michael, and Raphael—are included in their ranks. They are simultaneously saints *and* archangels.

Veneration of these angels predates Christianity:

- Gabriel, Michael, and Raphael were considered deities in ancient Mesopotamia.
- They are recognized as archangels by both Judaism and Islam.
- The archangel saints are also beloved by independent practitioners of varying spiritual paths, as well as by devotees of angels.

Other archangels exist. Depending on tradition, there may be either four or seven archangels. Although the identities of the others vary, the three constants in any list of archangels are Gabriel, Michael, and Raphael.

The rationale for why these three and *only* these three archangels are considered Christian saints is that they are the only angels named in scripture. Gabriel and Michael are mentioned in the Old Testament, while Raphael is referenced in the Books of Tobit and Enoch. The archangel saints may be venerated and invoked together or separately.

#### FEASTS:

• The Western Church has designated 29 September as their shared feast day.

• The Eastern Church commemorates the angels on 8 November.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; incense; fragrant essential oils.

SEE ALSO individual entries for *Gabriel Archangel*, *Saint*; *Michael Archangel*, *Saint*; *Raphael Archangel*, *Saint*.

## ∾ Armel, Saint

Also known as Arthfael (Welsh, meaning Bear Prince); Armagilus.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated in most branches of Christianity.

Saint Armel (482–c. 570) was born in Wales. The etymology of his name indicates that like so many Welsh saints, he may have been of royal lineage. Having given away his fortune and dedicated himself to God, Armel traveled to Brittany, where he founded the Abbey of Plouarzel. He served for seven years in

the court of the Merovingian king Childebert I, where he performed miraculous healings, restoring sight to the blind and enabling the lame to walk.

Armel is famed for banishing a dragon living in the Forest of Teil. He lured the dragon from its lair, then, using his clerical stole as a leash, led it to the top of a mountain overlooking a river. He ordered the dragon to dive into the water, which it did. Whether it perished or swam away is unknown, but the dragon never returned. In gratitude, the local people renamed the peak Mount-Saint-Armel.

Among Armel's devotees was Britain's King Henry VII. Saint Armel is petitioned against drought.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: hospital chaplains; others who labor in hospitals and those who bring spiritual comfort to the ailing.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Armel is portrayed with a dragon on a leash.

**SACRED SITES**: Various places in Brittany are named in his honor. Saint Armel's jaw is preserved as a relic in the Church of Saint-Armel, Ille-et-Vilaine.

FEAST: 16 August.

SEE ALSO Anna Pendragon; George, Saint; Martha, Saint; Teilo, Saint.

### ∾ Armèle, Saint

Also known as Armela; Armelle; Armaëlle; Armaël.

**EPITHET:** The Daughter of Love.

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

Saint Armèle, a 17th-century French charwoman and Christian mystic, is venerated in Brittany. Born Armèle Nicolas on 19 September 1606 to a devout Breton peasant family, she spent her childhood caring for the family's sheep but left home at age twenty to work as a nanny.

Armèle had been experiencing mystical visions since childhood. The household in which she went to work had a family tradition of reading from a book on the lives of the saints every night after dinner. The legends and adventures of the saints set her soul afire. She wished nothing more than to emulate them.

Armèle's mystical experiences intensified. They were experienced viscerally —she actually experienced Christ's Passion. She also understood that Christ died for *her* sins quite literally and so, by extension, she felt that she was personally responsible for his suffering, causing her tremendous guilt. Simultaneously, she was besieged by doubt and also exhibited behavior associated with demonic possession. She was incapacitated and unable to work for extended periods of time. Her employers were frustrated and not always kind to her, although Armèle welcomed all hardships as an opportunity to atone for Christ's suffering.

Her employer's eldest daughter loved Armèle and, when she married, requested that Armèle accompany her to her new marital home. Armèle worked for her faithfully as a maid for the next thirty years while also developing a reputation as a holy woman, which continued after her death on 16 August 1671.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: Armèle is the matron of those who work for a living. She assists job hunters as well as employees seeking to better their circumstances.

**SPIRITUAL ALLY:** Saint Armèle shares her feast with Saint Roch. They may be venerated together.

FEAST: 16 August.

SEE ALSO Roch, Saint.

#### ∼ Arnold of Metz

Also known as Saint Arnulf or Saint Arnoul.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Arnold was born in approximately 580 to a wealthy, prominent family in Austrasia, the northeastern portion of the kingdom of Merovingian Franks. (Arnold is sometimes mistakenly described as deriving from modern Austria. Although the names Austria and Austrasia are similar, they do not refer to the same location.)

Arnold antored the princthood and conved as an advisor to King Thoudehort In

612, he became bishop of Metz, now in France. In 627, he retired to a monastery near Remirement, France, where, in 640, he died and was buried. A year later, citizens of Metz requested that Arnold's body be exhumed and returned to them for burial nearby.

Men were sent to carry his body. It was a long journey and the casket was heavy. When the men saw a tavern in the town of Champignuelles, they decided to stop for a break and a beverage. Unfortunately, they were advised by the barkeep that there was only enough beer left for one glass. The pallbearers decided to share it. They started drinking, passing the mug around and continued drinking and drinking. The single mug of beer never ran out. This miracle was credited to Arnold and was among the miracles that earned his canonization. He is the patron saint of beer and brewers.

Water, at that time, was not particularly safe to drink. Arnold believed that polluted water caused illness and advised his parishioners of the dangers of drinking water, exhorting them to drink beer instead. He reputedly ended a local plague by submerging a crucifix in a brew kettle and persuading people to drink only from that blessed kettle.

"From man's sweat and God's love, beer came into this world," said Saint Arnold, who also said, "Don't drink the water, drink beer!"

FAVORED PEOPLE: brewers; barkeeps; beer lovers.

**OFFERINGS**: beverages from the Saint Arnold Brewing Company of Houston, Texas, or any other beer.

SEE ALSO Arnold of Soissons, Saint; Gambrinus.

There are two saints named Arnold or Arnulf who are associated with beer and brewing. Their legends are occasionally conflated; however, each was a distinct, historical person.

#### ↔ Arnold of Soissons, Saint

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Arnold, born in approximately 1040 near Brabant, Flanders, was a soldier before joining the Benedictine Abbey at Soissons, France. For three years, he lived as a hermit but was eventually appointed abbot. He tried to avoid this honor by fleeing, but a wolf forced him to return and accept. In 1080, he became bishop of Soissons, again against his own desires. When a rival occupied his see, Arnold took the opportunity to retire. He founded the Abbey of Saint Peter in Oudenberg, West Flanders, later destroyed during the French Revolution. There, he began to brew beer, encouraging local peasants to drink it rather than water, which was at that time potentially a health hazard.

When an abbey brewery's roof collapsed, Arnold asked God to multiply the stores of beer left for the monks' consumption. His prayers were answered, earning him a reputation as a miracle worker while still alive. While weaving bee skeps for the abbey's apiary, Arnold realized that they could be used as a filter to further clarify beer.

FAVORED PEOPLE: brewers; beer lovers; those who cultivate or pick hops.

**ATTRIBUTE:** mashing rake; bee skep.

SACRED ANIMAL: bee.

SACRED PLANT: hops (Humulus lupulus).

FEAST: 8 July.

**OFFERINGS**: Belgian beer, or other beer or ale.

SEE ALSO Arnold of Metz, Saint; Gambrinus.

## ∾ Artemidos, Saint

CLASSIFICATION: Orthodox saint.

For millennia, the goddess Artemis was among the most beloved deities of Pagan Greece. Even after Christianity became Greece's official religion and it was forbidden to worship the old gods, Artemis was too crucial and significant to abandon. Instead, she was given a gender-swap and resurrected as Saint Artemidos. Saint Artemidos, an official saint, fulfills many of the functions once performed by the goddess. Artemis protects children; so does Saint Artemidos. Artemis was leader of the female spirits known as nymphs. The nymphs survive, too, although in modern Greek folklore, they are known as Neraida and bear a malevolent reputation. Saint Artemidos can heal a child who has been struck or harmed by the Neraida, or is manifesting an ailment caused by them.

### Neraida Rescue Ritual

- 1. Bring the child and a complete change of brand-new clothing (never before worn by anyone) to a church dedicated to Saint Artemidos.
- 2. Ideally, obtain a blessing from the resident priest.
- 3. Strip off the child's old clothing and donate it to the church.
- 4. The child must leave wearing the brand-new clothes.

This ritual is presumably based on earlier ones dedicated to Artemis and thus may also be accomplished at one of her ancient shrines or at a new one. Variations suggest that the child should be brought to the shrine in black clothing and leave wearing new white clothing.

SEE ALSO Artemis, Saint; Brigid, Saint; Nicholas, Saint.

## 👡 Artemis, Saint

EPITHET: Saint Beautiful.

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

Artemis is among the most ancient of all indigenous Greek deities. Veneration of the goddess Artemis never seems to die. Alternatively, perhaps Artemis' desire to remain close to her devotees is exceptionally strong. When Christianity became the official religion of Greece, it became illegal to worship the old gods. Her devotees apparently rationalized that if venerating Artemis as a Pagan goddess was forbidden, then she could be venerated as a Christian saint instead.

No churches are dedicated to Saint Artemis (as opposed to Saint Artemidos). She never underwent official canonization. Saint Artemis is a modern folk saint, popular in Athens. Her epithet. Saint Beautiful, is remarkably reminiscent of those belonging to the goddess Artemis: Most Beautiful or Lady Beautiful. Saint Artemis fulfills all of Artemis' roles: she heals, guards women in childbirth, protects children, bestows fertility, and protects people from the malevolent designs of the spirits known as the Neraida.

SEE ALSO Artemidos, Saint; Brigid, Saint; Quiteria, Saint.

### Note: Arthurian Saints

The ever-popular legends of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table have been interpreted in many ways over the centuries and from many perspectives. The Arthurian saga features powerful Pagan and Christian motifs, leading to profound and passionate debate regarding which motifs are original and which were introduced when. There is little consensus.

First written down by Geoffrey of Monmouth in 1138, the Arthurian saga is based on older Welsh and Breton legends and lore. Arthur allegedly led British resistance to Saxon invaders in the sixth century, following the departure of the Romans from the British Isles. It was a time of political and religious turbulence. Many early Welsh saints are also simultaneously characters in the Arthurian mythos or have close connections with these characters. These saints are known as the Arthurian saints.

But, you argue, King Arthur didn't exist—he's only a legend. Are these saints historical people or merely legends, too? These are mysteries that have yet to be resolved. Although there is no conclusive evidence that King Arthur did exist, neither is there proof that he didn't. Many scholars believe that there was a historical figure named Arthur Pendragon upon whom these legends are based. Likewise, these saints may very well have once been historical people. Many are credited with numerous miracles to this day—so clearly *someone* is answering prayers.

The Arthurian saga is intertwined with legends of the Grail, which may be interpreted from a Pagan Celtic, a conventional Christian, or an esoteric Christian perspective. Likewise, Arthurian legends tend to be retold with either an intensely Christian or an intensely Pagan perspective.

• Those who prefer the Pagan perspective argue that many of the Arthurian saints may originally have been beloved indigenous deities whose legends have been given a Christian veneer

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• Those who prefer the Christian perspective deeply resent attempts to de-Christianize what are official saints.

SEE ALSO Anna Pendragon; Benno, Saint (2); David, Saint; Non, Saint; Teilo, Saint.

#### 👡 Aubin, Saint

Also known as Saint Albinus; Saint Albino.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Saint Aubin (c. 470–1 March c. 550) was born in Brittany to a wealthy, noble Romanized Gaulish family. (Some suggest his family was originally from Cornwall.) As a youth, he converted to Christianity and is credited with mass conversions of Pagans in the area. Aubin was a monk, then an abbot. Then against his protests—he was elected Bishop of Angers.

A strict man and a stickler for protocol and going by the book when it came to religious decisions, he often came into conflict with the Merovingian king Childebert. Aubin was, however, renowned for generosity, kindness, and miracles when it came to the poor and less fortunate, especially prisoners. He used church funds to ransom prisoners from pirates and performed various miracles enabling the release of prisoners from local prisons.

- Aubin requested that the king release a debtor named Etherie from prison. The king refused. Aubin visited her in jail. When a guard made as if to strike Etherie, Aubin breathed in his face and the guard dropped dead. The king decided to let Aubin provide the woman's bail.
- Aubin heard prisoners moaning in the Tower of Angers. He protested their treatment, but to no avail, so he held an all-night vigil for them outside the tower, praying for their safety. In the morning, parts of the stone tower spontaneously collapsed, allowing the prisoners to escape.

After his death, a church was dedicated to Aubin; he was buried in its crypt. He continued to produce miracles from beyond the grave and his church became a major European pilgrimage. (The Abbey of Angers was built near the site.) Miracles allegedly produced include healing all sorts of physical and mental

disorders, as well as exorcism of evil spirits. Saint Aubin is petitioned for protection from pirates and for release from captivity.

FEAST: 1 March.

SACRED SITE: His relics are in the Abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés in Paris.

**OFFERING**: Light candles for him; promise a pilgrimage to one of his churches; create a widow-and-orphans fund in his honor; relieve the suffering of prisoners.

#### ∼ Audrey, Saint

Also known as Saint Etheldreda.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Audrey, short for Etheldreda, was the daughter of Anna, king of the East Angles. (Although Anna is now typically a woman's name, in seventh-century Britain, it was fit for a king.) Of her parents' seven children, five eventually became saints. Audrey wished to take the veil and become a nun, but her parents required that she marry for dynastic purposes. Her first marriage was happy; her husband respected her vow of celibacy and they lived together platonically. He died after three years and a second marriage was arranged for her with Egfrid, prince of Northumberland, who was not quite so tolerant of her desires. Although he allowed her to live as a nun for a while, eventually he sought to consummate their union. He tried to bribe the local bishop to release Audrey from her vows, but the bishop refused and Audrey fled to her property, the Isle of Ely, with her husband in hot pursuit. A seven-day tide miraculously separated them. Perceiving this as the hand of God, Egfrid acquiesced; the marriage was annulled and he married someone more amenable.

Audrey, in turn, founded the double monastery at Ely—one building for monks, another for nuns. She demonstrated the gift of prophecy, accurately foretelling the exact day of her death from plague (23 June 679) and exactly how many of her nuns and monks would also die.

Audrey suffered from a neck tumor. It is sometimes described as the cause of her death, but she actually died of the plague. She attributed the disfiguring tumor to divine punishment for her youthful fondness for necklaces and jewelry. It was removed at her death. Sixteen years later, her body was exhumed and found to be incorrupt. She was exactly as she had been in life, except that the wound on her neck had miraculously, posthumously healed.

Saint Audrey's feast day was traditionally celebrated with a fair at Ely. Goods sold were so notoriously shoddy that a distortion of the words "Saint Audrey" evolved into "tawdry."

Saint Audrey is the matron saint of widows and England's Cambridge University. She is invoked for healing ailments of the throat and neck and may perhaps be of assistance to those who run flea markets and second-hand stores, especially if proceeds are intended for charity and good works.

**ATTRIBUTES**: book; pastoral staff; two palm branches. (Although palm branches usually indicate martyrdom, Audrey was not a martyr.)

**BOTANICAL**: ten-petal sunflower (*Helianthus decapetalus*).

FEASTS: 23 June; 17 October.

SACRED SITES: There has been a chapel of Saint Etheldreda in London continuously since the 13th century. Despite the destruction of saints' relics during the English Reformation, one of Audrey's hands was preserved and is now in the Church of Saint Etheldreda in Ely.

SEE Glossary: Incorrupt; Relics.

## 👡 Avalokiteshvara

Also known as Avalokitesvara; Chenrezig; Padmapani; Lokeshvara.

**EPITHETS**: The One Who Responds to the Cries of the World; Lord of the Six Syllables.

CLASSIFICATION: Bodhisattva.

The name *Avalokiteshvara* means "the lord who responds to the cries of the world." He is the Bodhisattva of Compassion and the embodiment of limitless

loving-kindness. Avalokiteshvara matured into such an evolved soul that he achieved Nirvana and broke his cycle of rebirth. All his negative karma was eliminated.

Avalokiteshvara, however, refused to leave this earthly plane until every other living being was also freed from cycles of ignorance, pain, and reincarnation. He vowed to help everyone achieve this same spiritual epiphany, delaying his own final release so that he could assist souls still trapped in suffering and negativity.

The most beloved of the bodhisattvas, Avalokiteshvara is venerated throughout the Buddhist world, but especially in Tibet, where he has manifested in many forms and incarnations throughout history.

- He is the traditional ancestor of the Tibetans.
- In one incarnation, he was King Songtsen Gampo, who first brought Buddhism to Tibet in the mid-seventh century.
- He was the first Dalai Lama—all Dalai Lamas, including the present one, are considered incarnations of Avalokiteshvara.

According to an ancient Tibetan folk legend that predates Darwin by millennia, Avalokitesvara was a monkey living in Tibet's Yarling Valley during the primordial era. Tara was an abominable snowwoman (a yeti) living nearby. The two fell in love and became the parents of six humans, the ancestors of the Tibetan people.

The first documented description of Avalokiteshvara derives from the Lotus Sutra, which dates from approximately the first century ce. According to the Lotus Sutra, Avalokiteshvara will, if called upon, assist those swept away by floods or menaced by other deadly perils. He bestows the gift of fertility. He travels to all corners of all realms helping all beings who seek his help. Call him by name or through his mantra and he will come.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: Avalokiteshvara, the epitome of mercy and compassion, will protect anyone and everyone, provided they ask for his help.

**MANIFESTATION**: Avalokiteshvara can take any form in order to reach a soul in need. He can reach you anywhere, on any plane of existence.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** In India, Avalokiteshvara is portrayed as a young prince with the

Buddha nestled in his hair, or as an ascetic who closely resembles the Hindu deity Shiva. He may have two, eight, or 1000 arms. (According to legend, Avalokiteshvara received 1000 arms from Buddha—the better to help those in need.) In China, Avalokiteshvara transformed into Kwan Yin and so is depicted in female form.

### RITUAL: His mantra is:

OM MANI PADME HUM!

(Hail the jewel in the lotus!)

Chanting this mantra regularly reputedly eases pain, heals illness, banishes evil spirits, subdues evildoers, and—last, but not least—leads your soul to paradise

ATTRIBUTES: lotus flower; crystal mala (Buddhist rosary).

SEE ALSO Kwan Yin; Tara; Three Saints in the West.

### 👡 Aya, Saint

Also known as Agia; Austregildis.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Aya was a noblewoman, wife of the Count of Hainault, now in modern Belgium. She took the veil at Mons, becoming a Benedictine nun. A wealthy woman, she donated extensive property to her monastic order. She died in approximately 714. Eighty years later, members of her family regretted Aya's actions and sought to reclaim their ancestral lands. No deeds or other paperwork could be found and so the case went to court.

The court acquiesced to the nuns' request that the case be heard at Aya's grave. During the hearing, the nuns requested that Aya testify on their behalf. Addressing Aya as Great Saint, a nun explained that efforts were being made to deprive them of their lands and asked Aya to confirm the gifts she had made in life. A voice emerged from Aya's grave announcing that she was ratifying her gifts. The case was found in the nuns' favor. Saint Aya is invoked by plaintiffs in law suits. She allegedly performs miracles in even the most desperate cases.

FEAST: 18 April.

SEE ALSO Benedict, Saint.

В

### 👡 Baba Ghor

Also known as Baba Gor; Bava Gor; Bawa Gor; Gori Pir; Shidi Mubarak Nobi.

CLASSIFICATION: Siddi saint.

Baba Ghor, most beloved of the Siddi saints, is the subject of many legends, as well as much dispute. His veneration transcends the Siddi community; he is the single most popular saint of African descent for South Asian Muslims in India and Pakistan—or anywhere in the world. His devotees derive from many spiritual traditions, but especially from among the *Parsi* (South Asian Zoroastrians).

The historical Baba Ghor is believed to have lived in the 14th and 15th centuries. Reports suggest that he died in either 1416 or 1431. A shrine dedicated to him may already have been established by 1452 when, according to 17th-century documents, the new king of Gujarat, Qutbuddin Ahmed Shah, visited "the saint of God, Baba Ghor." (Gujarat, now part of modern India, was then an independent nation.)

According to his most famous legend, Baba Ghor was a prominent military commander in Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) when he received a profound spiritual message. He was ordered to vanquish what most versions of his legend dismiss as a "female demon" in India. (Baba Ghor may or may not have been of Abyssinian ancestry. One version of his legend suggests that his hometown was Kano, Nigeria.) Baba Ghor immediately assembled a small army and left for India accompanied by his brothers and sisters. The number and identities of these siblings depend upon which version of his legend is told, but the two constants are Baba Habash and Mai Mishra, now his fellow saints.

Ultimately, it was Baba Ghor's sister, Mai Mishra, who actually defeated Makhan Devi, the spirit described in Siddi legends as a demon or sorceress, or both. The honorific Devi, however, indicates that she is a Hindu or Jain goddess. Her name may be translated as "Butter Goddess," and according to Baba Ghor's legend, she ensnares men via poisonous buttermilk potions. The underlying theme of the tale is underscored in a retelling by Shemeem Burney Abbas in the book *The Female Voice in Sufi Ritual*: Baba Ghor was ordered "to break the magic of the goddess and to light the lamp of Islam."

Local legend credits Baba Ghor with the destruction of Makhan Devi's temple, but some historians suggest that the person responsible was really Ahmed Shah, king of Gujarat. The legend of her defeat may be interpreted as a metaphor for the regional victory of Islam. Makhan Devi's temple was replaced by a shrine dedicated to Baba Ghor.

Baba Ghor was a soldier and a mendicant prior to his arrival in India, but there he became a trader in beads. He is credited with founding Gujarat's bead industry, although its antiquity is too great for this to be true, since agate has been mined in Gujarat for millennia. Other versions of his legend suggest that Baba Ghor traveled to India specifically to participate in the bead trade.

Baba Ghor carved agate beads and extended the agate trade to East Africa, becoming in the process an extremely wealthy man and a community leader. By 1505, the name *Babaghoria* was commonly used to identify the local agate. He remains the patron of the bead industry, and agate miners continue to invoke him for safety before entering the mines.

Some historians suggest that Baba Ghor did not come from Africa but was instead a member of the Gujarati nobility who was later adopted and assimilated into Siddi tradition. Needless to say, the Siddi community adamantly rejects this assertion.

Baba Ghor is perceived by devotees as the epitome of righteousness and as the highest possible earthly authority. Thus truth ordeals are undergone at his shrine, typically to refute or prove accusations of adultery, sorcery, witchcraft, or theft. He is invoked to provide divinely inspired judgment.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: bead manufacturers, collectors, and artisans; anyone who works in the bead industry.

ATTRIBUTE: *bedi*, the iron ankle-rings of truth.

**SPIRITUAL ALLIES**: He is frequently venerated alongside Mai Mishra and Baba Habash.

**GEMSTONE**: *babaghoria*, the gray-and-white banded agate from Gujarat named in his honor. *Babaghoria* may also refer to beads of a certain shape, regardless of the stone from which they are carved.

### SACRED SITES:

- His primary pilgrimage site is his *durga* (tomb) in Ratanpur, Gujarat, where Mai Mishra and Baba Habash are also buried.
- Baba Ghor's memorial shrine in Mumbai was built by a Parsi devotee in 1947.
- His shrine in Karachi, Pakistan

SEE ALSO Baba Habash; Mai Mishra; Siddi Saints.

# ∾ Baba Habash

Also known as Bava Habash; Bawa Habash.

CLASSIFICATION: Siddi saint.

According to Siddi legend, Baba Habash is the brother of fellow saints Baba Ghor and Mai Mishra. They traveled together from what is now Ethiopia to what was then the kingdom of Gujarat, now in modern India. Settling in Gujarat, they expanded the local agate industry, becoming wealthy traders. Following their deaths, the three siblings were recognized as saints. They are each venerated independently, as well as together.

Baba Habash is specifically invoked to restore, renew, or supply virility and to remedy male infertility. He may also be invoked to heal female infertility, especially in conjunction with Mai Mishra.

**SACRED SITES:** his tomb-shrine in Ratanpur, Gujarat, shared with Baba Ghor and Mai Mishra.

SEE ALSO Baba Ghor; Mai Mishra; Siddi Saints.

# 👡 Baba Sali

**EPITHET:** Father of Prayer.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Jewish saint.

Baba Sali is the name by which the beloved saint, scholar, Kabbalist, and miracle worker Rabbi Israel Abihatsira is popularly known. Baba Sali, a scion of the illustrious Abihatsira family, may be the most popular modern Jewish saint. He is famed for his refusal to curse; he only blessed. He blessed water, thus empowering it to heal.

Born in Tafillalt, Morocco, in 1890 on the festival of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, he demonstrated tremendous religious devotion in childhood. His spiritual powers were quickly apparent. Even in his youth, people flocked to him for blessings, earning him the title Baba Sali, literally Father of Prayer or Our Praying Father. He immigrated to Israel in 1964, where he died twenty years later on 8 January 1984. He was a humble, ascetic man who lived modestly.

In Israel, Baba Sali seldom left his home: a synagogue and ritual bath were contained within its confines. Baba Sali's devotees came to him. He dressed in traditional robes, leaving little more than his face exposed, which gave him the appearance of a biblical prophet. He had close, positive, respectful relationships with many other Jewish sages, including Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson.

Baba Sali's most famous miracle involved a young, unreligious Israeli soldier whose legs were paralyzed because of an injury received during the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Medical solutions having failed, he sought Baba Sali's help as a last resort. Baba Sali told him that God gives us limbs to serve Him and, if the soldier would promise to become more observant, Baba Sali would intercede on his behalf for a full recovery. The soldier kissed Baba Sali's hand. Baba Sali's wife, who was present, told the soldier to stand up and walk. And he did.

Baba Sali's blessings are invoked for healing, fertility, prosperity, academic and business success, and pretty much anything else you can think of.

SACRED SITE: his tomb in Netivot, Israel.

**FEAST:** Baba Sali is commemorated on the fourth day of the Hebrew month Shevat, corresponding in time to Aquarius; hundeds of thousands visit his gravesite in Netivot.

**OFFERINGS:** Baba Sali blessed and healed people of all religions as well as Jews. He typically asked Jews to become more observant (whatever you're doing, do more), encouraging women to light candles and men to pray with teffilin. Others should offer charity and good deeds in his honor.

SEE ALSO Abihatsira, Rabbi Makluf ben Yosef; Schneerson, Rabbi Menachem and Glossary: Feast; Intercessor.

## ∾ Bagnesi, Blessed Maria

Also known as Maria Bartolomea Bagnesi; Marietta Bagnesi.

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint; canonization pending.

Born on 15 August 1514 in Florence, Maria Bagnesi was a small, beautiful, happy child who was raised mainly by her sister, a Dominican nun, in her sister's convent. Four of her sisters entered the religious life, but Maria's father arranged a marriage for her. She was so horrified at the thought of marriage that she became sick, bedridden, and unable to walk. The wedding was canceled.

After Maria became a Dominican tertiary in 1544, she was able to leave her bed for brief periods. However, she suffered from asthma, kidney disease, and pleurisy, and was often immobilized. Her father hired doctor after doctor in attempts to heal her; however, many were quacks and are now blamed for worsening her condition rather than improving it.

Maria began to have visions. She engaged in conversation with angels, demons, and saints. Her neighbors feared that she was possessed. However, a local priest became her spiritual advisor and assured neighbors that Maria was not in league with Satan. She developed a reputation as a holy woman. Pilgrims began to visit her. She became deeply mystical and was seen to levitate.

Maria had a deep love for animals, especially cats. Many slept on her bed and allegedly guarded her songbirds. When she was hungry, cats fetched cheese for her. Maria Bagnesi is invoked to protect against abuse and also to protect your parents.

FAVORED PEOPLE: those who are sick and ailing.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Maria is often portrayed with at least one cat.

**SPIRITUAL ALLY:** Maria was deeply devoted to Saint Bartholomew, appending his name to her own. They may be venerated together.

FEAST: 27 May.

SEE ALSO Bartholomew, Saint and Glossary: Tertiary.

# 👡 Bahaudin Nakhshbandi

Also known as Baha al-Din al-Naqshbandi.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Sufi saint.

The Nakhshbandi Sufi Order is named in honor of Bahaudin Nakhshbandi (1317–1388), a mystic, visionary, and brilliant Islamic scholar. He founded a school near Bukhara on the Silk Road and was acknowledged as a holy man during his lifetime. Students and pilgrims flocked to his school to receive instruction, guidance, and blessings. It became the largest center of Islamic learning in Central Asia.

Bahaudin Nakhshbandi's crypt in the courtyard of a mosque near the ancient city of Bukhara remains a popular pilgrimage. Attempts to build a grand mosque in his honor consistently failed; it was finally understood that the saint preferred to have his tomb out in the open air. Various rituals have evolved that are intended to maximize blessings received during the pilgrimage:

- Enter the shrine with your right foot and depart with your left.
- Pilgrims pray at the Stone of Desire.
- Circle and touch the sacred tree and tie wishes and monetary contributions to it.

A mullah sits beneath the mulberry tree, dispensing spiritual advice and blessings. In exchange for offerings—bread, honey, and melons are customary; however, some report that cash is much appreciated—the mullah bestows a pastry called *bui* that attracts benevolent spirits. You may pray at the shrine. You may also request that the mullah offer prayers on your behalf.

During the Soviet era, the mosque was transformed into a "museum of atheism" and pilgrims were forbidden. The shrine was reopened in 1989 and has been restored. According to traditional belief, Bahaudin Nakhshbandi brings both babies and luck. He is credited with many miracles of healing and fertility.

SACRED SITE: The shrine, known as the Bahaudin Nakhshbandi Ensemble, located on the outskirts of Bukhara in the Republic of Uzbekistan, is widely

considered the most important Sufi shrine in Central Asia.

## 👡 Balthazar, Saint

Also known as Baltazar; Saint King Balthazar.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated in most branches of Christianity.

Balthazar, one of the Three Kings, was, according to legend, the King of Nubia and ruler of Ethiopia. His traditional gift to the Christ Child was myrrh, but legend says that he brought many other fine and valuable gifts as well.

Balthazar is invoked against epilepsy and other seizure disorders. He is especially venerated by those of African descent throughout Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay, who celebrate him on his feast day with festivals, processions, and musical performances.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: playing-card manufacturers; those who labor with saws; those who suffer from seizure disorders.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: He is typically portrayed as a crowned African king who may be kneeling before the Christ child or riding a camel. His crown may be worn over a turban. Balthazar is usually, but not exclusively, envisioned as a black man.

FEAST: 8 January.

FLAG: A Moor dressed in red holds a lance with a pennant on a golden field.

**OFFERINGS**: Pay tribute to him with the scent of myrrh; candles.

SEE ALSO Gaspar, Saint; Gaucho Gil; Magi; Melchior, Saint.

# ∾ Barbara, Saint (1)

Also known as Barbe; Varvara.

**CLASSIFICATION:** venerated by most branches of Christianity.

Variations of Saint Parhara's logand abound but all involve death and a tower

variations of Saint Barbara's regent abound, but an involve deam and a tower. The standard version suggests that she was the beautiful daughter of a wealthy Pagan. Her father wished to arrange an advantageous marriage for her and was worried that she was so beautiful that she would be stolen away. Little did he know that Barbara had vowed her virginity to Christ. Dad, on the other hand, sought to safeguard her virginity for the prince he hoped she'd marry, so he kept Barbara locked away in a tower.

Princes did come calling, but Barbara found ways of dissuading them, much to her father's annoyance. Eventually, her father had to travel away from home. Without his direct supervision, Barbara emerged from her tower to check on a bathhouse under construction on the family property. She was dismayed to see only two windows and persuaded the workmen to add a third in honor of the Trinity. (An alternative version eliminates the bathhouse and claims Barbara convinced the workers to add a third window to her tower.)

Barbara moved into the bathhouse, where she had herself secretly baptized by a priest. (An alternative version suggests that she immersed herself three times in a local spring, effectively—if unconventionally—baptizing herself.) She modeled herself after John the Baptist and the desert fathers, eating only locusts and sipping from honeysuckles. She demolished and disfigured all her father's idols and images.

Eventually, her father returned home and was livid. He impulsively tried to kill Barbara with his sword, but she prayed and was miraculously transported to temporary safety on a mountain. Yet another version suggests that Barbara escaped by miraculously passing through the tower walls, in the manner of Marvel Comics super-heroine Kitty Pryde.

Her father pursued her. When a shepherd betrayed Barbara's hiding place, all his sheep were transformed into grasshoppers. Barbara's father seized her by the hair and dragged her off to jail, where she was scourged, beaten, and tortured. Miracles began to proliferate:

- The rods used to beat her transformed into peacock feathers.
- Torches that were lit to burn her spontaneously went out whenever they were brought near her.
- All Barbara's wounds miraculously healed.
- Authorities attempted to humiliate her by parading her around the city naked but, although they stripped her, somehow Barbara always remained fully clothed.

The judge ordered that Barbara be executed with a sword. The head of the family (paterfamilias) had the legal right to execute members of his family privately himself, rather than expose the family to the shame of public execution. Dad thus dragged Barbara back to the mountain where, after he killed her, he was instantly struck by lightning and reduced to ashes. Local Christians buried Barbara, whose tomb quickly became a pilgrimage site and the site of miracles.

Although the historical Barbara, if there was a historical Barbara, allegedly lived and died in the fourth century, she only emerged as a saint in the seventh. By the Middle Ages, she was among the most popular of all saints, as she continues to be. Despite her popularity, all that is verifiably known about Saint Barbara is her name, so she was officially removed from the active Calendar of Saints in 1969. She remains an official Orthodox saint.

If you're ever caught in a thunderstorm and are frightened, Saint Barbara is the one to invoke for safety. She protects against all kinds of fiery death, including death from artillery, explosions, fire, and lightning. She may be petitioned for protection from land mines. Barbara consoles the suffering and those in agony. She protects against sudden death but is also petitioned for swift, merciful, peaceful death. Barbara heals sick children. She is also invoked against grasshoppers and other invasive insects. Barbara is invoked for help with conception in general and specifically by those who wish to bear curly-haired children.

Saint Barbara is the matron saint of golfers. The connection between Barbara and golf allegedly sprang from golfers' fears of being struck by lightning on the course, but she now oversees the game in general.

Saint Barbara isn't always Saint Barbara. Although she remains a tremendously popular saint, some of that popularity is due to her connection with the beloved orisha Shango with whom she is syncretized. Shango is the spirit of lightning. When enslaved Africans in the Western Hemisphere saw chromolithographs of Saint Barbara, what caught their eye wasn't the young white virgin, but the lightning that almost inevitably accompanies her image.

Saint Barbara's feast day is traditionally associated with divination:

• Place bare winter branches in a vase filled with water on 4 December; if Barbara's boughs, as these branches are known, are green and flowering at Christmas, a prosperous year is foretold. (If not, tighten your belts; it's going to be a barsh year ) 10 0C u murshi yeur.j

- In Provence, it's the time to sow Barbara Wheat—wheat germinated in a saucer. The higher it grows, the greater the prosperity foretold for the year.
- If you can't decide between suitors, Saint Barbara will help. Place one bare winter branch in a water-filled vase for each potential suitor. Tag each branch with a suitor's name. The branch that blooms first indicates Barbara's recommendation for Mr. Right. (This method may be used for any decision, not only romantic ones.)

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: architects; builders; stone masons; those who work with explosives; bomb technicians (presumably safe crackers, too), firefighters; gunners; ammunition workers; soldiers; those working with any sort of explosive weapon or tool; miners; prisoners.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: a beautiful young woman who is virtually always accompanied by a tower. It may be full-size or a miniature held in her hands. She may wear a crown in the shape of a tower. There will usually be a lightning bolt in the image, too. Those who do not like traditional religious statuary may use the tarot Tower card to represent Barbara. (This card usually displays the image of a lightning-struck tower.) Images of Saint Barbara intended for devotees of Shango may eliminate the tower, substituting Shango's attributes instead—such as a white horse, a rooster, or red apples.

**ATTRIBUTES**: sword; tower; cannon; chalice (sometimes interpreted as the chalice of happy death); peacock feather.

COLOR: red.

SACRED DAY: Saturday.

FEASTS: 4 December; Barbara may also be commemorated on 17 December. Different communities celebrate Barbara's feast in various ways:

- As celebrated by Syrian, Palestinian, and Lebanese Christians on 4 December, Eid il-Burbara (Saint Barbara's Feast) has been compared to Hallowe'en. Children wear costumes and request treats, similar to trick-or-treating.
- The Feast of Saint Barbara is known as Barbaroba in Georgia, where it is celebrated on 17 December. Efforts are made to have a pleasant day, as it's believed that how you spend the day determines your fate for the next twelve months.

### SACRED SITES:

- Barbara's relics are in Saint Vladimir's Cathedral in Kiev.
- The Coptic Church of Saint Barbara in Old Cairo, Egypt, was built to house her relics.
- Saint Barbara Church in Kutna Hora, Czech Republic, is a UNESCO World Heritage site.
- The Church of Saint Barbara, or the Azize Barbara Kilisesi, in Göreme, Turkey, was carved from soft rocks in the 11th century
- Santa Barbara, California, was named in her honor when explorer Sebastien Vizcaino survived a violent storm just offshore on the eve of her feast.
- Antioch, Heliopolis, Nicomedia, Rome, Cumae, and Tuscany all claim to be the site of Barbara's life and martyrdom.

**OFFERINGS:** small silver towers; honeysuckle flowers; candles in general, but especially lightning-shaped candles; peacock feathers. In the nation of Georgia, *lobiani*, pastry bread stuffed with beans, is served on her feast day.

SEE ALSO Barbara, Saint (2); Barbara, Africana; Barbara Caballera, Saint; Bethen; Cyrus and John; Fourteen Holy Helpers; Juliana, Saint; Seven African Powers and Glossary: Santeria; Syncretism.

# ∾ Barbara, Saint (2)

Traditionally, the name Saint Barbara refers to the Christian martyr of that name or to the orisha Shango who is syncretized to her. However, in recent years, a new manifestation of Saint Barbara has emerged. It is unclear whether the old Saint Barbara has simply continued to evolve, or whether a completely different spirit is operating under her name.

This Saint Barbara first emerged in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America and is a warrior saint. She rushes in to save people from all sorts of disasters, but not necessarily those traditionally associated with Saint Barbara—lightning, fire, and explosions. Instead, this Barbara protects from supernatural and spiritual dangers. She routs demons and nightmares. She resembles—in function, if not appearance—a female Michael Archangel. Retablo paintings credit her with rescuing people from alluring mermaids and alien abduction. Traditionally, Saint Barbara is associated with the dangers of fire. This new manifestation of Barbara goes underwater to rescue the drowning. **MANIFESTATION:** She manifests in the guise of a Latin American woman who ranges in age from youthful to mature. Modestly dressed, she may wear a skirt and sweater, or appear more formally in gown or robes, but she is never ostentatious.

**ATTRIBUTES:** She is consistently armed with a sword but otherwise lacks the attributes traditionally associated with Saint Barbara or with Shango—no tower, lightning, or white horse.

COLOR: green or blue.

FEAST: 4 December.

SEE ALSO Barbara, Saint (1); Michael Archangel; Seven African Powers and Glossary: Retablo.

🔊 Barbara Africana, Santa

Also known as Santa Barbara Lucumi.

The results of syncretism become ever more complex the longer it continues. Barbara is among the saints who have traditionally provided an acceptable front for suppressed African spirits. Technically, at least from the perspective of the Vatican, there is no such saint as Santa Barbara Africana—literally African Saint Barbara. No such saint appears on the official calendar roll. Instead, Santa Barbara Africana is a folk saint venerated by those who acknowledge both the traditional African and the Roman Catholic aspects of African Diaspora spiritual traditions.

The name Santa Barbara Africana emphasizes the African origins of the spirits to whom Saint Barbara is traditionally syncretized. Many devotees find the identification of African spirits with the young white virgin martyr to be dissonant. Santa Barbara Africana provides a more acceptable mask by retaining Roman Catholic associations, but substituting the image of a mature, regal black woman.

The true identity of Santa Barbara Africana—exactly which African spirit is represented by her image—depends on the beholder and the spiritual tradition:

• Santa Rarbara Africana may indicate Shango who is syncretized to Rarbara in

- Sana Darbara Anicana may mulcale Shango, who is syncretized to Darbara m Cuban traditions.
- Santa Barbara Africana may indicate Oya (also known as Iansa), syncretized to Barbara in Brazilian traditions.
- In Venezuela, Santa Barbara Africana indicates Oya, while Shango is called Santa Barbara Shango.
- Vodouistes from the Dominican Republic identify Santa Barbara Africana with the matriarch spirit Ezili Dantor.
- Those unfamiliar with the various syncretic traditions tend to treat Santa Barbara Africana as if she were a Madonna.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Her African heritage and identity are crucial to veneration of Santa Barbara Africana and so she is not represented by traditional images of Saint Barbara, who is almost invariably depicted as a white woman. Instead, she is represented by Black Madonna images. For instance, statues based on the Black Madonna of Czestochowa are labeled and sold as Santa Barbara Africana.

**ATTRIBUTES:** She may hold a baby rather than Saint Barbara's traditional attributes, the sword and tower.

FEAST: 4 December.

SEE ALSO Barbara, Saint (1); Seven African Powers and Glossary: Black Madonna; Santeria; Syncretism.

# 👡 Barbara Caballera, Santa

**PRONOUNCED**: cab-ah-yair-a.

Santa Barbara Caballera is Spanish for Saint Barbara the Horsewoman. The name refers to a specific votive image depicting a young woman dressed in red riding a white horse. Although called Santa Barbara, this image was originally intended to represent Shango, a West African spirit traditionally syncretized to Barbara. However, when it comes to the evolution of folk religion, there are no hard-and-fast rules.

Regardless of whom it was originally meant to represent, it is sold under the name Santa Barbara. Over the years, some of her devotees discovered that they liked the image of Saint Barbara on horseback and used it to represent her. Many are now appalled at the suggestion that Santa Barbara Caballera may represent anyone other than the young saint herself. Images of Santa Barbara Caballera typically portray her with the white skin and flowing brown locks of the traditional Christian saint. She does not resemble Santa Barbara Africana. Instead, the image bears a striking resemblance to a feminine version of Saint James on Horseback. Perhaps Barbara has decided to emulate her fellow saint. Incidentally, Saint James' image is traditionally used to represent the African spirit Ogun, Shango's old rival.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: A young beautiful woman wearing a crown and dressed in red rides a white horse. She will probably have a chalice and sword, but no tower. Other attributes of Shango—a rooster or a basket of red apples—may also be present.

SEE ALSO Barbara, Saint; Barbara Africana, Saint; James the Greater, Saint; Santiago Matamoros; Seven African Powers and Glossary: Syncretism.

### No Bartholomew, Saint

Also known as Bartolomé; Barthelemy; Bartolomeo; Bart.

CLASSIFICATION: considered a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Saint Bartholomew was among the twelve Apostles. Jesus described him as being "without guile," so he is now considered a spirit of truth. Much of his life is mysterious. He may have written a gospel. He may have been among the first to bring Christianity to the kingdom of Armenia, the first state to adopt Christianity officially. He may have preached in Asia Minor, India, and Ethiopia.

In life, Saint Bartholomew's full name was the Hebrew Nathanael bar Tolomai, or Nathanael bar Talom. It's unclear why he isn't known by his first name, as were the other Apostles. Nathanael, a popular man's name during his time and also the name of a powerful angel, means Gift of the Lord. *Bar* means "son." The meaning of Tolomai or Talom remains mysterious.

The straightforward explanation is that it is his father's name, but Tolomai doesn't correspond to any known Hebrew name.

- It may be a variant of the Greek Ptolemy, which may indicate that he came from a family of Hellenized Jews.
- It resembles a word for "ploughman," so his original name may have been Nathanael, the ploughman's son.
- Yet another theory suggests some link between Bartholomew and the spirit Ben Temalion. *Ben* and *Bar* are synonyms, both meaning "son." Talom and Temalion may be cognate.

Saint Bartholomew was martyred brutally—flayed alive in either Armenia or Azerbaijan before being beheaded or crucified upside down. (According to Coptic tradition, Bartholomew was sewn into a sack filled with sand and drowned in the sea, which may relate him to his Iberian alter-ego, Saint Bartholomew of the Sea.) Over the centuries, he developed a reputation as a powerful and generous healer responsible for many miracles. As a result, many hospitals are named in his honor.

Invoke Saint Bartholomew for:

- Protection from violence and from violent death.
- Safe, successful surgery. Light red candles for him prior to surgery, then make a larger gift when surgery proves successful.
- Saint Bartholomew is invoked when it's crucial to know the truth (which he may reveal in dreams).
- Saint Bartholomew protects against nightmares and bad dreams.

He is invoked against twitching, nervous disorders, tics, anxiety, and neurological ailments, and against the occupational hazards of butchers, cobblers, and tanners, including knife slippage and injury. He may be of assistance with Tourette's syndrome.

Saint Bartholomew's feast day is historically associated with violence:

- In the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre, thousands of French Protestants (Huguenots) were slaughtered by organized mob violence in Paris in 1572.
- During the 1349 Saint Bartholomew's Eve Pogrom, also known as the Massacre of Mainz, 6000 Jews—the entire Jewish community of Mainz, now in modern Germany—was massacred because they were blamed for an outbreak of bubonic plague.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: butchers; surgeons; tanners; bookbinders; cobblers; shoemakers and leather workers; dyers; glovers. The island of Saint Barthelemy in the Caribbean is under his protection.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Saint Bart's iconography is particularly violent, with emphasis paid to his flayed skin. He may be depicted with a blood red body or as a skinless man holding his own skin, with only his facial skin intact.

**ATTRIBUTE**: butcher's knife; tanner's knife; book; flayed human skin.

COLOR: red.

**BOTANICAL**: sunflower.

GEMSTONE: peridot or chrysolite.

FEASTS: 11 June (Orthodox); 24 August (Roman Catholic); 11 September (Coptic).

SACRED SITES:

- Bartholomew's relics may be found in Rome at Saint Bartholomew-on-the-Tiber Church and at Canterbury Cathedral in England.
- A small church in Cana, Israel, is reputedly built over the site of Bartholomew's home.
- St Bartholomew the Great Church, London's oldest parish church, was founded in 1123 by Prior Rahee, formerly King Henry I's jester who, having fallen desperately ill with malaria while on pilgrimage to Rome, was healed by a dream vision of Saint Bart. Beginning in the 12th century, many testified to great healing miracles received after visiting this church and petitioning the saint.

SEE ALSO Apostles; Bartholomew of the Sea, Saint; Ben Temalion; Bagnesi, Blessed Maria.

No Bartholomew of the Sea, Saint

There is no official saint known as Bartholomew of the Sea. As far as any official proceedings are concerned, there is but one Saint Bartholomew and

that's the Apostle. Saint Bartholomew is an exceptionally popular saint in Portugal, where he manifests very differently than he does elsewhere, and where he is called Saint Bartholomew of the Sea. Whether the two Bartholomews are one and the same is subject for debate.

The iconography of Saint Bartholomew of the Sea is unique. Rather than the flayed skin associated with the traditional saint, this Saint Bartholomew holds a sword or trident. Something rests beside his feet—it may be a demon, dolphin, or merdog. This creature is Bartholomew's messenger and servant. Some theorize that the ancient Greek god Poseidon lurks under the mask of Saint Bartholomew of the Sea, while his merdog is the sea spirit Scylla.

According to a Greek myth, Scylla, a beautiful sea nymph, engaged in an illicit love affair with Poseidon, King of the Sea. When Poseidon's wife, the powerful goddess Amphitrite, discovered the romance, she transformed Scylla into a canine-shaped sea monster. (An alternative version suggests that the sorceress goddess Circe was responsible for Scylla's transformation, also for reasons of jealousy.)

Like Poseidon (and unlike the Apostle), Saint Bartholomew of the Sea presides over horse races. Invoke him if you need luck or the inside word on the ponies. If he helps you, use a percentage of your winnings to pay tribute to his generosity.

Saint Bartholomew of the Sea is also invoked to locate missing objects. Address your request to the saint; he'll send his servant to locate and deliver what you seek. Both spirits must be paid. Saint Bartholomew of the Sea's pet is his partner as well as his servant and must be treated with respect.

Saint Bartholomew of the Sea protects seafarers and provides abundant catches for those who fish. He has dominion over weather and can raise, control, and soothe winds, storms, and waves. Saint Bartholomew of the Sea is invoked for healing children with developmental disorders, and with stuttering.

**FAVORED PEOPLE:** In Portugal, Saint Bartholomew is venerated as the patron of seafarers, sailors, travelers, those who fish, and those who live near the sea, rivers, and bridges.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Sometimes, Saint Bartholomew's standard iconography is used, but Saint Bartholomew of the Sea is usually depicted in the guise of a sea spirit.

ATTRIBUTES: trident; sword.

**FEAST:** Saint Bartholomew of the Sea shares Saint Bartholomew's feast day, 24 August. Traditionally, black hens or eggs laid by black hens are eaten in his honor.

COLORS: red for Saint Bart; black for his servant.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; gifts with marine motifs for servant and master; equine motifs for Saint Bartholomew of the Sea.

SEE ALSO Bartholomew, Saint.

# ∾ Bartolo, San

This saint, venerated in Guanajuato, Mexico, is technically the official Saint Bartholomew; however, he has completely different attributes, iconography, and functions. Where Portugal's Saint Bartholomew of the Sea resembles Poseidon, San Bartolo is reminiscent of Bacchus.

San Bartolo is the patron saint of drunks. Allegedly, if you pray at his church, he will answer your prayers and petitions, but only if you are drunk or pretending to be. Local legend suggests that he is not Bartholomew the Apostle, but a regional holy man who achieved unofficial sainthood after death and was syncretized to the official saint.

Saint Bartolo, apostle or not, is also associated with San Bartolo Agua Caliente, among the first colonial spas in Mexico. The building complex once included the Ancient Hospital of Thermal Baths of San Bartolomé, dedicated to the saint in his official guise as patron of nervous and neurological diseases and possibly beneficial for those suffering the ill effects of alcohol, too.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: He is depicted as a rotund, tipsy, barefoot monk.

**ATTRIBUTES**: jug of wine; ring of keys—to the wine cellar, to ecstasy, to the mystic secrets of the universe, to the medicine cabinet for a hangover remedy.

FEAST: 24 August.

SEE ALSO Apostles; Bartholomew, Saint; Bartholomew of the Sea and Glossary:

Syncretism.

# ∾ Barzani, Asenath

Also known as Rabbi Asenath bat Samuel Barzani; Asenath Barazani.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Jewish saint.

Asenath Barzani (1590–1670) is widely considered to be the first premodern woman to be awarded the title "rabbi." Poet, scholar, Kabbalist, head of a *yeshiva* (religious school), angelologist, and Baalat Shem (a master of magical names of power), Asenath spent much of her life in Mosul, now in modern Iraq, but then in Kurdistan.

Her father, Rabbi Samuel Barzani, considered the foremost scholar of his time in the Kurdish Jewish community, was a master of practical Kabbalah. He taught his daughter mystical secrets and continued to appear in her dreams, advising her even after his death. Both father and daughter were allegedly in possession of the Ineffable Name of God. When Asenath was betrothed to her cousin, Jacob, her father insisted that their wedding contract stipulate that Asenath must never be troubled by housework so that she would have time to continue her studies.

Described as wise and beautiful, Asenath Barzani performed miracles of fertility and healing, especially of children, using the power of her touch and blessings. She once summoned angels to extinguish a synagogue fire. Asenath had a pet white dove that nested just outside her window and once alerted her when a would-be rapist attempted to break into her home at night while she slept. Rather than scream or raise an alarm, Asenath used her mystical powers for protection; the man found himself magically suspended from Asenath's roof beams, his nefarious plans exposed to all. He was unable to break free until Asenath deigned to release him.

**SACRED SITE**: Her grave (and her father's) in the city of Amadiyah, now in modern Iraq, was a pilgrimage site for centuries.

SEE ALSO Maid of Ludomir.

Also known as Balthild.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Bathild (c. 627–30 January 680), whose name means Bold Battle, was a young relative of Ricberht, the last Pagan king of East Anglia. When he was defeated by his Christian rival, Sigabert, Bathild was sold as a slave to Erkenwald, mayor of the Merovingian king Clovis II's palace. Eventually, Bathild became the head housekeeper of the palace. In 649 ce, she married Clovis himself, becoming Queen of the Franks. She used her position to promote Christianity.

Widowed in 655 ce, she became the queen regent and immediately forbade the enslavement of Christians. Although official hagiographies emphasize her generosity to the poor and the monasteries that she built, in life Bathild was a ruthless ruler, suspected of involvement in several assassinations. She sponsored Saint Eligius, to whom she was very devoted. An apparition of this saint after his death convinced her to put away all her gold and jewels and live modestly.

Bathild gave the throne to her son, Clotaire, when he was fifteen, and she entered a convent. All three of her sons became kings. She died 30 January 680 of intestinal disease. Before she died, she had a vision of herself ascending a golden ladder reaching to Heaven in the company of angels. She is buried at the Abbey of Chelles outside Paris, but some of her relics may have been brought to Glastonbury.

Saint Bathild is invoked for healing, especially of children, and for assistance in cases of kidnapping and abduction. Miracles attributed to her after death include exorcising persistent evil spirits from children. She was a tough, strong woman, truly bold in battle. The wheel of fortune took her from aristocrat to slave to queen. Petition her to help you achieve success despite the most severe obstacles.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: women; widows; children; those suffering from illness; kidnap victims.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: a crowned nun giving alms to the poor.

ATTRIBUTE: a ladder.

FEAST: 30 January.

A gold seal matrix once attached to a ring was discovered in a field in East Anglia in 2003. One side features Bathild's name and portrait; the other depicts Bathild and Clovis in conjugal embrace. It is believed that the "official side" may have been used to seal her official correspondence, while the other side may have been intended for more intimate correspondence between husband and wife.

SEE ALSO Eligius, Saint.

## 👡 Bega, Saint

Also known as Saint Bee.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Bega, a seventh-century Irish princess, was engaged to marry a Norwegian prince. She, however, wished to devote her life to spiritual pursuits and had consecrated her virginity to Christ. Her family was unsympathetic to her desires, so Bega fled, according to legend, riding a clod of dirt across the Irish Channel to Cumberland, England.

Bega lived a solitary existence as an anchoress (hermit) in the forest for many years. Birds brought her food. She encountered the future Saint Oswald, who was on a raiding expedition against local highwaymen. He persuaded her to enter a convent for safety's sake. She took the veil from the future Saint Aidan at Lindisfarne and eventually founded her own monastery. Saint Bega is renowned for protecting and caring for the poor and oppressed.

SACRED SITE: Priory Church of Saint Bees in Cumbria.

FEAST: 6 September.

**OFFERING:** Feed birds in her honor.

# ∾ The Beheaded Ones

Also known as The Decollati.

**CLASSIFICATION:** unofficial saints.

The Decollati, or Beheaded Ones, are buried in the graveyard of the Church of the Decollati in Palermo, Sicily. The Beheaded Ones are repentant but executed criminals whose remains were left unclaimed by family or friends (presuming they had any) and ended up buried in the graveyard behind the church. Before their deaths, they renounced violence and begged pardon and forgiveness from God and their victims.

The Gospel of Luke 15:7 says: "There will be more joy in Heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance." Because the Beheaded Ones were popularly perceived as bringing such joy to Heaven, they became venerated as unofficial saints and intercessors. They seem glad to have the opportunity to make up for their crimes by doing good works from beyond the grave.

The Beheaded Ones, criminals in life, now protect against crime, thieves, and miscreants, but they are all-purpose folk saints and may also be petitioned for luck, love, good health, employment, change of fortune, and winning lottery numbers. Though strongly associated with the Church of the Decollati (the souls of the Beheaded Ones are believed to reside beneath a large stone just inside the chapel), they will travel and have traditionally been invoked at home altars both within and far away from Sicily.

The Decollati will serve anyone but were especially venerated by women and the poor. Although they've forsworn violence and crime, they aren't always gentle. In this Sicilian love spell, they're requested to torment the spell's target until he or she succumbs to the spell caster's charms:

1. Chant the following incantation:

Souls of the beheaded,

Three hanged, three slain, three drowned,

All nine join forces,

Go to (name of spell's target) my sweetheart,

Pester (name of spell's target) with (list the desired torments),

Don't kill (name of spell's target)

But make (name of target) come to me with love and desire.

2. Make an offering to the Beheaded Ones with the promise of a larger one (tell them what it is) if the spell is successful in a specified amount of time.

**MANIFESTATION:** If addressed, the Beheaded Ones allegedly always answer, if only with sounds. Pay attention to any audible words or noises when invoking them.

SACRED DAYS: Monday and Friday.

SACRED SITE: Chiesa dei Decollati, the Church of the Beheaded Ones, was situated by the River Oreto and was once dedicated to the Madonna of the Bridge. The church was once embellished with images of miracles associated with the Beheaded Ones, but not much of the sanctuary remains, only the side chapel most closely associated with the Beheaded Ones

**PETITION:** Form images of your needs and desires from wax and present these to the Beheaded Ones.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; flowers; incense; milagros; pilgrimage to their Sicilian grave shrine.

SEE ALSO Glossary: Milagro.

# ∾ Ben Temalion

Also known as Ben Temalyon.

Ben Temalion is not a saint. He is more correctly classified as a spirit or demon, but he is deeply intertwined in the legend of one saint and may masquerade under the guise of another, so he is included in these pages.

In traditional Jewish angelology, some angels may be evil, while some demons may occasionally be helpful.

The story of Ben Temalion is found in the Talmud. Simon bar Yohai, the great first-century spiritual leader, traveled to Rome with a delegation of other Jewish leaders hoping to obtain revocation of edicts that were hostile and injurious to Jews. Arriving in Rome and discovering all official doors of authority closed to them, they despaired. How would they ever accomplish their goal?

The demon Ben Temalion then appeared to them, offering his services. He proposed to enter the body of a girl belonging to the emperor's family in the

form of a possessing spirit and to remain there, withstanding all other attempts at exorcism, until Simon Bar Yohai arrived to perform the exorcism.

Simon objected to the plan, convinced that it wouldn't work. He was new in Rome. His formidable reputation was unknown and he belonged to a religion that was out of favor. Rome had many exorcists, he argued. Why would he even be summoned?

Ben Temalion promised to make the girl herself call for Simon Bar Yohai, also promising that when Simon whispered his name into the girl's ear, the demon would immediately depart, breaking all the glass in the palace in which she lived as proof of his departure.

The Talmud says that the sages did not wish to accept the services of this demon but could think of no other effective way to obtain the revocation. Ben Temalion proved an honorable demon. Everything went exactly as he suggested. Following the successful exorcism, Simon was offered a reward of anything he wished from the imperial treasury. He declined all offers of wealth, instead requesting the edicts, which he promptly destroyed.

The story of Ben Temalion confirms the suspicions of those who, over the centuries, have feared that exorcists are actually in collusion with the demons they expel—that exorcism is a cooperative effort. A similar story is told about Saint Bartholomew in India, except that Bart refused to accept any reward and ended up tricking and destroying his demon.

The similarity of Ben Temalion's legend with that of Saint Bartholomew may not be coincidental. The name Bartholomew derives from the Hebrew Bar Tolomei. *Bar* means "son"; the meaning of Tolomei remains unknown, but it is similar to Temalion. The *Ben* in the demon's name is not a shortened form of Benjamin—it is a Hebrew word meaning "son."

Saint Bartholomew is among those saints who do not behave in a consistently conventional manner but have magical aspects. Some perceive that the demon Ben Temalion may masquerade under some guises of the saint. An alternative theory suggests that following the Diaspora, Ben Temalion seems to have immigrated to France, where French Jews identified him as a *lutin*, a helpful household spirit.

**MANIFESTATION:** Ben Temalion is described as resembling a small, mischievous boy.

SEE ALSO Bartholomew, Saint; Bartholomew of the Sea, Saint; Simon Bar Yohai.

## ∾ Benedict, Saint

### Also known as Benadetto, Benoit, Benezet.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Benedict and his twin sister, Scholastica, were born in approximately 480 to a wealthy, noble family in Norcia, now in modern Italy. Their mother died giving birth to them. At an early age, Benedict traveled to Rome to pursue his studies. Disgusted with all the religious quarrels he witnessed, as well as the dissolute ways of his fellow students, Benedict abandoned Rome and moved to a cave, later known as the Holy Cave, where he lived for three years. A monk brought him food and also gave him a monk's habit to wear.

Benedict acquired a reputation as a holy man because of his religious devotion, but also because of the paranormal abilities he manifested, including telepathy and clairvoyance. He was invited to lead a monastery, but his austerities proved too much for the other monks, who attempted to poison him. When Benedict made the sign of the cross over the poisoned cup, it instantly shattered. (A later, second attempt to poison him was foiled when a crow snatched away the poisoned bread.)

Benedict returned to his cave seeking solitude but was inundated with visitors seeking him as their mentor. Twelve small monasteries soon sprang up in the hills near his cave, each with twelve monks and each reporting to Benedict. Sometime between 525 and 529, Benedict moved to Monte Cassino, which was then in the midst of a Pagan revival. Temples dedicated to Jupiter and Apollo stood on the hill. Benedict cut down the groves and reconsecrated the temples to Saint Martin. He smashed the statue of Apollo and destroyed Apollo's altar that stood at the summit. Then he built a chapel there and dedicated it to John the Baptist.

In 529, Benedict founded the Monastery of Monte Casino and the Benedictines, the monastic order that bears his name. He composed the Rule that is the foundation for all Western monastic orders; thus he is frequently considered the founder of Western monasticism. He aggressively pursued witches and Pagans. He achieved renown as an exorcist, able to drive away even the fiercest, most malevolent demons. Benedict died on 21 March 547 while he was engaged in prayer. When Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger became pope in April 2005, he adopted the papal name Benedict XVI in honor of Saint Benedict, whom the new pope described as "the great patriarch of Western monasticism."

Benedict is the patron saint of exorcism. He is invoked against poison, poisoners, and kidney stones. He is the patron of happy death. He protects against witches, witchcraft, and malevolent spells. He is invoked for assistance by servants who have broken their employers' possessions; he provides healing for animals.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: farmers; chemists; architects; cavers; spelunkers; engineers; students; coppersmiths; the dying; exorcists; demonologists.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** A bearded man wearing the cowl of the Benedictines holds the Benedictine rule, or the rod of discipline.

**ATTRIBUTES**: broken cup; broken sieve; scourge; a cup with two snakes; pastoral staff; book; raven carrying bread in its beak.

AMULET: The Saint Benedict medal, sometimes referred to as an "anti-Satan" medal, allegedly wards off evil. This double-sided round medal traditionally depicts Saint Benedict holding a cross in his right hand and the book or scroll of his Rule in his left. The saint's attributes—the shattered chalice and the crow— also appear, along with two slogans: *Crux sancti patris Benedicti* ("The cross of our blessed Father Benedict") and *Eius in obitu nostro praesentia muniamur!* ("May we be strengthened by his presence at the hour of our death"). Letters on the back of the medal deliver the injunctions: "Get back, Satan!" and "The drink you offer is evil; drink that poison yourself."



The precise origins of the Saint Benedict medal are unknown. It was formally approved by Pope Benedict XIV in 1741, but there is documentation of its existence in the 17th century. It may be based on a manuscript written in 1415 and housed in the Bavarian Abbey of Metten that features a picture of Saint Benedict holding a staff and scroll on which are written the full words corresponding to the initials on the medal.

The medal may be worn on a chain as a medallion, attached to rosary beads, or carried in a pocket or a charm bag. It may also be placed in a car or buried in the foundation of a building to ward off malevolent spirits. It reputedly protects against poison, contagious illness, and tempestuous weather. Brought into the delivery room, it provides for safe childbirth.

FEASTS: 14 March (Byzantine); 11 July (Anglican, Episcopalian, and Roman Catholic); also 21 March.

SACRED DAY: Saturday.

SACRED ANIMAL: crow or raven.

**SACRED PLANTS:** Saint Benedict's herb, also known as herb bennet (*Geum urbanum*), credited with the power to ward off malevolent spirits and sometimes worn as an amulet; also hemlock.

**CONSTELLATION**: Opiosuchus has been interpreted as depicting Benedict amid thornbushes.

SACRED SITES:

- The Abbey of Monte Casino in Italy where Benedict established his first monastery in approximately 529.
- Saint Benedict Abbey in Saint-Benoit-sur-Loire, France, where, in 660, the body of Saint Benedict was moved to keep it safe from attacks on Monte Casino.

**OFFERINGS**: Benedictine; brandy; B & B liqueur (Benedictine and brandy); candles; pilgrimage.

SEE ALSO John the Baptist; Martin, Saint; Scholastica, Saint.

no Benedict the Black, Saint

Also known as Saint Benedict of Palermo; Saint Benedict the Moor; San Benito.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Benedict the Black (1526–4 April 1589) was born in Sicily, the son of slaves from Ethiopia. Although often called Benedict the Moor, he is not ethnically Moorish. The word "Moor" is instead being used as a synonym for "black."

Benedict was emancipated at age eighteen, apparently as a gift from their owner to his parents. He demonstrated spiritual inclinations at an early age. At twenty-one, he joined a group of hermits and was eventually appointed their superior. When he was approximately thirty-four, Pope Pius IV disbanded the community of solitary hermits, ordering them to join regular orders. Benedict joined an order of Franciscans near Palermo, serving as their cook. They appointed him superior as well, and he served as teacher of novices. Benedict, a humble man, eventually asked to return to his position as cook. Miracles were attributed to him while alive and continued after he died.

Though illiterate, Benedict was exceptionally well versed in scriptures, demonstrating incredible insight. He was also telepathic, possessing the ability to read minds. When his body was exhumed years after his death, it was found to be incorrupt (not decayed). Saint Benedict protects against smallpox and other epidemics. He is officially the patron saint of black people and those of African descent, as well as the patron saint of Palermo. **ICONOGRAPHY**: Saint Benedict may be depicted with a flaming heart, indicating his burning fervor.

ATTRIBUTES: crucifix and lily.

FEAST: 4 April.

OFFERINGS: candles; brandy; milagros in the form of a flaming heart.

SEE ALSO Benito de Palma, San and Glossary: Milagro.

🔊 Benedict Joseph Labre, Saint

EPITHETS: The Beggar of Perpetual Adoration; The Beggar of Rome.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Saint Benedict Joseph Labre (25 March 1748–16 April 1783) is the patron saint of hobos, tramps, and those who are homeless for any reason. They may petition him for all their needs.

Benedict, eldest of fifteen children, did not want to follow in his father's footsteps as a shopkeeper in Bologne, France but sought a spiritual life. Although he was educated by his uncle, a parish priest, the Carthusians, Cistercians, and Trappists all rejected Benedict's attempts to enter their orders, claiming he was unsuited for monastic life, mainly because of his frail health. Benedict's response was to start walking to Rome as a pilgrim with only the clothes on his back, a crucifix, a rosary, a Bible, and a few other books. It took him four years, during which time he visited shrines, slept outdoors, and depended on the charity and kindness of strangers. When no food was offered, he foraged in nature or garbage heaps.

Finally arriving in Rome in 1774, he spent his days praying in various churches and his nights sleeping in the Colosseum among the homeless poor. When he was witnessed levitating in a kneeling position while praying at the Church of Gesu, he was recognized as a holy man. On 16 April 1783, Benedict Labre collapsed on the steps of the Church of Santa Maria dei Monti, his favorite church. Despite his protestations, he was carried to a nearby hospice where he died, reputedly of malnutrition. Within months of his death, miracles were attributed to him: his confessor documented 136 miracles attributed to his

intercession. He was canonized in 1881.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: the homeless; beggars; the mentally ill; those who have been rejected by religious orders.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** He is portrayed as a thin man in a threadbare coat with a rosary around his neck and a rope belt. He may be depicted as a beggar who shares his alms.

ATTRIBUTES: cross and rosary.

SACRED SITE: He is buried in the Church of Santa Maria dei Monti in Rome.

FEAST: 16 April.

SEE ALSO André, Saint.

### ∾ Benezet, Saint

Also known as Saint Benet; Benoit; Benedict the Bridge Builder.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Saint Benezet (c. 1163–1184) was a French shepherd boy. During a solar eclipse, he had a vision ordering him to build a bridge over the river Rhône at Avignon. When he protested that he was busy, he was advised that angels would watch his flocks in his absence.

Now clearly, a shepherd boy can't build a bridge by himself. Benezet explained his vision and mission to both church and secular authorities, but all mocked him and refused their assistance. Angels advised him to demonstrate the miraculous nature of his vision. Under their direction, he lifted a large stone into place, announcing that this was the foundation stone of his bridge. Eighteen miracles followed in quick succession and authorities reconsidered their refusal to help. Miracles included the blind regaining their vision and the deaf their hearing. Hunchbacks discovered their backs were straight.

Saint Benezet is credited with founding the bridge-building societies that flourished in southern France during the 12th and 13th centuries. Although sometimes called "brotherhoods." they were not religious orders, nor were they limited to male participation. They more closely resembled guilds. Knights, artisans, and women were among the membership, as were clergy. They ran hospices for travelers and are sometimes associated with the mystical organizations simultaneously present in southern France.

Benezet died before his bridge was complete. He was interred on the bridge and his relics enshrined in a chapel dedicated to Saint Nicholas. In 1669, floods washed away parts of the bridge. His coffin was recovered and opened and his body found to be intact and incorrupt—a sign of sanctity. His relics were transferred to the Celestine Church of Saint Didier in Avignon during the 17th century

Saint Benezet was a visionary, in touch with angels. His bridge-building skills extend to more than just literal physical bridges. Petition him to help you create and manifest metaphoric bridges as well, especially in situations that seem impossible to ford. He may also be petitioned for miracles of healing.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: bachelors (this may be interpreted literally as unmarried men or as the traditional euphemism for gay men); bridge builders, literal and metaphoric.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: a boy carrying a large stone on his shoulder.

**SACRED SITE:** Benezet is the patron of the city of Avignon; the remains of his bridge are considered his pilgrimage point.

FEAST: 14 April.

**OFFERINGS:** Serenade him with the famous French folk song "Sur le Pont d'Avignon." (The bridge at Avignon is known in French as le Pont d'Avignon or le Pont Saint Bénezet.) Alternatively, add to his flocks; give him images of sheep. He died very young; offer toy bridges and construction toys.

SEE ALSO Nicholas, Saint and Glossary: Relics.

# ∾ Benito de Palma

Also known as San Benito el Moro.

There is no official saint called Denite de Dalmar it is a distortion of Denedict of

Palermo, more commonly called Benedict the Black. (Benito is the Spanish and Italian variant of Benedict.) When the Vatican named Benedict the Black as the patron saint of black people and those of African descent, they intended this in a conventional manner—in the same way that Benedict is also patron saint of the city of Palermo. In Latin America, Spanish missionaries aggressively promoted veneration of Benedict/Benito to those of African descent in order to facilitate and promote conversion to Catholicism.

Benito was embraced by the African community, but not in ways that the Vatican, the missionaries, or even the historical Saint Benedict may ever have envisioned. The place name Palermo resembles *palma*; palm fronds are used to demarcate sacred space in West Africa. Benito de Palma is syncretized to Eshu-Elegbara, West Africa's trickster Master of the Crossroads. References to San Benito are often intended to mean Eshu-Elegbara.

San Benito de Palma is intensely popular in Cuba and Mexico and throughout Latin America, especially in Venezuela where he is patron of African drumming. An Afro-Venezuelan legend says that San Benito hid Jesus when the Romans were searching for him, protecting him by drumming.

San Benito's most unusual manifestation is in Mexico, where he is venerated by assassins who pray for success and to avoid apprehension by authorities or the friends and families of their victims. (Clearly this is not the historical Saint Benedict, a devout, pious man who would insist on the repentance of murderers.) Offerings and gifts of gratitude to his Mexico City shrine are lavish.

SACRED SITE: Lake Maracaibo, Venezuela.

**OFFERINGS**: rum; cigars; drums; serenade him with drumming.

**SEE ALSO** *Benedict the Black, Saint; Seven African Powers* and Glossary: *Syncretism.* 

∾ Benno, Saint (1)

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Born into Saxon nobility, Benno (1010–16 June 1106) was as intensely political as he was spiritual. He served as chaplain to Holy Roman Emperor Henry III before being appointed bishop of Meissen in 1066. Benno spent a year in prison

for backing Pope Gregory VII and the local nobility against Holy Roman emperor Henry IV. When Benno was later summoned to Rome, he ordered the gates of the cathedral locked in case Henry sought to enter in his absence. Henry, in fact, did demand entrance, which he was granted. When he left, he took the cathedral's keys with him and tossed them into the river to indicate that the doors could not be locked against him. When Benno returned and heard what had happened, he walked down to the river, where a fish delivered the keys to him.

Benno remained controversial. Martin Luther campaigned vigorously against his canonization. He died of natural causes and was buried in the Cathedral of Meissen. Many miracles are associated with his relics.

FAVORED PEOPLE: anglers; those who fish or work with fish; weavers.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: a bishop holding a fish with keys in its mouth; a bishop holding a book atop which lies a fish and two keys.

ATTRIBUTES: fish; keys.

FEAST: 16 June.

SEE Glossary: Relics.

# ∾ Benno, Saint (2)

Also known as Beuno; Bennow.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Saint Benno (died c. 640) was the grandson of a Welsh prince. King Arthur was allegedly his great-uncle. Benno was the uncle of Saint Winifride, as well as her teacher, guardian, and spiritual advisor. The most famous legend of Saint Benno involves his successful reattachment of Winifride's severed head. He became a visionary in his old age and died of natural causes.

After his death, many healing miracles were reported at his tomb. It is still traditional to sit or place ailing or frail children on the stone slab of his tomb in order to receive his gift of healing. Saint Benno is invoked to heal children and animals, especially cattle **ICONOGRAPHY:** Benno is usually depicted in the act of putting Winifride's head back where it belongs.

FEAST: 21 April.

SEE ALSO Arthurian Saints; Winifride, Saint.

### ∾ Bent El-Hmus

**CLASSIFICATION:** Jewish saint.

A gathering of sages and rabbis met in the Moroccan oasis town of Taourirt. Some were local, but others had traveled from as far away as Jerusalem. The out-of-towners lodged in the home of a local woman named Bent El-Hmus. During the meeting, police arrived. Accusing the holy men of selling wine to Muslims, they proceded to arrest them. Bent El-Hmus told the sages that if they promised her Paradise after death, she would testify that she was the guilty party. (Moroccan Jews were allowed to make and possess alcoholic beverages for their own private use but were not permitted to sell it to Muslims, for whom alcohol is forbidden on religious grounds.)

The Muslim authorities initially did not believe Bent El-Hmus, accusing the rabbis of making her the fall-guy so that they'd go free. Bent El-Hmus spoke so persuasively, however, that she convinced them she had sold the wine. She received a death sentence and was promptly executed. She is venerated as a martyr for allowing herself to be killed in order to save the holy men, and also as an example of the ideal hostess: she could not allow guests under her roof to be harmed, preferring to die instead. Bent El-Hmus is invoked for healing and fertility.

Following her burial, a spring welled up near Bent El-Hmus' grave that quickly demonstrated healing powers. She is intensely associated with this particular spring, as well as with springs in general. Those who venerate her far from Taourirt may find themselves directed by her spirit to other healing springs. For example, a woman suffering from a painfully swollen leg received a dream visitation from Bent El-Hmus, who advised her to immerse herself in a specific spring and then apply salve to her leg. The woman followed the dream directions and was healed. SACRED SITE: her grave in Taourirt, Morocco.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; charity given in her honor; preservation of natural springs.

## 🔊 Bernadette of Lourdes, Saint

### CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Marie-Bernarde Soubirous (7 January 1844–16 April 1879), now known as Saint Bernadette, was a young French peasant girl when she witnessed an apparition of what she described as a "beautiful lady" at Lourdes in the French Pyrenees. With the possible exception of Mexico's shrine of the Lady of Guadalupe, Lourdes is now the most famous Marian shrine on earth.

Bernadette was the eldest of six children born to an extremely poor family so impoverished that the entire family lived in one unheated room. She witnessed the first apparition on 11 February 1858, followed by seventeen more during the next five months. The apparition repeatedly requested that a chapel be built for her on the spot where she appeared.

During her ninth visitation, the apparition advised Bernadette to drink from the spring that flowed beneath the rock in the grotto in which she appeared. Although no spring was visible, Bernadette dug in the muddy ground and attempted to drink the brackish water. Onlookers scoffed; Bernadette's family was embarrassed by her behavior and muddy appearance, but three days later a spring appeared at the spot. The water of Lourdes is now renowned worldwide for providing miracle cures, whether by drinking or immersion.

Bernadette was initially mocked. The local church hierarchy was offended that this little illiterate girl would be the one chosen to receive these holy visions. Her description of what she actually witnessed did not jibe with official Marian iconography. The Lourdes region of the Pyrenees has an ancient reputation as a stubborn outpost of fairy worship, and Bernadette's description of the small, youthful, beautiful lady was indeed reminiscent of fairy lore.

Initially, accusations of witchcraft were directed against Bernadette. Others suggested that she was developmentally disabled or mentally ill and advised that she be sent to an asylum. Forced to recount her experiences over and over to Church and government officials, Bernadette told skeptics: "I have been told to tell you about it. I have not been told to make you believe it."

Bernadette was the only one to see and hear the beautiful lady. She experienced the apparitions ecstatically. She later described those apparitions as the happiest moments of her life. The apparition told her not to expect to be happy in this world.

The apparition told Bernadette three secrets that she never revealed. Asked whether she would tell the pope, Bernadette replied: "The Virgin forbade me to tell any person and the pope is a person."

When Church authorities eventually conferred legitimacy on the apparition, Bernadette was effectively removed from Lourdes, ostensibly so that veneration would be focused entirely on Our Lady of Lourdes and not on Bernadette herself. She was not allowed to return to the scene of the apparition or the spring, nor was she present at the consecration of the Basilica of Our Lady of Lourdes in 1876.

In 1862, her visions finally having been officially authenticated, Bernadette applied to join a convent but was turned down because they didn't wish to be overwhelmed by pilgrims and tourists. In April 1866, she was accepted as a postulant at Nevers, France. (A postulant is admitted to a religious order as a probationary candidate for membership.) On her first day, she was ordered to recount her visions to the entire community and then never to speak of them again.

Bernadette was in ill health for most of her brief life, suffering from asthma as a child and contracting tuberculosis of the right knee bone shortly before her death at age thirty-five on 16 April 1879. Since her death, over 200 million people have visited Lourdes seeking spiritual and physical healing, making it the largest pilgrimage site in France and one of the most famous Roman Catholic pilgrimages.

Bernadette was canonized in 1933. She is the subject of popular films and novels. Actress Jennifer Jones won an Academy Award for her portrayal of Bernadette in the 1943 film *The Song of Bernadette*. Bernadette is the matron saint of those ridiculed for piety or spiritual experiences, as well as those suffering from any kind of illness. She is invoked for healing and against poverty. A full description of Bernadette's life and visions may be found in Ruth Harris' *Lourdes: Body and Spirit in the Secular Age* (Viking, 1999).

#### **SACRED SITES:**

• The Chapel of Saint Bernadette at the Mother House of the Sisters of Charity

in Nevers, France, where her incorrupt remains are on view in a gold and crystal reliquary.

- The Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes in Lourdes, also known as the Domain.
- The Church of Saint Bernadette, part of the Sanctuary and consecrated in 1988. The church was constructed over the spot where Bernadette stood when she witnessed her final apparition.
- The spring that Bernadette dug out of the mud, as directed by her apparition, is at the rear of the Grotto at Lourdes, shielded behind protective glass.

**PILGRIMAGE:** A pilgrimage called "In the Footsteps of Bernadette" invites devotees to follow in the saint's footsteps—literally. There are seven stops on the route, beginning with Bernadette's birthplace and concluding with the "Path of Bernadette," her footpath to the Grotto where she witnessed the apparition.

**PETITION**: Bernadette herself said of those addressing her (in other contexts): "It is best for people to speak and write very simply."

FEASTS: 16 April; 18 February.

**OFFERING:** white wine.

SEE ALSO Guadalupe; Mary; Well Saints and Glossary: Apparition; Incorrupt.

### 🔊 Bernard of Clairvaux, Saint

# CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches.

Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–21 August 1153) was an incredibly influential churchman. This French abbot, born into nobility, reformed the Cistercian order, preached the Second Crusade, persecuted the Cathars, wrote prolifically, and was the enemy and prosecutor of philosopher Peter Abelard (as in Heloise and Abelard). A very conservative man and a charismatic speaker, he was a dominant force in Roman Catholicism from approximately 1126 until his death.

Many find Saint Bernard fascinating because he appears to possess both a public and a private face. He was extremely well connected spiritually and politically—the assumption among conspiracy theorists is that he was privy to all sorts of secret. arcane knowledge. He may be petitioned for information.

although whether he will reveal it is another story.

Bernard's uncle, André de Montbard, was among the nine founding members of the Knights Templar and eventually its Grand Master. In 1128, Bernard became clerical head of that order and wrote the first Rules of the Templar Order. He is now frequently mentioned in connection with the Priory of Sion, long rumored to be an ancient secret society and quite familiar to fans of Dan Brown's bestselling 2003 novel, *The Da Vinci Code*.

Bernard was extremely devoted to Mary Magdalen, as well as to various Black Madonnas. Once, when he was ailing, three drops of milk miraculously flowed from the breast of the Black Madonna of Châtillon-sur-Seine and healed him. A prolific author, he wrote 200 lyrical sermons inspired by the Old Testament's erotic *Song of Songs*, which he dedicated to "the Madonna," although many believe this particular Madonna really to be Mary Magdalen.

Hugues, Count of Champagne, gave Bernard some land in the Valley of Wormwood. Bernard renamed it Clairvaux, or the Valley of Light, and established an abbey there.

FAVORED PEOPLE: beekeepers; candle makers; those who work with wax.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: He is depicted in the garb of a Cistercian and may be accompanied by a dragon, a chained demon, a swarm of bees, a beehive, or a white dog.

SACRED SITE: Shrine of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux in Troyes Cathedral, France.

FEAST: 20 August.

SEE ALSO Mary; Mary Magdalen and Glossary: Black Madonna.

There are two famous Saint Bernards:

- Saint Bernard dogs are named in honor of Saint Bernard of Montjoux.
- The Knights Templar were affiliated with Saint Bernard of Clairvaux.

new Bernard of Montjoux, Saint

Also known as Saint Bernard of Menthon.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Bernard (923–28 May 1008) was born in Savoy to a noble family. Although he sought a spiritual vocation, his parents arranged a marriage for him instead. Bernard sneaked away from home the day before the wedding, fled to Italy, and joined the Benedictines. He spent the next forty years evangelizing in the Alps, especially in the remote regions that housed Pagan strongholds, as well as hideaways for less conventional Christians seeking discreet privacy. The region was also a hideout for robbers and those on the lam from the law.

Bernard vowed to make the roads and mountain passes safe for pilgrims and travelers. He started a patrol intended to clear brigands from the roads and founded hospices for pilgrims and travelers that were renowned for their hospitality toward all. Saint Bernard dogs, trained to rescue those lost in the snow, are named in his honor. He is the patron of the breed, as well as of rescue dogs in general and those who train them, work with them, or benefit from them.

He is the patron and protector of those who travel in the mountains, especially Alpinists and mountain climbers. He is also patron of skiers and those who own or maintain ski slopes. Saint Bernard protects run-aways and may be invoked to help rescue you—or provide inspiration so that you can rescue yourself—from unwanted relationships and commitments.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: a man standing on a mountain peak, usually accompanied by a dog.

**SACRED ANIMAL**: dogs. Although he is now most associated with the distinctive Saint Bernard breed, early images of Saint Bernard depicted him with a white dog.

FEAST: 28 May.

SACRED SITES: Two mountain passes are dedicated to him:

- the Great Saint Bernard Pass, the most ancient pass through the western Alps
- the Little Saint Bernard Pass, which is also the site of an ancient stone circle
- the Cathedral of Saint Bernard in Montreux houses his cranium.

**OFFERINGS**: Sometimes Saint Bernards need rescuing, too. Offerings on behalf of

organizations that care for or rescue Saint Bernard dogs will be appreciated, as will sponsorship of rescue-dog societies in general. Efforts on behalf of preserving mountain habitat and brandy or B & B (Benedictine and brandy) are also appropriate.

### 👡 Beruriah

Also known as Bruriah.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Jewish saint.

Beruriah, the only woman recognized in the Talmud as a scholar in her own right, lived during the turbulence of the second century. Her family was destroyed during Rome's suppression of Judea's final rebellion against its authority. Beruriah was the daughter of the great sage, Rabbi Hananiah ben Teradion, among the ten martyrs recalled annually on Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement. Roman authorities caught him teaching from a Torah scroll, a practice they had outlawed, and condemned him to death. Beruriah watched as her father was wrapped in a Torah scroll, placed on a pyre of green wood, and burned alive.

Beruriah's mother, arrested with her father, was also executed and, as part of the family's punishment and degradation, Beruriah's sister was sent to labor in a Roman bordello. (Beruriah and her husband allegedly followed and rescued her.) Her brother, who had been her study partner, became an outlaw. Blamed for betraying his fellow conspirators to authorities, they killed him, filling his mouth with dust and pebbles, which is what was done to stool pigeons back then.

Beruriah married Rabbi Meir, a brilliant scholar. She lived most of her life in Tiberias on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. She was herself a brilliant Torah scholar—a calm, insightful woman who was considered an equal to male scholars, but an exception among women. Her protest against the stereotyping of women led to her tragic death.

When Beruriah laughed at a rabbinic dictum regarding the innate lewdness of women, her husband, whom she adored, challenged her, saying: "On your life! You will end up admitting they are right!" Meir secretly commanded one of his students to try to seduce her to prove his point. It took a while; the student pursued her passionately and eventually she succumbed. It was a setup. When the "I told you so" moment arrived, Beruriah was so devastated and overcome

with shame that she hung herself. Her date of death is estimated to be approximately 170.

Her husband is renowned as a great miracle worker from beyond the grave. Beruriah, too, may be petitioned for healing and protection, especially when tragedy threatens to overwhelm.

SEE ALSO Meir Ba'al Ha Ness, Rabbi.

### 🔊 Bethen

Also known as The Three Holy Girls.

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saints.

The Bethen are a triad of female saints venerated in Austria and Bavaria. Their identity appears rooted in their Pagan alter egos, a triad of goddesses also once worshipped in Bavaria and Austria, and also known as the Bethen. *Bethen* may derive from a Germanic word meaning "to pray." The names of the individual Bethen vary depending on region. They are called:

- Ainpet, Gberpet, and Firpet
- Ainbeth, Borbeth, and Wilbeth
- Aubet, Cubet, and Quere
- Catherine, Margaret, and Barbara

Which of these four sets of names is different from the rest? The renaming of the individual members of the Bethen as Catherine, Margaret, and Barbara may be an attempt to identify them with the extremely popular and official Saints Barbara, Catherine of Alexandria, and Margaret, who are sometimes venerated together as a triad.

The Bethen are unofficial, or popular, saints. No documentation exists regarding them as historical persons. The earliest surviving depiction of the Bethen in the form of saints dates from an 1127 painting in a southern Tyrolian church. They were extremely popular saints for centuries, until they were eventually overshadowed by increasing devotion to Mary. Evidence indicates

that the Bethen were venerated as individual saints and as a triad. They are invoked to provide fertility.

COLORS: red; black; white.

**SACRED SITES:** The Bethen have traditionally been venerated at wells, sacred springs, stones, and trees, but there are also shrines associated with them:

- The Church of Leutstetten in Bavaria, where, according to legend, three noble virgins never married, donating all their wealth toward building the church instead. Their image was enshrined in the church. No evidence documenting this story exists, but a painting of the Bethen in the church dates from 1620.
- The Church of Saint Vigil in Obsaurs in Austria also features a painting of the Bethen. There is a sacred well nearby.
- There is also an image of the Bethen at Worms Cathedral.

**OFFERINGS**: candles. An 11th-century document suggests that women laid offering tables for the Bethen complete with food, drink, and three knives, one for each of them.

SEE ALSO Barbara, Saint; Catherine of Alexandria; Foureen Holy Helpers; Margaret of Antioch, Saint; Mary; Well Saints and Glossary: Saint, Unofficial; Syncretism.

### 👡 Bibiana, Saint

Also known as Saint Vibiana; Saint Viviana; Saint Vivian.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Bibiana is a distortion of the name Vibiana, who is described as a Roman virgin martyr. No historical evidence documenting her life exists, but she is the subject of a detailed legend.

Vibiana lived in Rome during a time of Christian persecutions. Her father was deported as a forced laborer and she was placed under house arrest with her mother and sister. The two other women died of natural causes; Vibiana was left to bury them herself. When she was later executed as a professing Christian, a priest buried her beside them and a church was eventually built over their remains.

A more elaborate version of her legend suggests that she was arrested along with her parents and sister, all now also saints. Her father was deported, her mother was beheaded, and her sister dropped dead in the process of being arrested and so was spared the torture inflicted on Vibiana. Sent to a whorehouse, Vibiana proved so uncooperative that she was sent to an insane asylum. She was eventually tied to a pillar and scourged to death in approximately 361. (The scourges used were loaded with lead to make the torture as excruciating as possible.)

Her corpse was left for street dogs to consume, but the dogs refused to touch her. Buried beside her mother and sister, first a church and then a basilica were built over their graves. A mysterious, miraculous herb that sprang up in the churchyard proved capable of curing seizure disorders, headaches, and mental illness.

Officially, Saint Vibiana is invoked against depression, migraines, epilepsy, and other seizure disorders. Because she heals headaches and because Vibiana rhymes with Bibiana—as in *bibulous*, meaning "marked by the consumption of alcoholic beverages"—Saint Bibiana has emerged as the saint invoked to cure hangovers. It is unclear exactly when Vibiana transformed into Bibiana, but it is the name by which she is now best known.

Veneration of Bibiana was confined to Rome until 1853, when relics identified as hers were sent to Los Angeles. There is some disagreement on this point, with some insisting that the relics actually belong to an entirely different martyred Vibiana, perhaps because Saint Bibiana, matron saint of hangovers, has become a source of humor.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: the mentally ill; torture victims; those suffering from seizure disorders or migraine headaches; alcoholics; herbal practitioners; those committed to mental-health facilities against their will.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: She is often depicted tied to a pillar.

**ATTRIBUTES:** pillar; tree branch; scourge with leaded thongs.

FEAST: 2 December.

SACRED SITE: The cathedral of Saint Vibiana in downtown Los Angeles was

constructed in 1876. Badly damaged by the 1994 Northridge earthquake, it was scheduled for demolition in 1996, but an aggressive campaign by preservationists saved the Italianate building. Since 2002, Bibiana's relics have been housed in the mausoleum of the new Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels. The cathedral formerly dedicated to her has been deconsecrated and is now an events venue known as Vibiana.

### 🔊 Bilal

Also known as Sidi Bilal (Lord Bilal); Bilal ibn Rabah; Bilal ibn Habashi.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by the Shia, Sufis, and Gnawa.

Sidi Bilal served the Prophet Muhammad as the first *muezzin*, or caller to prayer. Born in the late sixth century, Sidi Bilal was an Ethiopian Christian slave. Different legends explain how he became free. In one, he converted to Islam while still enslaved. In response, his master tortured him. When Abu Bakr as-Siddiq, a close friend of the Prophet, learned of this, he purchased Bilal and freed him. Bilal eventually became Muhammad's personal servant.

According to another version, Bilal was a Christian slave serving Muhammad's household. He was freed when he healed the Prophet's daughter, Fatima, of an illness by singing. He then converted to Islam and became the first muezzin. His devotees, the Gnawa Brotherhood, also combine healing and music. The Gnawa are descended from slaves transported from Ghana, Guinea, and Mali to serve as guards for Moroccan sultan Moulay Ismail (1672–1727). They claim spiritual descent from Sidi Bilal; his name is invoked in many of their songs.

#### COLOR: green.

**SACRED SITE**: His tomb-shrine is in the Bab al-Saghir Cemetery in Damascus. It is traditional to tie a bit of green cloth to the tomb's window grille when requesting a favor or offering a petition. Some petitioners return to remove the cloth if their request is granted.

**OFFERINGS**: charitable donations in the saint's honor.

### 👡 Birgitta of Sweden, Saint

Also known as Saint Bridget of Sweden; Saint Brigitta.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Birgitta (1303–23 July 1373), mystic, visionary, and founder of the Briggittine monastic order, was born to a wealthy, noble Swedish family. On her mother's side, she was related to Swedish royalty and, for a while, she served as chief lady-in-waiting to the Swedish queen. She married very young, bore eight children, including the future Saint Catherine of Sweden, and was renowned for her generosity and kindness.

After her husband's death, Birgitta devoted the rest of her life to spiritual pursuits. She traveled to Rome to request papal confirmation of her monastic order. She was extremely popular in Roman society and, except for some pilgrimages, stayed there for the rest of her life. She was canonized in 1391, less than twenty years after her death.

Birgitta's ecstatic visions began in childhood but became more frequent as she grew older. Although recognized as a holy woman later in life, her visions and piety were mocked in her youth. Birgitta eventually renounced her position as princess, as it interfered with her spiritual vocation. She may be petitioned by those overwhelmed by visionary experiences. Ask her to help you discern between good and malevolent spirits. If necessary, she may be invoked to reveal precisely when you will die.

FAVORED PEOPLE: widows.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Birgitta is depicted as an abbess in Briggittine robes.

**ATTRIBUTES**: a pen and book; often depicted writing down her visions; pilgrim's staff.

#### SACRED SITES:

• Vadstena Abbey in Sweden, the motherhouse of the Briggittine Order and built according to Birgitta's specifications. Birgitta's relics are housed within this church.

• the Brigitta Chapel in Vienna

FEASTS: 23 July; 7 October.

**SEE ALSO** *Brigid*, *Saint*.

#### ∾ Black Hawk

EPITHETS: The Watchman; The Saint for the South.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Spiritualist saint.

Black Hawk is venerated as a saint and spirit guide by the Spiritual Churches of New Orleans. Among the primary spirit guides of Mother Leafy Anderson (1887–1927), widely considered the founder of this spiritual tradition, Black Hawk first appeared to her in a vision. She described him as "the saint for the south." According to Mother Anderson, another now less renowned spirit, White Hawk, served the north. It is unknown whether Black Hawk had manifested to anyone before he appeared to Mother Anderson. By the 1920s, he was venerated within the New Orleans Vodoo community. After Mother Anderson's death, he appeared to another Spiritualist leader, Mother Catherine Seals. After her death in 1930, he began to manifest to a multitude of Spiritualists and transitioned from a personal spirit guide to a saint with a broad base of veneration.

Black Hawk's identity is subject to debate and controversy. In other words, who was he when he was alive? Several prominent Native American leaders were named Black Hawk. The saint is generally considered to be the most famous of them—the Black Hawk (c. 1767–3 October 1837) who was the war leader of the Sauk and Fox Indians of the Upper Mississippi Valley.

This Black Hawk sided with the British during the War of 1812 and led a rebellion against the United States in 1832 known as the Black Hawk War. Although initially victorious, the Sauk and Fox were trapped and beaten on 2 August 1832 at Wisconsin's Bad Axe River. United States troops killed dozens of the Sauk and Fox, including women, children, and the elderly, in an incident now called the Bad Axe Massacre.

Black Hawk escaped but was captured and jailed. He was eventually released into the custody of Sauk and Fox leaders who had remained loyal to the United States during the uprising. An autobiography allegedly dictated by Black Hawk was first published in 1833. A revised, enlarged edition appeared in 1882 and was a bestseller. It remains in print.

Scholar Judith Bettelheim suggests a different identity for Black Hawk. An Oglala Lakota chief of that name performed with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show and spent the winter of 1884–1885 in New Orleans, the city where veneration of Black Hawk is now centered.

Black Hawk, the Watchman, is a warrior for justice. Invoke him for help with legal matters and to be released from prison or any sort of captivity. Votive images of Black Hawk are placed on altars or positioned near the front door facing outward to serve as watchman and sentry.

- Many devotees place his image in a bucket filled with sand or dirt.
- Rituals for Black Hawk are conducted at night and illuminated by red candles, not electric lights.

**ATTRIBUTES**: a tomahawk to cut through obstacles or to clear a path; a spear or lance that can be thrown to reach a distant target and, symbolically, a distant goal.

COLOR: red.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; tobacco; fresh fruit. It is traditional to refrain from offering him alcoholic beverages.

For more information, see Jason Berry, *The Spirit of Black Hawk: A Mystery of Africans and Indians* (Univ. Press of Mississippi, 1995).

SEE ALSO Marron, Saint.

### 🔊 Blaise, Saint

Also known as Biagio (Italian); Vlasios (Greek); Vlash (Albanian); Blazey (Cornish) Vlaho (Croatian); Blas (Spanish); Blasius (Latin).

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most Christian traditions.

Very little documented historical evidence regarding Saint Blaise exists. This is what is verifiable:

- Blaise, the child of wealthy Christians, became a physician and eventually the Bishop of Sebaste in Armenia.
- He was martyred in approximately 316.

Those are the facts. The rest of his extensive hagiography is based on folklore, so the following legends may or may not be historically true.

To escape persecution as a Christian, Blaise fled to a mountain cave where he lived among wild animals. They recognized him as a holy man, coming to Blaise daily for a blessing. He healed sick and wounded animals. Wild birds brought food for him.

Hunters searching for animals to bring to the amphitheater discovered Blaise in his cave sitting among wild, fierce beasts. He was a known Christian, so they dragged him off to the governor of Cappadocia and Lower Armenia. (An alternative version suggests that he had angered the hunters by obstructing them from killing animals, so they wanted him out of their territory.) On the way, they encountered a weeping woman. Her only pig had been captured by a wolf. Blaise ordered the wolf to drop the pig and the wolf obeyed. The governor ordered Blaise scourged and thrown into a dungeon with no food or light, but the woman whose pig he had saved sneaked him candles and meals. Since he absolutely refused to abjure his faith, he was tortured with iron wool-carding combs and then beheaded. Fleeing Christians carried his cadaver to Italy.

Just before his execution, Saint Blaise rescued a boy who was choking on a fishbone. Blaise touched the boy's throat, the fishbone was disgorged, and the boy was fine. Although Blaise was a physician and may simply have known the right thing to do, this was interpreted as a miracle, and it is now his most famous legend.

Blaise became extremely popular in Europe in the 11th and 12th centuries. It's likely that in some areas, forbidden Pagan spirits masquerade under the guise of the saint. In Slavic regions, Saint Blaise has taken over duties formerly assigned to the deity variously called Veles, Volos, and Vlas who also has profound associations with wolves. Saint Blaise is invoked to protect wild and domestic animals. He heals toothaches as well as all throat disorders. He is one of the Fourteen Holy Helpers.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: Saint Blaise vowed to bless and protect anyone who lit a candle in his memory on his feast day. He is the patron of candle makers, wool combers, and stonecutters, and the special protector of wild and domestic

animals and people who care for them. He protects anyone who suffers from any throat-related disorder, including coughing. In Germany, he is considered the patron of wind instruments and those who play them.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: He is depicted as a hermit amid wild animals, a man healing a choking boy, and a man holding two crossed candles. (If you don't know the legend, you may not realize they're candles; they look like a big white X.)

ATTRIBUTES: wool-carding comb; two candles.

### SACRED SITES:

- Saint Blaise is the patron saint of Dubrovnik, Croatia, whose cathedral possesses various relics, including his head, hands, right foot, and most notably, his throat.
- the Chapel of Saint Blaise in Rocamadour, France
- Saint Blaise's Well in Bromley, Kent, England

### **RITUALS:**

- Beasts of burden are traditionally given a holiday on the feast day of Saint Blaise. It is considered unlucky to allow an animal to labor on his day.
- Animals are blessed in churches on this day.
- To remove obstructions from the body (a bone in throat or a splinter in flesh), hold the body part with two hands, look at the obstruction and order: "Holy Saint Blaise commands you to come forth!"
- An Italian tradition recommends preserving a piece of Christmas *panetone* (a type of cake) to eat on 3 February to ward off sore throats for the rest of the year.
- The ritual Blessing of the Throat is performed in some churches on his feast. Two long tapers are blessed and lit, tied together with ribbons to form an X, and gently touched to the throats of those suffering from ailments or those just seeking to be blessed.
- Saint Blaise Water is springwater that has been blessed in the name of the saint or that has had contact with his relics. It allegedly protects against throat disorders and may be used to heal animals.
- An English tradition of lighting bonfires on the eve of Saint Blaise's feast may have been inspired by the resemblance of his name to the word "blaze."

FEASTS: 3 February (Roman Catholic); 11 February (Orthodox).

ALTAR: Decorate with images of wild animals, especially wolves; burn lots of candles, as Blaise was forced to spend too much time in darkness.

**BOTANICAL**: water moss (*Fontinalis antipyretica*).

**OFFERINGS:** Burn candles for him. Make donations on behalf of the safety and welfare of wild beasts. He disapproved of hunting; a sacrifice would be to give it up in exchange for a miracle. In the Balkans, goat or mutton is eaten on the feast day; be sure to save a portion for Blaise.

**SEE ALSO** *Amadour, Saint; Andrew, Saint; Fourteen Holy Helpers* and Glossary: *Syncretism.* 

### 🔊 Blandina, Saint

Also known as Saint Blandine.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Blandina (died 177) was a slave who was converted to Christianity by the Christian family who owned her in Lyons—then in Gaul, now in modern France. Christianity had arrived in Lyons approximately twenty-five years before Blandina's death. Christians were then widely believed to commit all sorts of horrific crimes, including cannibalism and incest. Authorities arrested Blandina's household and tortured individual members in an attempt to obtain confessions of guilt.

Blandina—a young slave and not an actual family member—was perceived to be the weak link. Authorities expected her to break down quickly and confirm accusations against the slave owner and his family. Instead, Blandina was steadfast, refusing either to confess her own guilt or to implicate others. This frustrated authorities, who were convinced they could break her. As a result, Blandina was tortured more severely than the others:

- She was beaten and then hung upside down in the arena to be consumed by lions, but the lions did not harm her.
- She was tied up in a net and thrown to a wild bull. Once again, the animal

caused her no harm.

• Finally, she was stabbed to death with a dagger.

Blandina's body was burned and her ashes thrown into the river. No historical documentation for Blandina's legend exists, although absence of proof is not proof of absence. In 177, the year Blandina allegedly died, the primary goddess of Lyons was Kybele. Bulls and lions are among Kybele's sacred beasts. She is virtually always depicted in the company of lions. Some images of Blandina could easily be interpreted as images of Kybele. It is possible that a Christian legend has evolved around iconography once associated with this goddess.

Saint Blandina is invoked for any sort of assistance.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: young women and girls; torture victims; slaves; those who are falsely accused, especially of cannibalism.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Blandina is depicted as a young girl tied to a pillar with lions and sometimes also bears—beside her; she also appears balancing on a wild bull's back in the company of other bulls. Based on her iconography, those unfamiliar with her story might imagine her to be a circus performer or a bull dancer.

**SACRED SITE:** She is venerated at the Church of Saint-Leu in Amiens, near Lyons. Whatever could be rescued of Blandina's body is preserved as a relic there.

FEASTS: 2 June; 11 July.

**SEE** Glossary: *Iconography; Syncretism*.

### 🔊 Blath of Kildare, Saint

Also known as Saint Flora.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Saint Blath was the cook at Saint Brigid's convent at Kildare. Saint Brigid might have miraculously produced a constant supply of food, but it was Saint Blath who actually cooked it. Legend has it that bread and bacon prepared by Blath

was superior to a feast elsewhere. Because her Gaelic name literally means "flower," Saint Blath is sometimes called Saint Flora. She died in approximately 523 of natural causes.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: those who cook for organizations like schools, firehouses, or religious orders; those who run soup kitchens.

**SPIRITUAL ALLY:** Blath worked closely with Saint Brigid and they may be venerated together.

FEAST: 29 January.

SEE ALSO Brigid, Saint.

### 👡 Bolívar, Simón

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint; member of the Court of María Lionza.

Simón Bolívar (24 July 1783–17 December 1830), the leader of South America's revolutionary wars, is venerated in his native Venezuela. Bolívar led Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela to independence but died bankrupt near Santa Marta, Colombia. He is returned to glory and power in the cosmology of the Maria Lionza spiritual tradition as the leader and most powerful member of the Court of Liberators.

Request his help when seeking employment with a government or with government-associated agencies.

**MANIFESTATION**: According to Kardecian Spiritist mediums, the spirit of Simón Bolívar announces his presence by coughing—a reminder that he suffered from tuberculosis.

SACRED SITE: Bolívar's remains have been housed in the National Pantheon in Caracas since 28 October 1876. His body was exhumed on 16 July 2010, so that forensic experts could determine the true cause of Bolívar's death.

FEAST: 17 December.

**OFFERINGS**: When petitioning Simón Bolívar, offer three candles—one yellow, one blue, and one red, the colors of the Venezuelan flag. Alternatively, offer one gold candle, flanked on one side by a glass of water and on the other by a glass of fine whisky. He likes fine cognac, too. Another possibility is a glass of Bolivar Coffee Liqueur.

SEE ALSO María Lionza.

#### 🔊 Bona of Pisa, Saint

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Bona (1156–29 May 1207) began displaying mystic tendencies and experiencing visions in childhood. Once, while looking at the crucifix in Pisa's Church of the Holy Sepulcher, Bona saw Jesus on the cross gaze back at her and hold out his hand to her. She also experienced a pivotal vision of Saint James the Greater, to whom she would be profoundly devoted for the rest of her life.

Bona, who was born out of wedlock, spent her early childhood living with her mother in Pisa until, at age ten, she went to live alone in a small cell near the Church of San Martin. She lived there for three years, engaged in praying and knitting. For three days each week, she subsisted on only the most minimal amounts of bread and water.

Bona's father, a prominent man, had gone to fight in the Crusades. After Bona had lived in her cell for three years, her mother sent her to him in Palestine, escorted by two women. Her father, informed of her impending arrival, was not pleased. He did not wish her to come. Bona's presence as an illegitimate child was an embarrassment to him and to his sons, her prominent, well-connected half-brothers—one was the Patriarch of Jerusalem; one was Master of the Order of Templars; the third was a Cavalier of the Knights Hospitallers.

Bona's father sent soldiers to capture the women, but they evaded him by hiding in a cave alongside the proverbial wise hermit. Eventually, the women tried to return to Pisa, but their ship was captured by Saracen pirates. Bona was brought in chains to an African prison, where she nearly died. Ransomed at age eighteen, she returned home, moving back into her little cell. She didn't stay put long but became an official guide on the pilgrimage route to Compostela under the auspices of the Knights of Saint John. Although always in fragile health, she spent the rest of her life leading pilgrims across the arduous route to the shrine of Saint James.

Bona led nine tour groups, in the process earning a reputation as a holy woman. People sought her advice, blessings, and healing touch. Bona attempted to lead another journey to Compostela but was extremely weakened by a lifetime of austerities. (By modern standards, she was severely anorexic. By the standards of her own time, her austerities were extreme and often disturbing to her confessor and onlookers.) Collapsing not far from home, she was brought back to Pisa, where she died.

Bona was canonized in 1962. She is invoked to heal headaches and migraines.

**FAVORED PEOPLE:** Saint Bona is the matron of travelers, especially couriers, tour guides, flight attendants, and other airline employees, as well as of adventurers. If you lead spiritual or religious tour groups, Saint Bona may be inclined to be sympathetic toward you. If you are traveling to Compostela, she is almost certain to have sympathy for you.

**ATTRIBUTE:** the scallop shell of Saint James.

**SPIRITUAL ALLY:** Saint James the Greater.

FEAST: 29 May.

SACRED SITE: the Church of San Martino in Pisa, where her relics are housed

**OFFERINGS**: candles; scallop shells; things useful for a tour director.

SEE ALSO Catherine of Siena; James the Greater, Saint; Martin, Saint.

### 👡 Boris and Gleb

CLASSIFICATION: Orthodox saints.

Boris and Gleb were the sons of Vladimir, the Grand Prince of Kiev and the first Christian ruler of the Rus, the tribal nation from which the name Russia derives. The brothers were converted to Christianity alongside their father in 988. Vladimir had several wives, in addition to 800 concubines. Needless to say, Boris and Gleb were not his only sons.

When Vladimir died in 1015, Boris and Gleb were away battling the nomadic

and Pagan Pechenegs. Because of Vladimir's complicated marital history, there was debate among his sons as to who was truly his legitimate heir. Although Boris was hypothetically next in line for the throne, another brother seized it and sent assassins after Boris, who was attacked in his tent while praying. (Scholars argue over which of Vladimir's many sons was responsible for his brothers' deaths, but Syvatopolk is usually blamed.)

Boris survived the attack, only to be taken before his murderous brother, who showed no mercy but ordered him stabbed in the heart with a sword. Gleb was the next to be targeted. Returning to Kiev by ship on 5 November, Gleb was stabbed in the throat with a kitchen knife by his chef, who was really an assassin in disguise sent by his brother.

In 1019, another brother, Yaroslav, had the bodies of Boris and Gleb exhumed and brought to the Church of Saint Basil in Vysgorod near Kiev, where they were buried together. Miracles were soon reported and their tomb became a pilgrimage site. Their bodies disappeared during an invasion in 1240.

Boris and Gleb are always venerated together as if they were twins, although they were not and may even have had different mothers. The brothers are Russia's earliest Christian saints. Some believe that early veneration of the saints masked continued veneration of the sacred twins, Castor and Pollux.

Boris and Gleb are sought as intercessors. They perform miracles of healing and are invoked in folk magic for prosperity and business success. If you can manage some sort of successful business transaction on 2 May, their feast day, legend has it that your business is guaranteed success for the next twelve months.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Boris and Gleb are portrayed as two handsome young men standing together or as two knights mounted on horseback. A popular subject of icons, Boris is portrayed with a beard, while Gleb lacks one.

ATTRIBUTES: swords; Russian cross with three crossbars; Tree of Life.

**BOTANICALS:** Boris is identified with barley and Gleb with wheat. Gleb is also associated with birch trees.

COLORS: black and red.

**FEASTS:** The brothers are venerated together on 2 May. The feast of Boris is 24 July, while Gleb is celebrated on 5 September.

SEE Glossary: Icon; Syncretism.

#### 🔊 Boudica

Also known as Boadicea; Boudicca.

**CLASSIFICATION:** folk saint.

Boudica (died approximately 60 ce) was the wife of Prasutagus, a client king of the Roman government and tribal ruler of the Iceni, a Celtic tribe of Norfolk, England. Client kings gained patronage and protection from Rome but in return guaranteed to maintain local peace—i.e., no rebellions against Rome. The relationship was a personal one between the client king and Rome. Therefore, when a king died, the relationship was automatically dissolved and a new deal had to be negotiated.

In his will, Prasutagus named his daughters and the emperor Nero as his heirs. This was a formality that may have been forced upon him by the Romans. Prasutagus almost certainly never expected the Roman government to press their claim for his throne. He may have been unaware that the Romans had historically annexed other territories using this method.

When Prasutagus died, Nero's financial representative in England arrived to make an inventory and take possession on behalf of the emperor. His manner was apparently disrespectful and rude, belligerent and confrontational. Boudica, whose name derives from a Celtic word for "victory," was enraged. She declared herself leader of the Iceni, challenging Rome's authority, presumably on behalf of her still very young daughters. Rome's reaction was extremely aggressive. Boudica was stripped to the waist and flogged. Her daughters were raped in front of their mother. Many Icenians had been forced to take out loans from Rome at exorbitant interest rates. The Romans called in the loans and Icenian property was seized.

Roman authorities may have assumed that they had broken Boudica's will, but they were wrong. In 60 ce, she amassed a huge army of over 120,000 Icenians and other tribes eager to oust the Romans. Boudica rode before them in a chariot with her two young daughters. In a famous legend, Boudica released a rabbit before the start of battle as part of an oracular ritual.

Several Roman towns, including what is now London, were sacked and burned. Roman historian De Cassius writes that over 80,000 Romans were killed in the rebellion. Boudica was finally trapped and defeated by the Roman governor Suetonius Paulinus, who had been forced to interrupt his destruction of the druid groves on the Isle of Anglesey in order to quell Boudica's uprising. Boudica drank poison rather than be held captive by the Romans. (Egyptian pharaoh Cleopatra killed herself for similar reasons.)

Boudica is described as being "of royal blood," and scholars now theorize that Prasutagus ruled because he was married to her. Some suggest that Boudica was the true hereditary ruler and that her marriage to a client king may have been forced on her by the Romans—hence her outrage when Rome refused to acknowledge her daughters' right of succession.

Strongly identified with the modern Celtic revival and Pagan renaissance, Boudica's spirit is invoked by those of Celtic heritage, as well as by those who seek to overthrow oppression. Boudica is also a favorite subject in popular media. Fictionalized depictions of her appear in novels, comic books, and television programs. Actress Alex Kingston portrays the warrior queen in the 2003 film *Boudica*.

Reports from numerous witnesses, dating back to at least the 19th century, suggest that an apparition of Boudica riding in her chariot haunts Lincolnshire.

**MANIFESTATION:** Boudica is described as having long fair hair that falls to her hips. She dressed in a multicolored tunic, over which she wore a cloak fastened with a brooch. She wore a great gold necklace, or torc, around her neck and carried a spear. The Romans described her as "very tall and grim" with a "piercing gaze and a harsh voice."

SEE ALSO Elen of the Roads and Glossary: Apparition.

### 🔊 Bousso, Mame Diarra

EPITHET: The One Who Lives with God.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Mouride saint.

Mame Diarra Bousso (1833–1866) is doubly revered:

- As the mother of renowned Senegalese saint Sheikh Amadou Bamba
- As a saint in her own right

*Mame* is an honorific, a Wolof term indicating a revered grandparent. (Wolof is the primary language of Senegal.) *Diarra* means "the one who lives with God." Her actual birth name was Mariama, leading to reverential comparisons with Mary, the Holy Mother.

An extremely devout child from a pious Muslim family, Mame Diarra Bousso had learned to read the Koran by the time she was ten. She ate sparingly except at religious feasts and was exceptionally generous to all, offering food and clothing to anyone in need. As in life, so in death—Mame Diarra Bousso is considered an incredibly powerful saint whose generosity knows no limit.

Mame Diarra Bousso is renowned for her complete and utter devotion to her husband. Once, when the household unexpectedly ran out of firewood, rather than going out to gather more, Mame Diarra burned her own clothing instead so that her husband wouldn't have to wait for his breakfast. One night, a powerful storm threatened the straw fence enclosing their yard. Her husband asked her to help him hold up the fence. The wind intensified to such a degree that her husband finally sought shelter, assuming that she would also. When he came out in the morning to appraise the damage, he discovered Mame Diarra Bousso still holding the fence. When he asked why she hadn't sought refuge, she replied simply that she had stayed where he told her to stay.

Mame Diarra Bousso died at the age of thirty-three. She is invoked for assistance with marital difficulties, infertility, and economic problems. She is an exceptionally generous and patient spirit; devotees describe her as being as bountiful as the sea.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: No known photograph of Mame Diarra exists; she is usually depicted in the act of holding up a fence.

ATTRIBUTES: prayer beads; tea kettle; mortar and pestle.

SACRED DAY: Thursday.

SACRED SITE: Her grave in the village of Porokhane, Senegal, is the site of a huge annual pilgrimage for male and female devotees, but especially for women. Various rituals are associated with the pilgrimage, including tying fabric to the tree on which Mame Diarra Bousso once hung her laundry.

### 👡 Brice, Saint

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Brice, a French orphan boy, was born in approximately 370 and raised as the protégé of Martin of Tours. However, he was not grateful and obedient, but wild and rebellious. Brice was obstinate and so ill behaved that some accused him of being possessed by a demon. Saint Martin was frequently advised to get rid of him, but his response was that if Jesus could tolerate Judas, he could tolerate Brice.

Brice became a priest and was designated to succeed Martin as bishop after the older man's death in 397. However, once his protector, Martin, was gone, the local people rebelled, choosing a different successor. Brice was driven violently out of town in fear for his life. He traveled elsewhere but remained controversial, suffering several accusations of immorality, although he was always acquitted. When the man who succeeded Martin as bishop died, Brice tried to reclaim the position but was once again driven from town by a mob.

The third time was the charm. When the post became vacant again in 437, Brice returned to Tours but this time was welcomed. The populace had mellowed and Brice's reputation had improved. He served as bishop of Tours until his death from natural causes in 444.

Saint Brice is invoked to heal and prevent stomach disorders. He may also be invoked by those who are falsely accused.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Brice is traditionally depicted in the garb of the bishop he waited so long to become.

BOTANICAL: bay laurel.

FEAST: 13 November.

**OFFERINGS**: fine white wine.

SEE ALSO Judas Iscariot; Martin of Tours.

### 👡 Brigid, Saint

Also known as Bride of the Isles; Saint Brigid of Kildare; Brigid of the Gael; Mary of the Gael; Bridget; Brigit; Brighid; Brid; Bride (pronounced: breed).

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

According to legend, Brigid (453–1 February 523) was the daughter of a Pagan Irish king and a Pictish slave who had converted to Christianity. Born in a druid household, she was literally born on the threshold. Her mother, who had been carrying milk into the house, gave birth to Brigid at sunrise with one foot inside the house and the other out the door. A pair of druids and a pair of bishops each prophesied that Brigid would be a unique child, the like of which the world had never seen. Brigid was nursed on milk from a magical cow. A druid once witnessed three fire angels (*seraphim*) anointing baby Brigid with oil and sprinkling her with water.

- Saint Brigid is invoked for fertility, healing, prosperity, and protection.
- She was able to provide a limitless supply of food; similar to the everreplenishing cauldrons of the Celtic Otherworld, Brigid's larder is never empty.
- Her cows provide a lake of milk and must be milked three times daily.
- A single measure of her malt brewed enough ale to supply seventeen churches.
- She once carried a burning coal in her apron without the apron burning.
- Flames emerged from her head or engulfed her, yet miraculously she was not burned.

Saint Brigid bears a mysterious and powerful resemblance to the Irish goddess Brigid, sharing her name, feast day, sacred sites, functions, and association with druids. Coincidence? Many believe not. Various theories explain their relationship:

- The high priestess of the shrine of the goddess Brigid at Kildare was considered an avatar of the goddess and traditionally adopted her name. Eventually, one of these women converted to Christianity and, under her direction, the shrine's orientation changed from Pagan to Christian. This may be the woman described as the daughter of a Christian slave.
- Alternatively, in the face of Christianity and over time, the goddess Brigid

simply evolved into Saint Brigid.

These two theories are not mutually exclusive. If the head of the college is an avatar of Brigid, then her actions may be understood as deriving from the goddess herself. An opposing theory suggests that the shrine at Kildare was always a Christian sanctuary, intended to rival an important Pagan sanctuary at nearby Dun Ailinn.

Saint Brigid was the matron saint of the filidh, a highly learned class of Irish society who, following Ireland's conversion to Christianity, took over many of the functions previously associated with druids, especially divination.

Saint Brigid may be Ireland's most beloved saint. She is the epitome of kindness and generosity, and the foremost female figure of Irish Catholicism. Known as the Mary of the Gaels, an Irish legend has her serving as midwife to Mary, Mother of Christ. Saint Brigid is venerated at shrines, churches, and wells.

Brigid continues to evolve. Seventeenth-century Irish and Scots-Irish indentured servants deported to Haiti brought veneration of Saint Brigid with them. In Haiti, the saint once again transformed as she entered the Vodou pantheon under the name La Grande Brigitte or Maman Brigitte. She also gained a husband: Maman Brigitte is married to Baron Samedi, the Vodou lord of the cemetery. Haitian refugees later carried her veneration to New Orleans where, as Mother Brigid, she is loved and venerated by Hoodoo and New Orleans Voodoo devotees. Mother Brigid is traditionally invoked for justice and to protect your children, especially if they are in the military.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: women; dairy workers; milkmaids; babies; blacksmiths; those whose parents are not married; midwives; travelers; chicken farmers; fugitives.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Saint Brigid is dressed like an abbess or nun and frequently accompanied by a cow, which she is sometimes portrayed milking.

ATTRIBUTES: lamp; candle; shepherd's crook.

**COLORS**: yellow and gold, for the Roman Catholic saint; purple for her Vodou manifestation.

SACRED DAY: Sunday.

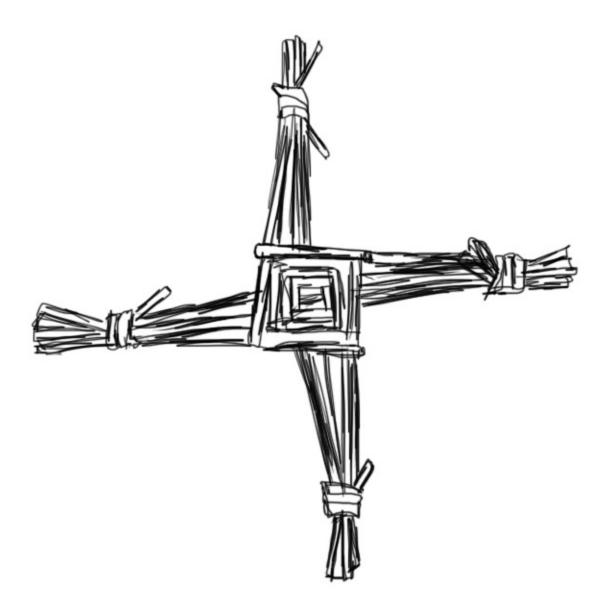
NUMBERS: 3; 9; 19.

FEASTS: 1 February; 2 February. Hoarfrost—white, frozen dew—gathered on Saint Brigid's feast day reputedly possesses the power to remedy headaches.

**AMULET:** In Ireland and elsewhere, it is traditional to craft a Saint Brigid's Cross from rushes.

- The rushes must be pulled up, not cut, on the eve of Saint Brigid's Feast.
- The rushes are woven from left to right.

The completed cross is placed above the door to provide protection and blessings to the household and left there until the following year, when it is replaced by a new cross.



#### **SACRED SITES:**

- The shrine of the goddess Brigid at Kildare was transformed into a convent whose nuns continued to maintain her perpetual flame. No bellows were permitted to fan the flames; only the breath of nineteen nuns kept Brigid's fire burning. The fire was surrounded by a fence of stakes and brushwood. No man was permitted within this enclosure. In 1220 ce, the archbishop of Dublin ordered the flame extinguished, declaring the custom to be Pagan. However, following his demise, the nuns rekindled the flame and maintained it until the Reformation.
- The Norman Cathedral of Saint Brigid was erected in 1223, probably on the site of the original Pagan shrine. It fell into disrepair during the Reformation but was restored in the 19th century.
- Brigid's Fire Temple is located hehind the Cathedral

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- Saint Brigid's Well in Kildare bears an ancient reputation as a healing well.
- Saint Brigid's birthplace is reputedly at Faughart Hill, County Louth.
- Many holy wells associated with Brigid are located in Scotland's Hebrides Islands, which may be named in her honor—for example, Bride's Well on the Isle of Lewis.
- Saint Bride's Church in Fleet Street, London, has a tiny medieval chapel in the crypt that is situated beside Saint Bride's Well. (The well is no longer accessible.) The site is estimated to have been a place of worship for over 3000 years.

SACRED ANIMALS: cow; pig; white snake; linnet bird.

**BOTANICALS**: dandelion; snowdrop flower (*Galanthus*), considered a sign of spring in the British Isles.

**OFFERINGS**: milk; blackberries; Irish beer and ale for the Roman Catholic saint. Her Vodou alter ego requests red wine and purple eggplants.

SEE ALSO Amaro, Saint; Blath, Saint; Elen of the Roads; Ffraid, Saint; Patrick, Saint; Well Saints and Glossary: Syncretism; Vodou, Voodoo, Hoodoo.

## C

### 👡 Cajetan, Saint

Also known as Cajetano; Cayetano; Gaetano.

EPITHET: The Saint of Bread and Work.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Cajetan (1 October 1480–7 August 1547) was the highly educated scion of a wealthy Venetian family. His father was the Count of Thiene. Cajetan earned a law degree and served as a diplomat for the pope. Ordained at age thirty-three, he founded the Confraternity of the Divine Love, which emphasized divine poverty but drew its members mainly from the ranks of the aristocracy.

In 1527, following the sack of Rome, Spanish soldiers, convinced that the confraternity had secret wealth, brutally tortured its members, including Cajetan, who fled to Venice. He founded a new order, the Theatines, as well as a low-interest pawnshop to benefit the poor. Miracles were attributed to him during his lifetime. Cajetan was always well connected, and his close friend and co-founder of the Theatines became Pope Paul IV.

Cajetan died in Naples, reputedly of grief. In the after-life, he has emerged as the patron of gamblers and the unemployed. Like a divine employment agent, he finds jobs for people. Request his aid when you are unemployed. He is extremely sympathetic to those suffering financial hardships. Cajetan is invoked to provide specific sums of money or just money in general, if you're in need. Cajetan provides quick cash influxes rather than general prosperity or financial stability. Ask him for help when you need to pay your gambling debts.

Saint Cajetan loves to gamble; he's the betting saint. Bet him some money that he can't produce something for you; then, when he wins,

donate that money to charity in his honor.

Saint Cajetan loves to gamble and allegedly cannot resist a bet. Bet him that he will not be able to perform some miracle for you. If he loses, you've lost nothing. Most bets made with Cajetan are for small stakes like candles, recitations of the rosary, or miniscule cash bets. If you are asking for something greater—and Cajetan is potentially a miracle worker—offer to donate a large sum—whatever is large for you—to a charity of which he would approve, usually on behalf of the poor.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: gamblers; pawnbrokers; working stiffs; the unemployed.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Cajetan is usually depicted wearing a black cassock with a jeweled necklace or collar. He may wear a flat black hat or be depicted kneeling beside a table.

FEAST: 7 August.

**SACRED SITES:** Cajetan is venerated around the world, but especially in Argentina; his shrine in Buenos Aires is visited by thousands daily. Millions visit annually on his feast day.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; flowers; donations on behalf of the poor. It is traditional to donate to a food pantry or soup kitchen in his honor.

### ∾ Calogero, Saint

Also known as Saint Calogerus.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Virtually nothing is known of Saint Calogero before his arrival in Sciacca, Sicily. Legend has it that he came from afar, fleeing persecution. Calogero was a black man, and it is theorized that he was originally from Ethiopia. He lived as a hermit on the mountain now named for him, Mount San Calogero, dying there in 486 ce of natural causes.

Mount Calogero dominates Sciacca, among Europe's most ancient spa resorts.

The mountain features thermal vents known as stoves. Saint Calogero is saint of the stoves, which have been used therapeutically since at least the fifth century bce. Reputedly, Daedalus, the Greek genius inventor, was the first to channel the hot vapors that seep through fissures in the rocks into thermal baths. These vapors are prescribed to treat allergies, arthritis, rheumatism, and gynecological and skin disorders.

The steaming vents were long considered sacred territory. Saint Calogero banished the Pagan spirits previously associated with them, taking over the site himself and using the cave vapors to heal the sick. The largest cave, la Grotta del Santo, or the Saint's Grotto, is named in his honor. Calogero also became famous for miracles performed while he was still alive.

Calogero is a very beloved saint, venerated wherever Sicilians have emigrated. He is invoked for all kinds of healing, but especially for joint disorders. He continues to perform miracles and is renowned for healing the lame and disabled. Calogero is the guardian of the summer harvest. His festival coincides with a Sicilian festival dedicated to bread.

- San Calogero bread is a special ritual bread that is cut into anatomical shapes —arms, legs, so forth—like an ex-voto, then blessed on his feast day and preserved to be eaten in times of need.
- During the festival's procession, Calogero's devotees pelt his passing statue with bread rolls.
- Bread prepared for Saint Calogero's feast is traditionally studded with fennel, sesame, and poppy seeds.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Calogero is often depicted as a white man, although he is commonly called "the black saint" and his African ancestry is a major part of his legend.

#### ATTRIBUTE: book.

#### FEAST: 18 June.

**FESTIVAL:** His fiesta in Agrigento, Sicily, from the first to the second Sunday in July, commemorates the occasion when San Calogero prevented a massive earthquake.

SACRED SITE: The Church of San Calogero is built over the cave where the saint

lived. The votive statue in his church at Agrigento, Sicily holds a silver basket containing his leg bone. The statue is surrounded by ex-votos proclaiming Calogero's miracles.

**OFFERINGS**: On his feast day, people traditionally place flat San Calogero bread and small pots of wheat grown in the dark beside his statue.

SEE ALSO John the Conqueror; Well Saints and Glossary: Ex-Voto.

### ∾ Camillus, Saint

EPITHET: The Red Cross Saint.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Camillus (1550–1614) was a Neapolitan mercenary, professional gambler, and cardsharp. He was tall, over six feet, and very handsome. Ladies loved him. By age twenty-four, however, his luck had turned. Camillus lost everything, including the shirt on his back, and wound up begging on the street. He eventually took a job doing construction work for the Capuchins, literally the only ones who would hire him. This attempt to rebuild his life resulted in a spiritual epiphany. Camillus dedicated his life to God and the needy.

Camillus entered the Church, founding a new order, the Brothers of Saint John of God, also known as Ministers of the Sick. He spent his final thirty years nursing the sick and opening hospitals that were unusual for their time in that they actually attempted to heal patients—as opposed to most hospitals of the day, which were merely comfortable places to die. Camillus' hospitals set the standard for health-care, including quarantine wards for the contagious, healthy diet, cleanliness, and adequate ventilation.

Camillus is invoked for healing miracles. He is the patron of gambling addicts. Invoke his assistance to help you stop. Petition him if you have reached rock bottom. Camillus rebuilt his own life and he can help rebuild yours, too.

Invoke Saint Camillus whenever you need him. Light a white candle for him and offer him a little cash and something that represents your particular addiction. Once the candle has burned down, give the cash to the first beggar, charity, or needy person to ask you for a hand-out. FAVORED PEOPLE: nurses.

**MANIFESTATION:** Camillus wears a black habit with the Red Cross of his order. When he was down and out, he suffered from abscessed feet; he may limp badly.

FEAST: 14 July.

**OFFERINGS**: white candles and a sample of whatever represents your addiction: casino chips; playing cards; racing or lottery forms; dice.

SEE ALSO John of God, Saint.

### 👡 Casilda, Saint

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Casilda (died 9 April 1050) was the daughter of the emir of Toledo, Spain, then under Muslim rule. She felt sympathetic toward Christian prisoners and sneaked medicine and food to them. Once, while surreptitiously carrying a basket of bread to them, she was challenged. When she uncovered the basket, the bread had miraculously transformed into roses.

Casilda suffered a uterine hemorrhage that wouldn't stop bleeding. Treatment by physicians was unsuccessful so she sought a spiritual solution, traveling to the sanctuary of Saint Vincent in Burgos. The saint healed her and she converted to Christianity. She lived as a hermit beside his sanctuary for the rest of her life.

Casilda is petitioned for reproductive fertility and to heal women's reproductive disorders, especially where excessive bleeding is involved. She is also invoked against bad luck. Saint Casilda is the matron saint of the Spanish cities Burgos and Toledo.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Holy cards portray Casilda as a pretty woman holding flowers, dressed in clothing that today would identify her as a devout Muslim. Older images, like artist Francisco de Zurburán's portrait of her, depict her as a luxuriously dressed Moorish princess, albeit with a halo.

ATTRIBUTE: basket of roses.

FEAST: 9 April.

**OFFERINGS**: water; candles; incense; flowers, especially roses.

SEE ALSO Elizabeth of Hungary; Vincent, Saint and Glossary: Holy Cards.

### ∾ Catherine of Alexandria

#### CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Catherine of Alexandria (287–305 ce), first venerated by the Byzantine Church, was assigned many of the functions once associated with the Greek goddess Athena. Returning Crusaders introduced Catherine to western Europe in the late 11th or early 12th century and she became an incredibly popular saint.

According to her standard legend, Catherine lived in Alexandria, Egypt, and belonged to the local nobility, meaning that she was probably of Greek ancestry. She may have been the governor's daughter. A vision in her youth caused her to convert to Christianity, although other legends suggest that her mother was a secret Christian who taught her daughter.

Catherine was a brilliant young girl, always at the head of her class. A persuasive orator, she was assertive and not at all shy. Catherine complained to the emperor about ill treatment of Christians. He sent fifty of the city's top Pagan philosophers, as well as his wife, to debate with her and to convince her of the folly of her ways. Instead, she converted them all. Everyone but Catherine was executed by being burned alive. She was spared, as the emperor wished to marry her, but she refused.

Two hundred soldiers sent to arrest one little eighteen-year-old girl were also converted and subsequently executed. Somehow the governor managed to imprison Catherine. While in jail, she was fed by a dove. Catherine received a vision of Christ, possibly culminating in mystic union. Catherine continued to defy the emperor, so he ordered her body broken on a spiked wheel, forever after known as a Catherine Wheel. The fate of that wheel depends on the version of her legend:

- It broke, crumbling at her touch.
- Hovering angels, observing her ordeal, broke the wheel.
- The wheel was struck by lightning—divine fire— but Catherine remained untouched.

Catherine was scourged and finally beheaded. Milk, not blood, flowed from her veins. Angels transported her body to Mount Sinai and hid it. Hundreds of years later, her body was unearthed and identified, and the Monastery of Saint Catherine was built on the site.

There is absolutely no evidence documenting Catherine's life or legend. She was removed from the official Vatican roster of saints in 1969, as her legend is reputedly completely fictional. Elements of Catherine's biography are clearly taken from that of Hypatia, the martyred Pagan scholar of Alexandria. However, whatever her true story or identity, the saint known as Catherine of Alexandria has performed multitudes of miracles for centuries and continues to do so. She is among the saints who advised Joan of Arc.

Catherine's blessings are particularly invoked regarding romantic matters. She is a sacred matchmaker; ask her to help you find a husband. In Greece, she is invoked by mothers anxious for their daughters to wed. Catherine is also the matron of women who never marry, by choice or otherwise.

Catherine is among the most magical of saints and the eve of her feast is considered among the year's best nights for romantic divination and rituals intended to incubate prophetic dreams about matrimony. Although the most famous involve identifying a future spouse, Catherine's assistance may be invoked for any matrimonial dilemma.

Catherine is particularly associated with baking and eating salt cakes as part of the dream-incubation process. Typically, the entire procedure must be conducted in total silence, from the moment you start baking, until you have recorded the dream. Here is the simplest version of the ritual:

- 1. Bake an almost unbearably salty pancake.
- 2. Eat it, washing it down with *lots* of wine.
- 3. Focus on your question or desire before going to sleep, then prepare to dream.
- 4. Don't speak, from start to finish—not even a peep.

Catherine is invoked for healing, especially diseases of the tongue. She is counted among the Fourteen Holy Helpers. Catherine also offers special assistance with the mechanics of the education process, like funding, scholarships, admissions, and housing.

FAVORED PEOPLE: Catherine is the matron of any field involving wheels,

including wheelwrights, drivers, truckers, millers, potters, sewing machine operators, and knife grinders. Her wheel is also associated with gambling. Roulette players invoke her blessings and protection. She is also the matron saint of librarians, academics, philosophers, and scholars. Other favored people include artisans (especially female artisans), spinners, lace makers, rope makers, and young women in general.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Catherine is shown as a beautiful young girl with a sword and a wheel, emblems of her martyrdom. She may be crowned or a crown may rest at her feet. Because of the ubiquity of her wheel, she resembles the Roman goddess Fortuna and her Wheel of Fortune.

**ATTRIBUTES**: the Catherine Wheel, a spiked wheel; book; bridal veil; wedding ring; scourge.

**RITUAL**: Burn white candles for Catherine every Friday night to request gambling help. Burn white candles on Saturday nights for help with scholastic issues.

**SACRED ANIMAL**: dove—especially a white dove with red legs or red eyes.

COLORS: white with red, as in a white dress with red trimming.

FEASTS: 23 November; 24 November (Eastern Churches); 25 November (Western Church).

**SACRED SITE:** Saint Catherine's Monastery at the foot of Mount Sinai reputedly contains her relics.

**OFFERINGS**: white candles dressed with red glitter; wheel-shaped cakes.

SEE ALSO Agnes, Saint; Bethen; Fourteen Holy Helpers; Guglielma; Hypatia; Joan of Arc.

## ∾ Catherine of Siena

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Catherine Benincasa (25 March 1347–29 April 1380), mystic, visionary, and author, was the youngest of twenty-five children. Her twin sister did not survive their birth. Her mystical propensities manifested early, as did an exceptionally devout nature and a taste for the dramatic. Catherine's first vision of Jesus occurred at age six. As a child, she would run into the street to kiss the ground on which Dominicans trod.

Her parents wished her to marry, but she sought a religious vocation, eventually becoming a Dominican tertiary—an independent but affiliated lay woman, able to live at home. Catherine took the desert fathers as her role models and practiced extreme ascetism, including sleep and food deprivation. Her austerities would eventually kill her.

Catherine's abstention from food transcended even the most austere fasting of her day. She ate virtually nothing. Unless forced to consume more, her diet of choice was cold water and communion wafers. She chewed bitter herbs, but spit them out without swallowing.

Her fasting was not considered exemplary at the time, but strange, weird, and scandalous. Because she did not, at least initially, seem to suffer physically from lack of food, some believed her to be possessed by the devil. Catherine was accused of witchcraft. Her fasting was often in direct violation of the explicit commands of her confessors. They ordered her to eat and she defied them. Summoned before the Inquisition, she persuaded them of the correctness of her behavior, but she was placed under close supervision. The result is that she is one of the most documented saints. In addition to her own writings, her confessors left written reports about Catherine.

To prove that she was not a witch, Catherine ate in public daily, observed by others. Her daily vomiting, however, was done in private. Catherine's confessor writes that, because she was unable to digest anything, food had to leave her body in the same way it entered lest it cause her tremendous pain. Thus she inserted fennel stalks down her throat to induce vomiting. (She also told her confessor that this painful self-induced vomiting was penance for her sins.) She lived like this for six years.

Repulsed by the odor emanating from the cancerous breast of a woman she was nursing, Catherine gathered and drank the pus from her breast, claiming that she sought to overcome all bodily sensations. That night, she experienced a vision of Jesus, who invited her to drink the blood flowing from the wound in his side. After this, Catherine claimed that she no longer needed food and was unable to digest it.

Catherine was not weak or fragile; she was robust and vigorous. She worked with the poor and tended victims of the plague. A circle of disciples surrounded her. Intensely involved in politics, she served as advisor to popes. She wrote to kings, queens, and popes, giving all a forthright piece of her mind. She displayed no fear of anyone. Three hundred and seventy-four letters have been preserved.

Catherine received the stigmata in 1375. This was considered extremely controversial, as Saint Francis and the Franciscans were then popularly believed to have a monopoly on the stigmata. Catherine, a woman affiliated with the Dominicans, was perceived as essentially horning in on their territory. Although the marks were visible at first, she prayed that they be rendered invisible and her wishes were honored—meaning that she felt the pain of Christ's wounds without the visible display that would have garnered wonder, sympathy, and respect.

Whether or not she was an anorexic by modern standards is the subject of academic debate and several very interesting books. Her behavior may also be understood as a very extreme vision quest intended to provoke sacred, ecstatic experiences. Catherine had spontaneously experienced ecstatic visions as a child. The experiences she describes are wonderful and even erotic, although she was also tormented by demons who encouraged her to eat normally. She experienced a mystic marriage in 1367, receiving a wedding ring from Christ.

Her austerities eventually caught up with her. Catherine suffered excruciating stomach pains. On 1 January 1380, she vowed to stop drinking water. She maintained a total hunger strike until 29 January, when she suffered complete collapse. Although she abandoned her strike, she died exactly three months later at age thirty-three, the same age as Jesus at his crucifixion. She was canonized in 1461 and proclaimed a Doctor of the Church in 1970.

Catherine was credited with miracles during her life and continues to perform them from the after-life. Catherine puts out fires of all kinds:

- She is invoked to prevent literal fire and conflagration, and to provide safety from them.
- She is invoked against the metaphoric fire of sexual desire and temptation.
- Catherine heals and prevents severe burns.
- She is also invoked against miscarriage.

Catherine is the matron saint of Italy and the European Union. She is survived by her published letters and *The Dialogue of Saint Catherine*, the mystical transcript of her five-day rapture.

FAVORED PEOPLE: firefighters; nurses; laundresses; those suffering illness.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Catherine is portrayed wearing the garb of a Dominican sister.

ATTRIBUTES: stigmata; crown of thorns; wedding ring; skull.

SACRED FLOWERS: lily; rose.

SACRED ANIMAL: dove.

SACRED SITES: Catherine died and was buried in Rome, but Siena sought her return. In 1383, her confessor, Blessed Raymond of Capua, secretly sent Catherine's head there. It is housed in the Basilica of San Domenico, the church where Catherine's family worshipped. A side chapel is dedicated to her. Catherine's foot is housed and displayed in the Dominican Church of Venice. Most of the rest of her remains are buried in her tomb in Rome's Basilica of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva.

FEAST: 29 April.

**SEE ALSO** *Claire, Saint; Domenico, Saint; Therese Neumann* and Glossary: *Stigmata; Tertiary.* 

"Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire." This quote from Catherine of Siena began the sermon given by the Bishop of London during the wedding ceremony of Prince William and Catherine Middleton on 29 April 2011, the Feast of Saint Catherine.

## ∾ Cecilia, Saint

Also known as Saint Cecily; Cecelia.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Cecilia, a second-century Christian martyr, came from a noble Roman family. She vowed herself to Christ, but her family insisted that she marry. She advised her new husband on their wedding night that she was accompanied by an angel that he would only be able to see if he were purified. Her husband agreed to be baptized in order to see the angel, but when he actually saw the holy being, he experienced a true conversion. His brother was also soon baptized and the two men ministered to Christians. They were arrested and martyred.

Cecilia buried them at her villa on the Appian Way and was arrested for this action. As she refused to make offerings to Roman state gods, she was accused of treason and given a death sentence. Attempts were made to scald or suffocate her in the bathhouse attached to her mansion, but Cecilia was miraculously impervious to the extremely high heat. Attempts were then made to behead her; her half-severed head sang God's praises for three days before finally expiring. Her grave was discovered in 817 and her incorrupt relics were transported to Rome's Church of Saint Cecilia.

The goddess Bona Dea Oclata was once venerated by Roman women at her shrine in Trastevere, located near the present-day site of Rome's Basilica of Saint Cecilia. Bona Dea Oclata offers protection against blindness and disorders of the eye. Cecilia means "blind" and it is theorized that veneration of Bona Dea Oclata may have been transferred to the saint.

Saint Cecilia is invoked to clear paths and remove obstacles—both literally, as when someone is traveling, and metaphorically.

**FAVORED PEOPLE:** singers; composers; musicians; makers of musical instruments; poets.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Cecilia is portrayed as a beautiful young woman playing a musical instrument, indicating her matronage of the musical arts. Although her head sang at her death and her heart is described as singing God's hymns, Cecilia herself was not a musician. The organ with which she is usually portrayed is a type that did not exist until centuries after her death. British artist John William Waterhouse painted Saint Cecilia being serenaded by angels.

ATTRIBUTES: lute; organ.

COLOR: green.

SACRED DAY: Wednesday.

FEAST: 22 November.

**SACRED SITE:** The Basilica of Saint Cecilia in Trastevere, Rome, is built over the ruins of her home.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; roses; offerings on behalf of starving musicians; creative works in her honor.

SEE ALSO Agatha, Saint; Helena, Saint and Glossary: Incorrupt.

∾ Charbel, Saint

Also known as Saint Sharbel; Saint Charbel Makhlouf.

CLASSIFICATION: Maronite and Roman Catholic saint.

Charbel was born on 8 May 1828 in a mountain village in what is now northern Lebanon to a poor Maronite family. His baptismal name was Joseph Anton Makhlouf. He was the youngest of five children. The family was so devout that they attended Mass daily.

Joseph's father died when he was three. He was raised by an uncle until his mother remarried. His stepfather became a priest. (Maronite priests can marry.) Joseph assisted him. The boy spent so much time praying in a grotto near the pasture where he tended the family cow that, by 1845, local people were already calling it the Grotto of the Saint, foreseeing his future.

Joseph wished to become a monk, but his mother opposed the plan. She wanted him to get married. (Maronite monks are celibate.) In 1851, Joseph ran away from home and joined a monastery, where he became Brother Charbel. He considered the Church to be his bride. Charbel was ordained a priest on 23 July 1859.

Because he demonstrated supernatural power, in 1875, Charbel was permitted to live as a hermit at the Hermitage of Saints Peter and Paul, two kilometers

from the Monastery of Saint Maron. He spent the next twenty-three years practicing silence and severe mortification, his life dedicated to solitude and penance. Charbel fasted and prayed continuously, wore a hair shirt, performed manual labor, and celebrated Mass daily

Charbel's face was never seen while he was alive. He kept his head down, his eyes downcast, and his monk's hood pulled down over his face. He lifted his eyes only to Heaven. In his sacred imagery, he is usually portrayed gazing downward, even though his face is exposed.

Charbel suffered a stroke on 16 December 1898 and died eight days later on Christmas Eve murmuring the names of Mary, Jesus, and Joseph. He was buried on Christmas morning. At his funeral, Charbel was already hailed as a saint. Pilgrimages to his tomb began immediately, as did miracles associated with him. At night, his tomb emanated a vivid bright light that attracted the attention of the Ottoman army, who suspected a conspiracy against the government, not miracles

Four months after Charbel's death, on 15 April 1899, his tomb was opened. He had been buried only in his monk's garb and it had been a harsh winter. His body was found floating in mud, yet Charbel was found to be intact and incorrupt. His body exuded a moist blood- or sweatlike substance for the next sixty-seven years. This moisture, periodically collected with a cloth, was discovered to provide healing. In 1927, he was given a new burial and his tomb was placed in a monastery crypt

Charbel's tomb was opened eight times between 1950 and 1975. His remains were examined by physicians under the joint supervision of the Vatican and representatives of the Maronite patriarch. His body consistently looked as if he were still alive.

Charbel is credited with hundreds of miracles. Two, acknowledged by the Vatican, were sufficient for his canonization. He is credited with healing a nun who had suffered from a severe gastric ulcer for fourteen years that had resisted conventional medical treatment, including surgery. He also restored the vision of a man blinded in an accident. Charbel was canonized on 9 October 1977. He is invoked for healing of all illnesses and ailments.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: shown as a bearded, hooded monk, sometimes in the company of Jesus Christ or angels. He is a popular subject of retablos from Mexico, where he is very beloved.

**ATTRIBUTE:** a tomb radiating light.

SACRED SITE: hermitage and Tomb of Saint Charbel at the Monastery of Mar Maroun in Annaya, Lebanon. A nearby museum displays Charbel's minimal possessions.

SEE ALSO Joseph, Saint; Maron, Saint; Mary and Glossary: Incorrupt; Retablo.

### 👡 Charlene

EPITHET: The Little Cajun Saint.

**CLASSIFICATION:** unofficial saint.

Charlene Marie Richard (13 January 1947–11 August 1959) lived only twelve years, but she has had tremendous impact on the lives of many. She was a cheerful, athletic girl with spiritual inclinations from Richard, Louisiana, near Lafayette, the heart of Cajun country. In July 1959, Charlene felt ill and was diagnosed with acute lymphatic leukemia. She was soon hospitalized and suffering constant unbearable pain and agony.

The hospital chaplain discussed with Charlene the Christian concept of offering up one's suffering as a prayer on behalf of others. This comforted the little girl. Every day for the remainder of her brief life, the priest visited her and described someone who could benefit from her intercessory prayers. Every day, Charlene unselfishly, heroically, and eagerly prayed to God, offering up that day's pain on behalf of another person. She died thirteen days later.

Although currently an unofficial saint, Charlene was a devout Catholic, as are many of her devotees, some of whom seek official canonization for the little saint. After her death, people continued to request Charlene's intercession. Many miracles are attributed to her. Charlene is invoked to intercede on behalf of all sorts of matters, but especially healing. Over 10,000 visit her grave shrine annually.

SACRED SITE: Charlene is buried in Saint Edward Catholic Church cemetery in Richard, Louisiana. It is traditional to leave votive offerings and notes to her at her grave.

OFFERINGS: candles; flowers; rosaries; charitable donations in honor of Charlene.

SEE ALSO Antonietta Meo and Glossary: Intercessor; Saint, Official; Saint, Unofficial.

### ∾ Chouri, Rabbi Chaim

Also known as Hayyim Khuri; Chaim Churi.

EPITHET: The Saint of Beersheba.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Jewish saint.

Chaim Chouri is among modern Israel's most beloved saints. Born on Djerba Island off the coast of Tunisia in 1885, he was a teacher, an author of religious works, and a dramatic preacher gifted with the power to bless and heal. He achieved renown as a healer who could instantly ease both physical and mental afflictions, sometimes with the touch of his hand. Rabbi Chouri displayed the power of clairvoyance and was considered a prophet and guardian of the Tunisian Jewish community. He served as spiritual leader among the Jewish communities of southern Tunisia and was chief rabbi of the city of Gabès for many years.

Rabbi Chouri immigrated to Israel in 1955 together with his family. He died there two years later at age seventy-two and was buried in Beersheba.

The veneration of Rabbi Chouri fascinates anthropologists, as it was not transported from North Africa but sprang up in modern Westernized Israel. Studies point out that Rabbi Chouri's family did not anticipate that he would be considered a saint following his death, or they would have chosen a different gravesite for him, one with more room for festivities on his *yahrzeit* (anniversary of death). Instead, he is buried among the other graves in Beersheba's municipal cemetery.

After Rabbi Chouri's death, reports of miracles proliferated and continue to do so:

• Rabbi Chouri appears in dreams, offering advice to the ailing.

- He has manifested himself to soldiers, leading them to safety.
- He is invoked for fertility and to provide luck.

SACRED SITE: His grave in Beersheba, Israel. Food, beverages, candles, and oil

placed on the grave are believed to absorb his blessings and miraculous power. They reputedly bring joy, good fortune, and healing when consumed, burned, or rubbed onto the body.

**FEAST:** the anniversary of his death on the twenty-fifth day of the Hebrew lunar month Iyar.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; pilgrimage to his grave; donations and good deeds on behalf of the poor and needy in his name; couscous with chicken, served in honor of Rabbi Chouri, but consumed by devotees and their guests.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, see Alex Weingrod, *The Saint of Beersheba* (New York, 1990). see also *Ghriba*, *La*.

# ∾ Christina the Amazing

Also known as Christina Mirabilis; Christina of Liege; Christina the Astonishing.

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

Christina (1150–24 July 1224) was orphaned at age fifteen and raised by two older sisters in what is now modern Belgium. When she was twenty-one, she suffered a severe seizure that left her comatose and presumed dead. During the requiem Mass held for her, Christina suddenly sprang back to life, levitating out of her open coffin and up to the ceiling. This caused a terrible commotion among onlookers.

A priest ordered Christina to descend immediately and she did, right onto the altar. She announced that she had visited Hell, Heaven, and Purgatory. In Heaven, she had ascended to the throne of divine majesty, where she was offered a choice:

- Stay with God.
- Return to her body. Christina was advised that through her devotion and future suffering she could redeem souls in Purgatory and acquire personal merit. She would rejoin God following her death.

When she awoke from her coma Christina demonstrated an incredibly sensitive

sense of smell and could not bear the odor of other people. Claiming she could smell their sins, she levitated to get away. Alternatively, Christina hid in ovens and cupboards. She climbed tall trees, towers, and buildings. She could not bear proximity to other people.

When she wasn't hiding, she was locked up. She angered her sisters so much with her compulsive, extravagant charitable donations (the possessions she gave away belonged to them as well and they were orphans, not wealthy people) that they periodically locked her up in attempts to control her. Others tried to capture and control her, too, all with equal failure. Christina was once chained to a pillar to prevent her climbing, roaming, and flying. Instead she escaped during the night.

Her title Christina the Amazing is kind; during her lifetime, she was considered Christina the Unusual or worse. Many believed that she was possessed by demons. Some attempted to perform exorcisms. Christina spent much of her time in flight from others.

Christina wished to devote herself to spiritual pursuits. Her ascetism was of the flamboyant variety. She lived by begging, dressed in rags, and slept outside on rocks in the chilly Belgian winter. She also slept in crypts and tombs. She mortified herself by standing in freezing water or rolling in fire. She was never seriously injured, even when she allowed herself to be dragged underwater by a mill wheel.

Was she a holy woman or was she mad? People argued this point when she was alive and continue to do so. A visionary, Christina described her ecstatic journeys to Heaven and Purgatory. She died of natural causes.

Although Christina is sometimes associated with various religious organizations, she was never affiliated with any, but remained a lay woman who sought her own independent spiritual path. In life, she was considered a holy fool. In death, she is often assumed to be an official saint but, in fact, has never been canonized. She produced miracles in her lifetime and continues to do so. (Once, when Christina was hiding in the forest with no food to eat, her breasts spontaneously began producing milk so that she was able to nourish herself.) Christina is invoked against depression and mental illness.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: lunatics; the mentally ill; psychiatrists; therapists and mentalhealth professionals; caregivers for the mentally ill or depressed. She is sympathetic to those whose sense of smell is so acute as to be a handicap; she may help nursing mothers. **ICONOGRAPHY:** Christina is portrayed as a young woman with disheveled hair sitting on a wheel surrounded by snakes.

FEAST: 24 July.

SEE Glossary: Holy Fool; Saint, Official; Saint, Unofficial.

## ∾ Christina of Bolsena

Also known as Christina of Tyre.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

When she was fourteen, the daughter of a Roman military official living beside Italy's Lake Bolsena converted to Christianity, adopting the name Christina. Her father threw her into Lake Bolsena with a millstone tied to her feet, but she walked ashore, the millstone showing the imprint of her feet. Christina survived other torments, too:

- She was thrown into a vat of boiling oil and into a burning furnace.
- Arrows shot at her turned around in mid-air and hit the archers instead.
- She was locked up with poisonous snakes and adders that did not touch her.
- Her breasts were sliced off and her tongue cut out.

She was finally killed, either by being beheaded or by having her head smashed and her brains pulled out. Christina's grave quickly became a shrine. Lake Bolsena is on the pilgrimage route to Rome, so she became an extremely popular saint. She was removed from the official roster of saints in 1969 because of lack of documentation of her life.

FAVORED PEOPLE: millers; snake handlers; daughters.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: a young girl with a millstone around her neck or standing atop a millstone.

**ATTRIBUTES**: arrows; pincers; snakes; millstone.

FEAST: 24 July.

### ∾ Christopher, Saint

Also known as Christobal; Christophe; Christoffel; Kristoffer.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Saint Christopher, patron saint of travelers, provides safety when you are away from home. Once among the most famous Christian saints, he was removed from the official Vatican roster of saints for lack of historical verification. However, he remains among the chief miracle-working guardian saints and his popularity is undiminished.

Any day that you gaze upon the image of Saint Christopher is a day that you won't die or, at least, not suddenly and unexpectedly. So goes the legend that fuels the popularity of Saint Christopher and the medals bearing his image. Churches often featured large murals of Saint Christopher that were visible as soon as you entered, usually located right across from the entry door, expressly for this purpose. Many churches still do. The popularity of Saint Christopher medals—small medallions bearing his image—derives from the ability to peek at the saint whenever you desire.

The promise of not dying suddenly was originally intended as Christopher's blessing to Christians, assuring them that they would not die without time for last rites. However, Christopher is an extremely generous and ecumenical saint. Many non-Christians sport his medals, too, and claim beneficial results. Many people make sure to gaze upon his image as soon as they arise in the belief that he guarantees a day without death, sudden or otherwise. Some also chant little rhymes invoking his aid, daily or as needed, for example:

Protect us, Saint Christopher, on our travels and wherever we may roam,

Please keep us safe and guide us always safely home.

Saint Christopher protects against all travel dangers, not just traffic accidents. He has a reputation for helping poor people who deal in contraband. He may help smugglers, too, especially if their

motivation is altruism, not greed.

Christopher has been widely venerated in both the Eastern and Western churches since at least the fifth century. Churches were dedicated to him as early as 452. His popularity declined in the 17th century in response to the Reformation, but revived dramatically in the 20th with the rise of road and air traffic.

Legend suggests that he lived in third-century ce Roman Palestine, but was martyred in Lycia, now in modern Turkey. He was tied to a stake facing forty archers who shot at him with arrows. Miraculously, he survived— only to be beheaded.

Christopher means Christ Bearer. The name was bestowed upon him by Christ in the form of the Holy Child. Allegedly, Christopher, a man of gigantic height and incredible strength, once attempted to carry a small boy across a river, only to discover midway that the child had become unbearably heavy. It was the Divine Child playing tricks on the giant. Christ eventually revealed himself, blessed Christopher, and gave him his spiritual mission.

Christopher is believed to be among those saints whose respectable faces mask forbidden Pagan spirits. Spirits lurking under the guise of Saint Christopher may include Anubis, Hercules, and the Phoenician hero Melkart, also a resident of third-century ce Roman Palestine.

In addition to providing protection against the dangers of the road, Christopher is a healer, counted among the Fourteen Holy Helpers. He protects against sudden death from infections, epidemics, plagues, and contagious illness. Saint Christopher also protects against nightmares. He heals and guards against earaches.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: travelers; children; any occupation that requires constant travel.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: He is almost invariably portrayed carrying the Divine Child across a river, an image that echoes an older one of Hercules carrying his son. Icons and other Eastern Church imagery once portrayed Christopher with a man's body and a dog's head. This has been attributed to linguistic misinterpretations, but may indicate an ancient link with the Egyptian jackal god Anubis, who is also a guardian of roads and ways. **AMULET:** The medal of Saint Christopher features the image of the saint bearing the Holy Child. Some Saint Christopher Medals are worn as pendant medallions, while some are designed to be attached to automobile sunshades or elsewhere in a car. The character Seeley Booth, played by actor David Boreanaz, in the Fox television series *Bones* wears a Saint Christopher medal.

### SACRED SITES:

- Christopher's skull is reputedly housed in the Museum of Sacred Art at Saint Justine's Church on the island of Rab, now in present-day Croatia.
- Christopher's staff is reputedly housed in the Cathedral of Saint Bernard in Montreux.
- Saint Christopher Wayside Shrine in Huntsville, Alabama
- the Church of Saint Christopher in Mystras, Greece
- Saint Christopher's Anglican Cathedral in Bahrain

FEASTS: 9 May (Eastern Church); 25 July (Western Church).

**OFFERINGS**: a travel flask filled with a cup of comfort; anything to do with travel; candles; incense; good deeds and charitable donations.

SEE ALSO Fourteen Holy Helpers; Guinefort, Saint and Glossary: Syncretism.

# 👡 Cipriano, Saint

SEE Cyprian, Saint.

## ∾ Claire, Saint

Also known as Clara; Chiara; Clare; Claire of Assisi; Klara.

CLASSIFICATION: Anglican and Roman Catholic saint.

Chiara Offreduccio, the future Saint Claire of Assisi (16 July 1194–11 August 1253), was the disciple and close companion of Francis of Assisi. She founded a religious order, the Poor Ladies, now known as the Poor Claires, in honor of their most famous member.

Claire's father was a count; she came from a noble, wealthy, devout Italian family. When Claire heard Francis preach in the streets of Assisi, he set her soul on fire and transformed her life. On the night of Palm Sunday 1212, Claire secretly ran away from home to join Francis. (Her flight may have been precipitated by the marriage her parents were planning for her.)

Francis placed her in a Benedictine house of refuge, chopped off her long hair, and gave her sackcloth to replace her finery. Several days later, when friends and relatives finally located her after an intensive search and sought to bring her home, Claire defied orders, pleas, and threats. She clung to the altar cloth; try as they might, no one was physically able to move her. Sixteen days later, her younger sister, Agnes, ran off to join her. Eventually their mother would join them, too.

Claire sought to emulate Francis. For most of her life, she fought unsuccessfully for the right to imitate his vow of poverty. What she had initially wanted and sincerely expected to do when she first ran away was to follow and accompany Francis as a fellow mendicant, a wandering beggar. This was considered unacceptable for a young lady, however, and she was forced to accept a cloistered life.

At the time, many considered Claire's relationship with Francis scandalous. Neither was the hallowed saint that they are today. They were groundbreakers, spiritual revolutionaries. At the time, many considered both to be less than orthodox. Some suggested that they engaged in forbidden rites. Francis and Claire were constantly under suspicion, another reason that she was forbidden to share his wandering, preaching, begging life as she desired.

Claire compensated by practicing extreme austerities. She slept on the ground, mortified her flesh, and walked barefoot outside on the rough streets. As Francis renounced wealth, so Claire renounced food. Rudolph M. Bell, author of *Holy Anorexia*, describes Claire as the first major Italian holy anorexic—*anorexia mirabilis* in contrast to *anorexia nervosa*.

Claire fasted completely—meaning she drank and ate nothing—on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. On other days, her food consumption was minimal. She starved herself to the point of severe, painful illness. Francis eventually intervened, ordering her to eat at least one and a half ounces of bread daily, but others considered her practices an ideal to be emulated. Claire, herself, eventually came to doubt the wisdom of the severe austerities she practiced and advised the future Saint Agnes of Bohemia to refrain from harsh physical austerities, writing that "our bodies are not of brass and our strength is not the strength of store." ծուշուցու ու ծւծուշ.

Saint Claire's help is invoked to find marital partners and for the birth of children, especially female children. She is invoked against eye disorders and vision problems of any kind. Claire is usually portrayed with a monstrance, the vessel used in Roman Catholic rites to display the host. To untrained eyes, she resembles a crystal-ball gazer and so Clare has become the matron saint of clairvoyance.

Vodouistes interpreted the image of Claire's glowing monstrance as resembling the moon. In some Haitian Vodou traditions, Saint Claire has evolved into a beautiful, sweet-voiced, moon-gazing mermaid known as Clairmesine Clairmeille. Traditional images of Saint Claire are used to portray her Vodou counterpart, as are images of mermaids.

Candles dedicated to Saint Claire and bearing her image are burned to acquire foresight, second sight, intuition, and prophetic dreams. Many practitioners of Spiritualism/Espiritismo consider Clare the matron of psychics, fortunetellers, and mediums. The 1996 Israeli movie *Saint Clara*, based on a novel by Czech author Pavel Kohout, is not about the saint, but instead tells the story of a clairvoyant high school girl named Clara.

Claire once longed to see the official Christmas nativity display, but was so ill that she was confined to bed. Miraculously, she "saw" it on the walls of her cell, just as if she were watching it on television. When questioned, she described details that corresponded exactly to what actual eye-witnesses had seen. As a result of this unique visionary experience, in 1958, Pope Pius XII named Saint Claire the matron saint of television.

#### **FAVORED PEOPLE:**

- Officially—embroiderers; needle workers; gilders; goldsmiths; those who work in any aspect of the television or telephone industries; those who are not loved.
- Unofficially—fortunetellers; clairvoyants; psychics.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: A woman dressed in a nun's habit holds or gazes intently at a monstrance. In many images, the host within the monstrance glows like the sun.

**ATTRIBUTES:** monstrance; pyx; lamp.

COLOR: white.

SACRED SITES:

- The Basilica of Saint Claire in Assisi contains her remains and those of her sister, Agnes.
- Rome's Church of Santa Chiara

FEASTS: 11 August is her primary feast; also 23 September and 3 October.

**OFFERINGS:** Claire adored music: dedicate some to her or play some for her. Read to her about her beloved Francis. Offer eggs, water, or Santa Clara Mexican vanilla liqueur; make donations and offerings on behalf of the poor.

SEE ALSO Catherine of Siena; Francis of Assisi and Glossary: Vodou, Voodoo, Hoodoo.

## ∾ Clement, Saint

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Clement (died c. 99) was an early pope, perhaps the second or third after Saint Peter. Banished from Rome by government authorities, Clement was sent to labor in a stone quarry, where he discovered his fellow prisoners suffering from extreme thirst. Clement prayed and then thrust his pickaxe into the ground; a spring of sweet water emerged. He proceeded to make many converts and produce more miracles. He was soon martyred by being thrown into the Black Sea with an anchor tied around his neck. Clement emerged as the patron saint of blacksmiths, metal workers, and anchorsmiths.

His feast day, known as the Clem Feast, is the traditional feast of smiths. Torch-lit processions were once commonly held in Saint Clement's honor. The saint was represented by an effigy or by a smith chosen to represent him. Anvils in smithies were fired up by exploding gunpowder on them. To go "clementing" was to go from house to house begging food, drinks, and money in exchange for songs, similar to wassailing or Hallowe'en trick-or-treating.

The historical Clement was most likely a Roman nobleman who was an early convert to Christianity. Legends of Saint Clement describe him as the first

blacksmith, the first to refine iron ore, or the first man to shoe a horse assertions that are clearly historically untrue. Scholars suggest that Clement's associations with smithcraft indicate that he may be identified with the mysterious spirit Wayland the Smith, who was once widely venerated throughout Germanic and Nordic lands, as well as the British Isles.

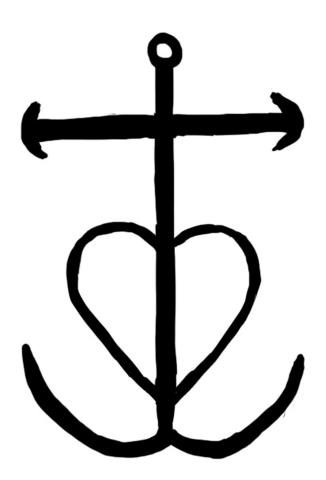
**FAVORED PEOPLE**: mariners; stone cutters; ferrymen; marble workers; blacksmiths; metal workers.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Clement is portrayed as a pope holding an anchor; he may stand beside springs.

**ATTRIBUTE**: an anchor or the anchored cross, sometimes referred to as Saint Clement's Cross.

BOTANICAL: convex wood sorrel (Oxalis convexula).

**EMBLEM:** Cross of Saint Clement, also known as the Anchor Cross or Mariner's Cross.



SACRED SITES:

- Bones alleged to belong to Clement are housed in Rome's Basilica of Saint Clement.
- His head is reputedly in the Monastery of the Caves in Kiev.
- The Church of Saint Clement Danes in Westminster, London, was designed by Christopher Wren in 1682 and is the Central Church of Britain's Royal Air Force.

FEASTS: 23 November (Western Church); 24 or 25 November (Eastern Churches); 8 December (Coptic Church).

ALTAR: Home altars for Saint Clement may be constructed on an anvil.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; oranges; lemons; apples; pears; clementines; blacksmithing tools.

**SEE** Glossary: *Syncretism*.

### ∾ Colombe of Sens, Saint

Also known as Columba; Comba; Kolumba.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

According to legend, Saint Colombe (c. 257–31 December 273) came from a noble Pagan family in Saragossa, now located in modern Spain. Colombe, which means "dove," is her baptismal name. Her birth name may have been Eporita. She crossed the Pyrenees from Spain into France accompanied by a large bear.

Colombe settled in the village of Colombiès in Aveyron, where she was fed by manna for twenty-eight days, the length of one lunar month or one menstrual cycle. The manna was served to her on a miraculous shield, reminiscent of legends of the Grail. Roman emperor Aurelian wished to marry this mysterious, miraculous, beautiful girl to his son, but she refused.

Colombe was sent to a brothel, where her bear defended her honor. Attempts were made to burn her alive along with her bear, but the bear escaped and sudden torrential rains doused the flames. The legend says that Colombe was then beheaded in Sens beside a healing fountain. Alternative versions suggest that the fountain sprang up in response to her beheading.

During her execution, a blind man in the crowd invoked this miraculous woman's aid and his sight was instantly restored. In gratitude, he buried Colombe. She continued to produce miracles and a chapel built at her grave eventually evolved into the Abbey at Sens.

Devotion to Saint Colombe is centered in the eastern Pyrenees, an area associated with the mysterious secret society the Priory of Sion, as well as various Christian heresies. She is among those saints closely associated with Black Madonnas. There is no historical documentation regarding Saint Colombe and some suspect that a Pagan bear goddess lurks beneath the mask of the young saint. However, she was once a very popular saint and numerous locations throughout France are named in her honor.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Colombe is portrayed as a young woman with a bear, a young woman with a dog, a young woman being beheaded beside a fountain, and a young woman bound and standing on a funeral pyre with an angel.

ATTRIBUTES: book; peacock feather.

SACRED ANIMALS: dove, the meaning of her name; bear.

FEAST: 31 December.

**SACRED SITES:** 

- The Abbey of Saint Colombe in Sens, France, built over Colombe's tomb, was constructed in the seventh century, but demolished during the French Revolution.
- She now has a chapel within the Cathedral of Saint Stephen of Sens.
- Saint Kolumba Church, among the oldest in Cologne, Germany, was destroyed during World War II. The ruins have been incorporated into the Kolumba Museum.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; images of bears. Leave offerings like honey or berries for Colombe's constant companion, her bear.

SEE ALSO Comba, Saint; Well Saints and Glossary: Black Madonna.

### 👡 Colonia, Sarita

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

Sarita Colonia (1 March 1914–12 December 1940) was the eldest child in a poor Peruvian family. After her mother died, Sarita inherited her role and responsibilities. Her father remarried, had more children, then fell ill and was unable to work. Sarita inherited his responsibilities as well.

Sarita moved to Lima in approximately 1930, hoping to find work so that she could support her family. She worked as a live-in nanny for almost three years, then moved in with her aunt in the port city of Callao, adjacent to Lima. Sarita worked in her aunt's fish stand in the market. She also worked two or three additional jobs, sending all the money she earned home to her family. Her generosity toward others in the market was soon noticed. Whatever Sarita had, she shared. When her stepmother died, her father sent most of her siblings to live with Sarita.

In December 1940, Sarita became very ill. She was taken to the hospital, where she died the next day. Her death certificate lists cause of death as malaria, but surviving relatives blame an overdose of castor oil, used as a purgative. This is perhaps not quite dramatic enough for a full-fledged folk saint. so various

legends about her death have since emerged, most involving attempted—or accomplished—rape.

An eleven-hour television miniseries dedicated to Sarita Colonia, broadcast in Lima in 2002, offered no fewer than six versions of her death.

Since her death, Sarita Colonia has emerged as a great, powerful saint and intercessor. There is little that she cannot do. Stevedores and port employees from Callao were among her first devotees. Sarita developed a reputation as a spirit who protects the marginalized—those who feel excluded or judged by more conventional, official saints. Sarita is a loving spirit who rejects no one. In the 1940s and 1950s, she began to attract devotion from what was then commonly described as the "underclass": homosexuals, transvestites, prostitutes, thieves, and those who live or operate secretly and discreetly.

Sarita Colonia is sometimes described as the matron saint of criminals. The police sometimes stake out her shrines looking for wanted criminals. In 1994, bank robbers visiting her shrine prior to a planned heist were surprised and arrested. Although often pigeon-holed in media depictions as a saint of malefactors, like her fellow saint Jesus Malverde, Sarita transcends stereotypes and, in fact, has an extremely broad-based devotion among many social groups.

Sarita Colonia is the matron of the abandoned, the marginalized, and the poverty-stricken. Her devotees include, but are not limited to, criminals and sex workers. She is the matron of those who face death daily, including those who live in dangerous neighborhoods or work in dangerous fields. She protects those who fear crime, as well as its perpetrators.

Sarita remains beloved by Peru's gay, transgender, and transvestite communities. She is a favorite saint of the imprisoned. Inmates tattoo her image on their bodies. Her popularity is so widespread that the prison in Callao is nicknamed Sarita Colonia. She is the matron saint of prisoners—not just those in jail, but also those imprisoned by life's circumstances, poverty, oppression, abuse, and their own responsibilities.

Sarita is a matron of illegal immigration into the United States—not just from Peru, but from anywhere. Her image worn next to the skin, beneath clothing, allegedly confers invisibility or at least prevents notice. She protects and facilitates passage over the border, then helps with starting a new life, including finding jobs, finances, and papers. She helps reunite families separated by borders and is the matron of mothers who must travel far away from their children in order to support them.

Sarita worked as a nanny and as a market vendor; therefore, she is the special matron of those fields, especially market vendors with carts. She protects against sudden deaths (like her own) in all situations, but especially traffic accidents, so she receives tremendous veneration from professional drivers—truckers, taxi drivers, and bus drivers.

Flowers that have been in contact with Sarita's tomb are believed to be magically charged, as they've absorbed some of the power of the saint.

- Water from vases containing flowers dedicated to her is considered a form of Holy Water.
- Flowers taken from her shrines are used for healing and spiritual cleansing, and to adorn home altars.
- If you intend to remove her flowers from a public shrine, bring new ones to take their place so that someone else will also have the opportunity.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Votive images of Sarita Colonia are based on a photograph of her: a young woman with long dark hair gazing directly at her viewer.

#### ATTRIBUTE: roses.

**RITUAL**: Burn four candles simultaneously for Sarita: a white one for health, a red one for love, a green one for work, and a yellow one for joy.

**SPIRITUAL ALLY:** Sarita was a devotee of Saint Martín de Porres and the two can share an altar.

#### SACRED FLOWER: roses.

**SACRED SITE**: Sarita was originally buried in a common grave. When it was excavated to clear the land for construction, her family retrieved her bones as best as possible, gathered them into a wooden box, and reburied them nearby. In 1983, donations from devotees funded a new mausoleum shrine for Sarita in Callao.

**FESTIVALS:** Two annual fiestas celebrate Sarita Colonia: one in March celebrates her birth; the other in December commemorates her death. Devotees traditionally bring gifts that are distributed to the crowds, including food, clothing, and images of Sarita.

**OFFERINGS:** floral bouquets; candles; roses.

SEE ALSO Martín de Porres; Muerte, Santissima; Rose of Lima and Glossary: Holy Water.

## 👡 Coltrane, John

John Coltrane (23 September 1923–17 July 1967) was a saxophonist, innovator, composer, musical genius, and spiritual seeker. He is considered a saint by the Saint John Coltrane African Orthodox Church, founded in 1971. After seeing Coltrane perform in 1965, Archbishop Franzo King and Reverend Mother Marina King were inspired to found San Francisco's Saint John Will-I-Am Coltrane African Orthodox Church. Archbishop King, who had been raised in the Pentecostal Church, recognized the power of God in Coltrane's music, describing the experience as a "sound baptism."

The church is socially active and runs several outreach programs for the poor and needy. John Coltrane himself emerged from the depths of drug addiction to achieve heights of spirituality.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** An icon of Saint John Coltrane portrays him with a scroll and the Holy Ghost horn, a saxophone from which flames emerge.

**SACRED SITES**: His grave is located in Pinelawn Memorial Park and Cemetery in Farmingdale, New York; his church is located in San Francisco.

FOR MORE INFORMATION on Saint John Coltrane Church, go to *www.coltranechurch.org*. See Glossary: *Icon*.

## 👡 Comba, Saint

Comba, a folk saint from Galicia, Spain, is not only the matron saint of witches, she was once a witch herself. Veneration of Comba dates from the Middle Ages

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Her precise origins are unknown, although she is the subject of numerous local legends. Scholars theorize that she may actually be a merger of two official saints: Colombe of Sens and Saint Columba of Spain, a nun who was martyred by beheading in Cordoba in 853 during the conflicts between Christians and Muslims there. However, neither of these women have associations with witchcraft and the legends themselves suggest that Comba is a locally grown saint.

Legends explicitly identifying Saint Comba as a witch were first published in 1895, but some may be much older. According to the basic legend, Comba was walking down a road in Galicia one day when she encountered Jesus, who stopped and asked her where she was going. Comba responded honestly, saying that she was going about her witch business. Jesus didn't argue with her but delivered a warning. He told her to go ahead but added that, if she did, she would be unable to enter his kingdom.

In response, Comba experienced a profound spiritual reaction. Exactly what transpired afterward depends on the version of her legend, but the end-result of all versions is that she became a full-fledged, miracle-working saint. In some versions, she merely abandons sorcery; in others, she is martyred when she either resists sexual advances or refuses to deny her Christian faith, or both. Yet Comba never denies her previous associations with witches either. Although she now protects against witches and malevolent magic, she also serves as an intercessor for witches whenever they are in need.

SEE ALSO Colombe of Sens; Cyprian, Saint and Glossary: Intercessor; Saint, Official; Saint, Unofficial.

### ∾ Confucius

**CLASSIFICATION:** Confucianist saint.

Kong Fu Zi (551–479 bce), the Chinese philosopher better known in the West as Confucius, founded an ethical system that emphatically did not rely on veneration of saints or spirits. Although he did not deny their existence, he felt that the ecstatic rites associated with them distracted from the proper functioning of society. Rather than being a spiritual system, Confucianism was intended as a philosophical system that would facilitate proper social and familial order.

Confucianism emerged as a competitor of Taoism and traditional Chinese

shamanism. It successfully mocked, ostracized, ridiculed, and attacked shamanism, so that the older tradition came to be perceived—at least officially and by the elite classes—as primitive, ignorant, and déclassé.

Irony of ironies—following his death and continuing today, Confucius himself became revered as a saint. Many shrines, known as Confucius Temples, are dedicated to him. Votive statues are available for home altars, although they are controversial. Purists recommend wall scrolls of his teachings, insisting that the true purpose of the shrines is to honor his philosophy. In the context of folk religion, however, Confucius is invoked for assistance with healing, academic issues including admissions and exams, and domestic harmony.

Although respectfully acknowledging their existence, Confucius himself avoided writing about saints, spirits, or miracles. In his Analects 6: 20, he wrote, "show respect to the deities and the spirits of the departed but keep aloof from them." Because it was claimed that "the Master never talked of wonders, feats of strength, disorders of nature or spirits," author Yuan Mei (1716–1798) entitled his collection of supernatural stories What the Master Would Not Discuss. A 1996 English translation is entitled Censored by Confucius: Ghost Stories by Yuan Mei.

**SACRED ANIMAL:** The Kirin, also spelled Qi Lin, a mythical creature known as the "Chinese unicorn."

**FEAST:** He is honored on his birthday, the twenty-seventh day of the eighth month of the Chinese lunar calendar.

SACRED SITES: The oldest Confucius temple is in Qufu, his hometown. It is also the site of his grave, built the year after his death and now a UNESCO World Heritage site. Other important Confucius temples are found in Beijing, Taiwan, Indonesia, and Malaysia. Van Mieu, the Temple of Literature, the first university in Hanoi, was built in 1073 to venerate Confucius. These sites have evolved into pilgrimage destinations, although ironically, Confucius himself disapproved of pilgrimages, perceiving them as disruptive of social order and potentially dangerous, as they encouraged substantial numbers of people to veer from their everyday routines and obligations. **OFFERING:** incense.

**SEE** Glossary: *Pilgrimage*.

## ∼ Cosmos and Damian

Also known as Kuzma and Demyan; Kosmas and Damianos; Cosmo and Damiano; Cosmas; Cosma.

CLASSIFICATION: considered saints by virtually all branches of Christianity.

Cosmos and Damian (died c. 303) were twins from Syria who studied medicine and the sciences. They were considered miracle workers while they were still alive, most famously when they successfully grafted the leg of a recently deceased Ethiopian man onto a patient whose ulcerated leg had been amputated.

Dedicated physicians and devout Christians, they were martyred together. Arrested by the governor of Cilicia, they refused to renounce their faith and were executed by beheading, but only after attempts to kill them by drowning, stoning, and burning failed. They are buried in Cyrrhus, now in modern Turkey.

After their martyrdom, the two became even more renowned for their miracles of healing. They quickly became extremely popular saints. By the fourth century, churches were dedicated to them in Jerusalem, Egypt, and Mesopotamia. First venerated in the Eastern Churches, during the Renaissance, the Medici family adopted them as patrons, thus increasing their prominence in the West.

Cosmos and Damian are venerated in the Brazilian Spiritist tradition Umbanda, where they are considered the leaders of the Children's Line of Spirits. Devotion to Cosmos and Damian may derive from hidden veneration of the Pagan twin deities, Castor and Pollux.

Cosmos and Damian appear in dreams to perform healings or prescribe treatment.

Cosmos and Damian are invoked for all miracles of healing, but their specialties include gangrene and hernias. Both saints—but especially Cosmos—are invoked by women and men for fertility and virility. Oil placed before Cosmos' image is traditionally used as massage oil believed able to heal

infertility and impotence.

Cosmos and Damian are also invoked for marital happiness. Young women traditionally ask the saints to locate husbands for them. They are guardians of children and are invoked to protect orphanages. Appeal for their assistance using ex-votos and milagros.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: barbers; hairdressers; confectioners; candy makers and employees of candy manufacturers; dentists; eye doctors; midwives; surgeons; physicians; pharmacists and chemists; surgeons. The Russian Church considers them patron saints of smithcraft.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: The twins are always depicted side by side. The oldest known image of them is a mosaic in the dome of the Church of Saint George in Thessalonica, Greece, that dates from approximately 400. Russian icons depict the brothers holding medicine boxes and dispensing spoons. The handles of the spoons are in the shape of a cross.

**ATTRIBUTES**: palm fronds, which are emblems of martyrdom; phial; container of ointment; spoons to dispense medicine.

**FESTIVAL:** The Church of Saints Cosmos and Damian near Giza, Egypt, is the site of an annual pilgrimage at the end of June for those suffering from epilepsy, seizure disorders, and nervous ailments.

FEASTS: 26 September, 27 September (Western Church); 1 July, 1 November (Eastern Church).

**SACRED SITES:** It is traditionally believed that an ailing person who sleeps in a church or shrine dedicated to Cosmos and Damian will receive a dream leading to a cure. You can construct your own shrine, but there are many churches dedicated to the twin saints. These are just a few:

- The Basilica of Cosmos and Damian, the oldest church in Rome's Imperial Forum, was built in the early sixth century over the site of a third-century bce Pagan temple.
- The Basilica of Cosmos and Damian in Igarassu, Pernambuco, built in 1535, is the oldest church in Brazil.
- the Russian Orthodox Church of the Saints Cosmos and Damian in Moscow
- The Church of Saints Cosmos and Damian in Constantinople was erected near the old temple of Castor and Pollux

une ora tempre or Cuotor una i orium.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; incense; candy. Give children candy in honor of the saints. Donate medical tools, medical supplies, and funds to the needy and ailing. Give to medical associations that care for the poor. Phallus-shaped ex-votos (*milagros*) are offered when seeking miracles of fertility and virility.

SEE ALSO Silverless Physicians and Glossary: Ex-Voto, Milagro.

∼ Crispin and Crispinian, Saints

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as saints by most branches of Christianity.

The twins Crispin and Crispinian were scions of a noble Roman family who converted to Christianity. They ran away from Rome, traveling to Soissons in what is now northern France, where they preached during the day and crafted shoes at night to earn their living. They aroused the ire of the local governor, who ordered them tortured.

The brothers were stretched on a rack and had awls driven beneath their fingernails. They were thrown into a river with millstones around their necks, but managed to swim to shore. Thrown into a bonfire, they emerged unscathed and were finally beheaded on 25 October 285, although an alternative version of their legend suggests that they escaped to Faversham, Kent, England, where they again worked as shoe makers.

Because of their long associations with leather, Crispin and Crispinian have recently evolved into the patron saints of modern leather culture, both straight and gay.

The famous "Saint Crispin's Day Speech" from William Shakespeare's play Henry V actually references both brothers.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: cobblers; shoe makers; tanners; saddlers; leather workers; bikers; anyone wearing leather regularly or as a uniform; lace makers; lace readers.

ATTRIBUTE: shoes.

FEAST: 25 October.

**BOTANICAL**: Crispin's flower is fleabane starwort (*Aster conizoides*); Crispinian's is meager starwort (*Aster miser*).

SACRED SITES: Rumor has it that the house in which they made shoes on Preston Street in Faversham served as a shrine until the 17th century. The parish church in Faversham has an altar dedicated to Crispin and Crispinian. The brothers' tombs are reputed to be in Rome's Church of San Lorenzo in Panisperna.

SPIRITUAL ALLY: Their mother, Saint Theodora.

∾ Crowley, Aleister

Also known as To Mega Thêrion.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Gnostic saint.

When the mystic Aleister Crowley (12 October 1875–1 December 1947) compiled the list of Gnostic saints, he included himself—twice. To those unfamiliar with saints, this may seem presumptuous; however, it is actually very traditional. Many saints vowed, while still alive, that they would respond, after their deaths, to those who invoked them for assistance. To declare yourself a saint is to make a similar vow—to respond from the after-life to those in need, or at least to respond to certain people in need.

Perhaps unusually for a saint, Aleister Crowley was once known as the "wickedest man on earth." He identified with the Great Beast whose number is 666 from the biblical Book of Revelation. Crowley was a brilliant occultist, a master magus, and a prolific author, painter, and poet. He is also the founder of the religious tradition called Thelema, founded in 1904.

Crowley is considered the prophet of Thelema. He and his then-wife, Rose Kelly, were traveling in Egypt when he experienced a profound spiritual revelation. A possibly noncorporeal spirit named Aiwass dictated *The Book of the Law* to Crowley over three days—8, 9, and 10 April 1904. *The Book of the Law* is the central text of Thelema—an English transliteration of a Greek word meaning "will." Thelema emphasizes individualism, as well as the uniqueness of each person's will.

The many biographies of Aleister Crowley include Richard Kaczynski's *Perdurabo* (New Falcon Publications, 2002); Israel Regardie's *The Eye in the Triangle* (New Falcon Publications, 1970); and Lawrence Sutin's *Do What Thou Wilt: A Life of Aleister Crowley* (St. Martin's Press, 2000).

**OFFERINGS**: absinthe. Crowley's own writings reveal his personal preferences.

SEE ALSO Apollonia, Saint; Gnostic Saints; Margaret of Antioch, Saint.

## 👡 Cyprian, Saint

Also known as Cipriano; Kyprianos.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

There are actually two Saint Cyprians, although they are now extremely difficult to disentangle from one another:

- Saint Cyprian of Antioch
- Saint Cyprian of Carthage

Both were third-century archbishops who died as Christian martyrs. One or both of them was a converted Pagan magician who renounced sorcery before becoming a devout Christian. The magician is usually, but not always, identified as Cyprian of Antioch. Very little historical documentation exists for either saint. From the perspective of folk religion, the two are frequently merged into one identity, so there is only one entry for Saint Cyprian in this encyclopedia.

Saint Cyprian may be the most magical of all the magical saints. Under the Spanish variant of his name—San Cipriano—he is considered the father and patron saint of Iberian magic.

As part of embracing Christianity and renouncing Paganism, Cyprian the magician burned his substantial library of occult books. Several centuries after his death, he apparently began to regret his actions and decided to make amends by providing people with a book containing the essence of his old collection. The fact that he was dead was no obstruction. According to the preface of this collection of magic spells, *The Book of San Cipriano* was dictated to a German monk, Jonas Sulfurino, by Saint Cyprian in 1000 ce.

Various somewhat different versions of this grimoire—or *grimorio*, as it is known in Spanish—are published under the same title or very close variations of it. As of this writing, no English translation exists, but it is readily available in Spanish or Portuguese. The manual became incredibly popular and influential in Iberia and eventually throughout Latin America. *The Book of San Cipriano* is extremely controversial—an old legend suggests that reading the book backward will attract Satan.

Saint Cyprian is all-powerful. There is little he cannot do or provide. He is invoked for healing and to locate missing persons and goods, whether lost or stolen. In certain folk traditions, he is petitioned to acquire werewolf skills. Those in any of the occult fields may consider him their patron and may request his assistance in any situation, even the most mundane. Cyprian protects magical practitioners, but he also protects against them.

Cyprian's associations with magic are unofficial. The Church acknowledges his renunciation of sorcery, but not his posthumous backsliding. Before his conversion, Saint Cyprian allegedly had a host of demons serving as his personal army. According to Church tradition, Cyprian of Antioch may have authored some of the exorcism prayers in the *Priest's Prayer Book*. Cyprian is now invoked to banish unwanted or dangerous spirits. Invoking his name is allegedly sufficient to send mid-level evil entities packing.

A magical oil that reputedly contains and transmits the essence of Saint Cyprian's powers is a frequent ingredient in magic spells for many purposes.

#### Oil of Saint Cyprian or San Cipriano Oil

The traditional ingredients include cinnamon powder, orrisroot, myrrh resin or myrrh essential oil, as well as essential oils of cedarwood and cypress and Bethroot (*Trillium erectum*).

- 1. Place pulverized dry ingredients into a jar or bottle and cover with olive, safflower, sunflower, and/or jojoba oil.
- 2. Add the essential oils, drop by drop, until a favorable fragrance is achieved.

Saint Cyprian—or one of them—allegedly made the transition from sorcerer to Christian after the love spell he cast on behalf of a client failed because of the intended target's purity of faith. Cyprian is now invoked to help reconcile lovers.

### Saint Cyprian's Reconciliation Spell

- 1. Obtain two candles, one to represent each person in the couple.
- 2. Carve each individual's name in one candle.
- 3. Rub each candle with San Cipriano Oil.
- 4. Bind the candles together so that they are facing each other using a piece of hemp or string.
- 5. Burn the candles.

A folk magic spell recommends burning a purple candle on Saturday while requesting Saint Cyprian's protection from liars, cheats, and womanizers.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: witches; wizards; fortunetellers; alchemists; exorcists; magicians; necromancers; nomads; Roma (Gypsies); the homeless.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Saint Cyprian is portrayed dressed as a bishop. He may also be portrayed in the process of being tortured beside Saint Justina.

**SPIRITUAL ALLY:** Cyprian is often venerated with Justina of Antioch, the young virgin whose faith and purity defied all his magical skill. Legend suggests that the two were eventually martyred together.

COLORS: brown; purple.

**BOTANICAL**: starwort (*Aster tripolium*).

FEASTS: 16 September (Cyprian of Carthage); 26 September (Cyprian of Antioch).

**OFFERINGS**: candles; incense; occultist or fortuneteller's tools.

# ∾ Cyr, Saint

Also known as Cyriacus; Kirkos; Qirkos; Quiricus.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Julitta, a rich widow from Anatolia, moved to Tarsus, then the center of

Christianity, with her three-year-old son, Cyr or Cyriacus (301–304). During persecutions, Julitta was denounced as a Christian and brought before the ruling magistrate; she brought her little boy with her. Slightly different versions of exactly what happened next exist. The standard version suggests that the magistrate was holding the boy while Julitta was questioned. She defiantly refused to renounce her faith and Cyr loudly announced that he, too, was a Christian. He may also have kicked the magistrate. The magistrate promptly threw the three-year-old down a flight of stairs, killing him in front of his mother.

Centuries later, Charlemagne was either in bed dreaming or out hunting when he experienced a vision. In the vision, he was just about to be gored by a boar when a small, naked boy appeared to him, identifying himself as Cyr and promising to save the emperor from the boar if only he'd give Cyr clothing to cover his nakedness. Charlemagne agreed and was saved. The dream was later interpreted as a request by Cyr for public veneration. Nevers Cathedral, 260 kilometers from Paris, was promptly dedicated to Saints Cyr and Julitta. The two are usually venerated together.

Saint Cyr is invoked to restore health to sick children and to save children's lives in any circumstance. He is petitioned for domestic happiness.

FAVORED PEOPLE: children; victims of torture.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: a naked child riding on a boar; a child thrown to the ground or down stairs; a child from whose blood a spring pours forth.

SACRED ANIMAL: A boar is sometimes sufficient to represent Cyr.

**SACRED SITE:** Nevers Cathedral in France, also known as the Cathedral of Saint Cyr and Saint Julitta.

**FEASTS:** 16 June; 15 July. The Ethiopian Church honors him on the fifteenth day of each month.

**OFFERINGS**: whatever would please a small boy. Cyr has expressed his desire for clothing.

SEE ALSO Julitta, Saint.

### ∼ Cyrus and John, Saints

Also known as Abu Kir and Yohanna.

#### **EPITHET:** The Wonder-Working Unmercenaries

CLASSIFICATION: venerated by most branches of Christianity.

Cyrus and John, brothers from Damanhur, Egypt, are the most popular of the saints known as Silverless Physicians or Holy Unmercenaries because they refused to take payment for their medical services, although they did seek to convert people to Christianity. The two were martyred in the fourth century.

That's the Coptic (Egyptian Christian) version of their legend. The Roman Catholic version suggests that they were not literally brothers, but brothers of the soul. Cyrus, a physician from Alexandria, and John, a physician from Arabia, traveled and worked together—and then were tortured and executed together. They are now venerated together and are especially popular among Coptic Christians.

Saints John and Cyrus inherited the functions of the Egyptian deity Serapis, also a famous healer. The temple of Serapis in the Egyptian city of Canopus, known as the Serapeum, was shuttered in 391 when Pagan religions were banned. The relics of John and Cyrus were transferred there and the temple was reopened as a church. Therapeutic practices associated with Serapis were retained—especially dream incubation, the practice of sleeping in sacred space for the purpose of receiving a healing dream. Miracles occurred, in addition to conventional healings. People spent hours, even days, in the presence of the saints' relics, which proved to have healing powers.

Their pilgrimage became very popular and, in the 10th century, their relics were transferred to the Coptic Church of Saints Cyrus and John in Old Cairo. This was intended to honor them and make them more accessible, but in the 11th century, that church received relics of Saint Barbara. The female superstar outshone the brothers, whose relics are now widely scattered. Some are in the newer Church of Saints Cyrus and John in Old Cairo; some are in a small church built in 1935 in Abuqir, the site of the old Serapeum. Others are in Greece. The relics are believed to possess miraculous powers of healing. The saints may also be invoked for healing.

FEAST: 31 January.

**OFFERINGS**: As Silverless Physicians, theoretically they ask nothing for their services, but candles and charitable donations in their name may be in order anyway, as are pilgrimages—especially if they provide miracles for you.

SEE ALSO Barbara, Saint; Silverless Physicians and Glossary: Pilgrimage; Relics.

# D

#### 👡 Dai Shi Zhi

Also known as Mahâsthâmaprâpta (Sanskrit); Daishizhi; Sizhi (China); Daiseishi; Seishi (Japan); Dae Sae Zhi (Korea); Dai The Chí (Vietnam).

EPITHETS: Great Strength Arrives!; The Bodhisattva of Moonlight.

CLASSIFICATION: Bodhisattva.

Dai Shi Zhi is the Chinese name for the bodhisattva whose Sanskrit name is Mahâsthâmaprâpta. Although Mahâsthâmaprâpta is classified among the great and original bodhisattvas, he has never been especially popular in India. As Buddhism traveled east, however, so did the bodhisattvas. Mahâsthâmaprâpta is extremely beloved in East Asia, especially in China and Japan, where his name, persona, and even gender underwent a change. He is most beloved and most likely to be invoked as a saint in China, so his Chinese name is used in these pages.

Dai Shi Zhi appears in early Buddhist scriptures, including the *Immeasurable Life Sutra* and the *Lotus Sutra*. As the primary attendant of Amida Buddha (Amitabha), Dai Shi Zhi is considered the epitome of wisdom in the same manner that Avalokiteshvara is the epitome of compassion. Although considered male elsewhere, in China, Dai Shi Zhi is consistently envisioned and portrayed as female, in the same manner that the male bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara evolved into China's beloved female Kwan Yin.

Together with Kwan Yin, Dai Shi Zhi is part of the sacred triad, The Three Saints in the West; the two bodhisattvas serve as attendants of Amida Buddha. Together and independently, the three holy beings rescue people from the Buddhist Hell realms. Dai Shi Zhi also vowed to protect people from ghosts, beasts, fire, blood, and knives, and may be invoked for acquisition of wisdom. FAVORED PEOPLE: She is the guardian of those born in the Year of the Horse.

SPIRITUAL ALLIES: Amida Buddha; Kwan Yin.

ATTRIBUTES: blue lotus; water jar.

COLOR: white.

PLANET: moon.

**DIRECTION:** south.

MANTRA: OM SAM JAM JAM SVAHA.

**OFFERINGS:** incense; good deeds.

SEE ALSO Avalokiteshvara; Kwan Yin; Three Saints in the West.

#### 👡 Damian, Saint

See Cosmos and Damian.

#### 👡 Damien, Saint

Also known as Father Damien of Molokai.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

In the isolated Hawaiian Islands, the first documented case of leprosy, more accurately called Hansen's disease, occurred in the 1840s. The dreaded illness spread rapidly. Because the disease was believed to be highly contagious and incurable, drastic measures were taken to quarantine victims of the illness completely. Thus a colony to house lepers was created in Kalaupapa, a particularly remote area of the island of Molokai—even as this book is being written, in the early 21st century, the only land access is a steep and precipitous mule route.

Victims of leprosy, as well as those even suspected of having leprosy, were chipped off to Kalaupapa beginning in 1866. They were thrown off chips and

supped on to Kalaupapa beginning in 1000. They were unown on supps and forced to swim ashore, assuming that they could swim. Many drowned in the rough, turbulent waters. Sometimes, a rope was strung from the anchored boat to shore so that the victims could haul themselves over. Those who survived found themselves in a lawless, brutal environment.

No buildings existed at Kalaupapa. Those banished there lived in caves, stone shelters, or rudimentary shacks built from whatever sticks or leaves were available. Ship's crews tossed supplies overboard, leaving it to sea currents to determine whether provisions would float to shore or out to sea. There was no access to adequate health care.

Seven years after the leper colony was founded, Father Damien arrived in Kalaupapa. Born Jozef de Veuster in Belgium on 3 January 1840, the seventh child of a Flemish corn merchant, de Veuster entered the priesthood in 1860, taking the name Father Damien, in honor of Damian, the great healing saint. In 1864, Father Damien traveled as a missionary to Hawaii, which was then still an independent kingdom.

The bishop of Hawaii felt strongly that those banished to Kalaupapa deserved a priest, but was reluctant to assign anyone, realizing that it was effectively a death sentence. Father Damien was among four men to volunteer. He arrived in Kalaupapa on 10 May 1873, where he found 816 people in residence.

Although there was already a church in Kalaupapa, it was too small to comfortably accommodate Father Damien's growing congregation. He built a new church with the help of his congregation, dedicating it to Saint Philomena. In addition to standard religious duties, Father Damien tended the sick, changed bandages, dressed ulcers, and helped build homes—and coffins—for the residents. He also dug graves for his parishioners.

Father Damien is credited with transforming Kalaupapa from what was described as "Hell on earth" into a thriving, lawful community. He helped establish farms and schools, and made sure that the rights of the weak were protected. Although the bishop's original plan was to have a revolving schedule of four priests sharing the burden of this extraordinary mission, Father Damien asked to remain in Kalaupapa. His parishioners requested that he stay, too.

In December 1884, he accidentally put his foot into scalding water while bathing. He knew it was scalding because his skin blistered—otherwise Father Damien felt no pain. He realized that he, too, had contracted leprosy. He died at age forty-nine on 15 April 1889. Mahatma Gandhi proclaimed Father Damien to be one of his primary inspirations.

Modern pharmaceuticals have transformed Hansen's disease into a controllable and rare condition. Kalaupapa is now a national state park. Father Damien was canonized by Pope Benedict XVI on 11 October 2009. The Vatican has credited Damien with the performance of two miracles:

- A French nun with terminal gastrointestinal illness is reported to have recovered miraculously after requesting Father Damien's aid.
- A Hawaiian woman was spontaneously and inexplicably cured of lung cancer after praying at Father Damien's grave.

The second miracle was also documented by Dr. Walter Chang in the October 2000 issue of the *Hawaii Medical Journal*. Even before the Vatican's endorsement, HIV and AIDS sufferers claimed Father Damien as their unofficial patron, because they feel that their disease has been stigmatized in the same way that leprosy was in earlier centuries.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Father Damien is usually depicted wearing a broad-brimmed missionary's hat. His statue stands before the Hawaii state capitol building in Honolulu. This statue portrays him in his later years, after he had contracted Hansen's disease. His facial scars are evident and one arm is in a sling. A duplicate of the statue stands in the National Statuary Hall in Washington, D.C.

**FEAST:** 15 April is his official feast as well as a secular holiday, Father Damien Day, declared by an act of the Hawaii State Legislature and celebrated annually in Hawaii.

SACRED SITES: Father Damien was initially buried in the churchyard of Saint Philomena Church in Kalaupapa, but he was exhumed in 1936 and returned to Belgium. After his beatification in 1995, one of his hands was returned to Kalaupapa and reburied in his tomb.

**OFFERINGS**: leis; offerings on behalf of those suffering from serious illness.

SEE ALSO Cosmos and Damian; Philomena, Saint and Glossary: Relics.

#### 👡 Daniel Hashomer, Rabbi

Also known as Daniel HaShomer Ashkenazi; Sidi Denil.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Jewish saint.

Rabbi Daniel HaShomer Ashkenazi, among the most beloved and popular Moroccan Jewish saints, is venerated by Muslims as well as Jews. His name is Daniel the Shomer. A *shomer* is a watcher or guardian. The word derives from a root verb meaning to watch, guard, protect, or keep. The word is used to indicate a saint—one who watches from above—but it also refers to those who fulfill the responsibility of keeping watch over corpses from time of death until burial is complete, so that they will not be left alone and vulnerable. To be called a shomer indicates spiritual power and courage.

Rabbi Daniel is a miracle worker, once resurrecting a slaughtered stolen cow so that she could be returned to her rightful owners. A devotee was arrested on suspicion of smuggling contraband, which in fact was true. He invoked Rabbi Daniel's aid. When authorities demanded to know what was inside his stillclosed cases, the man desperately lied and said they were empty. The cases were opened and, thanks to the power of Rabbi Daniel HaShomer, all the contraband had vanished! The devotee walked free. (No word on whether the contraband ever reappeared.)

The life of Rabbi Daniel HaShomer is unknown. His emergence as a saint was dramatic. Rabbi Daniel appeared in a vision to a young run-away, a mentally ill Moroccan Arab boy. The saint told the boy his name and the location of his grave; then he healed him. The boy returned home a couple of days later, lucid and healthy. He retold his visionary experience, testifying to the power of the saint. One person told another and, virtually overnight, Rabbi Daniel HaShomer Ashkenazi was renowned throughout Morocco.

Rabbi Daniel is renowned for healing eye ailments and visual problems, mental illness, infertility, epilepsy, and seizure disorders. He is an honest, forthright saint. A blind man slept in Rabbi Daniel's crypt hoping to receive a healing dream and a cure. Instead, Rabbi Daniel appeared to a local woman in her dreams, telling her to go inform this blind man that his vision could not be restored, but that Rabbi Daniel would bless him with general good fortune and health and ensure steady secure employment for him and his children, despite his blindness.

Rabbi Daniel is a frequent and articulate dream communicator. He sometimes

appears in the flames of bonfires lit near his grave to commemorate the anniversary of his death. He does not engage in conventional ritual possession, but he does speak through people who, at least temporarily, lack complete control over their faculties of speech, like those affected by seizures or the mentally ill. For instance, he once used someone's epileptic fit as an opportunity to complain that the abattoir near his tomb had inadvertently been placed over his mother's grave and demanded that it be moved. He punishes infractions and ingratitude with paralysis.

Rabbi Daniel protects his gravesite fiercely. The trees at his grave are allegedly always green, indicating his great *baraka* or spiritual power. Those who, in the past, have injured any of the trees or somehow encroached on his grave (or attempted to do so) have been severely punished by the saint, sometimes fatally.

**FEASTS:** Rabbi Daniel's *hillulah* (anniversary of death/celebration of life) is on the first day of the Jewish lunar month Elul, usually corresponding to the astrological sign Virgo. He is also honored on the fifteenth day of that month.

**SACRED SITES:** his grave in Touggana, Morocco. He also has an annual celebration in Moshav Zanoah, Israel.

**OFFERING**: Visit his grave and recite all 150 psalms in his honor. This may be done as part of a petition process or as fulfillment of a vow. Also light candles; make charitable donations in his name.

SEE ALSO Sidi and Glossary: Feast.

#### 🔊 David, Saint

Also known as Saint Dewi; Saint Dewydd; Dewi Sant.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint in the Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox Churches.

David (c. 475–1 March 589) derives from Welsh nobility. He is the son of Saint Non and Sandde, Prince of Powys, and is either King Arthur's uncle or nephew (sources disagree). He is the patron saint of Wales and the Welsh people, renowned for bashing blindness and other miracles. He founded many

monasteries. In the medieval era, two pilgrimages to Saint David's cathedral were considered the equivalent of one to Rome.

Some believe that a pre-Christian sea spirit masquerades as the saint. Others believe that Saint David is the prototype for the sea spirit Davy Jones.

FAVORED PEOPLE: Saint David is the patron saint of vegetarians.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: David appears as a long-bearded Celtic bishop with a dove perched on his shoulder.

ATTRIBUTE: a leek.

FEAST: 1 March.

SACRED SITE: Saint David's Cathedral in Pembrokeshire, Wales.

**OFFERINGS**: David drinks only water. Light candles in his memory and offer good deeds in his honor.

SEE ALSO Arthurian Saints; Non, Saint.

#### 👡 Day, Dorothy

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint, canonization pending.

"Don't call me a saint," Dorothy Day (8 November 1897–29 November 1980) once said, "I don't want to be dismissed so easily." In March 2000, Pope John Paul II granted the Archdiocese of New York permission to open the cause for her beatification and canonization. She is now considered an official Servant of God, venerated by Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

Dorothy, who considered herself an anarchist, first became interested in radical social causes as a way to help workers and the poor while attending the University of Illinois. In 1916, she moved to New York City, where she became a journalist and traveled in Bohemian circles. Her life was turbulent: failed love affairs, two common-law marriages, an abortion, and a suicide attempt. Day was raised as an Episcopalian; her spiritual awakening and interest in Catholicism coincided with the birth of her daughter, Tamar, in 1926. She was baptized a Roman Catholic in December 1927

Together with Paul Maurin, Day founded the *Catholic Worker* newspaper on 1 May 1933. Day herself sold the newspaper in New York City's Union Square for a penny a copy. *The Catholic Worker* remains in print; its price remains one penny. The newspaper evolved into the Catholic Worker movement, a collection of autonomous Catholic communities whose aim is "to live in accordance with the justice and charity of Jesus Christ." Dorothy Day is the co-founder of the movement, which describes itself as grounded in a firm belief in the God-given dignity of every human being. She dedicated herself to a life of voluntary poverty, but remained a social activist, committing herself to ideals of nonviolence, justice, and mercy. She died on 29 November 1980 at the home she had founded for homeless women in New York City's Bowery.

Day's autobiography, *The Long Loneliness*, was published in 1952. It was followed in 1963 by her account of the Catholic Worker movement, *Loaves and Fishes*. An archive of her papers is housed at Marquette University in Milwaukee. She is the subject of a documentary, *Dorothy Day: Don't Call Me a Saint*, which was featured at the 2006 Tribeca Film Festival.

**SACRED SITE:** Day is buried in the Cemetery of the Resurrection on Staten Island, not far from where she once lived.

FEASTS: 29 November; also 1 May, which is International Workers' Day.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; incense; offerings on behalf of the poor, needy, and oppressed.

SEE Glossary: Saint, Official.

## ∾ Delille, Henriette

Also known as Henriette DeLille; Mère Henriette Delille; Mother Henriette Delille.

**EPITHET:** Servant of Slaves.

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint, canonization pending.

Henriette Delille (1812–17 November 1862) is the first African American born

in the United States as well as the first United States–born French Creole whose canonization has been officially opened by the Vatican. She was born in New Orleans where, at that time, people were legally classified as white, black, or free persons of color.

Henriette Delille was a free woman of color, but that freedom came with stipulations. A free woman of color could only marry a man from her own community; she could not legally marry a slave or a white man. However, civil and Church authorities condoned and even encouraged a type of concubinage unique to Louisiana known as *plaçage*.

*Plaçage* is French for "placement." Those who find the term reminiscent of "career placement" are not wrong—plaçage entailed romantic and economic relationships. At the Quadroon Balls of New Orleans, free women of color arranged relationships for their daughters and wards with wealthy white men. ("Quadroon" refers to someone with one grandparent of African descent.) Their daughters were thus *placed*.

Mothers made these relationships for their daughters hoping to obtain security and prosperity for them. The white man agreed to support the young woman and any children she might bear from the relationship. Essentially, she became a mistress with previously agreed-upon benefits, although some men later reneged on responsibilities and others may have behaved more generously than expected. In some cases, the couple may have loved each other dearly and may have wished to marry, but were not legally permitted to do so.

Henriette Delille was the daughter, grand-daughter, and great-granddaughter of free women of color who had entered into plaçage with white men. Regardless of how dilute her African ancestry or how European she appeared, Henriette was still classified as a free woman of color—it was considered a legally defining characteristic. Henriette, the youngest of her parents' four children, was groomed to take part in plaçage. Instead, she became an outspoken opponent of the system.

Henriette was named for her grandmother, Henriette Labeau or Laveau. There is speculation that Henriette was related to Marie Laveau, another free woman of color who did not participate in plaçage; however, no documentation exists and the suggestion is strongly resented by many of Henriette's devotees, who despise the Voodoo queen.

Baptismal records indicate that, in the 1820s, during her teen years, Henriette may have given birth to two sons, both named Henry Bocno. Both died very young. Devotees who dislike the possibility that Henriette was an unwed mother suggest that perhaps she merely brought abandoned children for baptism and the

suggest that perhaps she merery brought abandoned children for baptism and the priest assumed her to be the mother, although as Henriette was a devoted and frequent church attendee well acquainted with her parish priests, this does not seem likely. Church officials have stated that, even if she was an unwed mother in her youth—as was Saint Margaret of Cortona—it poses no obstruction to her canonization, which is based on her later accomplishments.

Henriette had a profound spiritual awakening in her teen years. In 1827, at age fourteen, she began teaching in her local Catholic school. She argued against plaçage, claiming it made a mockery of the sacrament of marriage. She sought a different path for herself; she wanted to become a nun. Her plans were opposed by her mother and the Church. No existing local order of nuns would accept a woman of color born to an unwed mother who still maintained what was officially considered a life of sin. In the meantime, Henriette's mother still hoped to negotiate a financially advantageous relationship for her beautiful daughter.

In 1835, Henriette's mother suffered a nervous breakdown and was declared legally incompetent. Henriette was given control of her assets. After providing for her mother, Henriette sold all the remaining property and used the proceeds to found an order of nuns that she could join, the Sisters of the Presentation of the Virgin Mary, initially an unrecognized order—meaning that it was founded without waiting for approval from the Church. In addition to Henriette, the order's original members included seven young women of mixed racial ancestry and a white French woman.

Some controversy exists as to when the Vatican formally recognized the Order—it may have been as early as 1837 or as late as 1841. In 1842, they renamed themselves the Sisters of the Holy Family in homage to Mary, her son Jesus, and Joseph, the man who married her even though she was already pregnant with a child not his own. Among their other functions, the sisters cared for cast-off and abandoned slaves and discreetly taught slaves during a time when educating them was punishable by life imprisonment or even death under Louisiana law. In 1851, Henriette purchased a home in New Orleans to serve as the mother-house of the Sisters of the Holy Family.

Henriette's only recorded handwriting appears on the inside cover of an 1836 prayer book. Now known as "Henriette's Prayer" she wrote:

I believe in God. I hope in God.

I love. I wish to live and die for God.

Henriette Delille died at age fifty, described by friends as "worn out by work." She is the subject of several books and a 2000 television movie, *The Courage to Love*, starring Vanessa Williams as Henriette. The United States post office offered a special-edition commemorative envelope honoring Mother Henriette Delille and the Sisters of the Holy Family. The Sisters of the Holy Family are now active throughout the United States, Belize, and Nigeria. In 1989, the order, in conjunction with the Archdiocese of New Orleans, placed Henriette Delille up for canonization. On 27 March 2010, Pope Benedict XVI declared Henriette DeLille venerable, stating that she had lived a life of "heroic virtues."

SACRED SITE: Mother Delille is the subject of a stained-glass mural in the Cathedral of Saint Louis in New Orleans. The mother-house of the Sisters of the Holy Family was damaged during Hurricane Katrina.

FEAST: 17 November.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; donations and good works on behalf of the poor and needy; donations to the Sisters of the Holy Family on behalf of her canonization process.

SEE ALSO Joseph, Saint; Laveau, Marie; Margaret of Cortona, Saint; Mary and Glossary: Saint, Official.

#### ∾ Denis, Saint

Also known as Saint Dennis; Saint Dionysus; Saint Denys.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Saint Denis (died 258), an early Christian missionary sent from Italy to convert Gaul, became the first bishop of Paris. He antagonized local authorities, Roman and Celtic alike. The Roman governor ordered Denis flogged and roasted. When Denis failed to die, the governor arranged for him to be beheaded on what is now

Monumerure (Mount of the Martyrs) but was then a site associated with druids. (Angered druids may have demanded his head.) After his head was lopped off, Denis stood up, picked up his own head, and carried it six miles to its present burial place, where he finally expired. This miraculous feat impressed onlookers, many of whom instantly converted.

Saint Denis is patron of the possessed. Request his assistance to exorcise unwanted spirits or demons, but he will also help the involuntarily possessed with any facet of their lives, from the mystical to the mundane. Is demonic possession making it difficult to hold down a job or maintain financial stability? Ask Saint Denis to provide needed resources.

Denis is a healer counted among the Fourteen Holy Helpers. His specialties include such disparate ailments as headaches, rabies, and syphilis.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** a bishop carrying his severed head.

**SACRED SITE:** Basilica of Saint Denis near Paris. Denis is buried here, as are virtually all French monarchs beginning with the Merovingian kings of the Franks

**BOTANICAL**: milky agaric (*Agaricus lactiflorus*)—really a mushroom, but classified among botanicals.

FEAST: 9 October.

**OFFERINGS**: French wine; French bread; candles; good works; images of skulls.

SEE ALSO Fourteen Holy Helpers.

## 👡 Difunta Correa

**CLASSIFICATION**: unofficial saint.

*Difunta* means "defunct," as in deceased. When she was alive, this saint was known as Deolinda Correa, a beautiful young woman living in San Juan, Argentina, in the 1840s. A local police chief fell violently and obsessively in love with her, but she loved another. The police chief pursued her incessantly, harassing her family as well. Deolinda married the man she loved and hoped for peace, but her husband and father were soon forcibly conscripted to fight in

Argentina's civil war. Deolinda was left unprotected, vulnerable, and pregnant.

After her son's birth, Deolinda Correa left San Juan. She packed up her newborn son and apparently tried to reach another city via a circuitous route, but got lost instead, dying in the desert of thirst and exposure. It's unclear exactly where she was headed and how she ended up in the desert. Different legends offer differing theories:

- She may have been trying to join her husband.
- She may have been trying to escape her stalker.
- Her angry, rejected, vengeful stalker may have forced her into the desert.
- She may have been forced into the desert by a local mob convinced she had committed sexual transgressions.

Days later, gauchos driving cattle discovered her corpse, still miraculously providing milk to her baby, who had survived. The milk of his dead mother had kept him alive. The men rescued the baby and buried Difunta Correa in nearby Vallecito.

In 1890, Flavio Zevallos was driving his cattle across the desert when a sudden storm spooked and scattered them. He couldn't find them anywhere, but he did find Difunta Correa's grave. He vowed to build her a chapel if she'd help him find his cows. Returning the next morning, he discovered all his cattle grazing peacefully, not one missing. He sold them for a good price and fulfilled his vow.

With the exception of breast-feeding while dead, locating these cattle was Correa's first recorded miracle, thus her earliest devotees were livestock drovers. As they traveled through the country, they testified to her miracles and veneration of Difunta Correa increased. Truck drivers, the next group to adopt her, established roadside shrines along innumerable routes.

When the railroad arrived in 1908, Difunta's official shrine in Vallecito became readily accessible and she shot to fame. Now a giant complex, her shrine is visited by over half a million people annually. Pilgrims walk the thirty-eightmile route from San Juan to Vallecito at night, sometimes barefoot, reproducing Difunta Correa's final journey. (Shorter pilgrimage routes exist as well.) Innumerable roadside shrines and domestic altars are also dedicated to Difunta Correa.

Until 1959, Difunta's veneration was considered Pagan. A local priest then began to work with the shrine in efforts to steer it toward Catholicism. A Roman Catholic Church was constructed on the site in 1966 and dedicated to Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Difunta Correa is now sometimes syncretized to Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

Difunta Correa provides miracles of healing and fertility. She protects travelers in general, but especially those in the desert and traveling in cars and trucks. She provides safe journeys—literally, but metaphorically as well. Difunta Correa helps navigate the highways of love and life. She expects speedy fulfillment of all vows and promises made to her. She severely punishes those who default.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** An infant nurses at his beautiful dead mother's breast.

**SACRED SITE**: The entire town of Vallecito, Argentina, is essentially dedicated to her; there are no fewer than seventeen chapels there.

**FESTIVAL:** Her major pilgrimage coincides with Holy Week; thousands arrive in Vallecito, many crawling on their knees, some slithering on their backs.

**OFFERINGS**: bottles of water; tires; auto parts; pilgrimage to Vallecito. Grateful brides offer her their wedding gowns.

SEE Gaucho, Saint and Glossary: Saint, Unofficial; Syncretism.

## 👡 Dismas, Saint

Also known as Dimas; Dumas; Dysmas.

CLASSIFICATION: Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic saint.

Saint Dismas is the very first Christian saint. Some consider him the only one who can be considered a saint with absolute certainty, as Jesus promised him a place in Paradise. All four official Gospels describe how Jesus was crucified between two other men. Details regarding Saint Dismas derive from the Gospel of Luke. In this account of the Crucifixion, one man complains to Jesus, saying, "If you are the anointed one, why don't you save yourself and us, too?" The other man, Dismas, tells the first to shut up, stating that they deserve punishment but that Jesus is innocent. Jesus promises him that, later that very day, they would be united in Paradise. Jesus' two companions in crucifixion are typically described as thieves, but that's not technically accurate. The original Greek text calls the men *Lestai*, which strictly translates as "brigands," but was also the Greek name for the Zealots, Jewish revolutionaries dedicated to liberating Judea from Rome. The same term is used to describe Barabbas, the sole prisoner released (John 18:40). Had they really been plain rank-and-file thieves, they would have been spared their horrific deaths. Roman law reserved crucifixion as a punishment for very specific crimes: treason, crimes against the state, magic, and sorcery.

Saint Dismas is traditionally the patron of condemned prisoners and those on Death Row, but may also be considered the patron of political prisoners. He is invoked against being condemned to death. He is the patron of undertakers and funeral workers.

Saint Dismas' associations with thievery led to this magical formula water:

Good Thief Water, also known as Saint Dismas Water

- 1. For maximum power, create this potion on Good Friday in the daytime so as to coincide with the Crucifixion. (It can be made at other times, too, but will not be of maximum strength.)
- 2. Pour boiling water over the herb, five-finger grass, also called cinquefoil *(Potentilla simplex)*.
- 3. Allow it to steep for ten minutes, then drain the herbs, reserving the liquid.
- 4. After the liquid cools, sprinkle it over possessions, windows, and thresholds to prevent theft and break-ins.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: art dealers; antiquarians; prisoners, political and otherwise; those unjustly imprisoned; those on Death Row.

ATTRIBUTES: chains; club; cross.

FEAST: 25 March.

SEE ALSO Longinus; Luke, Saint; Simon, Saint.

## ∾ Domenico, Saint

Also known as Domenico di Foliono

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Saint Domenico (died 1031), a Benedictine monk who lived briefly in Cocullo, Italy, is credited with performing many miraculous healings while he was still alive. His specialties included rabies, snake bite, and toothache. When he was scheduled to leave Cocullo, townspeople were distraught: who would heal them now? They asked Domenico for something that would heal their ailments. Domenico gave them one of his molars and a shoe from Giulia, his mule.

- The tooth is now under glass on his altar in his church at Cocullo.
- Miniature replicas of the mule shoe serve as amulets.
- Allegedly, ringing the church bell at Cocullo prevents and heals toothache.

Centuries before Domenico's existence, the goddess Angitia reigned in this region. According to her myth, Angitia was the granddaughter of Circe, the sorceress-goddess famed for her appearance in Homer's *Odyssey*. Like her grandma, Angitia was a skilled practitioner of the magical arts. She was also a snake charmer and snakes, which are endemic to the region, featured prominently in her spiritual rites.

With the advent of Christianity, San Domenico inherited many of Angitia's sacred functions. (She, too, was associated with healing snake bites and rabies.) He also seems to have inherited some of her rituals. Angitia is believed to have presided over an annual spring festival of snake charmers, similar to the one that now honors San Domenico—the Festa dei Serpari (Procession of the Snake Charmers).

Snake catchers (the *serpari*) begin capturing local snakes during the vernal equinox. A standard Mass is held in the church on the day of the festival, but afterward, a votive image of San Domenico is brought outside so that snake charmers can drape it with live snakes. Snakes were once permitted inside the church, but this is now discouraged.

The serpari, carrying the serpent-covered statue, lead a procession through Angitia's old stomping grounds. Roman Catholic priests provide an escort, while costumed young women carry snake-shaped cakes. Live snakes are draped around other serpari, as well as those wishing to demonstrate their devotion to the saint. After the festival, the snakes are set free and encouraged to return to the fields.

Domenico was canonized in 110/ Famed for his ability to control and

neutralize snakes, by extension he is believed able to combat the greatest serpent of them all—Satan. He can exorcise demons, and break curses and magic spells. He is also associated with miracles involving animals—he once persuaded a wolf to return a baby it had snatched from its crib completely unharmed. If threatened by wild life, invoke his aid.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Domenico appears in the guise of a Benedictine abbot.

ATTRIBUTES: tooth; horseshoe; key.

**SACRED SITE**: Sanctuary of San Domenico in Cocullo, in the Abruzzo region of Italy.

**FESTIVAL:** The earliest documented evidence of Domenico's festival dates from 1392. By the 16th century, the festival was held on the first Thursday in May, just as it is today.

**OFFERINGS**: wine; horseshoes; candles; images of snakes; shed snake skins; snake-shaped candles; cakes and bread in the form of coiled snakes; pilgrimage.

SEE ALSO Benedict, Saint; Francis of Assis, Saint; Viridiana, Saint.

## 👡 Donato, Saint

Also known as San Donato di Anletta; Donato of Arezzo; Donatus.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Donato was a fourth-century bishop, possibly originally from Ireland, who aggressively proselytized in Arezzo and throughout Tuscany. He ran afoul of authorities, who forcibly put an end to his proselytizing. One legend suggests that he was beheaded on 7 August 301 at the top of the hill where a cathedral now stands. His head rolled down the hill. Where it stopped, a *pieve* was built. (A *pieve* is a rural church with a baptistery.)

That's a standard version of the legend; however, the saint's history is murky. There are several Saint Donatos and their legends may be conflated. In addition to the fourth century, Donato is said to have lived in the second, fifth, and sixth centuries, and even later. He is rumored to have been a childhood friend of Roman emperor Julian, who attempted to reinstate Paganism. Donato is credited with various miracles accomplished while he lived in Arezzo.

- He resurrected a woman named Euphrosina.
- He restored the vision of a blind woman named Syriana.
- He exorcised demons tormenting the son of the local prefect.
- Most famously, Donato killed a dragon that had poisoned a local well.

San Donato is among the magical saints. His legends may feature historical details from the bishop's life, combined with details deriving from his syncretism to a now-banished Pagan spirit. San Donato is intensely associated with epilepsy. The condition is traditionally considered to be San Donato's method of communication. He "owns" the disease, determining who suffers from it and who doesn't. A mystical way of considering this, especially when onset is sudden, is that epileptic episodes are attempts by Donato to get in touch with the sufferer. Allegedly, once communication is established—once Donato's call is answered, essentially—the ailment will be relieved.

Although he is intensely associated with epilepsy, many of Donato's devotees do not suffer from it. A popular saint, Donato is invoked to heal rabies, paralysis, epilepsy, seizure disorders, and any condition that might be characterized as a "fit." He nullifies the Evil Eye and offers protection from curses and malevolent witchcraft.

It is traditional to serve roast suckling pig seasoned with garlic and rosemary on the feast of Saint Donato.

FAVORED PEOPLE: bakers. Epileptics are Donato's spiritual children.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** San Donato holds a crescent moon or stands atop one; he is portrayed battling a dragon.

ATTRIBUTES: chalice; crescent moon; sword; dragon.

SACRED ANIMAL: frogs.

FEAST: 7 August.

**AMULET:** The image of San Donato is frequently incorporated into Italian amulets. For example, his image is placed atop a crescent moon inscribed with the number 13. (Although thirteen is frequently considered an unlucky number, some believe that wearing the number as an amulet transforms it into a vehicle of good luck and happiness. Thirteen is also the number of months in a lunar year.)

#### SACRED SITES:

- Santa Maria della Pieve, which houses his relics, was first built in the 12th century, probably atop a site once dedicated to the Italian deity Mercury.
- The Church of Santa Maria e Donato on the island of Murano, near Venice, also houses some of his relics. Legend has it that returning Crusaders carried some of Donato's relics to Murano Island, along with the remains of the dragon he had killed.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; iron keys; small containers filled with grain.

## 🔊 Dorothy of Caesarea, Saint

CLASSIFICATION: venerated by most branches of Christianity.

Dorothy, a Christian girl living in what is now Turkey, was martyred in 311. A lawyer in the crowd mocked her, telling Dorothy to send him some fruit and flowers from Heaven. Shortly after her death, in the middle of winter, a mysterious child, now generally believed to be an angel, arrived at the lawyer's house carrying Dorothy's veil. Wrapped inside were three apples and three beautiful, fragrant roses, although roses were completely out of season. The lawyer converted to Christianity (and wound up martyred as well.)

Saint Dorothy is the matron saint of florists, gardeners, brewers, brides, newlyweds, and midwives. Fruit trees are blessed on Dorothy's feast day. In medieval Sweden, she was considered the fifteenth member of the Fourteen Holy Helpers.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Dorothy is traditionally portrayed in a variety of ways:

- As a beautiful young woman crowned with roses and holding a basket of roses.
- As a veiled woman with flowers in her lap.
- She may hold a branch laden with annles

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- Kneeling before an executioner surrounded by stars.
- Dorothy may be portrayed in the company of an angel.
- She may be portrayed in an apple orchard, in the company of the Christ child.

FEAST: 6 February.

ATTRIBUTES: crown of stars; crown of roses.

**OFFERINGS**: flowers; apples; beer or ale; a basket with three apples and three roses.

SEE ALSO Fourteen Holy Helpers.

#### Norothy of Montau

Also known as Dorotea; Dorota; Dorothea.

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

Dorothy (6 February 1347–25 January 1394) was an exceptionally devout child from a very large family in Montau, a village on the Vistula River then under the rule of the Teutonic Knights and now in modern Poland. She began practicing austerities when very young, especially extreme food deprivation, which brought her into conflict with her mother. Dorothy developed nausea at the smell, taste, or touch of food. She consumed so little that she ceased urinating. Dorothy would have gone completely without food had her confessor not intervened.

Dorothy was passionately devoted to the Eucharist. She developed a kind of mystical pregnancy and entered trances frequently. Her life was devoted to her spirituality. At age seventeen, she was married to a wealthy swordsmith in his forties. He complained, probably accurately, that while entranced or in ecstasy, Dorothy disregarded her household duties.

- Dorothy forgot to shop.
- She neglected the cleaning.
- When she cooked, she was so distracted that she forgot to scale fish or clean vegetables.

For ner part, Dorotny wisned to be free of ner nusband, preferring begging to housework. She bore nine children, but only one survived—a daughter who later became a Benedictine nun. (Four of Dorothy's children died at birth; the other four died of the plague.) Her husband was not patient or good-natured, and was reputedly a heavy drinker. Whenever Dorothy spent what he considered too much time in church—which was frequently—he beat her, once so badly that he feared he had killed her. Frightened and repentant, he promised to go on pilgrimage with her if she revived. He kept his vow and they traveled together to Aachen. He accompanied her on other pilgrimages as well.

Dorothy later went on pilgrimage to Rome by herself, begging along the way to fund the trip. By the time she returned, her husband had died. She then became an anchoress, moving into a cell against the wall of the cathedral in what is now the Polish town of Kwidzyn. She gained a reputation as a holy woman. Visitors sought her advice. Her confessor wrote down her visions and revelations.

Dorothy is a miracle worker; her protection is invoked against miscarriage. Although many assume that she is an official saint, she has never been officially canonized. Venerated from the moment of her death, she was beatified on 9 January 1976, but canonization remains pending. She is, however, called Saint Dorothy and is particularly popular in Central Europe. Dorothy's tale, as told by her husband, is incorporated into author Gunter Grass' 1989 novel *The Flounder*.

FAVORED PEOPLE: brides; widows; parents of large families.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Dorothy may be portrayed surrounded by arrows.

ATTRIBUTES: lantern; rosary.

FEASTS: 25 January; 25 June; 30 October.

SEE ALSO Catherine of Siena and Glossary: Anchorite; Saint, Official; Saint, Unofficial.

## 👡 Drogo, Saint

Also known as Dreux, Drugon, Drogone, or Druon.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Saint Drogo's mother died in childbirth, but until he was ten, Drogo (1105–16 April 1186) didn't really know what had happened to her. When he learned how she died, he was devastated, blaming himself. He spent much of his life trying to compensate for or expiate what he perceived as a heinous sin. Orphaned by age eighteen, he disposed of all his property and became a wandering pilgrim, traveling to Rome nine times from his home in Flanders. He worked as a shepherd for six years.

Drogo was allegedly able to bilocate—be in two places at one time. Witnesses placed him at Mass while simultaneously working the fields.

Some sort of physical affliction or skin ailment led to Drogo being considered frighteningly unattractive. People were scared of him and did not wish to see him. He spent the last forty years of his life as a solitary hermit subsisting on only water, barley, and communion wafers passed to him through a little window of his cell. This was his only human contact.

Saint Drogo is the patron saint of coffee. He presides over coffeehouses, their employees, and anyone employed in any aspect of the coffee trade. If you love coffee passionately, he may be your saint. Saint Drogo is also invoked against hangover, mental illness, hernias, headaches, ruptures, gallstones, kidney stones, and kidney diseases. He is petitioned to alleviate depression and heal broken bones.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: orphans; mutes; the deaf; the mentally ill; the ugly or unattractive; the disfigured; those ashamed of their appearance.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Drogo is traditionally portrayed caring for his sheep or in the garb of a pilgrim. He may wear the scallop shell indicating the pilgrimage to Compostela. Modern depictions of Drogo frequently feature him drinking coffee.

FEAST: 16 April.

**OFFERINGS**: What else but a good cup of Joe? Offer him some coffee cake and a candle, too.

SEE ALSO James the Greater, Saint; Omar, Saint.

#### ∾ Duarte, Francisca

Also known as Pancha Duarte; Mama Pancha.

CLASSIFICATION: anima; unofficial saint.

Francisca Duarte was a hardworking midwife devoted to helping poor people in rural Venezuela. She died while trying to reach a woman at night during a brutal storm. Her body was found near a taguapire tree (*Pithecellobium roseum*), so she is commonly known as the Anima of the Taguapire, which literally means the soul of the taguapire. The tree itself may have been sacred prior to its association with Francisca Duarte.

A tomb was built where her body was found. Miracles began almost immediately. Francisca Duarte is an extremely popular folk saint invoked for miracles of healing and to protect children, pregnant women, and women in distress. She serves among the Court of Healers in the spiritual tradition of María Lionza.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: a lovely dark-haired woman wearing a nurse's cap, her hands clasped in prayer.

SACRED DAY: Monday.

SACRED SITE: her shrine in Santa María de Ipire, State of Guárico, Venezuela.

**OFFERINGS**: flowers; rosaries; beer; rum; pilgrimage.

SEE ALSO Anima; María Lionza and Glossary: Saint, Unofficial.

## ∾ Dubois, Emile

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

The man who came to be known as Emile Dubois was born in Étaples, France, on 29 April 1867. His birth name was Louis Amadeo Brihier Lacroix. When he

was sixteen, he immigrated to South America, traveling to Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Colombia. Here he met his wife, Ursula Morales, with whom he had a son. He plied various trades before immigrating to Chile, where he developed a reputation for defrauding the wealthy.

Accused of murder, Dubois was captured, arrested, and placed on trial. The evidence against him was circumstantial, but it was a high-profile case. The prosecutor is described as "relentless." Dubois eventually fired his attorney and assumed his own defense, proclaiming that he denounced the rich and powerful. Dubois was sentenced to death for the murder of Ernesto Lafontaine.

On 25 March 1907, Morales and Dubois married, having spent fourteen years together. The following day at dawn, Dubois bid Morales and their son farewell. Two priests arrived offering last rites, but Dubois rejected them, proclaiming that he would confess only to God, not those claiming to be God's representatives.

He was shackled, allowed to smoke a cigar, and brought before a firing squad. A packed audience awaited his execution, but, before it could be enacted, Dubois suddenly spoke up, announcing that he was innocent and that the police who needed someone to arrest had misrepresented his statements as well as the evidence. Dubois called the judge who had condemned him the true criminal that day.

Emile Dubois refused a blindfold and asked only that the firing squad aim accurately for his heart. Dubois was executed on 26 March 1907 in Valparaíso, Chile. Was he truly guilty or was he framed? Devotees and others still argue this point. After his execution, Dubois began performing miracles from beyond the grave. He responds to all requests, but his specialties include fertility, healing, and the return of loved ones.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Dubois had a prominent mustache; his iconic image vaguely resembles artist Salvador Dalí.

SACRED SITE: his grave in the Cemetario Playa Ancha in Valparaíso.

SEE ALSO Juan Soldado.

#### 🔊 Dwyn, Saint

Also known as Saint Dwynn; Saint Dwynwen.

Dwyn, a fifth-century Welsh princess, was madly in love. She and her beloved had an argument, serious enough to end the relationship. Dwyn cried a river of tears, so many that an angel responded, offering her a potion guaranteed to relieve her heartbreak. Dwyn drank it, but the results weren't what she expected \_\_\_\_\_\_her beloved turned to stone

—her beloved turned to stone.

Dwyn wept even more copiously. The angel, distressed by her grief, offered her three wishes as consolation. Dwyn's wishes were as follows:

- She wanted her true love to become a living, breathing, flesh-and-blood man once again.
- She wished forever to be spared the pangs of love.
- She wished that all true lovers who invoked her name would either receive their hearts' desire or get over their heartbreak quickly.

Her wishes granted, Dwyn retreated to the solitude of Llanddwyn Island, a small tidal island off the coast of Anglesey, North Wales, where she spent the rest of her life living as a hermit. Allegedly invoking her name is sufficient to obtain her blessings.

Dwyn is counted among the well saints. Allegedly, long ago, the faithfulness of a lover could be verified by the eels then living in Dwyn's well. (The well was destroyed in the 19th century.) Women scattered bread crumbs in the well and then gently placed their handkerchiefs over them.

- If the eels disturbed the handkerchief, their lovers would be true.
- If the eels did not, they should be suspicious.

Dwyn is a particularly compassionate and non-judgmental saint. She is willing to help true lovers, even if their love is scandalous or forbidden. It has been said of Dwyn that she "will not hinder adultery." Dwyn is also the matron saint of ailing animals.

#### FAVORED PEOPLE: true lovers.

SACRED SITE: Llanddwyn is now part of the Welsh National Nature Reserve. The name means "Church of Dwyn." Her shrine at Llanddwyn Island was the most popular pilgrimage in its general area during the Tudor era. A substantial chapel was built over the original chapel in the 16th century. The ruins are still visible.

FEAST: 25 January.

**OFFERINGS**: gifts on behalf of ailing animals or donations to organizations that assist animals in need.

**SEE ALSO** Well Saints.

#### 👡 Dymphna, Saint

Also known as Dympna; Dimpna.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Dymphna, described as a Celtic princess, may have been from Britain, Brittany, or Ireland. All three locations claim her. When her mother died, Dymphna's father, a seventh-century chieftain, searched for a suitable second wife, someone as lovely as his first. No one suited him, until he realized that his teenage daughter bore a remarkable resemblance to her mother. Dymphna fled from his embrace.

Dymphna's tale is thematically similar to fairy-tales like the French "Donkeyskin" (Peau D'Ane) and the Scottish "The King Who Wished to Marry His Daughter." Are these fairy-tales based on memories of Dymphna, or was the story of Dymphna originally a pre-Christian Celtic tale?

In the oldest known versions of Dymphna's tale, her father rapes her, causing her flight. When Dymphna became an officially endorsed saint, however, great emphasis was placed upon her piety and chastity, so she is described as fleeing before the rape can be accomplished. In the sanitized version, her father is identified as the sole Pagan in the family.

Dymphna fled to Belgium with her old confessor, the future Saint Gerebernus. Her father pursued and eventually found them. He killed Gerebernus and begged Dymphna to return with him and be his bride. She refused and he beheaded her. Dymphna and Gerebernus were buried in Gheel, Belgium near Antwerp.

Dymphna first emerged as a saint in the 13th century when relics of a man and woman were found in Gheel. The inscription on one box read "Dymphna." Miraculous healings of the mentally ill and epileptics were soon associated with these relics. Gheel remains the site of a large mental-health institution.

Saint Dymphna is invoked against sleepwalking and involuntary demonic

possession. She banishes demons and heals all varieties of mental illness and seizure disorders.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: incest survivors; victims of sexual abuse and rape; run-aways; mental-health caregivers; mental-health professionals; the mentally ill; those who suffer from nervous or neurological disorders; somnambulists.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: She is portrayed as a pretty young woman being beheaded by a king, or as a serene, crowned princess.

**ATTRIBUTES**: lamp; book; downward-pointing sword.

SACRED DAY: Monday.

FEAST: 15 May.

SACRED SITE: Saint Dymphna Church in Gheel, Belgium.

**OFFERINGS**: white, blue, or silver candles; white skull-shaped candles; head-shaped milagros; pilgrimage.

## E

#### ∼ Eleftherios, Saint

CLASSIFICATION: Orthodox saint.

Eleftherios was born in second-century Greece. His father, a Pagan Roman, died while Eleftherios was still a child, leaving him alone with his mother, Anthia, who was a devout Christian. When Eleftherios was twelve, mother and son moved to Rome, where they became deeply involved with the local Christian community.

Eleftherios was a prodigy, a deacon at age fifteen and a bishop by age twenty. An aggressive missionary, he was eventually arrested, tortured with a heated copper bed and boiling oil, and finally beheaded. His mother, forced to witness his execution, ran to cradle his body in her arms and was promptly beheaded as well. They are now venerated together, sharing a feast day.

Saint Eleftherios is renowned for bestowing easy, safe childbirth. *Eleftheria* means "delivery." Some theorize that behind the male mask of Saint Eleftherios lies the ancient face of the Greek childbirth goddess, Eileithyia.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Icons of Saint Eleftherios depict the saint in clerical robes decorated with crosses.

SACRED SITE: Saint Eleftherios Greek Orthodox Church in New York City.

FEAST: 15 December.

SEE ALSO Glossary: Icon; Syncretism.

## ∼ Elen of the Roads

Also known as Elen of the Ways; Elen of the Hosts; Elen of the Legions; Saint Elen Luyddog; Saint Helen Luyddog; Elen Lluyddog; Saint Helen of Caernarfon.

CLASSIFICATION: Celtic saint; Roman Catholic Saint.

Saint Elen was married to the Roman general Magnus Maximus (c. 355–28 August 388). In 383, Magnus, having been proclaimed emperor by his troops, challenged and killed the reigning Western emperor, Gratian. Maximus ruled Britain, Gaul, Spain, and Roman Africa until his execution for treason, as ordered by Roman emperor Theodosius.

Little, if any, documented history of Elen exists, although it is recorded that, during his invasion of Gaul, Magnus was accompanied by his wife and children. Following his execution, his son was also killed, while a daughter was spared. Elen's fate is unknown, but legends suggest that she took refuge with Martin of Tours.

Welsh legends describe Elen as an indigenous British princess. Her father may have been a chieftain from North Wales or she may have been the daughter of a Roman emperor and a Celtic woman. An alternative legend suggests that Elen is among the many children of the Celtic saint Coel Hen, also known as Coel Godebog, but perhaps best known as Old King Cole of Mother Goose fame.

Magnus and Elen married in Britain. They had seven children, five of whom are recognized as Celtic saints. Elen is said to have introduced the Celtic form of monasticism from Gaul into Wales. She is also said to have encouraged her husband to build roads across Wales so that their armies could travel with greater ease and speed. Maximus assented, charging local men with the backbreaking work of road construction. The men cooperated because Elen had requested the roads—they built them for her, their native-born princess and true ruler. This legend ostensibly accounts for the variations on her name: Elen of the Roads, Hosts, or Legions.

In fact, many roads in Wales are named after Elen and sacred wells, too. There is only one problem with this story—the roads associated with Elen predate this historical woman by centuries. Although there may indeed have been a fourth-century woman married to Magnus Maximus, she was not the one responsible for building these roads.

If this woman's name were Elen or Helen, as she is also often called, she may have been named in honor of Saint Helena, mother of Roman emperor Constantine. Saint Helena is sometimes described as being of British heritage and these two Saint Helens are sometimes confused with each other.

However, Elen, wife of Magnus Maximus, may also have been named after another Elen, an elusive and enigmatic goddess of sovereignty and Queen of the British Isles. This primordial deer goddess is associated with roads, crossroads, byways, springs, wells, waterfalls, ley lines, forests, and sacred groves. Scholars suggest that she was worshipped as early as the Paleolithic era. Although now most closely associated with Wales, Elen's sacred territory extended over the entire Isle of Albion, an ancient name for Great Britain, and possibly beyond. Some identify her with the goddess Nehalennia, whose shrine in the Netherlands was frequented by travelers, including many British merchants.

The historical wife of Magnus Maximus and the prehistoric goddess may merge in the *Dream of Maxen Wledig*, a medieval Welsh tale translated into English by Lady Charlotte Guest and published in 1849 as part of the *Mabinogion*, a collection of Welsh texts. In this tale, Maxen Wledig, the Roman emperor of Britain who is clearly based on Maximus Magnus, goes hunting one day. By mid-day, overcome by the heat, he lies down to take a nap, during which he experiences an amazing visionary dream.

In Maxen's dream, he arrives at the world's highest mountain. Having crossed it, he comes to the world's largest river. Approaching it, he beholds a great city and a beautiful castle. Entering the castle, he views more sights, until finally he arrives at the most beautiful sight of all: a richly dressed, bejeweled princess. To lay eyes on this princess, as Maxen describes her when he wakes, is similar to looking directly at the sun—her beauty shines so vividly. In his dream, Maxen throws his arms around the beautiful maiden and sits beside her on her throne and then he wakes up!

He describes the dream to his advisors, but remains haunted by it. He becomes obsessed with the beautiful woman of his dreams to the detriment of his health and his nation. His advisors decide to reproduce the journey of his dreams in an attempt to find Maxen's dream woman. In fact, they do, but when they approach the woman on behalf of Maxen, she says that, if Maxen wants her, he can come to her himself.

Maxen makes the journey and locates Elen, as the beautiful lady is identified. They marry and, as part of her bride-price, she asks Maxen to build her three strongholds, as well as roads connecting them.

The medieval Welsh manuscripts that comprise the *Mabinogion* were originally written down by Christian redactors and based on earlier oral traditions. In general, as with similar manuscripts from elsewhere, the scribes loved the stories and wished to preserve them, but were ambivalent about their Pagan content. It is typical of these Welsh manuscripts to depict pre-Christian deities as "royalty." Although Elen is described as an elegant and wealthy noblewoman, supernatural elements in the tale obliquely reveal her true identity. Other examples of these hidden deities include the Welsh goddess Rhiannon and her husband, Manawydan, who is portrayed as a royal master magician, but who is clearly identical to the Irish god of the sea, Manannan Mac Lir. Likewise, Manawydan's father, Llyr, is portrayed as a mortal king, while his Irish counterpart, Lir, is king of the sea.

*Elaine, the Grail King's daughter in the Arthurian mythos, may also refer to Elen.* 

Because of her association with roads, Elen is sometimes described as the British Saint Christopher and is considered the guardian of British travelers. Elen is widely considered a minor saint lacking the renown of the stars of the saintly pantheon like Christopher or Brigid. Yet she is a great goddess, the goddess of sovereignty of the entire British Isles. Her dominion is far greater than just traffic safety.

Elen serves different constituencies and evokes powerful emotions. Some Christian devotees deny the possibility that she is the survival of an ancient goddess, insisting that the fourth-century princess is the original and only Elen. Some modern Pagan devotees perceive Elen's role as a Christian saint as falsehood and subterfuge. Pagan veneration of Elen is currently undergoing a revival. The details that follow reflect both Christian and Pagan traditions.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: travelers, especially British travelers and travelers in Britain; orphans; geomancers; dowsers.

**MANIFESTATION**: In the *Dream of Maxen*, Elen wears fine robes and jewels. The ancient goddess is described as an antlered lady of the woods. In her most ancient manifestations, she may have been a tree goddess, in the manner of the Eastern goddesses Artemis and Asherah.

ATTRIBUTES: fly agaric (Amanita muscaria); basket of apples; antlers.

sacred trees: elder; elm; linden; apple.

SACRED ANIMALS: deer; reindeer; hounds, especially greyhounds and elkhounds.

FEAST: 22 May, according to the Roman Catholic calendar of saints.

#### SACRED SITES:

- Numerous Welsh roads and wells are named in Elen's honor.
- London may once have been her sacred territory, and some theorize that the name of the city may derive from her name.
- Salisbury Plain, on which Stonehenge stands, was once known as Ellendune.

SEE ALSO Boudica; Brigid, Saint; Christopher, Saint; Martin of Tours, Saint; Well Saints and Glossary: Syncretism.

## 👡 Elian, Saint

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

There is little historical evidence regarding Welsh Saint Elian, but he was venerated immediately following his death in the sixth century. He is a well saint —a saint whose fame derives from his associations with a healing well now located in the Church of Elian in Llanelian, Caernarvonshire in Wales. Allegedly, the well miraculously appeared one day when the saint was very thirsty. The water from the well is reputed to heal illnesses in conjunction with petitions to the saint, but that's not what it's famous for.

In the 19th century, vowing to visit Saint Elian's well was a threat; his well is a cursing well. The saint was invoked to cause sudden death or grave misfortune to those who offended the petitioner. The petitioner wrote the name of his target on a small piece of paper and pushed a crooked pin through it. Then the wellkeeper copied the name onto a pebble or piece of lead and dropped it into the well. A well-keeper was arrested in 1854 and the well was drained and eventually hidden by the clergy to discourage such practices.

Was the power in the well or was the power in Saint Elian? Saint Elian is invoked, without having to visit the well, to recover stolen good and identify thieves.

FEAST: 13 January.

**SEE ALSO** Well Saints.

## ∾ Eligius, Saint

Also known as Saint Eloi; Saint Eloy.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Eligius (c. 588–1 December 660) was an extraordinary artist from Limoges, France. Apprenticed to the master of the mint, he became a brilliant goldsmith and metal worker, attracting royal attention. King Clotaire II commissioned Eligius to craft a golden, jewel-encrusted throne for him.

Eligius eventually became Master of the Mint and a trusted advisor to the Merovingian kings. He was chief counselor to King Dagobert I. Eligius is considered a powerful magician and miracle worker. In approximately 610, a stallion was brought to the forge to be shod. The horse kicked furiously and everyone ran except Eligius. He calmly cut off the horse's leg, placing it on his anvil. He first replaced the shoe, then reattached the leg so the horse was as good as new.

In his fifties, Eligius resigned his political appointments to become a priest, founding convents and monasteries with his own personal fortune. He devoted his time to redeeming slaves and arranged with the crown to be permitted to provide decent burials for executed criminals who otherwise were just left to decay and decompose. He crafted many beautiful reliquaries, displayed clairvoyant skills, and discovered the hidden graves of saints. His prophesies include foretelling the date of his own death by high fever.

Saint Eligius is invoked to protect horses from illness. A number of churches possess hammer-shaped reliquaries dedicated to him. These were pressed against horses' foreheads during religious processions to guard them from disease. Eligius is also invoked against fires, floods, and ulcers.

*Eligius is the patron saint of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME), a British army corps.* 

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: Eligius is the patron saint of all who work with hammers. He is also the patron of cab drivers, coin collectors, clock makers, garage

employees, jockeys, horses, miners, minters, counterfeiters, veterinarians, knife makers, jewelers, smiths, metal workers, goldsmiths, gilders, locksmiths, saddlers, and gas station workers.

**MANIFESTATION:** He was described as a tall, handsome man with an angelic face and curly locks. He dressed in the most luxurious of fabrics and was adorned with gold and other precious metals—but beneath the sumptuous outfit, Eligius wore a hair shirt.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Eligius is portrayed in lush clerical garb or as a blacksmith or farrier with apron and hammer.

ATTRIBUTES: anvil; hammer.

COLOR: red.

FEAST: 1 December.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; French wine and brandy; offerings on behalf of horses.

SEE ALSO Bathild, Saint; Quentin, Saint.

## ∾ Elijah the Prophet

Also known as Eliyahu Ha Navi (Hebrew).

CLASSIFICATION: Jewish saint.

According to the Bible's Book of Kings, Elijah is the fiery prophet who opposed Ahab and Jezebel. He engaged in a magical duel with the prophets of Ba'al. He won, but was then forced to hide in a cave to escape the vengeance of Jezebel. Crows brought him food, enabling him to survive. He is a worker of incredible miracles.

Elijah is among several biblical personages believed never to have died, but to have ascended to Heaven while still alive. A fiery chariot transported Elijah to Heaven, where he transformed into the great angel Sandalphon. Elijah *is* Sandalphon, but he retains his old identity as well, in Heaven and on earth. He sometimes serves as a psychopomp, escorting souls to the next realm, especially

souls of Kabbalists. Elijah stands at the crossroads in Paradise guiding new souls to their correct destination.

Simultaneously, Elijah walks the earth and continues to work miracles. He is the primary culture hero of Jewish folklore. Folktales regarding Elijah fill volumes. Elijah redeems slaves, cares for the poor and needy, and performs miracles of healing and rescue. He is especially associated with miracles of fertility; his help is invoked by the barren. Elijah protects against the demon goddess Lilith, although there is also a subversive legend suggesting that she seduced him and bore his child.

Elijah visits students of Kabbalah to study with them and reveal esoteric secrets. Receiving visions of Elijah or hearing the sound of his voice are considered special signs of grace. Although he helps the poor and needy incognito, he openly reveals his identity to mystics. Reputedly, Elijah will announce the arrival of the Messiah. One legend suggests that he hides, invisible, on Mount Carmel, awaiting Judgment Day.

Tradition has it that, if you have been blessed with the sight or sound of Elijah, you must keep it secret.

The fiery prophet is estimated to have lived in the ninth century bce. He blesses and protects children, restores marital peace, and stimulates barren women to conceive.

**MANIFESTATION**: Be careful: Elijah's manifestations tend to be very humble or even disreputable. Make sure to be polite to all ragged beggars; any one of them may really be the Prophet Elijah. He resembles an old rambler, hobo, or homeless man. He may also appear in the guise of a magician—a sleight-of-hand carnival magician, not a magus. His true identity is revealed by the genuine miracles he performs. Part of this subterfuge is disguise and discretion, but part is a test to determine who will behave with grace and generosity toward even the humblest members of society.

Elijah makes more formal appearances, visible or invisible, at each and every Passover Seder. He is greeted at the door as part of official ritual; a glass of wine is reserved for him. He also attends every Jewish ritual circumcision ceremony (*brit milah*), where an empty chair of honor is reserved for him.

SACRED ANIMAL: Crows serve as his messengers.

**SACRED SITE:** The Cave of Elijah, or Elijah's Grotto on Mount Carmel, near Haifa, Israel, is believed to possess curative properties, especially for mental illness. Visiting is also believed to enhance personal fertility and increase the chances of conceiving a son, an important consideration for some.

**FEAST:** The tenth day of the Hebrew lunar month Av, corresponding to the zodiac sign Leo, is the day Elijah is said to have ascended to Heaven.

**OFFERINGS**: Mount Carmel wine; good deeds and charitable donations in his honor.

SEE ALSO Elijah, Saint; Moses; John the Baptist; Serah bat Asher; Simon bar Yohai; Wazana, Rabbi Abraham.

# 👡 Elijah, Saint

Also known as Elias; Ilya; Ilyas.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated by most branches of Christianity.

The prophet Elijah was elevated to Christian sainthood in the fourth century. He is considered the second forerunner of Christ. Icons of Elijah generally depict him in the act of ascending to Heaven in his fiery chariot. Without knowing the story, if you just look at the picture, you see a dynamic, imposing, bearded man flying through the sky in a flaming chariot drawn by fiery horses. He resembles a Pagan sun god. For this reason, and perhaps because Elijah also was not a Christian, several Pagan deities are believed to hide beneath his mask.

- In Greece, Helios lurks behind the mask of Saint Elias. Elias even sounds like Helios. Mountaintop shrines once associated with Helios were rededicated to Saint Elias.
- In Russia, thunder spirit Perun lurks beneath the mask. His two Russian feast days, 20 and 30 July, are called the Thunder Days. Rain falling on those days is believed to have tremendous magical and therapeutic powers. Bottle it, refrigerate it, and save it for an emergency—the proverbial rainy day. Saint Elijah the Prophet Water, as this potion is known, is believed to protect against the Evil Eye, malevolent magic, and disease.

Saint Elijah has power over drought and rain. Because of his ascension to Heaven, Elijah is the patron saint of airplane pilots. It is traditional to bless cars and other vehicles of transportation on his feast day.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: He is envisioned as an older, bearded man dressed in a prophet's robes. Icons depict him ascending in the fiery chariot drawn by fiery horses.

ATTRIBUTES: torch; book or scroll.

SPIRITUAL ALLY: Saint Elijah may be venerated with Our Lady of Carmel.

FEASTS: 20 July; 30 July.

**SEE ALSO** *Blaise, Saint; Elijah the Prophet; John the Baptist* and Glossary: *Syncretism.* 

# ∞ Elizabeth of Hungary

Also known as Szent Erzsébet; Saint Elisabeth; Saint Isabel.

CLASSIFICATION: Anglican and Roman Catholic saint.

Saint Elizabeth of Hungary (7 July 1207–17 November 1231), daughter of Hungarian king Andrew II, was born in Bratislava. Betrothed to Louis IV, Duke of Thuringia, in what is now modern Germany, she was sent to live in the Thuringian court at age four, although they were not married until she was fourteen.

Franciscans arrived at the Thuringian court shortly afterward, strongly influencing Elizabeth. Francis of Assisi became her spiritual ideal. She wished to live a life of poverty and service. Unhappy at the court of Thuringia, Elizabeth stopped eating food from her husband's table for fear that it had been acquired immorally, disguising her acute fasting by crumbling her food so that it looked eaten. She spent her dowry acquiring what she perceived as untainted food for herself and her servants.

Elizabeth of Hungary's spirituality was intensely associated with food, both her own extreme fasting and her compulsive need to distribute food to others. Her husband's family appears unsympathetic for discouraging her from distributing food to the poor, but their objection was that she did it compulsively. The most famous legend involves her husband's demand to see what was hidden in her apron. When she reluctantly opened it, the bread she was hiding had magically transformed into beautiful, fragrant roses.

Elizabeth built a hospital, tending the sick herself. She once brought a leper home to the castle and let him sleep in her husband's bed. Around this time, Elizabeth came under the influence of the German Inquisitor and witch hunter, Konrad of Marburg, fresh from the Albigensian Crusades. He became her advisor and confessor, imposing severe sanctions that reputedly included beatings and separation from her three children.

In 1227, her husband, off fighting in the Crusades, died of plague. After his death, Elizabeth sold or gave away everything she owned, donating it to the poor and the Church. She made solemn vows of obedience to Konrad, similar to those of a nun. He treated her very harshly, holding her to what are described as virtually impossible standards. He is sometimes blamed for her death at age twenty-four, although her exceptionally extreme fasting may also have played a part. Elizabeth made a vow of celibacy to Konrad that became problematic, as her family wished to make another politically strategic marriage for her. Elizabeth refused all offers of marriage. When her husband's brother drove her from Thuringia, she sought refuge in Marburg, where she died and is buried.

Following her death, healing oil began to ooze from her body. Miracles of healing occurred at her gravesite. She was canonized in 1234. Until the Protestant Reformation, she was among the most popular and beloved saints of Central Europe. Elizabeth of Hungary is considered an exceptionally compassionate and loving saint, and may be invoked for any sort of assistance ot healing.

**FAVORED PEOPLE:** Elizabeth is the special protector of dying children, exiles, the homeless, bakers, widows, lace makers, doctors and nurses, brides, and the falsely accused.

#### **ICONOGRAPHY:**

- A beautiful crowned young woman revealing the roses hidden in her apron.
- A beautiful crowned young woman holding a basket of bread.

#### ATTRIBUTES: crown; roses.

#### SACRED SITES:

• The Elisabeth Church in Marburg, Germany, built over her grave by order of the Toutonic Knights

ше тешонис книдикь.

• The Convent of Saint Elizabeth in Vienna, where her relics are displayed, including her skull wearing the gold crown she wore in life.

FEASTS: 17 November. In Hungary, Saint Elizabeth is also associated with Whitsun festivities.

BOTANICALS: roses; Whitsun roses (peonies).

**OFFERINGS**: candles; roses; good deeds on behalf of the poor, starving, and ailing.

SEE ALSO Damien, Saint; Isabel, Saint.

#### 👡 Elmo, Saint

Also known as Saint Erasmus; Saint Erasmo.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated by most branches of Christianity.

Several early Christian martyrs bear the name Erasmus, including a bishop and a hermit who lived in the mountains of Lebanon. Over the centuries, their legends have merged and it is difficult to determine which, if any of them, is the famous saint who is now counted among the Fourteen Holy Helpers. Elmo is the popular name for Erasmus.

It is generally accepted that Saint Elmo died during persecutions of Christians in 303 in what is now modern Croatia. He suffered various tortures first. He was thrown into a pit of poisonous vipers, cooked in a vat of boiling oil, and beaten with lead mauls until his veins burst. Angels protected Elmo. Lightning struck his persecutors, killing them all, leaving only Elmo unscathed. Further tortures ensued. Elmo finally died when his stomach was cut open and his intestines were wrapped around a windlass, an apparatus intended for lifting heavy weights, sometimes used on boats to raise the anchor.

His having withstood the lightning may be what led to Elmo's associations with what is now known as Saint Elmo's Fire or Saint Elmo's Light— mysterious globular or flame-shaped lights sometimes visible over the mastheads of ships at sea. Scientifically speaking, Saint Elmo's Fire is an atmospheric discharge of built-up static electricity that occurs during stormy

weather, but for millennia and continuing today, this eerie display of light was considered a mode of spiritual communication, indicating either a blessing or a warning.

Christian sailors in the Mediterranean perceived the lights to be the actual presence of Elmo, their patron saint, arriving to offer reassurance and protection. In pre-Christian days, however, these mysterious lights were associated with the Greek twin deities Castor and Pollux and their sister, Helen of Troy.

- If two lights were visible, then the twins were present and safety was assured.
- A single light indicated the presence of Helen, the face that launched—and sank—a thousand ships. Disaster was believed imminent.

Elmo is venerated on land as on sea. He is considered a great healer whose specialties include colic, cramps, women's labor pains, and intestinal problems. His patronage of women's labor pains is unusual because of the traditional Christian belief that painful childbirth was Eve's punishment passed down to future generations of women for Original Sin.

FAVORED PEOPLE: sailors; mariners; travelers on the sea.

ATTRIBUTE: windlass.

FEAST: 2 June.

**SACRED SITE:** Cathedral of Saint Erasmo in Gaeta, Italy, where his relics are housed.

**OFFERINGS**: gifts on behalf of mariners in need, such as the Seamen's Fund; candles; incense; charitable donations.

SEE ALSO Cosmos and Damian; Fourteen Holy Helpers; Helena, Saint.

👡 Elvis

**EPITHET:** The King.

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

Travel virtually anywhere in the world and you will discover that, wherever you go, people will recognize the name Elvis. They will know who he is; no last name is required. The King, as he was known, is instantly identifiable, even decades after his death. Elvis Presley (8 January 1935–16 August 1977) was an amazingly popular American singer—as he remains. Even those unfamiliar with his music or his biography recognize his name and image. Hailed as an icon, Elvis is a now folk saint as well.

Although his emergence as a saint occurred after his death, new legends now suggest that Elvis was always destined for sainthood. A frequently circulated story describes a mysterious blue light that was witnessed over the building where Elvis was born during his birth. Miracles of healing are attributed to him, sometimes by people who actively sought his intervention, but often occurring spontaneously in response to his image and recordings.

**MANIFESTATIONS:** As readers of tabloids can attest, Elvis sightings occur frequently. One such sighting is dramatized in director Jim Jarmusch's 1989 movie, *Mystery Train*.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Elvis was photographed *endlessly;* virtually all phases of his life are documented. Elvis is now also frequently portrayed in the guise of a winged angel, usually in his white Las Vegas—era costume. He is also a frequent subject of Mexican Day of the Dead altars and art, where his images are often simply labeled El Rey (the King)—no name needed at all.

**FESTIVALS:** An annual Elvis Week is held every August in Memphis, Tennessee; tens of thousands gather annually on 16 August for a torchlight procession through Graceland.

**FEAST:** 16 August, the anniversary of his death; however, many devotees also celebrate Elvis on his birthday.

SACRED SITES:

- his estate in Memphis, Graceland—especially the Meditation Gardens where Elvis, his parents, and his paternal grandmother are buried
- Sun Studios, also in Memphis, where his earliest recordings were made.

**OFFERINGS:** flowers; teddy bears; pilgrimage.

SEE ALSO Gardel, Carlos; Gilda and Glossary: Saint, Unofficial.

## 👡 Emerentiana, Saint

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Emerentiana's mother served as the wet nurse and nanny for the wealthy patrician Saint Agnes. Although Emerentiana came from a lower social class than Agnes did, they were suckled at the same breasts and are thus considered "milk-sisters"—similar to foster sisters. Emerentiana loved Agnes; it's unclear exactly how close they were in age, but presumably Emerentiana was of similar age to Agnes, thus also very young when she died.

Four days after Agnes' martyrdom, Emerentiana was discovered praying at her grave. A crowd mocked her and Emerentiana, grieving and angry, publicly announced that she too was a Christian. The crowd stoned her to death on the spot. She was buried nearby. Her feast day now follows immediately after that of Agnes. Friends in life, they may be venerated together on an altar. Saint Emerentiana is invoked to heal stomach disorders and digestive ailments.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Emerentiana is depicted as a young girl with lilies in her hand and stones in her lap, or in the process of being stoned.

ATTRIBUTE: stones.

FEAST: 23 January.

SACRED SITE: her tomb in Rome's Church of Saint Agnes Outside the Wall.

SEE ALSO Agnes, Saint.

#### 👡 Encausse, Gérard

Also known as Papus.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Gnostic saint.

Gérard Encausse, physician, occultist, and hypnotist, was born on 13 July 1865. The author of several works, including *Tarot of the Bohemians* and *Astrology for Initiates*, his *nom de plume*, Papus, means "physician." Encausse, who had a Spanish mother and a French father, was born in Spain but moved to Paris at age four.

In addition to medicine, Encausse studied Kabbalah, mysticism, and the magical arts. He received a Doctor of Medicine degree from the University of Paris in 1894 and opened a clinic. Encausse was active in various mystical, spiritual societies. He joined the French Theosophical Society shortly after it was founded, but soon left because he disliked its emphasis on Eastern spiritual traditions.

In 1886, Encausse founded the modern Martinist Order, a mystical Christian esoteric society. The original Martinist Order was founded in France in approximately 1740. The name Martinist refers both to this original society and to the form reorganized by Papus and others in the 19th century. The Martinists are named after French mystical philosopher and Rosicrucian Louis Claude de Saint-Martin (1743–1803), *not* Martin of Tours.

In 1888, Encausse cofounded the Kabbalistic Order of the Rose-Croix. He was also a member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and the Hermetic Brotherhood of Light. In 1893, he was consecrated a bishop of the Gnostic Church of France, founded in an attempt to revive Catharism. He also assisted in the formation of the O.T.O. Gnostic Catholic Church.

Encausse visited Russia in 1901, 1905, and 1906, serving as both physician and occult counselor to Tsar Nicholas and Tsarina Alexandra. Acting as a medium, Encausse allegedly summoned the spirit of Nicholas' father, Tsar Alexander II, who warned Nicholas that he would meet his doom at the hands of revolutionaries. Encausse allegedly told Nicholas that, as long as he (Encausse) was alive, he could magically ensure that this decree would be averted. In fact, Nicholas lost his throne 141 days after the death of Encausse.

Encausse joined the French military at the start of World War I, serving as a physician. He contracted tuberculosis and died, age fifty-one, on 25 October 1916. He is classified among the Gnostic saints.

SEE ALSO Gnostic Saints; Martin of Tours; Rasputin.

#### 👡 Engrácia, Saint

Also known as Engrazia, Engratia.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Born in Braga, now part of modern Portugal, Saint Engrácia was martyred with eighteen companions in 303. She is counted among the Martyrs of Zaragoza. Engracia, a young woman from an elegant family, was engaged to marry a nobleman living in the Pyrenees. She traveled to her wedding with an entourage that included her uncle, sixteen knights, and a female chaperon and servant named Julia.

When the party reached Zaragoza, now in modern Spain, they discovered that Christians were being persecuted. Engrácia and the others protested to the authorities, only to discover themselves subject to persecution as well. Engrácia was brutally whipped and then imprisoned. Her entire party was sentenced to beheading, but Engrácia died of her wounds before her sentence could be carried out. Engrácia's wedding party comprises only a part of the Martyrs of the Zaragoza. Others were killed, too. Hymns were soon composed honoring the martyrs. Their fame and renown spread. Although all are considered saints, Engracia, the young, beautiful bride, received the greatest veneration. Saint Engrácia protects against the Evil Eye and banishes it.

FAVORED PEOPLE: young women; brides; victims of torture.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: She is envisioned as a richly dressed young lady, although classical painters often preferred to portray her being tortured in various states of undress.

SACRED SITES:

- The Basilica of Saint Engrácia in Zaragoza, Spain, is built over the spot where the saint and her companions died.
- The Church of Saint Engrácia in Lisbon was initially sponsored by a 16thcentury Portuguese princess. It has since been rebuilt and, in the 20th century, was converted into Portugal's National Pantheon.

FEASTS: 16 April; 3 November.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; flowers; the wedding gifts she never received in life.

## 👡 Ephraim Ankawa, Rabbi

Also known as the Rabb or Rab (The Master); numerous transliterations of his name include Al Anquava; Anqawa; Al-Naqawa; Ankoa; Ankava; Alnucawi.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Jewish saint.

Ephraim ben Israel Ankawa, author, physician, rabbi, master Kabbalist, miracle worker, and saint, arrived in Marrakesh, Morocco, in 1391, having escaped from Toledo, Spain, where his parents had been burned at the stake for being Jews. He sojourned in Marrakesh for a few years before heading east. His arrival in Tlemçen, Algeria was dramatic—riding on a lion and using a huge snake for reins.

According to legend, when Rabbi Ephraim arrived in Tlemçen, he was tired and thirsty from traveling but lacked water. Seeing a gigantic rock near the city gates, he touched it with the palm of his hand. Water gushed forth, just as it had for Moses in the desert. Rabbi Ephraim is credited with miraculously producing these springs, now known as the Spring of the Rabb, but the name Tlemçen derives from the Berber Tilmisane, meaning "springs." So if this particular spring did not predate Ephraim, others in the area did.

Awed by the man riding a lion with a snake, the people of Tlemçen very respectfully offered their hospitality. Rabbi Ephraim Ankawa installed himself in a ruined house in a street later called the Street of the Rabb, where he devoted himself to his spiritual and mystical studies. He served as a healer and is credited with various miraculous cures.

The beloved only daughter of Sultan Abu Tachefin (reigned 1389–1393) was severely ill with an ailment that resisted all cures. Rabbi Ephraim's arrival on a lion had caused a stir, so someone suggested to the sultan that Ephraim be consulted. Within days, she was completely cured. Her overjoyed father offered a reward. Rabbi Ephraim refused gifts of gold and silver, responding that the reward belonged solely to God. He asked only for permission to build a small synagogue. The local Jewish community would cover the costs; all he sought was permission, which was granted. That small synagogue was eventually replaced by the great Synagogue of the Rabb, named in his honor. Rabbi Ephraim is invoked for virtually everything, but especially for healing, fertility, and finding spouses.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Rabbi Ephraim is portrayed riding a lion and using a snake for

reins.

SACRED SITES: Although there are very few, if any, Jews remaining in Algeria, annual pilgrimages to sites associated with Rabbi Ephraim have occurred in recent years. Sites include:

- His grave in Tlemçen, near Algeria's northwestern border with Morocco
- The 15th-century grotto, the Spring of the Rabb, believed to have miraculous healing properties. It was traditional to drink water from the spring blended with an alcoholic beverage—particularly absinthe, anisette, or arak—as a method of ensuring a vow to the saint.
- The Synagogue of the Rabb was restored in 1875 and again in 1890, but is now reputedly a martial arts center.
- The Synagogue of Tlemcen in Paris, founded in 1972 by Algerian Jewish *émigrés*, offers a replication of the traditional pilgrimage.

SACRED DATE: Various years are given for the Raab's death, including 1422, 1442, and 1495. Rabbi Ephraim communicated to a devotee in a dream that he had died on the first day of the Hebrew lunar month Kislev (usually corresponding to the zodiac sign Sagittarius). His tomb was erected on the sixth day of the month of Tishri (usually corresponding to Libra). Both dates are considered feasts. Devotees also traditionally visit his shrine on the Jewish holiday of Lag B'Omer, corresponding to the eighteenth day of the month of Iyar.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; charitable donations and good deeds in his honor; pilgrimage.

SEE ALSO Well Saints and Appendix I: Calendars.

# 👡 Erkembode, Saint

EPITHET: The Messenger.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Erkembode (died 742), a Benedictine monk from Ireland, became bishop of Thérouanne, now in northern France—a huge diocese that stretched from Ypres (now modern Belgium) to the Somme River Valley Erkembode walked constantly, searching for land to buy for the poor. That constant walking took its toll; by the time he died, he was crippled and virtually paralyzed.

Saint Erkembode is the patron of children who have difficulty walking. His assistance is requested for them. Children's shoes are left at his grave as part of the petition process or as testimonial to miracles received. He is also invoked against depression and to heal ailments involving bones.

SACRED SITE: his grave in Saint-Omer Cathedral, France.

FEAST: 12 April.

**OFFERINGS**: shoes; pilgrimage; candles.

#### 👡 Ernesto, Saint

Also known as Che Guevara.

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

Ernesto Guevara de la Serna Lynch (1928–9 October 1967), better known as Che Guevara, was born in Argentina of Basque and Irish ancestry. A Marxist revolutionary and leader of Cuban guerillas, his iconic image has since become symbolic of revolution and the counter-culture. In the years since his death, he has emerged as a folk saint known as San Ernesto. Although one would think that, as a fervent Marxist, he would be dismayed by the religious shrines now devoted to him, San Ernesto is credited with miracles.

Che Guevara was a controversial person. Although some perceive him as a revolutionary ideal, many Cubans consider him a butcher. His birth may have been on either 14 May or 14 June 1928. Documents indicate 14 June; however, a persistent story suggests that the later date was recorded to avoid revealing that his mother was already pregnant when she married his father. An astrologer was allegedly the source of this legend; he claimed to have been given the true date in order to cast an accurate horoscope.

Che Guevara was handed over to the Bolivian army by peasants to whom he was preaching in La Higuera, Bolivia. He was executed in the village of La Higuera and his body brought to the town of Vallegrande, where it was placed on display. The corpse allegedly would not close its eyes. His hands were cut off to provide fingerprints and identification. (The hands— preserved in formaldehyde—eventually ended up in Fidel Castro's possession.) What happened next is subject to debate:

- He may have been cremated and his ashes scattered.
- He may have been secretly buried at the air strip at Vallegrande, where remains were recovered in 1997 and brought to Cuba.
- Someone else's remains were brought and Che remains in Vallegrande, as some devotees insist.

The display of his broken body in La Higuera was intended as a humiliation and to serve as a warning to other revolutionaries worldwide. However, for the devout local people, the display and postmortem photos resembled Christ taken down from the cross. They perceived Che as a spiritual martyr, not necessarily a revolutionary one, and quickly began propitiation and veneration. Many of those who now venerate him have no interest in his politics other than to perceive him as someone seeking to help people. Reputedly, requests directed to him for favors and assistance have been granted. He apparently consistently responds to prayers for rain. His ghost has been witnessed near La Higuera.

In life, Che was a military physician. Presumably, he may be invoked for healing, especially for soldiers. He is also a member of the Political Court in the religion of María Lionza under the name Che Guevara, not San Ernesto.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: the famous iconic photograph of Che Guevara taken by photographer Alberto Díaz Gutiérrez (Korda).

**SACRED SITES:** his mausoleum in Santa Clara, Cuba; the monument and memorial in La Higuera, Bolivia, scene of his death.

**OFFERINGS**: He adored chess. Give him chess pieces or candy and cookies ornamented with chess figures; also candles and Cuban cigars.

SEE ALSO María Lionza.

#### ∾ Esther, Queen

CLASSIFICATION: venerated by Jews, Lutherans, and the Spiritual Churches of

New Orleans.

Queen Esther, the heroine of the biblical Book of Esther, was a Jewish woman married to a king of Persia—except that he wasn't aware of her religion. She had been advised to keep her religious identity secret. Because of her proximity to the throne and her bravery, she was able to save her people from disaster. Queen Esther was secretly venerated by the Crypto-Jews of Spain, Portugal, and their Western Hemisphere colonies, who prayed that she protect them from disaster as well. Because they, too, were obliged to keep their true religious identity secret, many Crypto-Jews identified with the travails of the ancient Jewish queen and felt that she would understand them and sympathize with their plight.

Queen Esther is the heroine of the Jewish holiday Purim. She is a heroine of the Spiritual Churches of New Orleans, too. She was among the personal spirit guides of Mother Leafy Anderson (1887–1927), widely considered to be the founder of the Spiritual Churches tradition. It's believed that Mother Anderson introduced veneration of Queen Esther into that tradition, where Queen Esther has now evolved from personal spirit guide to full-fledged saint.

Queen Esther is invoked to help individuals, but especially to assist communities in need. In life, she was a female member of a persecuted people who successfully opposed oppressive authority. Esther serves as proof that even the weakest can effect profound change. Symbolizing fidelity and courage, she presides over the third degree of initiation in the fraternal organization, the Order of the Eastern Star. The name Esther may be interpreted as "star." It derives from the name of the Mesopotamian goddess Ishtar, Queen of the Morning and Evening Star, a warrior and savior.

Esther's birth name was Hadassah, a popular Hebrew name meaning "willow." Her detailed story is recounted in the Book of Esther, the last of the books of the Jewish Bible to be added to the canon. It has been dated to approximately the fourth century bce and is reputedly based on an account written by Esther's uncle, Mordecai.

Queen Esther is a favorite subject of paintings, films, novels, operas, and other creative works. She became queen by winning a beauty contest and so is invariably portrayed as a beautiful and often alluring woman. Invoke Queen Esther's aid when your community is under attack.

FAVORED PEOPLE: Persian Jews are often described as Queen Esther's Children.

COLORS: pink; white.

FEAST: 24 May, according to the Lutheran Church.

**FESTIVAL:** the Jewish holiday Purim, celebrated annually on the fourteenth day of the Hebrew lunar month Adar. The Fast of Esther occurs from dawn to dusk of the previous day and commemorates Esther's own fast as she gathered her courage to approach her husband and request safety for her people.

SACRED SITES: Esther is reputedly buried in Hamadan, Iran, beside her uncle, Mordecai. The present mausoleum, still a major pilgrimage site, dates from the 13th century, but may have been built over earlier tombs. Another tradition suggests that the bodies of Esther and Mordecai were brought to the Galilean village of Bar'am in Israel. Documentation of pilgrimages to Bar'am dates back to the 13th century, although no trace of this shrine, described as topped by a large hat-shaped stone, now remains.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; charitable donations; fine fabrics. In life, Queen Esther was reputedly a vegetarian with a fondness for chickpeas.

SEE ALSO Black Hawk; Isabel of Portugal.

# 👡 Eulalia of Barcelona

Also known as Saint Eulalie.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Saint Eulalia, born in approximately 290, died on 12 February 303 during Diocletian's persecutions in Barcelona. She was forced to undergo thirteen tortures, including being placed in a barrel that was studded on the inside with knives or shards of glass and rolled down the hill now known as Saint Eulalia's Descent. Her breasts were sliced off. She was crucified on an X-shaped cross and finally decapitated. A dove flew from her neck after her head was severed, indicating her sacred status.

Eulalia's body was hidden in 713 during the Moorish invasion and recovered in 878. She is invoked against drought and to protect those who travel over water. FAVORED PEOPLE: sailors.

ATTRIBUTE: an X-shaped cross.

SACRED ANIMAL: dove.

FEASTS: 12 February (Roman Catholic); 22 August (Orthodox Churches).

**SACRED SITE:** Eulalia is the matron saint of Barcelona. She is interred in the crypt of the Cathedral of Saint Eulalia. An annual festival in Barcelona honoring her coincides with her Roman Catholic feast day.

SEE ALSO Eulalia of Merida; Joan of Arc.

## 👡 Eulalia of Merida

Also known as Saint Eulalie.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

From her earliest childhood, Eulalia (c. 290–c. 304) longed to be a martyr. Her Christian family lived in Emerita, the capital of the Roman province of Lusitania, now Mérida, Spain. Her mother, aware of Eulalia's intense desire for martyrdom, attempted to keep her daughter safe by sending her to the countryside. When she was approximately fourteen, however, Eulalia ran away. Arriving at the court of the Governor of Emerita, she proceeded to profess her Christianity publicly, insult the deities Apollo, Isis, and Venus, and—last, but very much not least—insult the Roman emperor. She then challenged the governor to make her a martyr.

The governor met her challenge. Eulalia was stripped naked, tortured with hooks and torches, and burned at the stake, taunting her torturers all the while. She finally died of smoke inhalation, although a French version of her mythos suggests that she was decapitated. At the moment of her death, a white dove flew from Eulalia's mouth. Her corpse was thrown into the street, but a sudden and miraculous snowfall covered her nakedness. Rumors quickly spread that Eulalia was a saint. A shrine was erected over her tomb.

Documented evidence indicates that Eulalia was venerated as a saint by as

early as 350. The Christian poet Prudentius (c. 348–c. 410) dedicated part of his book *Peristephanon (Crowns of Martyrdom*) to her. A basilica was built in her honor in approximately 560. Her relics were distributed throughout Iberia. Eulalia was very popular among the Visigoths. Her body was transferred to Oviedo in approximately 780, where she lies in a silver coffin.

FAVORED PEOPLE: run-aways; widows; victims of torture.

ATTRIBUTES: cross and stake.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: She is depicted as a naked young woman lying in the snow, as in John William Waterhouse's famous 1885 portrait, *Saint Eulalia*. Although the snow allegedly fell in order to cover her nudity, her portraits may be more revealing.

**SPIRITUAL ALLY:** Saint Eulalia is venerated alongside Saint Julia of Merida, another young Christian martyr. They share the same feast day.

FEAST: 10 December.

SACRED SITE: Cathedral of San Salvador in Oviedo, Spain.

SACRED ANIMAL: dove.

SEE ALSO Eulalia of Barcelona, Saint; Foy, Saint; Joan of Arc.

## 👡 Euphemia, Saint

Also known as Eufemia; Euphemie.

**EPITHETS:** The Great Martyr; Praised.

**CLASSIFICATION:** venerated by most branches of Christianity.

Euphemia (died c. 307) was the daughter of a senator from Chalcedon, now part of modern Istanbul. Her family was Christian. Euphemia was discovered hiding in a house with other Christians instead of participating in a mandated public Pagan ritual. The group was arrested and tortured for days. Euphemia, the youngest, was separated from the group and uncatened with the most brutar torture, perhaps on the assumption that the mere threat of torture would cow this young girl into denying her faith.

Euphemia called her torturers' bluff, enduring terrible torture with bravery and refusing to repudiate Christianity. She was tied to a wheel studded with sharp knives, which cut her. An angel appeared, removed Euphemia from the wheel, and healed her wounds. Rather than recognizing a miracle, her torturers prepared fresh torments for her.

Attempts were made to place Euphemia in an incinerator, but the men carrying her saw two fierce angels in the flames and refused to carry out the deed. They were killed for their refusal. Two other soldiers tossed her into the conflagration, but she remained unharmed. Thrown into a pit filled with knives and shards of glass, Euphemia once again emerged unscathed. Finally, she was taken to the arena to be devoured by wild beasts. She remained unmolested, until eventually a female bear swiped at her, leaving a small wound on her leg. Copious amounts of blood flowed—disproportionate to this kind of wound—and Euphemia instantly dropped dead. Simultaneously, an earthquake struck, causing onlookers to flee.

The saint's parents, who had been forced to watch their daughter's torture, took the opportunity to rescue her corpse. A golden sarcophagus was provided for Euphemia and, as soon as the social climate allowed, a cathedral was built over her grave.

Euphemia is famed for an incident in which she helped decide the future direction of Christianity. The Council of Chalcedon, the fourth Ecumenical Counsel of the Christian Church, was convened in 451 in Saint Euphemia's Cathedral. Up for debate was the true nature of Christ. The Chalcedonian Creed proclaimed the eternal "full humanity and full divinity" of Jesus Christ, but this was a contentious issue. Other branches of Christianity strongly disagreed, especially those adhering to Monophysitism, insisting that Christ was solely and exclusively divine.

No consensus could be reached. Finally, it was decided that Saint Euphemia would decide. Both parties wrote a description of their stance on separate scrolls, which were then placed in Euphemia's tomb. The emperor set his imperial seal over the tomb and ordered guards to stand watch for three days. When the tomb was opened, the scroll of the Monophysites lay beneath the saint's feet, while the scroll that is now the Chalcedonian Creed was held in her right hand.

Euphemia herself—or at least the location of her remains—is the subject of another controversy. In 617, Saint Euphemia's body was removed from

Chalcedon and transferred to a new church in Constantinople to protect her from Persian invaders. There, she eventually fell victim to iconoclasts, who tossed her silver reliquary into the sea. It was rescued and hidden in a secret crypt by a local bishop. By 796, her relics were once more on display in Constantinople, the city now called Istanbul, where some insist that they remain housed in the Orthodox Church of Saint George at the Phanar.

Other reports suggest that Crusaders stole Euphemia's remains—that her head was brought by the Knights Templar to their stronghold in Cyprus. The Roman Catholic Basilica of Saint Euphemia in Croatia claims to have miraculously received at least some of her relics. Saint Euphemia protects against rheumatism.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Euphemia is a great favorite of Orthodox icons. Roman Catholic images of Euphemia often portray her surrounded by lions.

ATTRIBUTES: cross; wheel (among the instruments of torture used upon her).

FEASTS: 11 July (date of the Chalcedonian Miracle); 16 September (date of her martyrdom).

SACRED SITES:

- the Basilica of Saint Euphemia in Rovinj, Croatia
- the Patriarchal Church of Saint George at the Phanar in Istanbul, once and possibly now the site of her relics

SEE ALSO Catherine of Alexandria; George, Saint and Glossary: Icon; Relics.

#### 👡 Evita, Saint

Also known as Santa María Eva.

**EPITHETS:** Lady of Hope; Lady of Compassion; Mother of the Poor; Virgin of the Unsheltered.

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

Eva María Ibarguren Duarte Perón (7 May 1919–26 July 1952), a poor illegitimate Argentinean country girl, came to Buenos Aires to become a movie star. She never achieved heights of movie stardom, but she did become a

successful radio hostess and local fashion icon. She married Colonel Juan Perón shortly before he became president of Argentina.

Eva was the subject of a cult of personality. Her presence was a major part of Perón's success. She is a contradictory person. On one hand, she worked tirelessly for the poor, establishing a foundation to help find jobs and distribute funds where needed. On the other, she is accused of absconding with funds and secretly funneling them to Swiss bank accounts. She and Perón lived lavishly. They were fascists who viciously and brutally eliminated their enemies.

In life, people adored her or hated her. She evoked visceral reactions. People not only disapproved of her politics, they couldn't stand *her;* she pushed their buttons. Criticism was very personal and often of a sexual nature; she was accused of being frigid and of being a sexual predator. In general, poor and working people loved her; the wealthy and the military elite despised her. That feeling was mutual. Eva never forgot her origins among the poor.

Eva's uterine cancer was kept secret for as long as possible. It manifested as uncontrolled bleeding; eventually she was hospitalized. As she lay dying, rumors spread that she was a vampire—that she needed constant blood transfusions and that she had ordered that blood be extracted from children. Mothers in wealthy neighborhoods avoided taking their children to hospitals or pharmacies lest they be kidnapped to serve as her blood supply. Meanwhile, those in poor neighborhoods prayed for her recovery. Like Jesus Christ, Eva died at age thirtythree. Devotees compared her to the Virgin Mary and Joan of Arc.

Unofficial saints tend to spring up despite authority, rather than with its blessing. Evita Perón is unusual because her veneration was officially encouraged and stimulated.

She died 26 July 1952 at 8:23 in the evening, but the official time was given as 8:25 because the Subsecretariat of Information of the Presidency believed that this was an easier time for people to remember. For years, on the anniversary of her death, news broadcasts announced the time: "It is 8:25, the hour in which Eva Perón passed into immortality."

At the news of her death, 700,000 Argentineans took to the streets in public mourning and hysteria. Sixteen people died among the crowds; another 3900 ended up in the hospital. More required first-aid. The line of people seeking to pay their last respects to her stretched for thirty-five blocks. She lay in state until 9 August; the crowds kept coming. Only the needs of the embalmer finally ended her wake.

In a speech given in the last years of her life, Eva said, "I left my dreams by the wayside in order to watch over the dreams of others." In her last speech she vowed, "I will be with my people, dead or alive."

Funeral ceremonies were held for her in cemeteries throughout Argentina (*sans* body, of course). Ramón Carrillo, minister of public health, ordered that a life-size 220-pound candle be installed in the ministry and lit for an hour every month on the 26th day, the day she died. Ironically, Eva was so emaciated at her death that she weighed less than eighty pounds.

Five days after her death, a formal request for canonization was made to Pope Pius and it was suggested that she be appointed matron saint of all American workers. The Vatican received over 100,000 requests for canonization, many crediting her with miracles.

No need to wait for the Vatican. An orchestrated attempt to create an unofficial saint was launched. The Peronist government encouraged her adulation. Official postal boxes were maintained so letters to (dead) Evita could be mailed. Technically, they were forwarded to her foundation; however, that fact wasn't necessarily emphasized to devotees. Annual celebrations were held in her honor. Elementary schools discussed Evita's continued existence as a beautiful shining star gazing down at her loved ones.

- Small altars were constructed by those among the queues of mourners waiting to pay their respects, but also throughout the country. The newspaper *Democracion* devoted multiple pages to photos and text describing altars and prayers devoted to Eva Perón, in the process encouraging emulation.
- The newspaper *La Razón* wrote, "God is at her side proclaiming her fairy, martyr and saint."
- Children's books described and pictured Evita wearing a halo or as a star in the form of a cross in the night sky.
- A children's magazine published a prayer beginning, "Evita, our love who art in Heaven. . . ." The prayer requests that she continue to protect dreams and that she continue to intercede before God, especially so that adults never lack fruitful work.
- Official first-grade reading texts featured the words "Ave Eva" on the first page, below an illustration of Eva in the company of angels.

• Official second-grade texts began with a prayer: "Our little mother who art in Heaven. . . . Good Fairy who laughs among the angels . . . Evita: I promise you that I will be good."

The attempt to keep her body incorrupt cost over \$100,000. The goal was to create the aura of sanctity associated with an incorruptible body, a characteristic of many saints. She was embalmed by Dr. Pedro Ara, superstar Spanish pathologist and mortician, famed for transforming the dead into permanent sculptures. The plan was to display her corpse in the world's largest mausoleum, but Perón was overthrown before this could be implemented.

The pendulum now swung the other way. For sixteen years, between 1955 and 1971, it was illegal to possess Eva's photograph or even say her name. Her statues were removed; copies of her autobiography were burned. Veneration of Santa Evita went underground.

The Church conspired with the new military regime to eliminate her body. (A prophecy believed by many Peronistas—and apparently others—stated that whoever possessed Eva's body would control Argentina.) Her corpse was kidnapped and transported several times. Rumors spread that she had been cremated or thrown into the River Plata, or hidden in assorted crypts. Wax replicas of her corpse were allegedly made so that there would be confusion as to which was real.

Evita ended up buried in Milan, Italy, where she rested for fifteen years under the name Maria Maggi. Her body was returned to Juan Perón in 1971 and eventually brought back to Argentina. She is now buried fifteen feet deep in a specially armored private vault in Buenos Aires' most exclusive cemetery. Her grave is reputedly so secure that a long-running local joke suggests that it could withstand nuclear attack.

Home altars are maintained for Santa Evita. She is believed to possess miraculous powers and to be a caring, proactive saint. Some anticipate a second coming. Evita performs healings, locates jobs, and provides cash to devotees in need. She is syncretized to the Virgin Mary.

"Don't cry for me, Argentina. The truth is I never left you." So sings the character based on Eva Perón in the hit musical Evita, loosely based on her life. Evita began as a rock opera concept album by Andrew Lloyd Weber and Tim Rice in 1976. Its success led to a staged production in London's West End in 1978, followed by a Broadway production the following year. Among those playing Eva are actresses Julie Covington, Elaine Paige, and Patti LuPone. Madonna portrays Evita in the 1996 film adaptation.

MANIFESTATION: Some devotees see her profile in the moon.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: There are countless photographs of Eva Perón from all stages of her life. Some devotees use images of the Virgin Mary to represent her. A popular icon features Evita's face superimposed over the image of Our Lady of Sorrows.

**FEASTS**: anniversaries of her birth and death, as well as the date of her renunciation of the vice-presidency, 17 October.

SACRED SITE: Eva Perón is buried in La Recoleta Cemetery in Buenos Aires.

**OFFERINGS**: flowers; candles; perfumes. She left instruction that, after her death, her wealth be used to help the poor and for scholarships so that children of the workers could study. Offerings along these lines might please her, too.

SEE ALSO Irma of Maresco; Joan of Arc; Kahlo, Frida; Mary and Glossary: Incorrupt; Intercessor; Saint, Official; Saint, Unofficial; Syncretism.

# 👡 Expedite, Saint

Also known as Expiditos; Expeditus; Expedito; Espedito; Agios Fanourious (Greek).

**EPITHET:** Sir Speedy.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic and Orthodox saint.

Saint Expedite is the spirit of speedy deliveries and quick solutions. He despises delay. He is the lord of fast action. If things are going too slowly—if something is mired in red tape, bureaucracy, or other delay—ask Saint Expedite to slice through the obstacles and deliver a solution *now*. Among his specialties is speeding up legal proceedings. He is the saint of emergencies, the spirit to turn

to when there is no time to wait.

Although some believe him to be an unofficial saint, in fact, Saint Expedite is very official, albeit from a time before documentation was required. While details of his past are vague, they are no more so than those of many other early saints. And although Saint Expedite was removed from the official calendar roll of Roman Catholic saints, so were Saint Barbara, Saint Christopher, and many other still-popular saints.

Legend has it that Expedite was an Armenian martyred in the fourth century, but no historical evidence of this currently exists. He has consistently been among the most magical saints and some believe that his image conceals hidden veneration of a banished Pagan god. Expedite may really be the Roman deity Mercury in disguise, with Mercury's rooster exchanged for Expedite's crow and Mercury's emblem, the caduceus, for a cross. The image of Saint Expedite is used in modern Vodou traditions to represent spirits of the cemetery like Baron Samedi and Baron LaCroix.

The legend about religious statues being shipped to America from Europe in boxes stamped *Expedite* and confusing recipients who mistook shipping instructions for a saint's name is blatantly untrue. Saint Expedite first shot to popularity in the Middle Ages, especially in Sicily and in what is now southern Germany.

*Expedite* refers to a type of Roman foot soldier; they carried no baggage and hence were fast or expeditious. Saint Expedite is quick to act. If you invoke him for help, you should see results shortly— or not at all. Make sure to pay debts and fulfill vows to Saint Expedite quickly. He does not like to wait.

To request a favor from Saint Expedite, burn nine green candles in front of his image for nine consecutive days; this will add up to a total of 81 small candles. You can also use nine novena candles—large, glass-encased candles designed to burn for nine days—but be sure to repeat prayers and appeals daily.

Saint Expedite is controversial. He has a reputation for unscrupulousness. He is rumored to assist sorcerers with curses and revenge spells; although some devotees vociferously deny that this is true, insisting that he will only fulfill benign petitions.

#### Saint Expedite House Guardian Ritual

This ritual requires a statue of Saint Expedite:

- 1. Balance a coin on his cross.
- 2. Request that he keep an eye out for the well-being of your home, occupation, finances, or whatever you need.
- 3. Keep the coin there as long as things are going smoothly.
- 4. If there is a downturn in your fortunes, remove the coin and tell Saint Expedite he can't have it back until the situation improves.
- 5. If and when you return the coin, give him a little something extra for motivation—a glass of rum or a slice of pound cake.

Should Saint Expedite grant your request, place fresh flowers beside his statue in your home or at an altar dedicated to him in a church or elsewhere. Some believe that flowers must be included in Expedite's offerings or the saint will react with anger. He is reputedly especially fond of red carnations.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: merchants; navigators; students; those in need of speedy solutions; those expected to deliver speedy solutions; computer programmers; hackers.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: A handsome young Roman soldier holds a cross aloft while stepping on a crow, which cries "Cras." That's a pun: *cras* mimics the sound a crow makes, but it also means "tomorrow." Saint Expedite stamps out tomorrow in favor of today. In some German images, Expedite may point to a clock.

ATTRIBUTES: cross and crow; palm branch indicating martyrdom; clock.

COLORS: red; green.

SACRED SITES: In general, Saint Expedite is the subject of private venerations and home shrines, but there are chapels dedicated to him around the world, as for instance in San Juan, Argentina, near the shrine of Difunta Correa. Saint Expedite's statue in the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, International Shrine of Saint Jude in New Orleans, is a pilgrimage destination for many. Saint Expedite is extremely popular in the island republic of Réunion, where he is the subject of many roadside shrines.

FEAST: 19 April (Catholic); 27 August (Orthodox).

SACRED DAY: Wednesday or Thursday, depending on tradition.

**OFFERINGS:** His favorite offering is pound cake; also rum or whisky; red or green candles; fresh flowers, especially red carnations. Fanouropita, a Greek offering cake for Expedite, features raisins and walnuts.

SEE ALSO Barbara, Saint; Christopher, Saint; Difunta Correa; Guadalupe; Jude, Saint and Glossary: Novena; Saint, Official; Saint, Unofficial; Syncretism; Vodou, Voodoo, Hoodoo.

# F

#### 👡 Faith, Hope, and Charity

Also known as Faith, Hope, and Love; Vera, Nadezhda, and Lyubov (Russian); Fides, Spes, et Caritas (Latin).

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as saints by most branches of Christianity.

Faith, Hope, and Charity, named for virtues, were three Christian sisters, aged twelve, ten, and nine, respectively, when they were martyred during the reign of Roman emperor Hadrian in the second century. Charity is sometimes named Love instead. According to legend, they were arrested for proselytizing, then tortured and killed one by one.

There is a second Saint Faith, another young martyr who is venerated by herself, not with any sisters. For more information on this saint, see the entry for Foy, Saint.

Faith was placed in a cauldron of boiling tar. Suddenly, a rose tree emerged from the tar. Flame-colored roses instantly bloomed and the petals fell, completely filling the cauldron. Faith was removed and beheaded.

Hope was thrown onto a bed of burning coals, but remained unharmed because the coals instantly transformed into a field of lilies. She was beheaded as well.

Charity, or Love, was stuffed inside a hot stove and left to die. When sufficient time had passed, her tormentors opened the stove door and looked inside, expecting to see Charity's charred body. Instead, they caught a glimpse of a beautiful paradise garden. Charity emerged singing and her head was lopped off. The sisters' heads were placed on display.

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In author Alyne DeWinter's novel The Roses of the Moon, the severed, preserved heads of Faith, Hope, and Love serve as an oracle.

No historical evidence of these sisters exists. Their mother is called Saint Sophia (Blessed Wisdom), so some suspect, by virtue of their names and the lack of evidence, that their legend was originally allegorical. However, others argue that early Christians frequently took the names of virtues as baptismal names.

Their cult is particularly ancient. The three sisters are venerated together and sometimes with their mother. In Haitian Vodou, Faith, Hope, and Charity are called the Three Twins and syncretized to the sibling spirits called the Marassa. Saints Faith, Hope, and Charity are invoked for healing and for all matters pertaining to children.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Chromolithographs depict the girls' heads and shoulders floating amid clouds. They are also sometimes posed in a formal family portrait with their mother, who shares their feast day

ATTRIBUTES: a cross, anchor, and heart symbolize each sister, respectively.

FEASTS: 1 August (Western Church); 17 September (Eastern Church).

SEE ALSO Foy, Saint; George, Saint and Glossary: Syncretism; Vodou, Voodoo, Hoodoo.

#### 👡 Fall, Ibra

Also known as Baye Fall (Father Fall); Ibrahima Fall; Sheikh Ibra Fall.

ерітнет: Lamp.

CLASSIFICATION: Sufi saint; Mouride saint.

Ibra Fall (c. 1855–9 June 1930), the most ardent supporter, promoter, and disciple of Senegal's saint Sheikh Amadou Bamba, is now also venerated as a saint. His image is almost as ubiquitous in Senegal as that of Sheikh Amadou.

Ibra Fall's nickname is Lamp, because he was the light of Sheikh Bamba's Mouride movement. The central minaret of the Great Mosque of Touba is named for him. The word minaret derives from the Arabic *manarah*, meaning "lamp," so there's a bit of word play there.

Amadou Bamba conferred the honorific Sheikh upon Ibra Fall, whose capacities as a Koranic scholar are passionately disputed. Ibra Fall's revolutionary act was to emphasize the value of hard work and dedication as a spiritual path. His devotees, called Baye Falls, are recognizable by their dreadlocks and the patchwork clothing they wear as a tribute to their master. The Baye Falls are now considered a subsect of Mouridism possessing their own unique practices.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** A photograph—and the many icons based upon it—portrays Ibra Fall standing before a crowd wearing dark robes. This image, in sharp contrast to Sheikh Amadou's vividly white robes, is intended to indicate Ibra Fall's dedication to physical labor. He is often portrayed beside Sheikh Amadou as if their photographs were blended.

**SACRED SITE:** his grave in Touba, Senegal.

Cheikh Ibra Fall is a musical tribute by Senegalese singer, Youssou N'Dour.

SEE ALSO Amadou Bamba, Sheikh.

#### 🔊 Ffraid, Saint

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

According to a Welsh legend, Saint Ffraid was an Irish princess who crossed the Irish Channel to Wales riding on a clump of sod and landing on the banks of the Conwy River. It is possible that Ffraid is a Welsh name for Saint Brigid. It is traditional to request her blessings before embarking on a journey and to eat horned cattle and sheep at feasts honoring her.

ATTRIBUTES: acorns; oak leaves.

**SACRED SITES:** The remains of her chapel, Capel San Ffraid at Treaddur Bay, reputedly stand on the sod that brought Ffraid to Wales. Many churches in Wales are named Llansanffraid in her honor.

SEE ALSO Brigid, Saint.

#### 👡 Fiacre, Saint

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Saint Fiacre (died 670) was a skilled healer and master herbalist who traveled to Brittany, where he established a hermitage near a spring. Believed to be of Celtic origin—although whether he was from Ireland or the Scottish Highlands is disputed—Saint Fiacre reputedly had such a green thumb that all he had to do was poke a stick into the earth to produce a lush garden instantly.

In 17th-century Paris, the Hotel Fiacre rented out carriages, which the general public called fiacres. It's still the word for a Parisian taxi.

Saint Fiacre is invoked for fertility, personal as well as creative, botanical, or agricultural. He is also invoked against venereal disease. Petition him to prevent or heal sexually transmitted illness. He is also invoked to heal hemorrhoids. (Allegedly, a stone in Brittany bears the imprint of his buttocks. Legend has it that, if you sit on the imprint, your hemorrhoids will be healed.) He may also be invoked to heal fistulas.

Saint Fiacre is as renowned for his misogyny as for his glorious gardening. He reputedly banished women from his monastery, threatening them with bodily harm if they ignored his injunction. He was considered a master healer and people flocked to him. He is now a saint and dedicated healer. Women suffer from hemorrhoids, fistulas, and venereal disease as well as men. Presumably, he will heal them; however, he may be more inclined to help if a man offers a petition on their behalf.

FAVORED PEOPLE: gardeners; herbalists; cab drivers; livery drivers.

**ATTRIBUTE**: spade; basket of fresh vegetables.

**FEASTS:** His feast day is in dispute; among days celebrated are 1 August, 18 August, 30 August, and 1 September.

#### ∾ Fidencio, El Niño

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

José Fidencio Sintora Constantino (17 October 1898–19 October 1938) was born in Guanajuato, Mexico, to a large, poor family. He is known as El Niño for three reasons:

- His healing skills manifested in childhood, hence his nickname *El Niño* ("the boy")—the first person he ever cured was his mother.
- Manifestations of the Christ Child are commonly called El Niño in Spanish and many of El Niño Fidencio's devotees perceive him as an incarnation or avatar of Jesus Christ.
- El Niño Fidencio maintained a childlike persona and appearance his whole life. He had a high voice, lacked facial hair, and was reputed to possess the genitalia of a pre-pubescent boy.

While working in the kitchen of a local family, the López de la Fuentes, El Niño Fidencio began a lifelong friendship with the family's son, Enrique. In the 1920s, the two moved to the town of Espinazo in the Mexican state of Nuevo León, where Enrique became the administrator of a huge estate owned by the German Kardecian Spiritist, Teodoro von Wernich. There, El Niño began to establish a reputation as a tremendously powerful *curandero* (traditional healer).

In 1927, at around age twenty-nine, El Niño experienced a profound mystic vision while weeping beneath a pepper tree. (He may have been weeping because Enrique López de la Fuente was abusive toward him.) A sacred being, described as possibly Christ or an angel, appeared to him, calling him to be of service to others and blessing El Niño with extraordinary healing powers.

Fidencismo, a Spiritualist movement based on the teachings of El Niño Fidencio, is officially recognized as a religion in Mexico. Temples devoted to him are located throughout Mexico and are also now in the United States. However, the majority of El Niño's devotees do not belong to this church, but are unaffiliated independent practitioners.

El Niño Fidencio was credited with healing cancer, tuberculosis, leprosy, mental illness, intestinal disorders, and blindness. He delivered babies and performed successful surgery without anesthesia. He relied on traditional medicinals, folk cures, and his very own methods. El Niño maintained a garden of over 200 herbs. He prescribed herbal baths, nutritional therapy, and laughter. He rolled people in dirt. He sat the mentally ill on children's swings and incorporated singing and dance into his cures.

He massaged people with his own saliva or a paste made from honey, herbs, soot, tar, and soap. Sometimes, contact with his body was sufficient to heal. He practiced the equivalent of shock therapy—a deaf mute's hearing and speech were restored when he unexpectedly received an up-close encounter with El Niño's pet cougar.

El Niño was a healer, but also much more. He helped the lovelorn and mediated family, legal, and real estate disputes. With no church or priest in Espinazo, El Niño administered baptism, confirmation, and communion. He also performed marriages and gave last rites, preaching that anyone can baptize a child, providing it's done in the name of God.

El Niño practiced astral projection, yoga, and meditation. He guarded his virginity zealously, believing that its loss would rob him of his healing powers. He performed duties that, at that time in rural Mexico, were associated with women: cooking, cleaning, laundry, childcare, and midwifery. He sometimes disguised himself as a woman, either because—as his enemies claimed—he was a transvestite, or because he sometimes desperately needed a break from overwhelming responsibilities and it was the most effective way for him to be incognito.

An exceptionally humble and modest man, he did not accept money for his services, but sometimes accepted clothing and food. Healings and miracles led to renown. Newspaper articles in 1928–1929 spread his reputation nationwide. In February 1928, the president of Mexico paid him a well-publicized visit. One month later, there were 30,000 people camped out in Espinazo seeking his attention. The crowds grew beyond his capacity to serve.

His fame attracted negative attention, too. On 18 February 1929, the state of Nuevo León, Mexico began legal proceedings against him for practicing medicine without a license. During the last years of his life, he was under almost constant attack from medical authorities and the Roman Catholic Church. He

constant attack from medical authornies and the Koman Cathone Church. He was arrested twice. In 1936, the archbishop of Monterrey demanded that he stop administering sacraments. El Niño Fidencio agreed, but kept doing it anyway. The circumstances of his death are mysterious. Medical cause, if any, is unknown. By 1935, he was suffering ill health.

- He may have had pernicious anemia.
- He may have suffered psychic exhaustion due to constant demands for healing.

Seeking to heal and recharge his powers, El Niño entered a three-day trance (a self-induced shamanic coma). Express orders were given that his body was not to be disturbed. Either someone panicked and physicians were called in or, as many devotees believe, jealous physicians whose business he had undercut were plotting against him and seized their opportunity. In either case, El Niño was allegedly presumed dead and either an autopsy or embalming was scheduled and begun. Somehow, his throat was slit. When it was cut, fresh blood, a living person's blood, spurted out. He is buried in Espinazo.

A curandero in life, he continues to heal in death. El Niño Fidencio is invoked for any kind of assistance, but his specialties are healing and immigration issues. Independent practitioners may contact him directly. He also communicates and heals via spirit mediums (*materias*).

**MANIFESTATION:** He communicates via dreams, visions, and clairaudience. (In other words, you'll hear his voice.) El Niño Fidencio speaks only Spanish, but will work with interpreters. He has manifested to people in order to perform healings personally, sometimes to those who were unfamiliar with him and hadn't requested his help, but who became devotees afterward.

SACRED SITE: his shrine in Espinazo, Mexico.

**SPIRITUAL ALLIES:** El Niño Fidencio was a great devotee of Guadalupe. They may be venerated together.

COLOR: purple.

FEASTS: 17 October (his birthday); 19 October (anniversary of his death); 19 March (feast of Saint Joseph, his patron and name saint).

**OFFERINGS**: flowers; perfume; candles; pilgrimage. El Niño loved music and dancing and encouraged both among devotees. He accepts very modest offerings if they are given with good intent.

SEE ALSO Guadalupe; Joan of Arc; Joseph, Saint; Teresita and Glossary: Curanderismo; Name Saint.

#### 👡 Florian, Saint

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Saint Florian (died 304) was a Roman general serving in what is now Austria whose responsibilities included supervising firefighting brigades. He reputedly and miraculously saved an entire burning village by dousing it with one bucket of water. Thus it is no surprise that Saint Florian is invoked to provide magical fire protection.

Saint Florian refused to make offerings to the official Roman state gods and was executed for treason. First brutally beaten with spikes and clubs, he was then burned all over his body and finally tossed into Austria's Enns River with a millstone around his neck. He later appeared to a woman in a vision, revealing the location of his body and requesting a Christian burial. His corpse was found where he had said it would be; an eagle sat guarding him until the body was safely removed.

Saint Florian became extremely popular in Central Europe. He is invoked against fire, floods, burning, and drowning. It is said that calling his name will provide protection during fires. He is the subject of spells and rituals intended to provide fire safety, for example:

- 1. Dedicate a red candle to Saint Florian.
- 2. Place an image of a burning building before the candle.
- 3. Light the candle and speak to Saint Florian, expressing your fears and desires.

**FAVORED PEOPLE:** Saint Florian is the patron saint of firefighters and chimneysweeps.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: a handsome Roman officer with sword and a pitcher or vessel of

water; a dead man lying on a millstone, guarded by an eagle.

ATTRIBUTE: millstone.

SACRED ANIMAL: stork.

FEAST: 4 May.

SACRED SITES: In the 10th century, a monastery was built around Saint Florian's grave in what is now Austria. The town of Saint Florian grew around it. The town features a firefighting museum. His relics are in the Church of Saint Florian in Krakow, Poland.

# ∾ Fourteen Holy Helpers

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saints.

The Fourteen Holy Helpers are a conglomeration of fourteen saints invoked as a team. Each Helper is venerated independently as a saint associated with some facet of healing. Each one bears a reputation as a miracle worker. However, they are also venerated together for maximum protection and healing power. With the Fourteen Holy Helpers on your side, all facets of health are vigilantly protected —or so goes the legend.

The tradition of invoking the Fourteen Holy Helpers began in the Rhineland during the 14th century in the wake of plagues devastating Europe. Initially, only three saints, known as the Three Holy Maids, were venerated together: Saints Barbara, Catherine of Alexandria, and Margaret of Antioch. Their numbers gradually increased, until they were formalized at fourteen.

Although there are variations, the following is the standard formal list of Fourteen Holy Helpers and their individual feast days:

- Acacius (22 June)
- Barbara (4 December)
- Blaise (3 February)
- Catherine of Alexandria (25 November)
- Christopher (25 July)
- Cyriac (16 March, 8 August)
- Danie (0 Actober)

- Elmo (2 June)
- Eustace (20 September)
- George (23 April)
- Giles (1 September)
- Margaret of Antioch (20 July)
- Pantaleon (27 July)
- Vitus (15 June)

Although called the Fourteen Holy Helpers, there may be more than fourteen. Other saints sometimes added or substituted include Anthony of the Desert, Leonard, Nicholas, Roch, and Sebastian.

- In France, there are traditionally fifteen Holy Helpers with the inclusion of Mary, the Blessed Mother.
- In medieval Sweden, Saint Dorothy of Caesarea was considered the fifteenth Helper.

**FEAST:** Each Holy Helper has an individual feast, but they are venerated as a group on 8 August.

**OFFERING**: A traditional offering is to vow to light candles to each Holy Helper on the appropriate feast day, as well as fourteen candles—one per Helper—on their joint day.

SEE ALSO entries for individual saints.

## 👡 Foy, Saint

Also known as Saint Faith, Fides, Fe, Foi, Foie.

**EPITHET:** Holy Faith.

Classification: Roman Catholic and Anglican saint.

Local tradition suggests that Saint Foy was born in December 290 in Agen, Aquitaine, now part of modern France, but then under Roman rule. Her family was wealthy, noble, and Pagan, but Foy's nanny was a secret Christian who converted her young charge. Foy, meaning "taith," was her baptismal name; her birth name is now unknown. It is unclear at what point Foy's father became aware that she was Christian, but he was not pleased.

The name Foy translates into English as "faith," and so this child martyr is often called Saint Faith. However, she is not related to the young sister saints, Faith, Hope, and Charity. There are two completely distinct saints named Faith.

When Foy was twelve, organized persecution of Christians began in Agen. Her nanny fled to the mountains along with the rest of the small Christian community. Foy was deliberately left behind because she was considered safe from danger, since her rich family was well connected and she was very young. The elders of the Christian community may have assumed that Foy could hide discreetly at home and wait out the persecutions, but they misjudged the situation.

Depending on the version of her legend, either Foy revealed herself to authorities or her father turned her in. Legend has it that her father betrayed her in order to scare her and "teach her a lesson," the ancient equivalent of being "scared straight." He assumed that, when threatened with torture, Foy would see the error of her ways, what he perceived as Foy's stubborn "infatuation" with Christianity would end and she would return home a chastened and obedient daughter. He thought she would act like a scared little girl rather than a brave martyr. He misjudged her.

Foy was twelve years old when brought before Roman authorities. Reputedly an exceptionally beautiful, charismatic child, the Romans did not wish to harm her. Instead, authorities attempted to bribe her, telling her that, if she renounced Christianity, a fine husband would be found for her. Foy proclaimed that the only spouse she desired was Jesus and furthermore she had already made a vow of fidelity to him.

Defiant when interrogated, Foy refused to make the demanded offerings to the Roman deities, even to save her life. The demand that individuals offer sacrifices to the Roman state gods was less about personal belief than about demonstrating loyalty to the Empire. The refusal of Christians to offer sacrifices was considered treasonous and thus punishable by death.

A lengthy detailed recount of Foy's martyrdom exists, but as it was written centuries after her death, it is unclear how much is factual. According to this account. Foy was ordered to sacrifice to the goddess Diana, but refused. Diana is an unusual choice of deities for Roman authorities. Although beloved by many rank-and-file Roman soldiers, she was a controversial goddess closely associated with women, slaves, sorcery, and subversive rites—not the typical choice for a young virgin's forced sacrifice. Foy's adamant rejection of this goddess may be a later interpolation in her legend, as, by the medieval era, Diana was closely associated with witches in western Europe.

Foy's rejection of Diana was insufficient to sign her death warrant. Instead, Roman authorities and her now-worried parents *begged* her to make the most nominal possible sacrificial gesture to the Roman emperor in his guise as Jupiter's representative on earth. Foy adamantly refused. Put to torture, Foy was bound to a brazier with iron chains and roasted. Still unbowed and defiant, she was then beheaded. Onlookers who expressed pity for the little girl were summarily beheaded, too.

Foy's body was rescued by Agen's hidden Christians and preserved until it was safe to bury her. Her grave was kept secret until two centuries following her death, when a basilica was built on the site of her martyrdom. Saint Foy became associated with tremendous miracles. There is literally no miracle this little saint cannot provide—from healing, to fertility, to exorcism of evil spirits. She developed a reputation as a great healer.

Foy's relics were removed from the basilica and brought to Conques on 14 January 866, where she remains. Whether her body was stolen or whether the monk who brought her to Conques was acting under her orders remains a bitterly contested debate.

Conques was on the pilgrimage route to Compostela and Saint Foy became an extremely popular saint, albeit a controversial one. Her head was placed in a beautiful, bejeweled, gilded, enthroned doll-shaped reliquary that bears a physical resemblance to a Pagan idol or graven image. Devotees emphasize that veneration is directed toward the holy relics within and not the glittering figure itself. Complicating the issue, the Pagan Celts who once inhabited Conques placed great spiritual emphasis upon human skulls.

Saint Foy, under the anglicized name Saint Faith, also became very popular in England, where numerous churches and places are named in her honor. As befitting an eternal twelve-year-old, Foy has a reputation as a prankster saint who sometimes plays tricks on devotees. She appreciates sparkly offerings, especially jewelry, and has little patience with those who fail to deliver promised offerings promptly after she has performed a miracle. Hannah Green's book, Little Saint, published posthumously in 2000, describes the author's experiences in Conques and her profound spiritual attachment to Saint Foy.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: prisoners; pilgrims; soldiers; travelers.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Saint Foy is traditionally portrayed as a beautiful, regal young girl wearing a crown. Alternatively, she is depicted in the process of being tortured.

**ATTRIBUTES**: the instruments of her torture and murder—gridiron, brazier, rods, sword; the palm branch of martyrdom.

**SPIRITUAL ALLY:** Foy is sometimes venerated with Saint Lawrence, who was also tortured by roasting.

FEAST: 6 October.

SACRED SITES:

- The Sainte-Foy Abbey Church in Conques, France, houses her reliquary and was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1998.
- Saint Faith's Chapel in London's Westminster Abbey was built in the 13th century.
- Saint Faith's Chapel in London's Saint Paul's Cathedral crypt.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; pilgrimage. Foy reputedly has a predilection for things that are shiny, glittering, or golden.

SEE ALSO Faith, Hope, and Charity; James the Greater, Saint; Lawrence, Saint and Glossary: Relics.

### ✤ Frances of Rome, Saint

Also known as Francesca Romana.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Eranges of Dame (1901 O March 1110) diad in the 15th contume long before the

advent of automobiles. Even so, she is the matron saint of safe driving. Frances was born to a noble, wealthy, and pious family in the Trastevere district of Rome. Although she had expressed a desire for a religious vocation, at age thirteen she was given in marriage to a wealthy aristocrat, commander of the papal troops. They were happily wed for forty years, perhaps partly because her husband spent much of his time away from home, enabling Frances and her sister-in-law to care for Rome's sick and needy. Her husband never interfered with her spiritual activities or perhaps even her desire for celibacy.

In 1409, Frances' husband found himself on the wrong side of a political battle. The family's mansion was plundered and their possessions destroyed; the husband was driven into exile for several years. At this time, Frances received the blessing of constantly seeing her guardian angel. She was the only one able to see him. The angel accompanied her everywhere, shining a lantern before her at night to keep her safe. In the 20th century, that lantern was perceived as resembling headlights and, in 1925, Saint Frances of Rome was declared matron saint of motorists and safe travel.

Frances was a visionary and ecstatic. In 1425, she founded a secular society of devout women. When she was widowed eleven years later, she joined the community herself. When she died, strange lights were reported on her face. Her last words were: "The angel has finished his task; he beckons me to follow him."

Cars are traditionally blessed on the feast day of Frances of Rome. She is petitioned for any sort of motor safety, but especially for driving when visibility is poor.

FAVORED PEOPLE: widows; drivers; cab drivers.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: a woman carrying a basket of food accompanied by an angel carrying a lamp.

SACRED SITE: Church of Santa Francesca Romana, Rome.

FEAST: 9 March.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; offerings on behalf of the poor and hungry; pilgrimage.

SEE ALSO Guardian Angels.

### 👡 Francis of Assisi, Saint

Also known as Francisco; François d'Assise; Franz.

**EPITHET:** Patriarch of the Poor.

CLASSIFICATION: Anglican and Roman Catholic saint.

Francis of Assisi (26 September 1181–4 October 1228), founder of the Franciscan order of monks, may be the most famous of all saints, beloved even by those who do not normally love saints. Francis was an unlikely saint. His father, a wealthy Italian merchant, named his son Francisco after the father's love of all things French. Francis' mother was French.

Francis developed a local reputation as a dissolute youth devoted to pleasure. He became a troubadour and a street brawler, and wished to become a soldier. Then he experienced a profound spiritual conversion, actually hearing Christ summon him to abandon his worldly life. Francis heeded the call.

Francis took a vow of poverty, abandoned his finery, and dressed in rough clothes. He walked barefoot, begging for his sustenance and preaching in the streets. His father disowned him. His vow of poverty was controversial, perceived by many as a reproach to the Church, which lavishly displayed its wealth. Francis' conversion was concurrent with the Church's persecution of the Cathars; many perceived Francis' teachings to be similarly heretical.

Francis visited the sick, especially caring for the lepers who terrified and repulsed him. He fought to face and defeat his fears. He called all living beings his sisters and brothers. In 1224, Saint Francis received the stigmata, wounds corresponding to those received by Jesus during the Crucifixion. He was the first person whose stigmata were documented and officially acknowledged as authentic by the Vatican. He died of natural causes, but his health had been severely compromised by his extreme ascetism.

In 1223, Saint Francis invented the crèche, now a Christmas standard. The crèche is a three-dimensional tableau—a nativity scene—depicting the Holy Child in the manger surrounded by Mary and Joseph, shepherds, the Magi, and lots of animals. It may be small enough to be placed on a table or life-size.

Saint Francis was canonized just two years after his death. During his lifetime,

he inspired 5000 other men to join him, thus beginning the Order of the Franciscans. However, in the early 14th century, following the destruction of the Cathars, the Inquisition, led by the Dominicans, turned its focus toward the Franciscans, a competing order whose emphasis on poverty and simplicity was associated with heresies. Many Franciscans were condemned and burned to death.

Francis is famous for his associations with animals. Among Francis' last words on his deathbed were thanks to his donkey for serving him so faithfully. In response, the donkey reputedly wept. Many Roman Catholic churches hold animal-blessing ceremonies on the feast of Saint Francis. Francis preached to the birds. He negotiated a truce between the townsfolk of Gubbio and the wolf preying upon them and their livestock. Francis sought out the wolf, who lay down at his feet. After giving the wolf a lecture about good behavior, he led it into town and formally introduced it to the stunned and startled townsfolk. Francis explained that the wolf was hungry and had to eat. The townsfolk agreed to feed the wolf regularly and the wolf agreed to cease self-service.

Saint Francis is invoked to help control animals peacefully. If wild animals, infestations of vermin, even neighbors' dogs are somehow encroaching on your territory or causing you anxiety, request that Saint Francis provide a happy solution for all. He protects against harm caused by animals and may be invoked to heal bites, stings, and venomous attacks. He is also invoked to protect animals. Small medallions bearing his image are frequently attached to dog collars to provide blessings and amuletic protection.

Saint Francis restores household harmony and peace in the family. He is invoked against dying alone. He is also invoked to exorcise, defeat, and banish the demon Beelzebub—Francis is his opposing force.

In 1979, Pope John Paul II proclaimed Saint Francis to be the patron saint of the ecology movement.

Saint Francis has long served as inspiration for works of art including paintings, sculptures, music, opera, and novels. Filmed depictions of Saint Francis include:

- director Roberto Rossellini's *The Flowers of Saint Francis*, cowritten by Federico Fellini (1950)
- director Franco Zeffirelli's Brother Sun, Sister Moon (1972)

• Director Liliana Cavani's docudrama *Francesco* starring Mickey Rourke in the title role and Helena Bonham Carter as Saint Claire (1989)

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: environmentalists; those who work on behalf of birds and animals, or who care for them.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: a monk preaching to the birds; a monk surrounded by a wide variety of animals; Saint Francis receiving the stigmata.

**SPIRITUAL ALLY:** Saint Claire.

SACRED ANIMALS: all of them!

**SACRED SITE**: Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi, the mother church of the Franciscan Order, located in Assisi, Italy. The saint's body was hidden here to prevent his relics from being scattered throughout Europe. His stone coffin may now be viewed in the basilica's crypt.

ALTAR: Decorate with images of the animals he loved, but keep it simple. Francis disliked the ostentaatious.

COLOR: brown.

SACRED DAY: Monday.

FEAST: 4 October.

**RITUAL**: Burn one brown candle consecutively for nine days to request Francis' aid. Alternatively, one single nine-day candle (a candle designed to burn for nine days) may be substituted.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; good deeds and donations on behalf of animals or the environment; pilgrimage.

Saint Francis' image is familiar, as his statue is frequently publicly displayed in gardens or parks, either as a free-standing statue or incorporated into a birdbath, bird feeder, or fountain.

SEE ALSO Catherine of Siena; Claire; Francis the Firehandler; Guglielma; John Paul II; Joseph, Saint; Mary; Mychal Judge; Seven African Powers; Viridiana, Saint and Glossary: Novena; Stigmata.

### 🔊 Francis de Sales, Saint

Also known as François de Sales.

CLASSIFICATION: Anglican and Roman Catholic saint.

Francis was born on 21 August 1567 at the castle of Sales in Annecy, France. Given a strict Catholic education and encouraged to practice mortification, Francis became a priest and served as spiritual counselor to many noblewomen. He was elected bishop of Geneva in 1602, but since Geneva was vehemently Calvinist, Francis stayed in Annecy. Francis cofounded the Order of the Visitation with Sister Jeanne de Chantal in 1610.

Francis de Sales was the author of the most popular spiritual book of the 17th century, *Introduction of the Devout Life*. Concerned that his messages weren't being spread, Francis had them printed onto sheets of paper that he personally slipped under doors. He is the patron of writers in general, but especially those who self-publish.

At a time when the deaf were routinely dismissed as mentally deficient and were not given spiritual training, Francis developed a method of teaching the catechism via his own system of symbols and sign language. He is now the official patron of the hearing impaired.

Francis de Sales died of a stroke on 27 December 1622. Canonized in 1665, he was proclaimed a Doctor of the Church in 1887.

FAVORED PEOPLE: writers; journalists; editors.

ATTRIBUTE: the sacred heart surrounded by a crown of thorns.

FEASTS: 24 January; 29 January.

**SACRED SITE:** The Basilica of the Visitation in Annecy, France, contains his tomb and is reputedly the site of many miracles.

SEE ALSO Acarie, Madame.

### 🔊 Francis the Firehandler

NAMES: Also known as Saint Francis of Paola.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Francis was born in Paola, a small village in Calabria, to aged parents on 27 March 1416. His parents credited Francis of Assisi with interceding on their behalf, so they named the baby that they had prayed for after that saint. At age twelve, Francis was sent to live with friars for a year. There, he first became associated with miracles, including bilocation—being in two places simultaneously.

Other miracles associated with Francis involved fire.

- Absorbed in prayer when he should have been cooking, the cook fire went out, yet the beans were cooked.
- Sent to the kitchen to fetch burning coals for the thurible (a metal censer suspended from chains and used to burn incense), young Francis had no container, so he carried the coals back to church in the folds of his cassock. The cassock did not burn. Francis did not catch fire.

When his year with them was up, the friars, recognizing that he was a special boy, wanted Francis to stay, but instead his parents took him away on pilgrimage with them, traveling to Assisi, Monte Cassino, Loreto, and Rome.

Upon his return to Paola, Francis lived as a hermit from 1430 to 1435. Twelve disciples eventually joined him; they became the first Hermits of Saint Francis, the religious order eventually renamed the Minim Friars. In 1436, having received permission from the archbishop, they built a church and cloister, founding a new monastic order.

Francis continued to perform miracles.

- He entered a blazing furnace and emerged unscathed.
- When his workers were thirsty, he caused a spring to gush forth by striking a rock with his staff, reproducing a miracle associated with Moses.
- When hunters cooked his pet lamb, Martinello, Francis resurrected the lamb

by calling it by name.

• Francis reputedly returned his sister's son to life.

Francis healed lepers, the blind, and the paralyzed. He exorcised demons from the possessed. A supremely outspoken man, he also aggravated the king, who threatened to destroy his monasteries. Soldiers were sent to arrest Francis, but they witnessed his miracles and left the holy man alone.

Francis was then summoned to the court in Sicily. When the ferryman refused him passage, Francis spread his cloak on the water and walked across the Strait of Messina. Upon his arrival in Sicily, Francis encountered the corpse of a man who had died by hanging three days earlier. He resurrected him and the man joined Francis' order.

When Francis passed through Naples, King Ferrante invited him to the palace. Hoping to curry favor, the king offered Francis a gold coin, which he refused. The king insisted, so Francis took it and broke the coin in two. Blood flowed from the coin. Francis told the king, "This is the blood of your subjects whom you oppress and who cry out to God for vengeance."

Francis spent the last three months of his life in total solitude, preparing for his death. The day before his death, shortly after his ninety-first birthday, he summoned his community, exhorting them to maintain his high standards and to be charitable toward one another. The next day, Good Friday, 2 April 1507, he once again summoned them. He received last rites, appointed a successor, and requested that the Gospel of John be read to him. Francis died while listening.

FAVORED PEOPLE: mariners; ferrymen; boatmen; travelers at sea.

FEAST: 2 April.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; donations on behalf of the poor and suffering.

SEE ALSO Francis of Assisi.

### ∾ Frank, Eva

Aleo known ac Evo Frank: Hava Frank: Chava Frank: Eva-Pachol Frank: Evva

Frank.

#### **CLASSIFICATION:** Frankist saint.

Eva Frank (1754–1816) was the daughter of Jacob Frank (1726–10 December 1791), the controversial Jewish messianic leader born in what is now Ukraine. He claimed to be the reincarnation of King David and also of the self-proclaimed messiah, Sabbatai Zevi. His wife, Hannah Frank, Eva's mother, was declared to be the living incarnation of the Shekhina—in esoteric Judaism, the indwelling spirit of God or the female aspect of God in exile on earth. When Hannah Frank died in 1770, Eva, age sixteen, assumed that role and was addressed as Matronita —a Kabbalistic honorific usually reserved for the Shekhina.

Eva Frank was venerated as the female messiah. By any Jewish standards, this was exceptionally subversive. Jacob Frank eventually evolved a whole new religion, the Frankists, incorporating elements of Judaism and Christianity.

Eva was born in Nikopol, Bulgaria, then part of the Ottoman Empire. She was a member of the Donmeh community, those who continued to venerate Sabbatai Zvi after his conversion to Islam. Eva Frank's birth name was Rachel after her grandmother, Jacob's mother. Other titles by which she was addressed include:

- *Gevirah*, Hebrew for "the Lady" or "the Mistress" (all mystic overtones intended)
- Panna, the closest Polish-language equivalent to Gevirah
- Ha Betulah Ha-Kedushah, Hebrew for "the Holy Virgin"

Eva Frank never married. It is unclear whether she was literally virginal, or even whether the title was ever intended literally. Her mother was also called Holy Virgin, even after she gave birth to Eva and several sons, and shared regular conjugal visits with her husband during his imprisonment at Czestochowa, Poland, where he had been convicted of promulgating Christian heresies.

Constant rumors circulated regarding the Frankists' unorthodox sexual practices. In a sexually conservative era, these rumors were extremely damaging. It's now difficult to tell whether they were simply due to malicious slander from their many enemies or whether the Frankists genuinely were engaged in Tantric rites. Eva Frank was accused of assuming her mother's role in the bedroom, as well as in Heaven. At some point during their extensive travels, Jacob Frank claimed Eva was really an illegitimate Russian princess, the secret daughter of Cathorine the Creat. He claimed that he was only her quardian not her father

but this may have been intended to avoid anti-Semitism or to evoke a glamorous aura, not to facilitate incest.

The Frankists hewed to an independent path, managing to outrage both Jews and Christians. In response to requests from devotees, Jacob Frank commissioned three portraits of Eva in 1777. Copies were highly prized talismans. The prominent Kabbalist and historian Gershom Scholem wrote that, as late as 1930, cousins of United States Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis treasured Eva Frank's portrait, considering her a saint. It was also alleged that Justice Brandeis kept Eva's portrait on his desk. The parents of United States Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter were also reputedly devotees of Eva Frank.

After Jacob Frank's death, Eva assumed command of the Frankists. Thousands made the pilgrimage to visit her and receive her blessings. Her fortunes eventually dwindled and she reputedly died in poverty. Although Eva allegedly died in Offenbach, Germany, in 1816, devotees declared her immortal and only hiding, not dead. They claimed that, like Jesus, Eva Frank would return one day for her second coming.

# G

## 👡 Gabriel Archangel, Saint

Also known as Gavriel; Gabrielus; Gavril; Gavriel; Jibril; Abruel.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Not all saints originally had a human incarnation. Saint Gabriel Archangel is an angel who is simultaneously considered a saint in Christian traditions, as are fellow archangels Michael and Raphael. Gabriel is also a beloved and respected archangel in the Baha'i, Jewish, Muslim, Pagan, and other spiritual traditions. Before he was either a saint or an archangel, Gabriel was worshipped as a deity in ancient Babylonia.

Few sacred beings of any persuasion can claim a résumé as impressive as Gabriel's:

- He is one of only two angels identified by name in the Bible (Michael is the other).
- Gabriel explains Daniel's visions in the Book of Daniel 8: 15–26.
- He was the angel sent to destroy the biblical cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, or so many believe.

Gabriel, the Angel of the Annunciation, advised of the imminent births of Jesus and John the Baptist. The Gospel of Luke 1: 26–38 names him as the angel who hailed Mary and revealed her destiny, while in the Gospel of Luke 1:10–20, Gabriel tells the aged Zachary that he and his equally venerable wife, Elizabeth, will soon become parents for the first time, heralding the birth of John.

- Gabriel may have been the angel in the Garden of Gethsemane.
- According to Islam, he is the angel who dictated the Koran to Muhammad.

- The Kabbalah associates him with the sefirah of *Gevurah* or Power.
- Gabriel is credited with first introducing coffee to people.
- Gabriel will blow the horn that signals Judgment Day.

According to traditional Jewish angelology, Gabriel stands to the left of the Divine Chariot and serves the Creator directly. He is in close communication with the Creator and thus is an extremely powerful intercessor. In other words, if you need someone to whisper your needs and desires into God's ear, Gabriel is perfectly placed. Likewise in the Gospel of Luke 1:19, the archangel states: "I am Gabriel, who stands before God."

Gabriel has a reputation for generosity. In Ethiopian Christian tradition, he is the saint most likely to perform miracles. Although all the archangels and saints are miracle workers, Gabriel is considered the most generous and responsive.

Gabriel presides over life and death. Invoked to heal infertility and aid conception, he also ranks among the Angels of Death, according to Jewish angelology. In this traditional belief system, there isn't one single Angel of Death; instead that function is performed by various angels, some more kindly and pleasantly than others. To have gentle Gabriel serve as your escort to the after-life is considered an honor and a blessing. He may be petitioned by a dying person or that person's loved ones to fulfill this role. According to Christian tenets, Gabriel is the patron saint of happy death and may be invoked for a peaceful, painless demise. Gabriel presides over a palace in the Sixth Heaven where lucky souls spend eternity.

Gabriel has dominion over dreams. Those seeking prophetic dreams or an end to nightmares may invoke his aid.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: Gabriel is traditionally considered the guardian of those born under the zodiac sign Cancer, but may have dominion over the other water signs, Pisces and Scorpio, as well. He is the patron of ambassadors, diplomats, postal workers, philatelists, astrologers, dreamers, remote viewers, mediums, messengers, and those who work in the public relations, broadcasting, and remote sensing industries.

**MANIFESTATION**: described as androgynous. There is some debate as to whether Gabriel is male or female. (There is also a contingent that believes angels lack gender.)

#### **ICONOGRAPHY:**

- Gabriel has inspired innumerable icons and other religious artworks. His image appears in churches throughout the world.
- He appears on virtually all Royal Doors ornamenting Eastern Churches.
- Gabriel has inspired countless artists, including Leonardo da Vinci, Fra Angelico, El Greco, Titian, Donatello, Botticelli, Henry Ossawa Tanner, Edward Burne-Jones, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and John William Waterhouse.
- Gabriel is typically depicted in Ethiopian icons easing the flames of the furnace containing Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego, the three youths condemned by King Nebuchadnezzar (Book of Daniel: 1–3).
- Because of his associations with death, he is the most commonly *identifiable* angel depicted in cemetery statuary (not including generic angels).
- Gabriel ranks among the most popular central figures incorporated into the traditional Mexican ceramic candelabras known as Trees of Life.
- The Judgment tarot card frequently portrays him blowing his horn.

ATTRIBUTE: trumpet or horn.

PLANET: moon.

ELEMENT: water.

SACRED DAY: Monday.

**DIRECTION**: north and/or west (sources disagree).

**SEASON:** winter, especially the month of January.

GEMS: emerald; moonstone; pearl.

COLORS: the spectrum of green and blue, and all shades between.

#### SACRED SITES:

- The Church of Saint Gabriel in Kulubi, Ethiopia, near the city of Dire Dawa hosts two annual pilgrimages honoring Gabriel—one in July, the other in December.
- Basilica of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel in Satu Mare, Romania
- Archangel Gabriel Cathedral in Goritsky, Russia

FEASTS:

• 26 March, 24 July, 8 November (Eastern Church)

- 28 December (Ethiopian Church). The Ethiopian Church also honors Gabriel on the nineteenth day of each month.
- Gabriel's original Roman Catholic feast, 24 March, was officially eliminated in 1969 by Church-calendar reformers, arranging for all three archangel saints to share Michael's feast of 29 September; however, devotees may celebrate either or both dates.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; incense; lilies; white flowers; coffee. Ethiopian tradition suggests that, if Gabriel responds to your pleas regarding fertility, the baby should be named in the archangel's honor.

SEE ALSO Amadou Bamba, Sheikh; Archangel Saints; Joan of Arc; John the Baptist; Joseph of Arimathea; Mary; Michael Archangel, Saint; Raphael Archangel, Saint and Glossary: Intercessor, Pilgrimage.

### na Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother

Also known as Gabriel Possenti; Gabriel of Our Lady of Sorrows.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Francis Possenti, the future Saint Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother, was born 1 March 1838 in Assisi. The eleventh of thirteen children, he was baptized in the same font used to baptize Saint Francis of Assisi centuries before. Possenti's mother died in 1842. Although he was devoutly religious from childhood, no one predicted in his teen years that Possenti would become a saint. He loved parties, flirted with girls, and was vain about his appearance, spending hours before the mirror primping before venturing outside. His nickname was "the dancer."

In 1851, Possenti fell dangerously ill. He vowed that, if he recovered, he would adopt a religious vocation. He did recover, but either forgot or ignored his vow. In 1853, suffering from a serious throat abscess, he again made a similar vow, but this time when he recovered, he kept it. Possenti attributed this recovery to the intercession of Andrew Bobola, who had been beatified earlier that year. (Bobola was not canonized until 1938, eighteen years after Gabriel Possenti's canonization.) Possenti applied to join the Jesuits. Why he did not join is now unknown.

Shortly afterward, the older sister who had raised him since his mother's death

died during a local cholera epidemic. When the epidemic passed, the cathedral in Spoleto where the Possenti family then lived organized a religious procession featuring an ancient Marian icon. As the icon passed young Possenti, he had a profound spiritual experience. He heard a voice asking why he remained in this world. In response, Possenti resolved to enter the Passionist Congregation. His father and other relatives attempted to dissuade him, but he was determined. On 21 September 1856, he received the habit of the Passionists and a new name: Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother.

Possenti died of tuberculosis at age twenty-three on 27 February 1862, before his ordination as a priest. On his deathbed, he held an image of the Sorrowful Mother in his hands. Just before he died, according to onlookers, Gabriel suddenly sat up and reached out his arms, his face radiant, as if he could see something that others could not. It is popularly assumed that Mary, the Sorrowful Mother, answered his prayers and came for him.

Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother was canonized on 13 May 1920, just days before Joan of Arc was also made a saint. Saint Gabriel is invoked to heal and prevent tuberculosis. It is traditional for high school students to visit his shrine 100 days before their graduation.

There is an active campaign to have Gabriel declared the official patron saint of hand-gunners. Unofficially, many already consider him so, although the campaign is controversial. The basis for this patronage is a legend that Gabriel once used his hunting skills to save a town from bandits, but there is doubt as to the veracity of this tale because, at the time it is said to have occurred, he was already in the late stages of the tuberculosis that killed him.

FAVORED PEOPLE: young people; students; seminarians.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: a boy or young man in the garb of a Passionist. Sometimes he gazes toward Heaven, his arms outstretched. He is typically portrayed bathed in celestial light.

SACRED SITE: his shrine in Gran Sasso, near Teramo, Italy, which contains his tomb. Gabriel spent the last two years of his short life in this town.

FEAST: 27 February.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; pilgrimage; charitable donations on behalf of the poor and students.

**SEE ALSO** *Francis of Assisi; Gemma Galgani; Joan of Arc; Mary* and Glossary: *Icon; Intercessor; Saint, Official.* 

## ∾ Gambrinus, Saint

Also known as King Gambrinus.

**EPITHET:** King of Beer.

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

Gambrinus is the patron saint of beer and brewers. Numerous breweries bear his name. According to legend, Gambrinus invented beer, but this is patently untrue, as beer has been brewed since prehistoric times and Gambrinus reputedly lived during the medieval era. In 1543, a German poet wrote that Gambrinus learned the arts of brewing directly from the Egyptian goddess Isis.

Gambrinus' true identity is subject to debate:

- He may have been a legendary king of Flanders.
- Some insist he was John the Fearless, Duke of Burgundy (1371–1419).
- Charlemagne is known to have had a cup-bearer named Gambrinus and this may be the same person.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Gambrinus is envisioned as a king, a crowned knight, a fat man, or sometimes as a fat king. Breweries were once commonly decorated with lifesize images of him. Gambrinus almost always looks happy.

**ATTRIBUTE**: a barrel of beer; a tankard or flagon of beer. Sometimes he holds two —one in each hand.

FEAST: 1 April, his birthday.

**OFFERINGS**: Offer him one of the many beers and ales named in his honor or displaying his image on their labels. Gambrinus looks well fed—offer him some food, too.

SEE ALSO Arnold of Metz, Saint; Arnold of Soissons and Glossary: Saint,

#### Unofficial.

### ∾ Gardel, Carlos

**CLASSIFICATION:** unofficial saint.

Carlos Gardel (11 December 1890–24 June 1935), hero of the tango, is often described as the greatest Latin American popular singer of the 20th century. His birth name was Charles Romuald Gardés. Only later was his surname changed to Gardel. His past is mysterious and there is debate as to the exact year and place of his birth, but the most accepted version is that he was born poor and illegitimate in Toulouse, France, arriving in Buenos Aires, capital of the tango, with his mother on 9 March 1893.

Gardel is credited with inventing the genre known as the tango song, recording what is considered the first tango song, *Mi Noche Triste* ("My Sorrowful Night") in 1917. It rocketed him to incredible success. His popularity can't be overstated. Gardel was a star; he went to Europe and wowed France, where he hung out with Charlie Chaplin. He starred in seven films: four made in the United States and three in France. Audiences sometimes insisted that reels be rewound so that songs could be heard twice.

He died in a plane crash in Medellín, Colombia, on 24 June 1935, during a lengthy concert tour of South America and the Caribbean. Fans were stunned and devastated. Several committed suicide. His body was returned to Buenos Aires by ship in February 1936. Thousands followed the cortege to the funeral, which was attended by hundreds of thousands.

Gardel is venerated by many who adore him as a singer and as an emblem of tango. However, he is also venerated as a folk saint who performs miracles for devotees.

A cigarette is kept eternally lit between the fingers of the votive statue at Gardel's grave, similar to candles kept burning at other shrines.

FAVORED PEOPLE: lovers of the tango.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Images of Gardel are readily available. The most famous is the life-size bronze statue near his grave known as "the bronze that smiles." It

portrays Gardel as a dapper man in a bow tie, flashing a confident smile. He is charismatic, even in bronze.

**SACRED SITE**: his tomb in Chacarita Cemetery, Buenos Aires, lovingly tended by devotees.

FEAST: 24 June.

**OFFERINGS**: carnations; cigarettes; music; pilgrimage. Light a cigarette for him at his grave. Horse racing was Gardel's passion—offer him racing forms.

SEE ALSO Elvis; Gilda.

### ∾ Gaspar, Saint

Also known as Saint Caspar; Kaspar; Gaspard; Gasparde.

**CLASSIFICATION:** venerated by most branches of Christianity.

Gaspar, one of the Three Kings, the emperor of the Orient, traveled the farthest to visit the Christ Child, bearing the gift of frankincense. Despite his provenance, Gaspar is usually envisioned as a beardless Caucasian man wearing gilded clothing. According to French author Michel Tournier (born 1924), however, Gaspar is the Black King—identified as the king of Meroe, now within the borders of modern Sudan—and he brought the gift of gold.

FEAST: 6 January.

FLAG: a golden crescent and star on a blue field.

SEE ALSO Balthazar, Saint; Magi; Melchior, Saint.

### 👡 Gaucho Gil

Also known as Gauchito Gil; Cruz Gil.

CLASSIFICATION: Gaucho saint.

Antonio Mamerto de la Cruz Gil Núñez (c. 1847–c. 1878), better known as Gaucho Gil, is the most famous and popular gaucho saint. Scarlet roadside shrines dedicated to him dot the highways of Argentina. He is the subject of innumerable domestic altars, as well as public shrines.

During Argentina's Civil War, Gil was forcibly drafted into a gaucho militia, but he deserted rather than kill other gauchos after a Guarani spirit appeared in his dreams and advised this action. (The Guarani are an indigenous people of South America.)

Gaucho Gil turned outlaw, stealing from the rich and giving to the poor. He survived as a fugitive for years, developing a reputation as a gaucho Robin Hood and miracle worker. Allegedly, Gaucho Gil only had to touch animals to heal them. He manifested clairvoyant powers and could hypnotize people with his gaze. Needless to say, the police sought to capture him, putting a substantial bounty on his head.

Gaucho Gil was at a party on 8 January celebrating the Feast of Saint Balthazar in approximately 1878 when he was betrayed by a friend. (The day is definite; however, the year is subject to debate. It may be a year earlier or later.) Gil surrendered peacefully, offering no resistance. This is a crucial part of his myth: Gaucho Gil voluntarily surrendered, sacrificing himself in a manner devotees perceive as resembling Christ. In fact, devotees compare Gaucho Gil to Jesus and many claim that he replaces Christ, at least in their own personal devotions.

A police escort was arranged to transport him to the town of Goya for sentencing, but en route, just outside Mercedes, the police officer in charge decided to invoke the "law of flight" and execute Gil. He was placed before a firing squad; every bullet missed.

Gauchito Gil, a devotee of San La Muerte, was invincible and could not be killed because of the San La Muerte amulet he wore beneath his skin. He met his death willingly, however, requesting that the amulet be extracted and then volunteering his own knife for the execution. He allegedly said that he wished or agreed to be killed "... so that I can serve my fellow countrymen."

Gaucho Gil was hung upside down from a thorn tree and decapitated with his own knife. His last words were: "This is an injustice. You are shedding innocent blood." His hands were sliced off to use as proof so that the bounty on him could be collected. Tragically, Gil had already been pardoned, but the official paperwork did not arrive until shortly after his execution.

Gaucho Gil began producing miracles immediately. Just before he died, Gil told one of his executioners, a correct that the man's con was deathly ill, but

told one of his executioners, a sergeant, that the man's son was dealing in, but that Gil would intercede in Heaven on his behalf, as the boy was innocent just as he was and did not deserve to die. When the man later arrived home, he discovered his previously healthy son at death's door. He begged Gaucho Gil's forgiveness and the child miraculously and immediately recovered. The sergeant made a cross from a tree trunk, returned to the scene of Gil's death, and erected it in ground still soaked with Gil's blood. A shrine was born.

Gaucho Gil's blood splattered when his throat was cut, landing on the crippled hand of one of his executioners. The hand was instantly healed. Similarly, the failing vision of Longinus, the Roman soldier who pierced Christ's side with the spear, was miraculously healed when Christ's blood fell into his eye.

Gaucho Gil is an all-purpose saint, petitioned for virtually everything from love and romance to healing or academic success. He offers protection while driving, hence his many roadside shrines. He provides for those in need. He may be asked for money, a home, or a car. He helps devotees find spouses. Thieves invoke his blessings because he, too, survived by stealing.

There is no evidence that Gil was ever a churchgoer. Despite requests, the Roman Catholic Church has consistently refused to begin canonization proceedings for Gaucho Gil.

**MANIFESTATION:** Gaucho Gil is described as an exceptionally handsome, charismatic man with a penetrating, hypnotic gaze. His gaze is sometimes described as paralyzing.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Only one known photograph of Gaucho Gil exists. It shows a smiling man with long dark hair and a prominent mustache. Statues may portray him with a red bandanna, red scarf, and red cape flung over his shoulder.

**ATTRIBUTE**: *bolas*—an indigenous throwing weapon now symbolic of gaucho culture.

COLOR: red.

FEAST: 8 January. As Gil was arrested at a dance, his fiesta features dancing.

**SACRED SITE:** Gaucho Gil's principal shrine is just outside the town of Mercedes in Corrientes Province. Hundreds of thousands visit. During his fiesta, thousands make the pilgrimage from Europe and North America as well.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; red flags; red wine; pilgrimage; retablos (testimonial plaques). Offer him an example of what you're thanking him for—wedding dresses in thanks for marriage, auto parts in thanks for cars or rescue from automobile accidents.

When offering candles to Gaucho Gil, light them with the wicks facing down, because that's the way Gil was facing when executed.

SEE ALSO Balthazar, Saint; Ernesto, Saint; Gaucho Saints; Juan Soldado; Longinus; Muerte, San La and Glossary: Intercessor; Retablo; Saint, Official; Saint, Unofficial.

#### 👡 Gaucho Saints

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saints.

The superficial definition of a gaucho is an Argentinean cowboy, but gauchos are not identical to the cowboys of the United States or to Mexican *vaqueros*. Although now idealized and considered emblems of Argentina, it was once an insult to call someone a gaucho. During Spanish rule and the early years of Argentinean independence, gauchos formed a disreputable subculture.

The word *gaucho* apparently first came into use in 1790. It initially referred to rough, tough, solitary men who traveled with nothing but a knife and maybe a girlfriend. Gauchos were perceived as outcasts, outlaws, and loners. Spanish cattle proliferated on the Argentinean plains, running wild. A plains cattle culture evolved. A high percentage of gauchos were of mixed Guarani and Spanish ancestry, although they can be of any ethnic derivation: European, African, indigenous, or any combination.

By the beginning of the 17th century, gauchos were wandering the pampas, the great plain that extends west, north, and south of Buenos Aires and also encompasses much of Uruguay. Wild and independent, gauchos were a law unto themselves, feeding on cattle. They invented the grilled beef now considered an essential part of Argentinean cuising, but once despised by the upper and middle classes. Eventually, the government sought to exert ownership over these wild cows. By 1620, a crackdown began.

Gauchos were excellent cavalry men. Many fought in the wars of independence from Spain, but others were forcibly conscripted to fight in the Argentinean Civil War or to serve as private armies for wealthy landowners.

Various gauchos are now passionately venerated as unofficial saints. The typical gaucho saint is a Civil War deserter, forced to the margins of society, surviving on wits and courage. Sometimes he commits crimes, but only from necessity. False accusations are a frequent theme in the legends of many Gaucho saints. They are noble outlaws who display a high moral code and traditional virtues like courage, honor, loyalty, and generosity. Many demonstrate a Robin Hood–like nature, similar to their Mexican folk-saint compatriot, Jesús Malverde. Most gaucho saints died tragically, typically betrayed by a Judas figure and cruelly tortured and killed. Although now saints themselves, in life many were devotees of the folk saint San La Muerte.

Gaucho Gil is the most famous gaucho saint. Others included in this book are José Dolores and Francisco Lopez, but there are many more.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Individual gaucho saints may or may not have been devout Christians; however, many are associated with miraculous crosses, which are incorporated into their iconography.

**OFFERINGS**: beef; yerba maté; tobacco products; hard liquor.

SEE ALSO Gaucho Gil; Jesús Malverde; José Dolores; López, Francisco; Muerte, San La.

### 👡 Gemma Galgani

Also known as Saint Gema.

**EPITHETS:** Daughter of Passion; The Lily of Lucca.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

The Italian mystic Gemma Galgani has been described as living like an angel and dying like a saint. Born near Lucca on 12 March 1878 to a prosperous middle-class family, she was the fifth child and first daughter. Her father was a pharmacist. Her mother, Aurelia, died in 1885 of the tuberculosis she had suffered from for five years. Gemma's brother, Gino, died in 1894, also of tuberculosis. Her father was stricken with throat cancer and Gemma nursed him until his death in 1897.

From an early age, Gemma wished to join the Passionist nuns, but her own serious illness prevented this. When she was nineteen, Gemma fell suddenly and abruptly ill. Among her ailments, Gemma suffered from curvature of the spine. Meningitis made her deaf. Abscesses on her head caused her hair to fall out. Her limbs became paralyzed. She was also in a state of profound spiritual distress, because she was convinced that God had destined her for a religious vocation, which now seemed impossible. The mystic visions Gemma experienced also contributed to her being refused acceptance by the Passionist Sisters. Gemma prophesied: "The Passionists will not receive me in life but they will have me in death"

Gemma prayed the novena of the Sacred Heart, ending on the first Friday of March 1899, at which time she was miraculously healed. She credited the Passionist Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother, not yet canonized, with interceding on her behalf.

On 8 June 1899, at age twenty-one, Gemma received the stigmata. Blood flowed abundantly from her wounds, saturating her entire mattress. She experienced visions of Christ and the Holy Mother, as well as her guardian angel, who frequently appeared to her and spoke with her. She also conversed with Mary and various saints, especially Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother. Among other miracles associated with her, Gemma was witnessed levitating. Her epithet, Daughter of Passion, refers to Gemma's profound identification with the Passion of Christ.

Gemma died of tuberculosis in Lucca on Holy Saturday, 11 April 1903, at age twenty-five. During her lifetime, she was controversial. Some already perceived her as a saint, calling her the Virgin of Lucca. Others—including her sister, Angelina, who was not permitted to testify at Gemma's canonization hearings mocked her. Some believed that Gemma was mentally ill and that her physical problems were psychosomatic. Her confessor initially doubted Gemma's mystical experiences, but after he became convinced of their reality, he gathered and preserved Gemma's writings, including her diary and letters, many of which have since been published наve знисе веен ривныец.

After death, Gemma's reputation as a saint grew. Her body was transferred to the Passionist Monastery in Lucca in 1923, fulfilling her earlier prophecy. She was beatified on 14 May 1933 and canonized on 2 May 1940 by Pope Pius XII, only thirty-seven years after her death.

Gemma Galgani is petitioned for healing, especially of meningitis, tuberculosis, and spinal injuries. She is invoked for financial stability and to create opportunities for those with disabilities or any roadblock to success.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: students; orphans; pharmacists; young people seeking religious vocation.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: As a modern saint, actual photographs of Gemma are available. Her primary iconic image depicts her as a beautiful young woman gazing Heavenward.

ATTRIBUTES: guardian angel; stigmata; the robe of the Passionists.

**SACRED SITES:** Her primary shrine is in the Passionist Monastery in Lucca, Italy, where her relics are housed. A pilgrimage route dedicated to Saint Gemma in Lucca includes the houses in which she lived. Other important churches dedicated to her include:

- the Sanctuary of Saint Gemma in Madrid, where her heart is contained in a statue reliquary
- the Sanctuary of Saint Gemma in Barcelona

FEASTS: 11 April; 16 May.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; incense; lilies; roses; pilgrimage.

SEE ALSO Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother; Guardian Angels; Mary and Glossary: Intercessor; Novena; Relics; Saint, Official; Stigmata.

#### ∾ Genesius, Saint

Also known as Saint Ginés.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Genesius (died c. 300) was an actor who, while performing in a comedic parody of Christianity for an audience including Roman emperor Diocletian, experienced an unexpected and genuine religious conversion. It occurred just as the actor underwent a mock baptism. Genesius spontaneously scrapped the sacrilegious script and instead ad-libbed a speech denouncing Diocletian for his persecution of Christians. Allegedly, the speech was delivered as Genesius gazed directly into the emperor's eyes.

Another name for the theatrical masks associated with Genesius is "Janus mask." The name honors Janus, the literally two-faced Roman deity of doors and gateways. As he has two faces, Janus is believed to see beginnings and endings simultaneously. Thus, images of his faces were once placed on curtains that opened and shut to indicate the start and finish of theatrical productions. Any resemblance between the names of the ancient god and the Christain saint is generally described as coincidental.

Initially, Diocletian was amused, assuming this was part of the show. At some point, however, he realized that this was no performance. Genesius meant every word he said. Genesius kept preaching, ultimately embarrassing Diocletian before his guests and enraging him.

Diocletian stopped the show. Ordering that Genesius be arrested, he devised his own theatrical performance: Genesius' flesh was torn with hooks. He was beheaded and burned on stage. (No word on what befell the rest of the theatrical troupe.)

In addition to sponsoring and providing for actors, who are his primary devotees, Saint Genesius is invoked to heal and relieve epilepsy and seizure disorders.

FAVORED PEOPLE: actors; comedians; lawyers; secretaries; printers.

ATTRIBUTES: actor's comedic mask and stringed musical instrument.

FEAST: 25 August.

SACRED SITES: The Actor's Chapel of Saint Malachy's Roman Catholic Church in New York City's Broadway district is dedicated to Saint Genesius.

### 👡 Geneviève, Saint

Also known as Geneviève of Paris.

#### CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint in most branches of Christianity.

When Geneviève (c. 422–500) was seven years old, Germanus, bishop of Auxerre and the future Saint Germain, visited Nanterre, her hometown. He singled out the little girl for a special blessing, predicting that she would be a holy woman.

When she was fifteen, Geneviève's wealthy parents died. She traveled to Paris to live with her godmother and there she dedicated herself to spiritual vocations. She engaged in charity work, subjecting herself to severe austerities. She is described as a vegetarian, which is technically true—she consumed nothing but bread and water and that only twice a week, fasting the rest of the time. Perhaps unsurprisingly, considering her profound fasting, Geneviève experienced visions, which she shared with the public. She evoked strong reactions from people. Some considered her a holy woman; others were ready to drown her.

In 451, Attila the Hun prepared to invade Paris and Parisians prepared to flee. Geneviève pleaded with them not to leave, insisting that Attila would retreat. In return, she was denounced as a witch and false prophet. People threatened to stop their leave-taking just long enough to drown her in the Seine. As it happened, Geneviève was absolutely correct; Attila changed course and Paris was spared. Geneviève, too, was spared when Germanus, bishop of Auxerre, hearing of her troubles, sent an emissary to ensure her safety. Her prayers are frequently credited with diverting Attila.

Paris was next besieged by the Franks under the command of Childeric, son of Merovée, founder of the Merovingian line of kings. The Franks blockaded the city. Geneviève organized and led a rescue mission bringing grain to starving Parisians. Although Childeric conquered Paris, he admired Geneviève's courage. She became a regular guest at his court, forming a close friendship with his son, Clovis, first king of France, and Clovis' Christian wife, Clotilde. Geneviève is credited with Clovis' conversion in 496, although he was actually converted by Clotilde. Clotilde is also now considered a saint, albeit a less famous one than Geneviève.

King Clovis founded the Church of Saints Peter and Paul and Geneviève was eventually interred there. Miracles at her grave caused the church to be renamed in her honor and led to her canonization. In 1791, during the French Revolution, the church was renamed the Panthéon, Latin for "all the gods." Revolutionaries publicly burned Geneviève's remains there in 1793.

Saint Geneviève may be invoked for anything; however, her specialty is preventing disasters, including floods and drought. She can allegedly soothe and calm the possessed.

FAVORED PEOPLE: Parisians; female soldiers; women warriors; candle makers.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Geneviève is often portrayed as a shepherdess, although this should be understood metaphorically, not literally. Other images depict her standing in a boat bearing grain.

ATTRIBUTES: loaf of bread; key; candle.

**SACRED SITE:** The Chapel of Saint Geneviève in Saint Sulpice is built over a site in Paris once dedicated to Isis.

FEAST: 3 January.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; also French wine, pastry, perfume, cheese, or other French products.

SEE ALSO Catherine of Siena.

### ∾ Gennaro, Saint

Also known as Saint Januarius.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Saint Gennaro (died c. 305) is the saint of the miraculous blood. Gennaro, reputedly the bishop of Benevento, was martyred in Pozzuoli, near Naples. After he was beheaded, his family's slave, Eusebia, once Gennaro's wet nurse, gathered two vials of his blood, which dried. When Gennaro's relics were eventually transferred to Naples, the blood spontaneously liquefied. The miracle of the blood, described as "boiling," has repeated three times a year, on schedule, ever since: 19 September, 16 December, and the first Saturday in May.

The Aunts of San Gennaro are a women's hereditary religious sisterhood in Naples dedicated to Gennaro. Members claim descent from the woman who preserved Gennaro's blood.

The first historical reference to the miracle of Gennaro's blood occurs in a document from 1389. Saint Gennaro protects against volcanic eruptions, metaphoric as well as literal. He allegedly keeps a watchful eye on Mount Vesuvius. The dates his blood boils correspond to his feast day and the anniversaries of occasions when he successfully soothed Mount Vesuvius. Years when his blood failed to liquefy coincide with volcanic eruptions. Disaster and misfortune are also anticipated in these years. Shortly after Gennaro's blood failed to liquefy in 1980, almost 3000 people were killed in an earthquake in nearby Irpinia.

Saint Gennaro is the patron saint of blood banks. He may be invoked by those suffering from illnesses associated with blood (leukemia; hemophilia; AIDS), as well as by those needing transfusions. He is invoked against the Evil Eye.

San Gennaro is considered an exceptionally responsive, generous saint, described as "the saint who never says no." Ask him for what you need.

**FAVORED PEOPLE:** Neapolitans. Gennaro is considered the most important of Naples' many patron saints. He is also the patron of those who work with blood and vampirologists.

#### SACRED SITES:

- His relics, including a vial of his blood, are in the Cathedral of Naples. The reliquaries are exposed for public veneration three times annually, coinciding with the expected liquefaction of Gennaro's blood. A huge festival celebrates the miracle.
- The Chapel of the Treasure of San Gennaro, within the Cathedral of Naples, was built as an ex-voto to the saint for rescuing his city from the plague. The chapel is considered one of the greatest manifestations of Neopolitan Baroque style.
- The Museum of San Gennaro's Treasury in Naples houses a collection of precious ex-voto gifts, including jewels, statues, and priceless paintings amassed over five centuries. The museum, which opened in February 2004, is

located adjacent to the Cathedral of Naples.

- The parish church in Pozzuoli possesses the stone on which Gennaro was reputedly beheaded. Bloodstains reputedly liquefy at the same time as the vial of dried blood in Naples.
- The Most Precious Blood Church on Mulberry Street in New York City's Little Italy. Over one million people attend the annual Feast of San Gennaro, New York's oldest and largest religious festival. A legend suggests that women who participate in his feast activities improve their marital prospects.

FEAST: 19 September.

COLOR: red.

**OFFERINGS**: red wine; candles; incense; the special foods associated with his annual feast, including sausages, zeppoles (type of pastry), and white *torrone*—a type of nougat—with almonds and honey; pilgrimage; donations to his churches.

SEE ALSO Patricia of Naples and Glossary: Ex-Voto; Relics.

### 👡 George, Saint

Also known as Georges; Giorgio; Egorii; Jorge; Jordi; Yuri; Mar Jirjis; Mar Juryus; Mar Girjis.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated in virtually all branches of Christianity.

Saint George lancing the dragon is among the most recognizable motifs of the Western world. He is among the most beloved of all saints and is venerated by virtually every branch of Christianity that engages in saint veneration, although the legends each tells about him may differ. George is also among those saints who have both a conventional Christian identity and a magical alterego.

There is no historical documentation regarding Saint George whatsoever. According to legend, he was an early fourth-century Christian soldier who came to a Libyan city that was being terrorized by a dragon lurking in surrounding marshes. The dragon was offered a new virgin daily, allegedly as a method of pacifying it and preventing it from rampaging through the city. Girls were chosen by lots and delivered to the dragon dressed in bridal gowns, implying that the dragon was collecting a harem ин шадон жаз сонссинд а нагсин.

Eventually, the lot fell to the king's beautiful daughter, but before the royal princess could be delivered, George rode into town on his white horse and fought and killed the dragon. The grateful citizens promptly converted to Christianity. Saint George returned to Palestine, where he was martyred, allegedly for refusing to sacrifice to Apollo.

Legend says George's birthplace was Lydda, now known as Lod in modern Israel. During the Byzantine era, it was called Georgiopolis after the saint. Lydda is very close to Jaffa, where the mythical Perseus slew the water dragon that menaced the princess Andromeda.

Not widely venerated until the sixth century, George became extremely popular in Egypt, Ethiopia, Georgia, and the Middle East, as well as in areas under Byzantine control or influence. Legend says that the Knights Templar carried veneration of George from the Levantine Coast to western Europe. Crusaders credited him with helping them capture Jerusalem. (Saint Maurice, another warrior saint, is sometimes given co-credit.)

George was not originally a dragon-killer, although he was a heroic knight who rescued innocent children and princesses. His earliest iconography shows him without the dragon. He is among the primary saints of the Coptic (Egyptian) Church, and the sacred images they associate with him do not incorporate the dragon.

The earliest known picture of George slaying the dragon is a late 11th-century painting from a rock church in Cappadocia, now in modern Turkey. The oldest documented written version of the story of George and the dragon is contained in Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend* and dates from approximately 1263.

The prototype for Saint George and the dragon may derive from the image of the Egyptian hero deity Horus on horseback spearing his rival deity Set in his guise as a crocodile, or of the Greek god Apollo slaying either the dragon Typhon or the Delphic python. The image of George slaying the dragon may be interpreted as a metaphor for the victory of Christianity, represented by the shining knight, over Paganism, depicted as a loathsome worm. (Alternatively, the dragon represents Satan himself.)

• A ninth-century Georgian icon depicts Saint George's horse trampling Roman emperor Diocletian.

• In Russian folk religion, the dragon George battles is explicitly identified with the witch goddess Baba Yaga.

Ironically perhaps, George is among the saints most associated with magic, witchcraft, and surviving vestiges of Paganism. The eve of his feast is considered among the most potent times of the year for divination and spell-casting. Throughout Central and Eastern Europe, Saint George's Eve is the night for magical and fertility rites. In Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula*, when the hero Jonathan Harker first arrives in Transylvania, he is warned by a local woman: "It is the eve of St. George's Day. Do you know that tonight, when the clock strikes midnight, all the evil things in the world will have full sway?" She begs him to wait for a few days before proceeding to Castle Dracula.

In Hungary, Saint George's Eve is the equivalent of May Eve celebrated elsewhere in Europe: the night when witches revel. Allegedly, if you went to a crossroads on Saint George's Day, you met all the local witches who'd been there since dawn collecting dew with long sheets. These were later wrung out and the dew bottled and preserved for potions and spells. Of course, if someone saw you at the scene, you'd be suspected of witchcraft, too.

In Romania, spectral blue lights that are visible only on Saint George's Eve allegedly reveal the location of buried treasure. Throughout the Balkans, Saint George's night is the ideal time for magic rituals intended to ward off ghosts, spirits, and especially vampires, who are traditionally destroyed by being pierced with stakes in the same manner that George impales the dragon. Reputedly, wearing a Saint George medallion may be sufficient to keep timid vampires away.

#### George's True Love Vision

This ritual allegedly bestows a vision of your soul mate. Focus intently on your desire during all steps of this spell:

- 1. Go to a remote crossroads on Saint George's Eve.
- 2. Comb your hair backward.
- 3. Prick the smallest finger on your left hand with a needle and allow three drops of blood to fall on the earth.
- 4. You may receive an immediate vision, conjured by the blood; if not, go home silently. Do not stop, turn around, or look back.

5. Go to sleep. Your love should appear in your dreams. Do not speak until you have recorded your dream.

Because George killed the much stronger dragon, he is associated with magic spells of domination. Burning Saint George candles (commercially available) is said to give you control over people or situations.

In Romania, there are two Saint Georges:

- Saint George, who is venerated in church on his feast day
- Green George, who presides over fertility rituals on Saint George's Eve

Russia also acknowledges two Saint Georges who are simultaneously one:

- Egorii the Brave, Dragon Slayer and Upholder of Christianity
- Springtime Egorii, who unlocks the frozen earth after winter and protects cattle and horses

In Russian folk religion, George (Egorii) rules all animals, including reptiles. Invoke him if you require protection from snakes or alligators. George provides for animals as well as for people, as a Russian folktale makes clear. One day when the saint was out riding, a wolf attacked his horse. George immediately bashed the wolf with his lance. Retreating, the wolf complained: "Why do you hurt me, George? You know I'm hungry." George responded, gesturing toward another horse: "If you're hungry, all you have to do is ask me. Take that other horse over there."

In Albania, George is feted twice: the Roman Catholic Feast of Saint George is on 23 April, while the Eastern Church honors him on 6 May. Allegedly, botanicals harvested between the two feast days display extremely powerful healing properties.

Saint George was venerated by the Skopts, a controversial and outlawed Russian spiritual tradition founded in the mid-18th century. In order to flee corporal bonds and free themselves completely from the influence of the flesh, the Skopts practiced castration as a spiritual rite. The icon of George on his white horse spearing the dragon was perceived as personifying the Skopt faith. The white horse symbolized complete purity without a trace of taint, while the dragon symbolized sexual desire and worldly temptation. "To ride the white horse" was a Skopt metaphor for removing genitalia.

In Barcelona, on the other hand, Saint George's Day, or La Diada de Sant

Jordi, is the equivalent of Saint Valentine's Day elsewhere. George on his white horse is perceived as the epitome of chivalry and romance—in tarot parlance, the Knight of Cups rather than the Knight of Swords, as he is perceived elsewhere. Lovers celebrate by exchanging gifts. Women are traditionally given roses, while men are given books.

Both Miguel de Cervantes, author of *Don Quixote*, and William Shakespeare died on 23 April, Saint George's Day, so in 1923, an enterprising Barcelona bookseller began to promote the holiday, which was already locally associated with romance. As of 2010, it is reported that four million roses and 400,000 books are sold on this day in Barcelona. UNESCO has declared La Diada de Sant Jordi to also be National Book Day.

- Saint George is identified with the Green Man, who epitomizes the unvanquishable and primordial male generative force.
- Muslims who visit George's many shrines in Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Palestine, or Syria identify him with Al Khidr.
- In African Diaspora traditions, Saint George is identified with the warrior spirit Ogun.

The Saint George's Night Uprising is the name given to the ultimately unsuccessful attempt by indigenous Estonians to overthrow the German overlords who had conquered their lands during the Northern Crusades. The rebellion began on 23 April 1343, or Saint George's Day.

In both his conventional and magical guise, Saint George is considered a powerful and miraculous healer. Classified among the Fourteen Holy Helpers, his specialty is healing sexually transmitted diseases, including syphilis and herpes. He is also among the saints believed able to cure leprosy. In the Coptic and Eastern Churches, he's renowned for healing mental illness. In recent years, George has been called upon to heal and relieve fibromyalgia, as that illness is compared to battling a dragon. George heals abscesses, cysts, and anything that needs to be lanced. He is also invoked to banish evil spirits and to heal animals and preserve their health.

**FAVORED PEOPLE:** Saint George is the patron saint of many places and people, including Beirut, Canada, Christian Palestinians, England, Ethiopia (where he is considered the King of Saints), Georgia (the nation named in his honor), Greece, Montenegro, Portugal, Russia, and Serbia. He is also the patron of soldiers,

farmworkers, dragon slayers, knights, butchers, armorers, saddlers, and equestrians. He is the guardian of horses and those who care for them. In Brazilian folk tradition, Saint George is the patron saint of murderers.

### **ICONOGRAPHY:**

- The traditional Western image portrays him as a handsome knight mounted on a white horse in the act of killing a prone dragon.
- The most famous Coptic image of George depicts him on horseback with a small figure mounted behind him holding a coffee pot. This second figure may be George's page or servant, or the princess he rescued. Copts often commemorate a pilgrimage by tattooing a sacred image on their inner right wrist: this image of George is a favorite.
- Several icons of Saint George in the Republic of Georgia are reputed to possess miracle-working powers.
- George is a favorite subject of Russian Palekh and other lacquer art.
- George is virtually always depicted riding a white horse, but there are rare exceptions. He is occasionally portrayed on icons mounted on a black horse—for example, on the icon known as The Black George housed in the British Museum. The substitution of the black horse for the usual white mount may be an oblique indication that the icon depicts George in his subversively magical guise.

**APPARITION:** An apparition of Saint George leading an army of ghostly bowmen appeared at the Battle of Mons in France during World War I in support of British forces. Similar legends derive from Georgia: a knight on a white horse descended from the skies to lead the Georgian army into battle on numerous occasions.

**ATTRIBUTES**: a red cross on a white background (officially known as the Cross of Saint George); lance; dragon; princess; white horse.

**SPIRITUAL ALLIES:** Russian legend suggests that George is the miraculous baby brother of the trio of sister saints, Faith, Hope, and Charity. They may be venerated together. Saint George is also venerated along with Michael Archangel who, according to legend, comforted George during his brutal martyrdom and fortified his will.

FEASTS: George has many feasts: 23 April (Western Church; the preceding

evening is magical Saint George's Eve); 1 May (Coptic Church); 5 May (Orthodox Syrian Church); 6 May (some Eastern Churches); 3 November (Russian Church); third Sunday in July (in Gozo); fourth Sunday in July (in Malta). The Ethiopian Church celebrates George on the twenty-third day of each month. He is honored annually on Trinity Sunday in Mons, Belgium. As part of festivities, which are attended by thousands, the battle between George and the dragon is reenacted. It's believed that if onlookers can grab a piece of the dragon, their luck is ensured for the next year.

Festivals honoring George and typically coinciding with his feast day are held throughout England. Traditional performances of the Mummer's play, *The Play of Saint George*, may be incorporated, as well as reenactments of George's battle with the dragon.

COLORS: red; white; green.

SACRED PLANTS: nettles; harebell.

SACRED SITES: An exceptionally large number of churches around the world are dedicated to Saint George—no fewer than forty-one in Moscow alone. There are reputedly 365 shrines dedicated to him in the Republic of Georgia, one for each day of the year. There were 350 Coptic churches dedicated to him in 1980 when they were officially counted, but that number is believed to be significantly greater now.

Some of the most significant pilgrimage churches include:

- the Church of Saint George in Lod, Israel, which allegedly contains his tomb
- Saint George's Cathedral in Jerusalem
- the Church of Saint George in Istanbul
- the Snake Church in Göreme, Turkey, so called because of the frescoes of Saint George spearing a snake-dragon
- the Monastery of Saint George in Old Cairo, Egypt, where, during the saint's annual festival, monks exorcise demons from the possessed. The monastery houses a miraculous iron collar and chain said to have belonged to the saint. Legend suggests that if you wrap the chain around your body and place the collar on your neck while offering prayers to George, you will receive his blessing. The chains of Saint George also reputedly heal nervous disorders and mental illness, including schizophrenic psychoses.
- The Church of Saint George in Old Cairo is reputedly built over a site where

the Holy Family took refuge during their flight to Egypt

- Saint George Bay in Beirut, said to be the place where George slew the dragon
- the Grotto of Saint George in Jounieh Bay in Lebanon where the saint is said to have cleaned his sword following his battle with the dragon. Long a sacred site, before it was dedicated to Saint George, the grotto contained a shrine to the Phoenician deity Adonis. The grotto's waters reputedly enhance women's fertility and fortify children in fragile health.
- the Maronite Cathedral of Saint George in Beirut
- Saint George's Chapel in England's Windsor Castle
- the Church of Saint George in the East in London
- Saint George's Cathedral in Southwark, London
- Saint George's Church in Gravesend, Kent, England, resting place of Pocahontas
- Saint George Cathedral and Museum in Addis Ababa completed in 1911, the site of Emperor Haile Selassie's 1930 coronation
- the Church of Saint George (Beta Ghiorghis) in Lalibela, Ethiopia
- the Saint George Monastery, also known as Deir Mar Jirjis, in Syria
- the Church of Saint George, the oldest extant building in Sofia, Bulgaria
- Saint George's Basilica in Prague
- Saint George's Basilica in Malta
- the Church of Saint George in Singapore

**OFFERINGS**: candles; lambic beer; images of dragons; flowers.

SEE ALSO Andrew, Saint; Faith, Hope, and Charity; Fourteen Holy Helpers; Khidr, Al; Margaret of Antioch; Maurice, Saint; Nino, Saint; Seven African Powers; Theodore of Sykeon; Well Saints and Glossary: Icon; Syncretism.

# 👓 Gerard Majella, Saint

Also known as San Gerardo Maiella; Saint Geraldo.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Gerard Majella (6 April 1725–16 October 1755) was rejected because of his poor health when he tried to join the Capuchin Order. The Redemptorist missionaries accepted him as a lay brother, allowing him to serve as sacristan, decriver trilor medic, and cardener. Carard became renewmed for producing

miracles and was reputedly capable of levitation, bilocation (being in two places at once), and clairvoyance.

A pregnant woman accused Gerard of fathering her child. He did not respond or defend himself, instead retreating into silence. Eventually, the woman recanted her accusation. This is the basis for his patronage of all aspects of pregnancy and childbirth. Saint Gerard Majella is the patron saint of unborn children and is thus the favored saint of many antiabortion organizations. In Haitian Vodou traditions, the Gédé spirits of the dead, especially Gédé Nibo, are syncretized to Saint Gerard Majella, perhaps because of the human skull that is his traditional attribute.

Saint Gerard was associated with fairly flamboyant mortifications of the flesh, including bloody, violent self-flagellation. He died at age twenty-nine of tuberculosis.

FAVORED PEOPLE: expectant mothers; unborn children; the falsely accused.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** He is depicted contemplating a cross or in the act of praying while levitating.

ATTRIBUTES: cross; skull.

SACRED DAY: Monday.

FEAST: 16 October.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; lilies; images of skulls.

SEE ALSO André, Saint and Glossary: Syncretism; Vodou, Voodoo, Hoodoo.

## 👡 Gerlac, Saint

Also known as Gerlac of Valkenburg or Gerlach; Gerlache; Gerlachus.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Gerlac, born in approximately 1100, was a Dutch knight who led a wild, dissolute life as a soldier, mercenary, and highwayman until his wife died. Gerlac was completely and profoundly devastated. Perhaps he had a spiritual

awakening or perhaps he sought to do penance for his sins, but he put his old life behind him and transformed himself into a holy wanderer.

Gerlac traveled to Rome and Jerusalem and spent seven years caring for the sick and ailing before returning to Holland in approximately 1157. Gerlac was a wealthy man. Upon his return, he donated all he owned to the poor and became a hermit.

Gerlac moved into a hollowed-out oak on the property he had once owned. He subsisted on bread mixed with ashes. He made a daily pilgrimage on foot to the Basilica of Saint Servatius in Maastricht. Local peasants perceived him as a holy man, but local monks were annoyed, feeling that if Gerlac was going to have a religious vocation, he should join their monastery and behave more conventionally. Their status and authority may have been threatened as local people turned to Gerlac for assistance and spiritual guidance, rather than asking the monks.

Appealing to their bishop, the monks accused Gerlac of hoarding wealth by hiding it in his oak tree. The bishop ordered the tree chopped down. Gerlac appealed and received assistance from powerful friends, including Hildegard of Bingen, but to no avail. The oak tree was cut down. No treasure was found. The bishop sought to make amends by using the tree's wood to construct a small shack for Gerlac.

Near the end of his life, mystical phenomena began to manifest. Water from a local well transformed into wine three times. There is speculation that these were signs indicating that Gerlac's time of penance had come to an end. He died on 5 January. The year of his death is variously given as between 1164 and 1172.

Legend has it that Saint Servatus himself administered the last rites, although, reading between the lines, this may indicate that Gerlac did not receive last rites from the local priesthood and that perhaps their feud was not completely resolved at the time of his death. His grave quickly became a pilgrimage site. In 1201, a cloister was founded near his grave, which in 1225 evolved into a convent for noblewomen.

Gerlac is the patron of animals, especially domestic animals and livestock. He may also be invoked to protect trees.

FAVORED PEOPLE: foresters; those who care for animals, plants, and wildlife.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Gerlac is portrayed standing within his hollow tree, often with a cow and donkey nearby. He may have a thorn in his foot.

FEAST: 5 January.

**SACRED SITE:** Sint-Gerlachus Church in Houthern-Sint Gerlach, the Netherlands. The church features fifteen frescoes depicting Gerlac's life and also contains his tomb.

**OFFERING:** Plant a tree in his honor.

SEE ALSO Hildegard of Bingen.

## 👡 Germaine Cousin, Saint

Also known as Germana.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Germaine (1579–15 June 1601), born to a poor farming family near Toulouse, France, was a sickly child with a withered, partially paralyzed right arm. She suffered from scrofula, a type of disfiguring skin ailment. Her mother died when Germaine was an infant. Her father's next wife was the proverbial wicked stepmother. She forced Germaine to live in the stable, telling her father this was necessary so that their children would not be infected by Germaine's ailment.

Germaine was sent to labor as a shepherdess when she was nine. She never owned a pair of shoes. Her stepmother beat and starved her and punished alleged infractions by scalding her with boiling water.

Germaine spent much of her time praying. Neighbors and relatives mocked her piety. The earliest miracles now associated with Germaine occurred while she was still alive. Her stepmother accused her of stealing bread from the kitchen. Threatening to beat her with a stick, the stepmother ordered Germaine to open her apron and reveal what was hidden within. Germaine complied and flowers, not bread, tumbled out. Similar miracles are associated with Saints Elizabeth and Casilda. Germaine died on her pallet in the stable at age twentytwo.

Forty years later, her body was accidentally exhumed and Germaine was discovered to be incorrupt: her body showed no signs of decay, traditionally interpreted as a sign of sanctity. Miracles of healing were immediately attributed to her. Over 400 miracles have now been documented, ranging from restoring sight to the blind to curing terminal breast cancer. She is especially involved to heal ailments of the spine and hip. Saint Germaine Cousin is also invoked against poverty and powerlessness.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: orphans; victims of abuse; the abandoned; the disabled; those lacking physical beauty.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Votive images of Saint Germaine inevitably portray her as a sturdy, healthy, pretty barefoot girl wearing fresh, clean clothing. She is usually depicted with her sheep or a watchdog. She may have an apron filled with flowers.

ATTRIBUTES: distaff; shepherd's crook.

FEAST: 15 June.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; flowers; donations or good works on behalf of abused and neglected children.

SEE ALSO Casilda, Saint; Elizabeth of Hungary and Glossary: Incorrupt.

∾ Gertrude of Nivelles, Saint

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Gertrude's father, Pepin of Landen, an ancestor of Charlemagne and a highranking official serving the Merovingian king Dagobert I, died when Gertrude (626–17 March 659) was fourteen. By then, Gertrude had already publicly announced that she would wed no one but Jesus Christ. Her mother founded a monastery for monks and nuns in Nivelles, now in modern Belgium. Gertrude joined her there, becoming its first abbess at age twenty. Famed for her tremendous hospitality toward pilgrims, she was a visionary who died at age thirty-three, the same age as Jesus.

Gertrude is invoked against rats and mice, as well as to heal and protect those who are deathly afraid of these animals. She is frequently portrayed in the company of rodents and may be understood as their guardian and controller. She presides over "exorcism" rituals intended to banish rodents. By extension, Gertrude has become the unofficial matron saint of cats.

 Gertrude is considered the matron of the recently dead. According to a medieval legend, it is a three-day trek to the after-life. The dead spend the first night of the journey under Saint Gertrude's protection. She is also the guardian of graves.

It is unclear whether Gertrude's associations with rodents derive from her miraculous ability to prevent them from destroying harvests and spreading disease, or from her associations with death. In pre-Christian Germanic folk belief, mice can represent souls of the dead.

- Gertrude is invoked by travelers seeking hospitality.
- She allegedly provides safety at sea.
- Gertrude heals and protects against mental disorders and phobias.

Because of her associations with these animals, Gertrude of Nivelles can be considered the guardian of those born in the Year of the Rat, as well as the Vietnamese zodiac's Year of the Cat.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: travelers; pilgrims; cat lovers; herbalists.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Gertrude is portrayed as an abbess, with mice running up her cloak or pastoral staff or sitting at her feet. Sometimes she is accompanied by a cat or holds a large mouse or rat.

ATTRIBUTES: rats; mice; cats; squirrel; distaff; lily; chalice filled with wine.

FEAST: 17 March.

SACRED SITE: The bronze statue of Saint Gertrude on the Saint Gertrude's Bridge (*Gertraudenbrucke*) in Berlin. The bridge once led to a hospital named in Gertrude's honor. As may be expected, the statue features mice. If you make a wish or say a prayer and then rub the heads of the mice, it is said that Saint Gertrude will grant your wish, providing you keep your wish secret.

**OFFERINGS**: gold and silver mice; less expensive images of mice and rats; feed stray and hungry cats in her honor; candles; wine; flowers.

SEE ALSO Gudula, Saint.

## 👡 Ghriba, La

Also known as Al Ghriba; El Ghriba.

EPITHETS: The Marvelous Girl; The Mysterious One; The Foreigner.

CLASSIFICATION: Jewish saint.

A strange, beautiful young girl appeared mysteriously on Djerba Island off the coast of Tunisia. She lived quietly in solitude and poverty. People tolerated her but never really welcomed her or warmed to her. One day, her house burned down. Her body was found among the ashes—dead, but completely intact, with not a burn mark on her. This was perceived as a miraculous mark of sanctity and people suddenly realized that rather than the oddball they had presumed her to be, she had been a saint in their midst. People flocked to pay homage and request her intercession in Heaven. Miracles occurred in response to petitions. A synagogue was erected over the site of her burned-down house, now known as the Ghriba Synagogue.

Ghriba means "strange," "marvelous," or "wondrous" in Arabic. At least six African synagogues have historically been called Ghriba, but the most famous is the one on Djerba associated with La Ghriba, the marvelous girl.

An alternative legend suggests that La Ghriba was a young Jewish refugee fleeing the fall of Jerusalem in the first century ce. She carried stones from the Jerusalem Temple with her. When she reached Djerba, she collapsed and died of exhaustion. The synagogue named for the wondrous girl was erected on the site where she died.

El Ghriba Synagogue is the most famous of the many synagogues and Jewish prayer houses that once flourished on Djerba, not just because of its mysterious miracle-working saint—although she is a factor—but because it is believed to possess relics from Solomon's Temple, possibly brought by a group of fleeing priests. (Sometimes, the marvelous girl is credited with bringing the stones. Sometimes the stones are alleged to have flown to Djerba all by themselves or were carried there by angels.)

La Ghriba may be petitioned for anything, but her specialties include marriage, fertility, and healing. Ghriba was once considered a kind of Jewish Lourdes where Christians and Muslims, as well as Jews and others, sought blessings. In recent years, however, it has been the target of Islamist hostilities. In 1985, a local policeman who had been hired to provide security instead opened fire on a festival crowd, killing three, including a child. On 11 April 2002, a suicide bomber drove a gas truck close to the temple. The resulting explosion caused twenty-one deaths.

# La Ghriba Ritual

This particular ritual invoking La Ghriba's aid must be done at her shrine; however, she may also be invoked at home.

- 1. Inscribe your name on an egg. Focus on your petition while holding the egg.
- 2. Carry it into the tunnel constructed where La Ghriba's body was discovered.
- 3. Leave the egg beside the candles lit for La Ghriba. The heat will cook the eggs.
- 4. Eat the egg and receive La Ghriba's blessing. (You'll know your own egg because it has your name on it.)

During the annual Lag B'Omer festival, a special variant of this ritual occurs. The names of unmarried girls are inscribed onto eggs, which must be brought into the tunnel by someone other than the girls. After the eggs cook, they are given to the girls to eat. Allegedly, their wishes will come true due to La Ghriba's intercession.

DJ Cheb i Sabbah's CD, La Ghriba, features a cover photo of a beautiful woman surrounded by flames.

FESTIVAL: coincides with the Jewish holiday of Lag B'Omer.

SACRED SITE: La Ghriba Synagogue on Djerba Island, also known as the Delet or "Door," has periodically been destroyed and rebuilt. The present building probably dates from the 19th century. The niche below the ark is called the Magrath Sibiya (Cave of the Girl).

**OFFERINGS**: eggs; pilgrimage. Oil lamps are traditionally lit for La Ghriba, but candles may be substituted.

SEE ALSO Simon bar Yohai and Glossary: Intercessor.

## 🔊 Gilda

Also known as Santa Gilda.

EPITHET: Queen of the Scene.

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

Miriam Alejandra Bianchi Scioli, now better known as Gilda (11 October 1961– 7 September 1996), worked as a kindergarten teacher in Buenos Aires until age twenty-nine, when she auditioned to sing with a cumbia group. (*Cumbia*, a type of dance music originating in Colombia, is now popular throughout Latin America.)

Gilda's stage name honors Rita Hayworth's cinematic femme fatale from the movie of the same name.

Gilda won the audition but had difficulty obtaining a recording contract, because producers doubted the potential commercial success of a female cumbia singer with such a sweet voice and angelic face. However, her first solo album, released in 1992, met with great success and acclaim. Gilda was a star; her records achieved double-platinum status.

In 1996, a truck collided with the vehicle in which she was traveling, killing most of its occupants, including Gilda, her mother, and one of her two children. Her death inspired even greater devotion from her many fans. Some invoked her aid as an intercessor and miracles were soon attributed to her intervention.

Perceived by many as a charismatic, holy person even while alive, Gilda has emerged as a popular folk saint complete with domestic altars and roadside shrines. She is credited with miracles of healing and requested to provide traffic safety. Many consider her music to have healing properties.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: The photograph most associated with Santa Gilda shows her smiling and adorned with flowers.

FEAST: 7 September.

SACRED SITE: her grave in Chacarita Cemetery, Buenos Aires.

**OFFERINGS**: flowers; candles; retablos (testimonial plaques).

SEE ALSO Gardel, Carlos and Glossary: Intercessor, Retallo.

## ∾ Giles, Saint

Also known as Saint Gilles; Aegidius; Egidio; Sinjil; Jilji.

CLASSIFICATION: Anglican and Roman Catholic saint.

Giles (c. 650–c. 710) wanted to be a hermit, but civilization kept intruding. He moved deeper and deeper into the woods, until finally, he settled into an extremely remote location in what is now southern France. His only companion was a hind (a female deer) who nourished him on her milk. But even here, civilization encroached.

Wamba, king of the Visigoths (reigned 672–689), hunted and pursued Giles' deer. The deer ran to Giles for shelter, hiding behind him. The deer escaped harm, but Giles was wounded and crippled by the king's arrow. King Wamba was so impressed that he encouraged Giles to found the monastery of Saint Gilles on the Rhône River. Giles spent the end of his life there performing miracles. (Although the legend cites Wamba, historians suggest that if this legend is true, the king was most likely Frankish, not a Visigoth.)

Saint Giles is now the patron saint of breast-feeding women.

- He may be invoked for any issues involving lactation.
- Giles is also invoked against female infertility.
- Giles can allegedly obtain forgiveness for unconfessed sins—even those sins too terrible to confess.
- He is invoked against cancer, seizure disorders, night terrors, and insanity.

Veneration of Giles spread throughout Europe. Among the most popular medieval saints, he is counted among the Fourteen Holy Helpers.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: blacksmiths; the disabled; cripples; lepers; beggars; wet nurses; lactating women; those who fear darkness or night.

ATTRIBUTES: arrow; crosier; hind.

**BOTANICAL**: the flower Saint Giles' orpine, also known as witches' moneybags (*Hylotelephium telephium*).

SACRED SITES: Giles is the guardian of forests and the patron of Edinburgh, home of Saint Giles Cathedral. Numerous churches and at least twenty cities bear his name. As patron of blacksmiths, his churches were traditionally built at crossroads so that riders could pray while their horses were shod at the smithy. The French town of St-Gilles-du-Gard grew around his tomb in the monastery Giles is credited with founding. The monastery evolved into an abbey, which became the starting point for one of the pilgrimage routes to the shrine of Saint James of Compostela.

FEAST: 1 September.

SEE ALSO Fourteen Holy Helpers; James the Greater, Saint.

## 👡 Gnostic Saints

Also known as Thelemite saints.

The Gnostic saints are commemorated within Thelema, the religion founded by author and magus Aleister Crowley (1875–1947) in 1904. The Gnostic saints include historical and mythic individuals who are venerated within that religion. The original list of Gnostic saints is found in *Liber XV*, "Book 15," also known as the Gnostic Mass, written by Crowley in 1913. The saints are invoked during the Gnostic Mass.

All the original Gnostic saints are male. The list includes Lao Tzu, credited as the founder of Taoism; Siddhartha Gautama, the historical Buddha; Krishna; Thoth; Moses; Dionysus; Mohammed; Hermes; Pan; Priapus; Osiris; Melchizedek; Heracles; Orpheus; Odysseus; Virgil; Rabelais; the author Algernon Charles Swinburne; Simon Magus; Basilides; Valentinus; Merlin; Arthur; Charlemagne; Roger Bacon; Francis Bacon; Templar Grand Master Jacques de Molay; Christian Rosencreutz, founder of the Rosicrucians; astrologer, spy, and magus Dr. John Dee and his compatriot Edward Kelley; alchemist and antiquarian Elias Ashmole; Adam Weishaupt, founder of the Illuminatic author Wolfgang von Coether King Ludwig II of Pavaria: the numman, aunor wongang von Goeme, King Luuwig nor Bavana, me occultist Alphonse Louis Constant, more popularly known as Eliphas Lévi; Friedrich Nietzsche; and the physician Gerard Encausse, also known by his nom de plume, Papus.

Crowley counted himself among the saints. The list of saints remained as Crowley wrote it for decades. In 1997, the mystic poet and artist William Blake was added to the roster by virtue of an essay by Crowley, which described Blake as a saint. The philosopher Giordano Bruno was added in 2000, commemorating the 400th anniversary of his execution.

SEE ALSO Crowley, Aleister; Hypatia; Jacobus Molensis the Martyr; Moses; Encausse, Gérard; Simon Magus.

## ∼ Goar of Aquitaine

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Goar (c. 585–6 July 649), a devout child from a noble family in Aquitaine, became a priest. Although achieving renown as a dynamic preacher, he wished to serve God more discreetly.

Goar moved into a small cell near Trier, now in modern Germany, and became a hermit. He also established a hermitage, a hospice where he cared for the sick, and a chapel. Goar provided for travelers and fed the poor, as well as evangelized the still largely Pagan region.

Goar soon developed a reputation as a holy man. Pilgrims traveled long distances to seek his advice and spiritual guidance. He was offered the position of bishop of Trier but sought a more solitary, less political vocation. He asked for time to meditate on the offer but died before he could respond.

After his death, his reputation as a miracle worker extended. A chapel was built over his grave. Monks took up their abode nearby and the site evolved into a monastery. Charlemagne built a church dedicated to Goar on the site. Goar is now considered the patron saint of hospitality.

FAVORED PEOPLE: hermits; innkeepers; potters; wine growers.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: a hermit being given milk by three deer; a hermit holding a pitcher; a hermit with the devil beneath his feet or on his shoulder; a hermit

hanging his hat on a sunbeam.

**ATTRIBUTE**: a pitcher.

SACRED SITE: Church of Saint Goar on the Rhine.

FEAST: 6 July.

**OFFERINGS:** Rhine wine; candles.

#### 👡 Gobnait, Saint

Also known as Saint Abigail; Saint Deborah; Gobnet; Gobnati; Gobnata; Gobnata.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Gobnait was born in County Clare, Ireland, in the fifth or sixth century. She fled to the remote Aran Islands, where she encountered an angel who told her to keep traveling, that this was not her resting place. The angel told Gobnait that when she saw nine white deer, she would know where to settle down.

Gobnait traveled across Ireland. Near Clondrohid, County Cork, she found three white deer and followed them. They led her to Ballymakeera, where she discovered six more white deer. These deer led her to Ballyvourney. When she saw nine white deer there, she ceased her traveling and put down roots. Gobnait founded a women's spiritual community. When plague threatened Ballyvourney, she designated it sacred ground and the plague stayed away.

Gobnait is a well saint. A well named for her in Ballyvourney is still the subject of an annual pilgrimage. Although now considered Christian, the origins of this pilgrimage are pre-Christian. Gobnait's legend is vague. It's possible that she was originally a Pagan goddess absorbed by Christianity, or veneration of the saint, a historical person, may camouflage devotion to a now-forbidden deity. The earliest documented reference to Saint Gobnait derives from the 13th century.

Perhaps the name Gobnait sounded too Pagan—or just not biblical enough. The name can be translated as "brings joy," similar to the biblical name Abigail, so she is sometimes called Saint Abigail. Gobnait is intensely associated with bees. She used honey and propolis, another product of bees, to heal wounds. The Hebrew name Deborah means "bee," ' so sometimes Gobnait is called Saint Deborah instead.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: beekeepers; apitherapists (bee therapists).

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Gobnait stands atop a beehive surrounded by bees.

FEAST: 11 February.

**SPIRITUAL ALLY:** A *Sheela-na-gig* at her Ballyvourney shrine is incorporated into rituals dedicated to Gobnait. Sheela-na-gigs are figurative carvings of an emaciated naked woman displaying her exaggerated vulva. The history and meaning of the Sheela-na-gig are mysterious. Although pre-Christian, they are incorporated into churches throughout the British Isles. Many are older than the churches in which they are housed.

SACRED ANIMAL: bees.

COLORS: yellow; black.

SACRED SITE: Gobnait's Well in Ballyvourney. Pilgrims leave offerings by the well. The saint's grave is in the churchyard. A 13th-century statue of Gobnait is traditionally displayed on her feast day, as well as on Whit Sunday. Measure the statue with a ribbon or woolen thread and use it for healing. Several other wells throughout Ireland are also dedicated to Gobnait.

**OFFERINGS**: images of bees; honey; beeswax candles; spring water.

SEE ALSO Brigid, Saint; Elen of the Roads; Well Saints.

# ∾ Godelieve, Saint

Also known as Godelieva; Godoleva; Godelva; Godelina.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Godelieve (1049–6 July 1070) was a Flemish noblewoman, the daughter of Hemfried, Lord of Wierre-Effray. At age eighteen, she was given in marriage to

another noble, Bertulf of Ghistelles, who abandoned her before the wedding feast was even over, allegedly at the instigation of his mother. Godelieve was left with her new in-laws, who abused her. She was locked in a tiny cell, starved, beaten, and subjected to verbal abuse. Eventually, she managed to escape and return home.

Godelieve's father was outraged and contacted secular and religious authorities. The bishop of Tournai and the Count of Flanders intervened, insisting that Bertulf reconcile with Godelieve, return her to his home, and treat her well. Bertulf acquiesced and seemed repentant. For a brief period, things seemed fine. Bertulf, however, soon became abusive and violent toward Godelieve. On 6 July 1070, Bertulf "happened" to be out of town when two hired assassins, coincidentally employees of his mother, first strangled Godelieve into unconsciousness and then drowned her in a pond or well.

Local people perceived the site of her murder as sanctified and began making pilgrimages. Godelieve was soon credited with performing miracles. For instance, she restored the failing eyesight of her stepdaughter, Bertulf's daughter.

Although Godelieve is a canonized Roman Catholic saint, in many ways she resembles a modern Latin American Almita. It is the tragic nature of her death in the prime of her youth that caused her to be venerated and invoked for intercession:

- Godelieve is the matron saint of those requiring restraining orders.
- She is invoked against abusive relationships of all kinds.
- She is traditionally invoked against difficult in-laws.
- She is also invoked for healing miracles. Her specialty is throat ailments.

FAVORED PEOPLE: abused women.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: a beautiful young woman with a rope around her neck; a pair of angels placing a crown on a beautiful young woman.

ATTRIBUTES: crown; well.

#### FEAST: 6 July.

SACRED SITE: The Holy Well of Saint Godelieve in Gistel, Belgium. It is unclear whether these waters were considered sacred or therapeutic before Godelieve's

death.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; incense. Offer her Soeur Godelieve, a Belgian liqueur; make offerings and efforts on behalf of abused or victimized women.

SEE ALSO Almita; Well Saints.

#### ∼ Gregory the Wonder Worker

Also known as Gregory Thaumaturge; Gregory of Neocaesaria.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Gregory (c. 213–c. 270) was born in the city of Neocaesaria in Pontus, which is now in modern Turkey. His birth name was Theodore. He came from an elegant, distinguished family. His brother-in-law was the Roman governor of Palestine.

After the death of his father when Gregory was fourteen, he and his brother wished to study law at the university in Beirut. His mother agreed but asked the boys to escort their sister to Caesarea in Roman Palestine first. There they met Origen, the early Christian scholar and theologian. Gregory and his brother converted to Christianity and forgot about practicing law. Instead, Gregory eventually returned to Pontus, where he lived as a hermit.

Even without a university degree, Gregory was perceived as extremely scholarly. People kept asking him to tutor their children. He was eventually appointed bishop without even being asked whether this was something he desired. (He didn't, but he accepted the responsibility as God given.)

Gregory was a famed exorcist. He was a faith healer who healed the sick by the laying on of hands. He won many converts this way. Gregory also settled scores and made peace between enemies. He encouraged local Christians not to take their disagreements to court, as the local government was Pagan. Instead, Gregory drew upon his own legal studies to help decide between them. He also became famed for miracles.

Once, two brothers in his diocese inherited property containing a lake. Unable to decide how to divvy up the property between them, the brothers agreed on armed combat to decide the matter, much to Gregory's dismay. The night before the scheduled fight, Gregory prayed that the matter would be resolved without violence. His prayers were answered—when the men woke up in the morning,

the lake had dried up and disappeared.

During violent oppression of Christians in the region, Gregory sought shelter in the mountains with his followers to wait out the persecution. When it was over, he collected the bones, bodies, and other relics of the martyrs and honored them with feasts, which he scheduled to correspond with Pagan festivals so that, gradually, Pagan traditions were subsumed by Christian feast days. Gregory is among those most credited with encouraging the cult of the saints, whom he perceived as vehicles to encourage conversion to Christianity.

Gregory is hailed as a wonder worker, and reputedly no miracle is impossible for him. Thus he is invoked for forgotten, impossible, and lost causes. His help is sought during natural disasters like floods and earthquakes.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Saint Gregory is often portrayed in the process of banishing demons.

**NUMBER:** 17. When Gregory left Pontus for Beirut, there were seventeen Christians in the city of his birth. In 275, he asked his relatives how many Pagans were in Neocaesaria and was advised that seventeen were left. He died in his sleep after hearing this news on 17 November.

FEAST: 17 November.

SEE ALSO Alexander the Charcoal Burner.

## 👡 Guadalupe

Also known as The Virgin of Guadalupe; La Guadalupana; Our Lady of Guadalupe.

**PRONOUNCED**: gwa-dah-loo-pay.

EPITHET: Queen of Mexico.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

The Lady of Guadalupe, a highly revered manifestation of the Virgin Mary, is among the most famous of all Marian apparitions. She ranks among the most beloved saints on earth although she is also controversial. The subject of Guadalupe and her true identity evokes passionate arguments from devotees and scholars alike:

- Many are shocked and offended at the suggestion that she could possibly be anyone other than Mary, Mother of Christ.
- Others are totally convinced that she is an indigenous Mexican goddess who tolerates the guise of Mary in order to maintain influence and contact with devotees.

The apparition named Guadalupe first appeared to a man named Juan Diego as he passed Tepeyac Hill on 9 December 1531, twelve years following the Spanish conquest of Mexico. Speaking to him in Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs, the apparition of a beautiful lady told Juan Diego to advise Spanish Church authorities that she wanted an abbey built and dedicated to her on the hill.

Church authorities initially discounted Juan Diego's claims. The Lady appeared to him four times demanding her shrine. Each time, he delivered the message to Church authorities. Finally, the bishop requested a miracle that could prove the reality of Juan Diego's assertions.

In response, the Lady told Juan Diego to gather flowers from the hillside and bring them to the bishop. Although it was winter, he discovered unusual flowers that he had never seen before growing on the hill. Gathering them up in his agave-fiber *tilma*—an indigenous cloak—Juan Diego carried the flowers to the bishop, who immediately recognized them as beautiful, fragrant Castilian roses. A miracle had been received; the flowers were both completely out of season and out of place. Furthermore, the image of the woman that Juan Diego had witnessed was now permanently and miraculously emblazoned on the tilma.

The abbey was built as requested. The Basilica of Guadalupe on Tepeyac Hill near Mexico City, now considered Mexico's most sacred site, is the subject of the greatest pilgrimage in the Western Hemisphere. Saint Peter's Basilica in the Vatican is the only Roman Catholic site to receive more visitors.

Juan Diego's original tilma, still emblazoned with the image of the beautiful Lady of Guadalupe, is housed in her Basilica. Scientific analysis indicates that although there was some later embellishment of the tilma—specifically of the golden rays, the moon, and the angel at Guadalupe's feet, the main portion of the image cannot be explained satisfactorily and remains mysterious. There are no identifiable signs of human creation, nor can the blue pigment on the cloak, apparently some sort of natural pigment, be identified or reproduced. The closest thing to the image of Guadalupe on Juan Diego's tilma may be the precipitated spirit portraits associated with the modern Spiritualist movement, also purported to be of supernatural origin. Furthermore, Juan Diego's tilma was woven from *maguey*, or woven agave fibers, which have a life expectancy of approximately ten years before they naturally disintegrate. The sheer continued existence of this tilma is a miracle in itself.

This may seem like a straightforward story, but there is more to it than meets the eye. Before Christianity's arrival in Mexico with the conquistadors, Tepeyac was the site of the Great Temple of the goddess Coatlique and already considered a place of immense sacred power. Those who consider Guadalupe an Aztec goddess in disguise usually identify Coatlique as her true identity, but other goddesses are also suggested.

The apparition appeared a fifth time to Juan Diego's uncle, Juan Bernardino, when he was deathly ill with smallpox, an ailment introduced to Mexico from Europe and one that local healers did not know how to treat. The apparition healed him, in the process telling Juan Bernardino what she described as her true name. She ordered him to reveal it publicly so that the world would know and use it. Juan Bernardino told Church officials that her name was Tecuauhtlacuepeuh. They understood this as Guadalupe, perhaps because many of the priests and conquistadors who came to Mexico, including Cortés, came from the Spanish province of Extremadura, home of a miracle-working statue named the Black Madonna of Guadalupe. (Although both are officially considered manifestations of Mary, Spain's Black Madonna of Guadalupe and Mexico's Virgin of Guadalupe bear little physical resemblance to each other.)

Guadalupe is a municipality in Extramadura. The name is believed to derive from the Arabic word for river or valley (*wadi*) and the Latin word for wolf (*lupus*). However, the name Guadalupe may have different meanings in Nahuatl, for example:

- She Who Crushed the Snake's Head
- She Who Comes Flying from the Region of Light Like a Fiery Eagle
- She Who Banishes Those Who Ate Us

As Guadalupe manifested in the guise of an Indian woman, she physically resembled the new community of Indian Christians. The immediate result of the apparition and the miraculous image on the tilma was mass conversion of Indians to Catholicism. Miracles associated with Guadalupe included healings and resurrections. A healing spring appeared at the site where Juan Diego met the Lady. Miracles were performed for Indians, Spanish, and *mestizos* (those of mixed Spanish and indigenous ancestry) alike.

Veneration of Guadalupe was controversial from the start. New Agers and Neo-Pagans were not the first to suggest that she was really a Pagan goddess in disguise. Spanish Church officials also suspected the same. In the words of Franciscan missionary Fray Bernardino de Sahagun (1499–1590): "It is clear that in their hearts the common people who go there on their pilgrimages are moved only by their ancient religion."

No documentation of the apparition or of Guadalupe as she is known today exists prior to the mid-17th century. Before 1648, all surviving documents attack pilgrimages associated with Tepeyac and veneration of its Lady. By the 18th century, however, she was the official matron saint of Mexico.

Guadalupe was the heroine of the Mexican Revolution in its fight for independence from Spain. She is a powerful emblem of national identity. *Guadalupism* is the name given the popular veneration of Our Lady of Guadalupe. She is invoked for every possible miracle and assistance.

A bumper sticker popular in the southwestern United States reads, "In Guad we trust."

**ICONOGRAPHY**: The image of Mexican Guadalupe is of a young brown-skinned Indian woman dressed in Indian clothing, as opposed to the European clothing worn by most Madonnas. Her mantle is not the traditional blue of a European Madonna, but teal (blue-green), which in Aztec cosmology symbolizes abundance and prosperity. Her image appears everywhere in Mexico, from sacred imagery to kitsch. She is a favorite subject of wall murals and tattoos.

FEAST: 12 December. Guadalupe may also be invoked on the first day of each month.

SACRED SITES: her basilica on Tepeyac Hill. Guadalupe is venerated worldwide and there are replica shrines in Italy, Japan, and throughout the United States, including in Miami, Sacramento, and Allentown, Pennsylvania. Countless shrines, churches, and home altars are dedicated to her as well.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; fruit; flowers; musical performances; pilgrimage.

SEE ALSO Bernadette, Saint; Jesús Malverde; Juan Diego; Kahlo, Frida; Mary; Muerte, La Santissima and Glossary: Apparition; Syncretism.

# ∾ Guardian Angels

Guardian angels are classified among the saints by the Roman Catholic Church based upon the words of Jesus in Matthew 18:10: "See that you do not despise one of these little ones for I say to you that their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father." Guardian angels exist in other religious and spiritual traditions, too, but are not also considered saints.

Saint Benedict encouraged devotion to guardian angels, but the primary impetus is believed to have come from Saint Bernard of Clairvaux. The Roman Catholic feast honoring guardian angels was first observed in the 16th century and was added to the official calendar roll in 1615 by Pope Paul V.

According to the Roman Catholic Church, guardian angels serve various functions:

- They are spiritual guardians and may also provide other kinds of protection.
- They present the individual's soul to God at death, serving as advocates.
- They are invoked to protect children.
- They may be requested to provide guidance, especially when faced with difficult choices or dangerous situations.

Less officially, according to folk Catholicism, guardian angels prevent and banish the Evil Eye. They are also historically invoked in magic spells involving unrequited love. These spells are not addressed to the petitioner's own guardian angel, but to the guardian angel of the elusive beloved. That angel is beseeched to deliver that person to the spell caster.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: A winged angel guards two small children playing near a dangerous cliff. A modern alternative depicts a winged angel protecting young children in traffic.

#### FEAST: 2 October.

**RITUAL**: It is traditional to light one white candle for each member of your household, including pets, on 2 October at midnight, the first moment of their

feast, in order to invoke their protection.

SEE ALSO Archangel Saints; Benedict, Saint; Bernard of Clairvaux, Saint; Gemma Galgani, Saint.

# 👡 Gudula, Saint

Also known as Gudrun, Goude, Goule; Gudule; Goedele.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint in most branches of Christianity.

Gudula (c. 650–c. 712), the daughter of a duke in what is now modern Belgium, was educated in the abbey of Nivelles by her cousin, Gertrude of Nivelles. After Gertrude's death, Gudula returned home, where she dedicated herself to spiritual pursuits and charitable works. Legend suggests that Gudula liked to slip out alone at night in order to pray. Sometimes she walked the two miles to a nearby church. While walking in the dark, a demon extinguished her lantern, but an observant angel relit it.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: A woman walks with a lantern, sometimes guiding pilgrims, while a demon attempts to extinguish her lamp.

ATTRIBUTES: lantern; lamp; candle.

FEAST: 8 January; 19 January.

FLOWER: Saint Gudula's lantern (*Tremella deliquescens*).

SACRED SITE: Cathedral of Saint Michael and Saint Gudula in Brussels.

**SEE ALSO** *Gertrude of Nivelles.* 

# 👡 Guglielma

Also known as Guglielmina.

**EPITHET:** The Heretic Saint.

#### **CLASSIFICATION:** unofficial saint.

Around 1260, a mysterious woman named Guglielma (died 24 August 1281), rumored to be a Bohemian princess, settled in Milan. She may have been the daughter of Premysl Otakar I, king of Bohemia. She may have been the first cousin of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary. Guglielma is believed to have been a widow. She arrived with a young man described as her son; however, there are no records and none of this is sure.

A spiritual woman, Guglielma was a healer and teacher. A devoted following soon surrounded her, some of whom were eventually convinced that she was more than just a holy woman. Andrea Saramita, a male devotee, proclaimed her to be the incarnation of the Holy Ghost, destined to inaugurate a new age of Holy Spirit. Although Guglielma apparently denied these claims, devotees were convinced that she was divine. When she died, many were sure she would be recognized and canonized. An inner circle awaited her resurrection.

Canonization was *not* forthcoming. Devotees took matters into their own hands, beginning a spiritual movement based on veneration of the Holy Spirit in the guise of Guglielma. Paintings and iconic images were commissioned. Guglielma was portrayed as part of the Trinity, standing beside Jesus Christ. Her primary disciple, Sister Manfreda de Pirovano, was proclaimed the first female pope.

Milan was then the center of the Waldensian movement, a Christian tradition emphasizing poverty and perceived by the Vatican as heretical. The whole area was considered a hotbed of heresy. Inquisitors were already present and the Guglielmites, as they were called, attracted their attention. They were brought before the Inquisition and examined. According to records, devotees continued to insist that Guglielma was the Holy Spirit incarnate, claiming that Pagans, Jews, and Muslims could be saved through her.

At least two heresies condemned the Guglielmites:

- The notion that the Holy Spirit could be incarnated by a woman
- The belief that it was possible to be saved without conversion to Roman Catholicism

Saramita and Manfreda were burned at the stake in 1300 along with other devotees. The Dominicans sought complete suppression of the cult. Guglielma was posthumously declared a heretic. (This may have been for legal reasons: only by declaring her a heretic could the Dominicans remove her body from its

burial in hallowed ground.) Her remains were exhumed, her bones burned, and the ashes scattered. Even the empty tomb was destroyed to prevent pilgrimages. Attempts were made to destroy all images of Guglielma as well as all known writings of her disciples.

Devotees discreetly continued to venerate her, some honoring her under the guise of Catherine of Alexandria or Margaret of Antioch. Since at least 1450, Guglielma has been venerated in the remote mountain village of Brunate as Saint Guglielma. In the 19th century, Sir Richard Burton, author of *The Arabian Nights*, noted that Santa Guglielma, worshipped at Brunate, performed many miracles, especially healing headaches (migraine). She is also invoked to increase milk flow in lactating mothers.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: An image of Guglielma commissioned after the scandal died down resembles the traditional image of the tarot Pope card: a man and a num possibly Saramita and Manfreda—kneel before a woman robed in purple. Some interpret the image, housed in Brunate, as depicting Guglielma proclaiming Manfreda as pope. (In real life, Guglielma died before that proclamation.) There is also speculation that the Papess card, also known as the Female Pope, from the 15th-century Visconti-Sforza tarot deck, depicts Manfreda, who was related to the Visconti family who commissioned that deck.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Devotees may use the tarot card known as the Pope or the Hierophant (depending on the tarot deck) to represent Guglielma, who is identified as the enthroned central figure.

**FEAST:** 24 August, the anniversary of her death and the fourth Sunday of April. Guglielma was reputedly born on the feast of Pentecost (Whitsun) and devotees celebrate her on that day.

#### **OFFERINGS**: candles.

SEE ALSO Catherine of Alexandria; Elizabeth of Hungary; Margaret of Antioch and Glossary: Pilgrimage; Relics; Saint, Official; Saint, Unofficial.

# 👡 Guillén, Elvirita

Also known as Elvira Guillén.

**PRONOUNCED**: el-vee-ree-tah gee-yen (the "G" is pronounced as in "gift").

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint; Animita.

The name Elvirita is the Spanish affectionate diminutive of Elvira, literally "Little Elvira." Elvirita Guillén was a fourteen-year-old orphan girl who was raped and killed in Antofagasta, Chile. She died on 14 March 1937.

Elvirita may have been born near Valparaíso. She was adopted in January 1937 by a couple living in Antofagasta, Chile's largest northern city. Little is known of Elvirita's life prior to her adoption. It is estimated that she was born in 1923. Two months after her adoption, Elvirita was invited to a party, where she attracted the attention of a Chilean army official. She refused his sexual advances and he raped her. He was initially charged with her murder as well, but rumors spread that Elvirita had taken her own life after being dishonored. Although forensic evidence contradicted these rumors, they were sufficient to garner lower punishments than originally anticipated for those involved with Elvirita's death. There was a perception among local people that this verdict was an additional injustice suffered by Elvirita. Her grave evolved into a shrine and is now covered with retablos attesting to the numerous miracles she is credited with producing.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Based upon a photograph, Elvirita is envisioned as a smiling, dark-haired young woman.

FEAST: 14 March.

SACRED SITES: her grave in Antofagasta's Cemetario General.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; flowers; pilgrimage.

SEE ALSO Anima; Maria Goretti, Saint; María Soledad and Glossary: Retablo.

# 👡 Guinefort, Saint

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

Must a saint be human or can a dog be a saint? Saint Guinefort has inspired impassioned debate since the 13th century. That's when a baby in France was

left in the care of the family greyhound while his parents ran some errands. While Mom and Dad were gone, a snake (possibly Satan in disguise) menaced the baby. Guinefort, the greyhound, killed the snake, splashing the baby with snake blood in the process. When Mom and Dad arrived home, they took one look at their bloody baby, saw blood on their dog's mouth, and jumped to conclusions.

Their first impulse was to punish the dog; they threw him down a well, where he died. Only then did they take a closer look at their baby, who was unharmed and perfectly fine. The snake cadaver was discovered and the parents realized that they had made a terrible mistake. Guilt stricken, they drew the dog from the well and gave him a proper burial. Another version suggests that the father, who may have been a knight, initially slew the dog with sword or arrow. When he discovered his mistake, he entombed the dog in the well. A shrine was created by planting a grove around the well.

Local peasants perceived that the noble guardian dog had been unjustly killed —essentially, martyred like a saint. They began to venerate him, calling him Saint Guinefort and visiting his grave. The loyal dog began performing miracles. Devotion to Saint Guinefort, dog saint, spread throughout France. This legend may camouflage a pre-Christian spirit associated with a healing well. Alternatively, it may derive from the ancient tradition of venerating sacred hounds, once prevalent in western Europe and Britain.

The cult of Saint Guinefort was controversial from the start. As soon as they learned of it, the Church actively discouraged it, but to no avail. Shortly before 1261, Inquisitor Étienne de Bourbon disinterred Saint Guinefort, burned his skeleton, and cut down the grove. But the trees grew back and pilgrimages continued, as did miracles attributed to the saint. As centuries passed, people assumed that Saint Guinefort was officially canonized. (Not so. The Vatican has never canonized him and has actively attempted to suppress his veneration.) Guinefort is invoked for miracles of healing and to guard children. His legend is featured in the 1987 French movie *The Sorceress*.

**SACRED SITE:** Guinefort's grove was visited until 1940. Ruins of a shrine dedicated to him are found in Trévron, Brittany.

FEAST: 22 August.

SEE ALSO Well Saints and Glossary: Saint, Official; Saint, Unofficial.

# 👡 Gwen Teirbron

Also known as Saint Blanche; Saint Candida; Alba Trimammis; Saint Wite.

**EPITHET:** The Triple-Breasted.

CLASSIFICATION: Celtic saint venerated by most branches of Christianity.

Gwen Teirbron may be a saint. She may be a goddess. She may be both, like Brigid, her fellow Celt. Brigid is the presiding spirit of lactating ewes. Three-Breasted Gwen, the literal meaning of Gwen Teirbron, is the presiding spirit of lactating women.

According to her official legend, Gwen Teirbron was a Breton princess born c. 499 ce. She had three sons, allegedly the reason for her triple breasts. Twice kidnapped by Anglo-Saxon pirates and brought to England, Gwen walked home over the sea each time. Less officially, many believe that she is a Celtic fertility goddess who assumed the guise of a saint.

Gwen Teirbron is counted among those saints credited with bringing Christianity to Brittany. Within the context of folk religion, however, she is adored for her powers over fertility and lactation.

Gwen Teirbron is petitioned for fertility in general but is especially associated with abundant milk. Her other names (Blanche; Wite) are reminiscent of milk. Until the 19th century, Gwen Teirbron was the subject of intense veneration in Brittany.

The Church of Saint Candida or Saint Wite and Holy Cross, Whitchurch Canonicorum in Dorset, is unique as, except for Westminster Abbey, it is the only church in England that retains its original medieval shrine and the relics of the saint for which it is named. During the medieval era, this church was a major pilgrimage site. It features a well renowned for healing miracles. Controversy exists as to whether the saint honored here is identical to Gwen Teirbron.

FAVORED PEOPLE: nursing mothers.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** legend and her name—*Teirbron* literally means "three breasts"—

has it that Gwen Teirbron had three breasts and that's how she is portrayed. You can't really see the breasts if she's completely and modestly clothed, so her images were revealing. In the 1870s, local priests removed most of her images from churches and buried them, considering them obscene and a distraction.

**SACRED SITES:** Gwen Teirbron once had a shrine in the Chapel of Saint Venec, Brittany. There is a statue of her in Ploufragan, Brittany, and a holy well named for her in Scaer, Brittany.

FEAST: 3 October.

SACRED FLOWER: Saint Candida's Eyes, the folk name for wild blue periwinkles.

**OFFERINGS**: a distaff and flax to ensure that a woman's milk is abundant.

SEE ALSO Brigid, Saint; Well Saints.

# Η

# 👡 Helena, Saint

Also known as Eleni; Helen; Elena; Ilona; Hélène; Helena of the Cross.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Flavia Julia Helena Augusta, the future Saint Helena (c. 250–18 August 330), was a bar girl and courtesan, possibly of British origin. She captivated Roman general Constantius, who fathered her son, Constantine. It is unclear whether or not Constantius ever married her. When a more politically advantageous marriage prospect became available to him, Constantius repudiated Helena and exiled her from Rome.

- Folk tales suggest that Helena's father was Britain's legendary Old King Cole.
- Another legend suggests that she was an innkeeper's daughter from Bithynia on the Black Sea.
- Innuendo during her lifetime suggested that she was a prostitute, although whether this meant an ordinary sex worker or a sacred temple priestess is now unknown.
- Before Helena converted to Christianity, she may have been a devotee and priestess of Aphrodite.

Constantine, her son, was born in Naissus, a city named after the Naiads of Greek lore and now called Nis in modern Serbia. His rival, Roman emperor Maxentius, disparaged Constantine by calling him a harlot's son. Constantine remained close to his mother all his life, bringing her back to Rome when he was declared Caesar in 306 ce. He minted coins bearing her image. It is unclear exactly when Helena converted to Christianity, but it is assumed that she influenced her son, who would become the first Christian emperor of Rome. In 326, Helena was involved in a major scandal involving Constantine's wife, Fausta, and Crispus, his son from a previous marriage. Fausta accused Crispus of rape. It is unknown whether these accusations were true. Crispus was tried, condemned, and executed.

Helena apparently convinced Constantine that Fausta was the true guilty party. There was no trial. Fausta was killed by suffocation in an overheated steam bath. Implicated in Fausta's death, Helena went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem the following year. It has been suggested that she was forced to leave Rome until the scandal died down, but a more pious explanation suggests that she undertook the difficult pilgrimage in order to atone for her family's sins.

Helena traveled to Jerusalem, searching for relics. In 328, she claimed to have discovered the True Cross on which Jesus was crucified in a crypt below the recently destroyed Temple of Aphrodite. She also reputedly found the nails from the Crucifixion, the Spear of Destiny, and the image now known as the Black Madonna of Czestochowa, which was allegedly painted by Saint Luke on wood from a table made by Jesus. While in the Holy Land, Helena founded basilicas in Bethlehem and on the Mount of Olives.

Because Saint Helena discovered the True Cross, she is now associated with the magical removal of "crossed conditions," the American folk name for certain kinds of curses and for blocked, stymied, static situations. Dedicate cross-shaped candles to Saint Helena, requesting that she remove the heavy cross you bear, making it disappear in the same way that burning candles vanish into thin air.

Helena allegedly preserved one of the nails used in the Crucifixion as a relic, threw one into the sea for the salvation of drowned sailors, and dedicated the third to the lovers of the world so that they would be preserved from heartache. (A more prosaic legend suggests that she sent all three nails to her son, Constantine, who wore one on his helmet and attached the others to his horse's bit and bridle.) This is the basis or rationale for why Helena is among the saints most closely identified with romantic miracles, especially in Iberian and Latin American folk magic. Santa Elena, as she is known in Spanish, is the subject of countless romantic spells and petitions, most intended to force someone to love and adore the spell caster. Here is an example:

#### Invocation of Santa Elena

Most loving Mother of the Roman Emperor Constantine,

To the Mount of Olives you did go With three nails of Our Lord Jesus Christ; One you threw into the sea for the salvation of sailors Another you nailed into a dedicated object The third I drive into (target of spell's) heart So that he (or she) is unable to eat, sleep, rest or converse with women or men Nor have one moment of rest until he (or she) surrenders at my feet Please Santa Elena, if you grant my desire, I will be your most sincere loving devotee.

Love spells involving Saint Helena often involve nails, like this one:

- 1. Dedicate a large white candle to Saint Helena and burn it.
- 2. While that candle is burning, personalize another candle, this one in the shape of a man or woman so that it resembles the target of your spell. Carve the person's name into the wax, as well as his or her birthday.
- 3. Talk directly to the candle, which represents the one you love. Tell it your desires.
- 4. Stick a nail through the candle where the person's heart should be.
- 5. Burn this candle, too.

Saint Helena's official hagiography emphasizes her pious, religious nature. However, the roles she plays unofficially—but apparently very effectively—in folk religion indicate that other, forbidden spirits may sometimes lurk under the guise of the devout Christian saint.

Some of the love spells associated with Helena recall spells once dedicated to the goddess Isis that date back at least to the first century ce. Although Isis is of Egyptian origin, her cult was extremely popular throughout the Roman Empire, especially in Rome. Some scholars perceive that Isis may linger behind the mask of Saint Helena.

Another theory suggests that the goddess beneath the saint's mask is really Aphrodite. Helena's discovery of the True Cross was made in the ruins of a temple of Aphrodite. Long before crosses were associated with Christianity, they were emblems of this love goddess.

Alternatively, some believe that aspects of Saint Helena mask vestigial devotion to Helen of Troy. In Homer's *Odyssey*, Helen of Troy sparks the Trojan

War by abandoning her Greek husband, Menelaus, for the Trojan prince, Paris. The war was officially fought to recapture Helen. However, Helen is not just a literary figure; she was once an important goddess venerated throughout Greece and worshipped alongside Aphrodite.

Like Aphrodite and Saint Helena, Helen of Troy has associations with love and crosses. Helen was venerated as a goddess of love and fertility. She was worshipped as Helen Dendritus (Helen of the Tree) on the Aegean Island of Rhodes. According to a legend, after the Trojan War, Helen returned home with Menelaus who, captivated by her beauty, could not punish or kill his errant wife. When Menelaus died, however, his son by another woman seized the throne and deported Helen, who took refuge with her old friend Polyxo on Rhodes. Little did Helen know that Polyxo secretly hated her. (Polyxo's husband was killed during the Trojan War and she blamed Helen.)

One day while Helen was bathing in the river, Polyxo's servants, disguised as avenging Furies, seized Helen and, on Polyxo's orders, murdered her. Helen's arms and legs were attached to the branches of a tree and she was either strangled or crucified. She was not buried but left hanging in the tree for birds to consume. As expiation for their crime, the people of Rhodes built a memorial shrine, where offerings were made to soothe Helen's ghost.

Saint Helena is a miraculous, magical saint invoked against disease. She locates missing objects and unearths buried treasure. She is identified with healing wells. In Russia, she is associated with flax. In Macedonia, she is associated with fire-walking rituals, perhaps vestiges of rites once dedicated to Helen of Troy. She is the subject of author Evelyn Waugh's 1950 historical novel, *Helena*.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: archaeologists; treasure hunters; shoppers, especially if searching for antiques; divorcees; nail crafters; converts; those struggling with difficult or challenging marriages.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Helena is usually portrayed as a beautiful, richly dressed and crowned blonde woman holding a wooden cross. The Chapel of Saint Helena in Rome's Basilica of the Holy Cross in Gerusalemme contains a Roman-era statue of her. It is a copy of the Vatican Juno transformed into a Christian saint by the addition of a cross.

ATTRIBUTES: cross; three nails; book.

**SPIRITUAL ALLY:** Icons frequently depict Helen in the company of her son, Emperor Constantine, also considered a saint. They may be venerated together.

COLORS: red; pink.

SACRED DAY: Friday.

FEAST: 18 August, 21 May.

#### SACRED SITES:

- The Chapel of Saint Helena in Rome's Church of Santa Maria in Aracoeli contains some of her relics.
- The Church of Sant'Elena on the island of Sant'Elena near Venice, where legend has it, a ship transporting her relics from Constantinople to Rome ran aground. The island was then known as Olivolo but was later renamed in her honor. All efforts to free the ship failed, so to make the ship lighter, sailors began removing all its cargo, including the urn containing Helena's relics. When the ship was freed, they began to reload, but as soon as Helena's urn was brought back on board, the ship was once again trapped. The urn was removed—and the ship began to float. The sailors interpreted this as a sacred sign indicating Helena's desire to stay on the island. A chapel was built for her here in 1028.
- The Chapel of Saint Helena in the Basilica di Santa Croce in Gerusalemme (Holy Cross in Jerusalem), which despite its name is located in Rome, was reputedly her private chapel. Legend says that she founded this basilica in honor of her discovery of the True Cross.
- The Chapel of Saint Helena and the Chapel of the Finding of the Cross are in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. The original church on this site was founded by Emperor Constantine and is said to be built over the site of the Crucifixion.

**OFFERINGS**: pink candles; cross-shaped candles; jewelry; antiques.

SEE ALSO Antonietta Meo; Cecilia, Saint; Elen of the Roads; Longinus, Saint; Luke, Saint; Well Saints and Glossary: Black Madonna; Icon; Pilgrimage; Relics; Syncretism.

## ∾ Helena of Skofde, Saint

Also known as Helena of Skovde; Saint Elin; Saint Helen.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Helena (c. 1101–1160) was a noble widow in Sweden. She had a daughter who married an abusive, violent man. When he beat his wife, their servants intervened, prompting the husband to attack *them*. Soon after, the husband was killed. His relatives accused Helen of playing a part in his death and sought revenge. Helen got out of town by going on a yearlong pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Upon her return, she was killed in an ambush near Skofde on 31 July.

An alternative version of her legend suggests that Helena of Skofde departed on her pilgrimage to Jerusalem *before* her son-in-law's death—a grueling journey, especially for an older woman. Her son-in-law's servants, suspected of his murder and never expecting Helena to return, accused her of instigating the murder in an attempt to shift the blame.

A blind man led by a child soon passed the murder site. The child, seeing a rosebush strangely filled with light, stopped to get a closer look and saw a severed finger wearing a ring purchased in Jerusalem, a pilgrim's ring. The blind man, putting out his hands, touched Helena's blood. When he next touched his eyes, his sight miraculously returned. A spring, which came to be known as Helen's Spring, spontaneously gushed out at the site as well. Another legend describes how Helena's body was placed in a stone coffin that refused to sink. Wherever it bumped the shore, another healing spring appeared. Helena was canonized in 1164. In 1596, a Lutheran archbishop attempted to seal off Helena's Spring. Piles of dirt were dumped in it, but water continually gushed forth.

During her lifetime, Helena was renowned for her kindness and generosity to the poor and needy. Following her husband's death, she donated most of her possessions to the poor. She built the Church at Skofde using her own funds.

FAVORED PEOPLE: widows; the falsely accused.

**ATTRIBUTES:** a severed finger and a sword.

#### **SACRED SITES:**

• Saint Helena's Church in Skofde. Her relics were removed from the church during the Protestant Reformation

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• Various springs are associated with Helena, including one located on the coast near Kattegat. Midsummer's Eve festivities are traditionally celebrated here.

FEAST: 31 July.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; roses.

SEE ALSO Helena, Saint; Well Saints.

#### 🔊 Hernández, Dr. José Gregorio

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint; canonization pending.

José Gregorio Hernández (26 October 1864–29 June 1919), a Venezuelan physician, was renowned in his lifetime for his generosity to the poor. Dr. José Gregorio, as he is popularly known, often waived his fees and donated his services. He paid for medicine for the poor out of his own pocket. He never married. He attempted to enter the priesthood twice but was refused because of his own health problems. He was struck by a car and killed while delivering medicine to a patient on a Sunday.

Death couldn't stop the doctor, who continues to perform miracles of healing from beyond the grave. Adored and admired during life, crowds flocked to his funeral. His coffin was carried on the shoulders of devotees, first to the cathedral, then across the entire city of Caracas to the cemetery. He was popularly proclaimed a saint even before he was buried. Dr. Gregorio had a reputation for never refusing anyone in need. The expectation was that he would continue to fulfill this role, but from an even more powerful position. His image is ubiquitous in Venezuela, appearing on everything from murals to key chains to postage stamps, but veneration of him is worldwide.

The cause for Dr. Gregorio's canonization was opened in 1949. He was recognized as Venerable in 1985. It is considered highly likely that he will eventually be canonized and made an official Roman Catholic saint. Numerous Venezuelan orphanages, hospitals, and clinics are named in his honor. He is the leader of the Court of Healers in the Venezuelan spiritual tradition, María Lionza.

Invoke Dr. José Gregorio to maintain good health. In addition to health and healing, he brings luck, love, and business and academic success. He serves as a

guardian, protecting against accidents, evil people, and malevolent witchcraft. He may be requested to provide a barrier of protection for yourself or another.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: anyone, but especially children and healers of all sorts. He is the patron of medical students.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** For decades, traditional images of the doctor depicted a man dressed in a black suit and hat. In more recent imagery, however, his suit and hat are white. Sometimes, he is portrayed wearing a physician's white lab coat over his black suit pants.

ATTRIBUTE: doctor's bag.

COLOR: white.

SACRED SITES: His grave at Cementario General del Sur of the Candelaria Church in Caracas, where a daily Mass is dedicated to him. In addition, his birthplace in Isnotu, in the foothills of the Venezuelan Andes, was declared an official Spiritual Site by Venezuelan authorities. His childhood home has been transformed into a sanctuary. He is also venerated at the Church of Jesús del Gran Poder in Guayaquil, Ecuador—some of his relics are in that church's crypt.

**OFFERINGS**: water; coffee; wine; rum; cigarettes; cigarillos; white candles; incense; pilgrimage; testimonial plaque at his sanctuary; offerings on behalf of the poor (and poor medical students, too).

SEE ALSO María Francia; Maria Líonza; Silverless Physicians.

# 👡 Hilda, Saint

Also known as Hild; Hilda of Whitby.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Saint Hilda (614–17 November 680) played a significant role in Britain's conversion to Christianity. Hilda was approximately thirteen years old when she, herself, became a Christian. Hilda came from a noble family, closely related to royalty. Her father, an Anglo-Saxon, was the nephew of Edwin, king of

Northumbria. Her mother was Celtic. When Hilda was an infant, her father died by poisoning, a victim of political machinations. Hilda may have been raised at King Edwin's court. Edwin and his entire court, including young Hilda, were baptized in the river at York on Easter Sunday of 627.

Little is known of Hilda's life before she became a nun. Described as an energetic woman and a great administrator, she became the abbess of several monasteries. In approximately 656, King Oswy of Northumbria fulfilled a spiritual vow by founding Whitby Abbey, then known as Streonshalh. Hilda was Whitby's first abbess. It was her home for the rest of her life. Hilda died peacefully at Whitby. Church bells rang spontaneously at the moment of her death and a local nun experienced a vision of Hilda being carried to Heaven, born aloft by angels.

Whitby Abbey originally followed the Celtic branch of Christianity, but in 664, it hosted the Synod of Whitby, which marks Britain's adoption of Roman rites. Until the very end of the 19th century, Whitby's fame derived from this synod, as well as from the ammonites and jet found there. Since the 1897 publication of Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula*, however, Whitby is renowned as the destination of Count Dracula's ship.

Hilda was an extremely prominent woman during her time. Kings sought her advice. Considered a great miracle worker, she is credited with ridding Whitby of its snakes, using her magical whip to lop off their heads. The fossil ammonites, also known as snakestones, found on local shores—and on Whitby's coat of arms—are said to be the petrified bodies of these headless serpents.

Officially, Hilda is the matron saint of learning, culture, and poetry. Perhaps less traditionally, she is Whitby's spiritual guardian. Hilda may be invoked for protection against vampires of all kinds, including so-called psychic vampires—those who, intentionally or not, prey on the energies and emotions of their fellow human beings.

**ATTRIBUTES:** Hilda is traditionally depicted with a pastoral staff in one hand and a miniaturized version of Whitby Abbey in the other.

#### **SACRED SITES:**

- the ruins of Whitby Abbey. Allegedly, seabirds tip their wings when flying over the abbey in homage to Saint Hilda. Her ghost has allegedly been witnessed walking near the abbey.
- Hilda reputedly had a retreat near a fresh-water spring approximately eight miles from Whitby, now known as Saint Hilda's Well, or Hilderwell.

- Saint Hilda's Church in Griffithstown, Wales.
- Persistent rumors suggest that at least some of her relics may have been transferred to Glastonbury.

FEASTS: 17, 18, or 19 November, depending on tradition; 23 June.

**OFFERINGS:** Whitby jet; candles; pilgrimage. Write her a poem.

SEE ALSO Margaret of Scotland; Patrick, Saint and Glossary: Relics.

## ∾ Hildegard of Bingen

EPITHET: The Sybil of the Rhine.

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

Hildegard of Bingen (1098–17 September 1179) was the tenth child of noble German parents. Her father was a knight in the service of Meginhard, Count of Spanheim. As the tenth child, Hildegard was the tithe owed to God. Her parents promised her to the Church, although this may also have been in response to the visions she began experiencing at age three. She was an unusual child who unnerved people.

Hildegard became a novice at age eight. She was sent to live with the holy woman and hermit Jutta of Sponheim, who was Meginhard's sister. Hildegard lived in a small room with one window, through which she received her two meals a day—one at 3:00 in the morning; the other at 3:00 in the afternoon. Her time was devoted to prayer, study, embroidery, and fasting. She received comparatively little formal education, incredible in the light of her many intellectual and creative achievements. She may be understood as the matron of homeschooling, autodidacts, and independent education. Hildegard assumed the veil as a nun at age fifteen.

A circle of women eventually emerged around Jutta. After her death, Hildegard filled Jutta's position, becoming prioress in 1136. Hildegard also founded two monasteries.

Hildegard was an extraordinarily accomplished person:

• She wrote plays, poems, hymns, mystical works, biographies of saints, and treatises on natural history and medicine.

- She advised popes, kings, emperors, and bishops.
- She corresponded with Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, and many others, including popes.
- She was a preacher at a time when women were expected to stay silent. She said the Holy Spirit inspired her and compelled her to speak.
- Hildegard was a healer and expert herbalist, specializing in women's medicine and prescribing exercise, rest, gem elixirs, and hot mineral baths. She collected and compiled over 2000 remedies and recommended proper nutrition and gemstone therapy.
- She wrote about the sacred bonds between humans and the natural world, a naturalist ahead of her time.
- She was a brilliant musician and composer, credited with writing the first opera. Approximately eighty of her compositions survive and recordings of them are available. She wrote chants for female singers.

Hildegard's visions continued throughout her life, although she kept them secret until she became seriously ill in her late forties. She blamed her illness on her secrecy and her suppressed visionary experiences. After consulting with the pope, she published the first of her collections of visions.

Hildegard's visions were experienced while conscious, not in a trance. As her confessor advised her to write them down, many are documented. She also painted portraits of herself experiencing these visions. She literally *saw* solutions to medical and theological dilemmas. She also literally saw a future in which women were honored and respected. She saw biblical figures, angels, demons, and ancient Pagan goddesses. She had visions of God, whom she perceived as possessing male and female aspects.

When she was over sixty, a "Heavenly Voice" advised Hildegard to leave her seclusion to travel and preach. She undertook four tours of the Rhineland— essentially, lecture tours where she spoke to packed houses of nuns and monks.

The descriptions of the sensations Hildegard experienced during her visions correspond to what are now called migraine headaches. She suffered debilitating headaches, followed by temporary blindness and paralysis, culminating in euphoria.

Hildegard considered herself a female warrior. She believed that women were more, not less, spiritual than men, an absolutely revolutionary concept during the

era in which she lived. When summoned to perform an exorcism, a task unheard of for a Christian woman, Hildegard demanded the presence of seven priests to serve as witnesses to her success.

Hildegard was not universally beloved. Some condemned her as diabolical, but she had friends in high places. Despite her visions, revolutionary ideas, and herbal knowledge, Hildegard was never accused of witchcraft, but she was frequently mocked and ridiculed. She was also called a saint in her lifetime. People flocked to her to request healings and miracles. (Other nuns complained of the crowds.) Miracles were reported after her death as well.

Hildegard is often called Saint Hildegard, and many assume that she is an official saint. She is not. In 1324, Pope John XXII gave permission for Hildegard's "public cult" and in 1940, the Vatican recognized her sanctity, but canonization is not in process. Hildegard is invoked for healing in general and especially for migraine headaches. Actress Barbara Sukowa portrays Hildegard in *Vision from the Life of Hildegard von Bingen*, a 2009 film by director Margarethe von Trotta.

People wrote to Hildegard requesting advice. Her letters answering their queries acquired the status of talismans.

**FAVORED PEOPLE:** artists; environmentalists; gardeners; linguists; musicians; clairvoyants; visionaries.

FEAST: 17 September.

**SACRED SITE:** Hildegard was originally buried in the convent of Disibodenberg, but in 1642, her remains were transferred to Eibergen, Germany, where they remain.

**OFFERINGS**: beer; candles; good works on behalf of others; creative works in her honor.

SEE ALSO Bernard of Clairvaux; Gerlac, Saint and Glossary: Anchorite; Saint, Official; Saint, Unofficial.

👡 Ho Chi Minh

Also known as Bac Ho (Uncle Ho).

**CLASSIFICATION:** Folk saint.

The early life of Ho Chi Minh (19 May 1890–2 September 1969) is shrouded in mystery. He was born in French-occupied Vietnam. His birth name was Nguyen Tat Thanh, but he used many aliases during his life. The son of a schoolteacher who was a committed Vietnamese nationalist, Ho Chi Minh traveled to Paris in 1912, where he became acquainted with the works of Karl Marx and the tenets of Communism. He traveled to Russia, where he founded the Indochinese Communist Party in 1930, later fighting alongside Mao Tse Tung.

On 2 September 1945, Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnamese independence. From that day until his death from heart failure in 1969, he served as president of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam). A totally committed revolutionary, he had little personal life; he never married or had children. His sole devotion was to his vision of Vietnam. Many consider him the uncle of the Vietnamese nation. (Clearly, there are also those on opposing political sides who disagree.)

Ho Chi Minh is now revered as an intercessor or spiritual mediator. He has even been described as a bodhisattva. Some consider him an avatar of Kwan Kung, the third-century Chinese general who may or may not be an incarnation of the Buddha.

In life, Uncle Ho, as a committed Communist, disparaged religion, shamanism, and superstition. He directed that his body be cremated; however, he was embalmed instead and put on public display in the manner of a saint (or of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin).

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Busts, portraits, and images of Ho Chi Minh appear in Vietnamese government offices, homes, temples, and pagodas.

### SACRED SITES:

- The Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum opened on 2 September 1975 and is open daily.
- The Ho Chi Minh Museum, located behind his mausoleum, opened on 2 September 1990, the 100th anniversary of his birth.
- Uncle Ho's House on Stilts, a wooden structure built in the style of Vietnam's mountain minorities, is located near a lake on the presidential palace compound and is the house where Ho Chi Minh lived, worked, and died.

**FEASTS:** Uncle Ho is honored on the anniversaries of his birth and death and during the Mid-Autumn Festival, coinciding with the full moon of the eighth lunar month.

**OFFERINGS**: incense, cigarettes, Vietnamese food or beer.

## 👡 Hubert, Saint

Also known as Saint Hubertus.

**EPITHET:** Apostle of the Ardennes.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Saint Hubert (c. 655–30 May 727 or 728) was a passionate deer hunter. One Good Friday while others were in Church, he chose to stalk deer instead. He came upon a magnificent stag and was just about to draw his bow when a golden crucifix shone from between its antlers. A voice emanated from the deer announcing: "Turn to Christ, Hubert, or your destination is Hell." He immediately accepted a religious vocation.

Hubert's special, personal mission was to convert Pagan Ardennes forest dwellers to Christianity. He eventually became the first Bishop of Liège, France. Saint Hubert is invoked against rabies, traditionally known as Saint Hubert's disease. He protects against vicious dogs and venomous snakes.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: hunters; archers; forest workers; opticians, mathematicians; metalworkers.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Usually portrayed with his miraculous stag, Hubert may also be accompanied by hunting dogs or have hunting equipment. Sometimes he is portrayed with an angel.

**ATTRIBUTES**: stag with crucifix between its antlers; bow and arrows; hunting hounds; bishop's stole.

**SACRED ANIMALS**: deer; hunting hounds and dogs, in general, especially bloodhounds, also known as the Saint Hubert hound, first bred at the Monastery of Saint Hubert in Belgium in approximately 1000.

FEAST: 3 November.

OFFERINGS: Jägermeister or Hubertus liqueurs; candles; images of deer.

### 👡 Hypatia

Also known as Ipazia.

Hypatia (370 ce–March 415 ce) was a brilliant, highly educated woman and a respected, charismatic teacher in Alexandria, Egypt, during the tumultuous era when this previously Pagan society transitioned to Christian rule. The daughter of Theon, a prominent mathematician and philosopher, she studied with her father and in Athens and Italy as well. Plutarch the Younger was among her teachers. Hypatia may or may not have been married to the philosopher Isodore of Alexandria, although it may have been a platonic marriage.

In approximately 400, Hypatia became head of Alexandria's Platonist school, where she lectured on subjects including Neoplatonism, philosophy, and mathematics. Her students included many prominent Christians. Her correspondence with Synesius of Cyrene, later the bishop of Ptolemais, in which he requests her advice on the construction of an astrolabe and a hydroscope has been preserved.

While they disagreed with her on matters of philosophy and religion, many Christians admired Hypatia, as she was perceived to be very chaste. Her independent and unconventional behavior, however, earned the disapproval of others.

Hypatia defied convention. She dressed in the clothes of a scholar rather than in typical women's clothing and drove her own chariot, unusual for a woman of her era. She was well connected and hobnobbed with the wealthy, interesting, and influential. Authorities in high places sought her advice.

Hypatia was blamed by many Christians for fomenting tensions between Cyril, bishop of Alexandria, and Orestes, the Roman governor of Egypt. This is given as the reason why, in March 415, during the Lenten season, Hypatia was pulled from her chariot by a Christian mob led by monks and a man thought to be Bishop Cyril's assistant. She was stripped naked and dragged through the streets into a church, where her flesh was flayed from her bones using oyster shells and pottery shards. Parts of her dismembered body were scattered through the city. Whatever remained was burned in the library of the Caesareum, a temple originally constructed by Cleopatra for Mark Anthony. In response to her murder, many of her students fled to Athens.

Hypatia is widely considered the most prominent Pagan martyr. Her murder is generally considered the end of the pre-Christian Classical era, even though, technically, it continued for another two centuries in a diminished manner. Hypatia was never forgotten. Her history may have been absorbed into the legend of Saint Catherine of Alexandria.

The Neoplatonic academy where Hypatia taught remained in existence until the Muslim conquest of Egypt in 642. When Alexandria's library was burned shortly after, all of Hypatia's works were destroyed. All that survives are some of her letters and discussion of her work by other scholars, who included quotes.

Over the centuries, even as details of her death went unmentioned, her name was recalled as the prime example of female intellectual brilliance and academic success. In 1843, Wilhelm Gottlieb Soldan, the German author of *History of the Witchcraft Trials*, suggested that Hypatia may have been the first "witch" persecuted by Christianity.

Fictionalized portrayals of Hypatia abound. By the 19th century, she was often portrayed as an erotic, romantic heroine. She is the heroine of the 1853 novel *Hypatia* by Charles Kingsley, author of *The Water Babies*. In this fictionalized version of her life, the author, a clergyman, envisions Hypatia embracing the truth of Christianity shortly before her death. Actress Rachel Weisz portrays Hypatia in the 2009 Spanish film *Agora*.

Hypatia is considered a saint and martyr by many Neo-Pagans and is invoked for academic success and for women's financial independence.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Although not a young woman at the time of her death, Hypatia is often romantically portrayed as a beautiful young girl, as for example in her portrait by the 16th-century Italian master, Raphael.

ATTRIBUTE: a seashell, especially a scallop or oyster shell.

**FEAST:** Beginning in approximately 2010, 15 March has been designated Hypatia Day. The month of Hypatia's death—March—is established, but the date that she died is unknown. 15 March was chosen because it is the very middle of the month.

**OFFERINGS**: wine; candles; books; writing implements.

SEE ALSO Catherine of Alexandria.

Ι

### 🔊 Ignatius of Loyola, Saint

Also known as Ignacio; Ignazio; Ignatz.

CLASSIFICATION: Anglican and Roman Catholic saint.

Ignatius was born in 1491 to a noble family in Loyola in the Basque province of Guipuzcoa. His father—without consulting the boys—determined that Ignatius would have a church career, while his brother was directed toward the military. Ignatius received the tonsure at age fourteen, but he pined until his father let him join the military as well. Ignatius spent his boyhood hunting, jousting, and reading poetry.

In 1521, while serving the king of Navarre, Ignatius was hit by a cannonball and his legs were badly injured, forcing him to undergo several surgeries. Incapacitated, he devoted himself to reading spiritual books that kindled his religious calling. On a visit to the shrine of the Black Madonna of Montserrat, Ignatius experienced profound visions. He offered the Madonna his sword as an ex-voto.

Devoting himself to a religious vocation, Ignacio spent hours daily praying in a cave and practicing very rigorous ascetism. His visionary experiences continued. He traveled as a mendicant to Rome, Venice, and Jerusalem, devoting himself to serving the sick. Upon his return, he entered the University of Paris. In 1546, he founded the Society of Jesus, also known as the Jesuits. Ignatius died in Rome on 31 July 1556. He was canonized in 1622.

Saint Ignatius is invoked to protect against harm from the living and the dead.

- He is called upon to battle demons, evil spirits, scary ghosts, and vampires.
- He is invoked to heal and protect the possessed.
- Concerned that someone recently deceased will transform into a vampire?

While preparing the corpse for burial, rub it with fat from a pig butchered on the feast day of Saint Ignatius to prevent it from rising.

FAVORED PEOPLE: soldiers; teachers.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** He is portrayed as a balding, poorly shaven man wearing a black cassock.

ATTRIBUTES: flaming heart; book.

SACRED SITES:

- The Church of the Holy Name of Jesus in Rome, the Jesuit Mother Church, contains his relics and features a museum dedicated to him.
- The Church of Saint Ignatius of Loyola at Campus Martius in Rome.

FEAST: 31 July.

SACRED DAY: Saturday.

SEE Glossary: Black Madonna; Ex-Voto.

## ∾ Irma of Maresco

Also known as Hermanita Irma Inglese of Maresco; Hermanita Caridad.

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

Irma Inglese Forte (17 July 1914–31 October 1972) was born in Buenos Aires of Italian descent. At her birth, the prophetess Madre María Salomé proclaimed that Irma was specially protected by God and Mary, and that her first son would be the Chosen One.

Irma married Don Miguel Antonio Maresco on 10 August 1935. Their son, Miguel, was born on 24 September 1936. Irma is venerated as part of a triad with Madre María and Pancho Sierra, as well as with her son, known as Brother Miguel. Irma of Maresco, considered a prophetess and healer, advised her friend Eva Duarte, who would eventually rise to fame as Evita Perón, and Juan Perón.

FEAST: 31 October; celebrations also mark her birthday on 17 July.

SACRED SITE: her tomb in Chacarita Cemetery, Buenos Aires.

SEE Evita, Santa; Madre María; Mary; Pancho Sierra.

🔊 Isaac ben Sheshet

Also known as the Ribash or the Rivash (acronym of his name); Isaac bar Chichat; The Rab (The Master).

**CLASSIFICATION:** Jewish saint.

Isaac ben Sheshet (1326–1408) was born in Valencia, Spain. He moved to Barcelona and became a renowned scholar, famed for his quote: "I pray with the mind of a child." In 1391, as pogroms against Jews spread across Spain, Isaac fled to Algiers, where he discovered the local Jewish community was bitterly divided between those of African descent and those newly arrived from Spain and the Balearic Islands.

Rab Isaac actively worked to impose Spanish (Sephardic) rites and traditions. He had a contentious relationship with several local Jewish leaders. A renowned Talmudic authority, he discouraged study of Kabbalah. He also actively attempted to discourage Jewish veneration of saints. Ironically, after his own death, he was elevated to sainthood. He is considered the special guardian of the Jews of Algiers; however, the ailing and unfortunate of all faiths come to pray at his tomb, from whence he dispenses miracles. His tomb was restored in 1862.

🔊 Isabel of Portugal, Saint

Also known as Isabella of Portugal; Elizabeth of Portugal; Isabella of Aragon; Queen Saint Isabel.

EPITHETS: The Peacemaker; The Holy Queen; Queen of Miracles.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Isabel of Portugal (1271–4 July 1336), daughter of King Peter III of Aragon, was named after her great-aunt, Saint Elizabeth of Hungary. (Isabel is a Spanish variant of Elizabeth.) She was a devout child who was married to King Diniz of

Portugal when she was twelve. He was chronically unfaithful and abusive toward her. The ladies of the Portuguese court were scornful and unfriendly toward her, possibly because they were all sleeping with her husband.

Isabel did not complain but busied herself with good deeds and charitable works. She founded hospitals, churches, and homeless shelters, cared for the sick, and provided funds for the needy. She reputedly replicated her great-aunt's miraculous feat of transforming bread hidden in her apron into roses. Like Saint Elizabeth, Isabel was married to a man who initially discouraged her charitable acts, but once she miraculously produced fragrant, blooming roses in January (completely out of season), Diniz permitted her to pursue her activities in peace.

Isabel's son, Affonso, resentful of favors shown his illegitimate brothers, rebelled against his father, fomenting civil war in 1323. Although historians suggest that Isabel favored Affonso, folklore credits her with riding onto the battlefield to make peace between father and son. When her husband died and her son ascended the throne, she donated her property to the poor and retired to a convent she had founded in Coimbra, Portugal.

Perceived as a saint while she was still alive, miracles were attributed to her intercession following her death, including such feats as restoring eyesight to the blind. Oil from lamps burned near her tomb was discovered to possess miraculous therapeutic powers. Isabel's corpse failed to decay—she is one of the oldest of the incorrupt saints. Her right hand is still occasionally exposed for veneration.

Isabel seems so devout, generous, and pious that one would assume her canonization would proceed without a hitch. Quite the contrary. Isabel's route to sainthood was delayed and controversial.

- The Vatican declined to canonize her for centuries.
- Eighteen popes ignored requests for her sainthood.

The problem was not with Isabel, but with those who most fervently sought her canonization. Isabel's life and death coincided with the Christian reconquest of Iberia and the forced conversion of substantial numbers of Jews, who then became known as New Christians. Some secretly continued to practice their original faith, or at least were suspected of doing so. Unearthing Crypto-Jews became the obsession of the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions. Even those serving as priests and nuns were not above suspicion.

New Christians (converted Jews or those with Jewish ancestry) constituted a

very high percentage of Isabel's earnest devotees and were allong mose most actively involved in her canonization process. Coincidence? The Inquisition didn't think so. The Church suspected that veneration of Queen Isabel masked forbidden veneration of Queen Esther. In fact, there was a cult of veneration dedicated to Queen Esther, the secretly Jewish queen of Persia who personally saved her people from destruction.

The Inquisition's suspicions may not have been completely incorrect.

- Isabel's husband, King Diniz, and her son, King Affonso, were considered merciful toward Jews, which the local Jewish community may have attributed to her influence.
- Some may have perceived Isabel as a genuine avatar (reincarnation) of Esther.
- Although nothing in Isabel's biography indicates that she was ever anything but an exceedingly devout Catholic, it's possible that others identified her as a Crypto-Jew. Indeed, many members of Spanish nobility were of Jewish ancestry.

Local bishops actively discouraged her canonization because they suspected the motivation of her devotees. Isabel was venerated as a controversial unofficial saint for almost 300 years. Some declined to venerate her, at least publicly, afraid of guilt by association. In the same way that many law-enforcement officials assume that all devotees of modern unofficial saint Jesus Malverde are criminals, so some Church authorities once perceived all devotees of Queen Saint Isabel as secret Jews.

One year prior to her canonization, the Inquisition accused many of those most involved in the canonization process of heresy, including twelve nuns. Many, including several nuns, were burned at the stake. Antonio Honem, the main witness to Isabel's canonization process, was burned at the stake in Lisbon in 1624, accused of being a Crypto-Jew. Isabel was finally canonized in 1625, primarily because King Philip II of Spain, seeking more saints of Spanish ancestry, pressured the pope into canonizing her.

No longer controversial and now an extremely popular and beloved saint, Isabel is invoked for virtually any miracle, but especially:

- to provide peace on the battlefield and within the home
- against jealousy and to tame unfaithful husbands
- to increase the milk supply of breast-feeding mothers
- for healing, including vision and menstrual problems

FAVORED PEOPLE: brides; widows; victims of adultery and spousal abuse.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: She is portrayed crowned with roses or carrying fresh roses in her apron during winter.

ATTRIBUTES: rose; pitcher.

### SACRED SITES:

- The Church of Santa Clara in Coimbra, which she founded, displays her silver casket above the main altar. Near the altar is a box for written petitions to the saint.
- The pine forest of Leiria was officially planted by her husband but, according to local lore, actually sprouted in one single night from seeds sowed by Isabel.

FEASTS: 4 July; 8 July.

**OFFERINGS**: roses; candles; Portuguese wine.

SEE ALSO Elizabeth of Hungary, Saint; Esther, Queen; Guadalupe; José Malverde; Loewe, Rabbi Judah and Glossary: Saint, Official; Saint, Unofficial.

# 🔊 Isidore the Laborer, Saint

Also known as Ysidro Labrador; Isidro Labrador.

**EPITHET:** The Worker.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Saint Isidore (c. 1070–15 May 1130) was a poor daylaborer from Madrid who worked for a rich landowner. Even then, Isidore performed miracles and shared what little he had with the poor. Other workers complained that he spent too much time praying. When his employer came to investigate, he discovered Isidore on his knees praying while an angel drove a team of snow-white oxen hitched to a plough.

Isidore became renowned as a healer. His miracles included the resurrection of his employer's dead daughter. Once, when the employer complained of thirst, he caused a spring to burst forth from dry earth.

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resource was married to renow future sami, Maria Formola. They are now venerated together as guardians of poor, oppressed farm workers. After his death, miracles were reported at his grave. Spain's King Philip II was reputedly healed after contact with Isidore's relics.

Saint Isidore is petitioned for rain in times of drought.

- If it's really dry, his image is brought outside and carried through the fields so that he can see and assess the damage for himself.
- If it's really, *really* dry, with no improvement in sight, his image is carried outside and left buried in a field so that he can *feel* it for himself.

Those who consider Saint Isidore their patron may invoke his aid for anything, including health and financial issues. Animals and fields are blessed on his feast day. He is invoked against the death of children. In Haitian Vodou tradition, the spirit Papa Azaka is syncretized to Saint Isidore the Laborer.

In Sonora, Mexico, a special vegetable stew featuring every possible available type of produce is served in honor of Saint Isidore on his feast day.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: farmers; ranchers; migrant workers; gardeners; anyone who works with dirt, including potters and sculptors who work with clay.

MANIFESTATION: Saint Isidore wears farmworker's clothing.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Saint Isidore is often portrayed in the company of angels.

ATTRIBUTES: sickle; staff.

SPIRITUAL ALLY: his wife, Saint María Torribia.

**FEASTS:** 15 May is his primary feast; he is also celebrated on 22 March and 25 October.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; good deeds on behalf of the poor; the fruits of your labor.

SEE ALSO María Torribia, Saint and Glossary: Syncretism.

## ∾ Isidore of Seville, Saint

EPITHET: The School Master of the Middle Ages.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Born in approximately 560 in Cartagena, now in modern Spain, Isidore was instrumental in converting the Visigoths to Roman Catholicism. In approximately 601, he succeeded his brother to the post of Archbishop of Seville, where he died on 4 April 636.

A teacher and Church reformer who required seminaries in every diocese, Isidore introduced the works of Aristotle to Spain. A prolific author, he compiled a dictionary, an encyclopedia, a history of the Goths, and a history of the world starting from Creation. Isidore of Seville was proclaimed a Doctor of the Church in 1722. Several other members of his family are also acknowledged as saints.

In recent years, Isidore has emerged as the patron of the Internet, although this remains unofficial. He is the cyber protector. Many advise performing rituals to protect your computer hardware and software on his feast day. To maximize his protection, his image may be used as a screensaver or as computer wallpaper. Alternatively, a holy card bearing his image may be kept under your desktop tower or in a laptop bag.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: researchers; authors; students; computer technicians and other workers; code monkeys.

ATTRIBUTES: book and pen.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Isidore of Seville is depicted as a bishop holding a pen and surrounded by bees.

FEAST: 4 April.

SACRED ANIMAL: bee.

SACRED SITE: The Cathedral of Murcia, Spain, houses many of his relics.

SEE Glossary: Relics.

J

### Notes Surgundus Molensis the Martyr

Also known as Jacques de Molay; James of Molay.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Gnostic saint.

Although this last Grand Master of the Knights Templar is classified as a Gnostic saint under the Latin variant of his name, Jacobus Burgundus Molensis, he is more familiarly known by his French name, Jacques de Molay. Born in approximately 1240, he was the twenty-third Grand Master of this chivalric organization.

Little is known of his personal life beyond his role as Grand Master. It is assumed, based on his name, that he was from Molay in the kingdom of Burgundy. He became a Templar in 1265 and traveled to Outremer, the Christian Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem, in approximately 1270. He may have been Master of the Temple in England before becoming Grand Master. After the fall of Outremer, de Molay relocated to Cyprus, where he became Grand Master in 1293 and engaged in attempts to retake the Holy Land.

King Philip IV of France (1268–29 November 1314), also known as Philip le Bel, was heavily in debt to the Templars and wanted to merge the Knights Templar with the Knights Hospitaller, making himself Grand Master of the two religious chivalric orders. De Molay adamantly disagreed but was invited by the pope to France to discuss the possible merger. He arrived in France in late 1306 or early 1307.

On 14 September 1307, King Philip sent out secret messages to his agents coordinating a mass arrest of all Templar Knights throughout France at dawn on Friday, 13 October. (Some believe that the superstition that Friday the 13th is an unlucky day derives from the arrest of the Templars.) That morning, Jacques de Molay was serving as a pallbearer at the funeral of the king's sister-in-law.

Together with sixty other Templars, he was arrested. They were tortured into confessing to a wide variety of charges. Either under pressure from the king or in cahoots with him, the pope ordered the arrest of all Templars worldwide. In December 1307, the pope sent two cardinals to Paris to confirm de Molay's confession, but in the presence of the cardinals, he recanted. He would go back and forth, confessing and denying his confession, for years.

The Council of Vienne convened to judge the Knights Templar refused to convict them of heresy, but on 22 March 1313, Pope Clement V abolished the order anyway. Fifty-four Templar knights had already been burned at the stake when, on 10 March 1314, three cardinals reporting directly to the pope sentenced de Molay and three other Templar dignitaries to life imprisonment. However, rather than accept this sentence, Jacques de Molay once again recanted his confession, proclaiming his innocence and that of the Templars. The only guilt he admitted, he declared, was of betraying their order by false confessions in hope of saving their lives. One of the other knights, Geoffroi de Charney, joined him. (The other two accepted their fate and kept quiet.)

King Philip ordered the two men executed immediately as heretics. Jacques de Molay was burned at the stake on 18 March 1314 on the Isle des Juifs in the Seine River, near the palace garden in Paris. He was seventy years old. De Molay asked that his hands be left free when he was tied to the stake so that he could hold them in prayer as he faced the Cathedral of Notre Dame. De Molay and de Charney died horrifically painful deaths. They were roasted slowly over a smokeless fire to ensure that they did not die quickly from smoke asphyxiation. Fire was first applied directly to their feet and genitals. De Molay called out from the flames with his dying words that King Philip and Pope Clement would soon join him. Prophecy or curse?

The pope died slightly over a month later, on 20 April 1314. Lightning struck the church where he was lying in state. When the fire was finally extinguished, his body had been almost completely destroyed. The king lasted until November. He had a seizure while hunting and died on 29 November 1314. At that time, their deaths were widely viewed as the result of de Molay's curse.

De Molay and de Charney met death with such composure and dignity that the crowd perceived them as martyrs. Many observers wept. Their ashes and bone fragments were collected as relics; presumably some were preserved and still survive. Another relic was also rumored to have been preserved. A theory suggests that it is Jacques de Molay's face that is emblazoned on the famed Shroud of Turin.

According to the theory, during his captivity—perhaps as cruel mockery—de Molay may have been tortured in a manner similar to what was done to Jesus, thus their wounds were similar. Following torture, his bleeding body was wrapped in a shroud. Authors Christopher Knight and Robert Lomas, in their 1997 book *Second Messiah: Templars, the Turin Shroud, and the Great Secret of Freemasonry*, theorize that blood and lactic acid from de Molay's wounds may have blended with frankincense used to whiten the fabric, resulting in the etching of his image into the shroud. This shroud was secretly preserved as a relic by the Templars or their sympathizers. In 1357, when the shroud was first publicly displayed, the crowds viewing the shroud recognized the resemblance and assumed the image was of Jesus.

The first reliably authenticated owner of the shroud was Jeanne de Vergy, widow of French knight Geoffroi de Charney. It is believed that *this* de Charney is the nephew of the one burned with Jacques de Molay. No public explanation was ever given for how Jeanne de Charney came into possession of this artifact.

The shroud immediately captured public attention when it was first displayed at a small church in the French town of Lirey. Crowds of pilgrims thronged to this previously obscure church. The Shroud of Lirey, as it was then called, was as controversial then as it is now. After it had been exhibited for several months, the Bishop of Troyes demanded that it be destroyed. Instead, it was apparently hidden away for three decades, until, in 1389, the de Charney family once again placed it on display. Eventually, the shroud was sold to Duke Louis of Savoy, the son of Pope Felix V, for the price of two castles and was transferred to Turin.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: a bearded man wielding a sword and wearing the uniform of a Templar knight—white clothing emblazoned with a large cross.

**FEASTS:** De Molay died on 18 March. He, together with the other Templars, is also commemorated on 13 October, the anniversary of their arrest, especially if it is a Friday the 13th.

### SACRED SITES:

- A plaque in Paris marks the site of his execution.
- The Shroud of Turin is housed in a side chapel of the Cathedral of John the Baptist in Turin.
- There is a full-size and exact replica of the Shroud of Turin in the Chapel of the Holy Relics in Rome's Basilica di Santa Croce in Gerusalemme.

### SEE ALSO Gnostic Saints; Veronica, Saint.

## 🔊 James Cut to Pieces, Saint

Also known as James Intercisus; James the Persian; Jacob Persian; Giacomo l'Interciso.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

James (died 421) was originally from Khuzestan in what is now southwestern Iran. He served as court minister to Yazdgird I, the thirteenth Sassanid king of Persia, who ruled from 399 to 421. Yazdgird initially promoted Christianity, but following the involvement of Christians in the destruction of a Zoroastrian fire temple, public outcry was so widespread and intense that he changed his mind and began persecuting Christians instead.

James was a great favorite of Yazdgird and of his son and successor, Bahram V. When Christianity fell from favor in Persia, James, a Christian, initially converted to Zoroastrianism. When his wife and mother discovered this, they sent James a heartfelt letter of remonstration, explaining that, unless he reconsidered, they would be unable to maintain their relationships with him. Under their influence, James revealed himself as a faithful Christian to Bahram, who promptly had him arrested.

James Intercisus, his name in Latin, literally means James Cut to Pieces—and so he was. Twenty-eight pieces, to be precise. Perhaps because the Persian king hoped to break his faith and resistance, he made the martyrdom of James particularly protracted and brutal. His digits and limbs were slowly sheared off, one by one, until nothing was left of James but his head and torso. He miraculously survived this torture and was finally killed by beheading. James died in Babylon. His death was the stimulus for the Roman-Sassanid War of 421–422.

SACRED SITE: Church of Saint James Intercisus in Jerusalem's Armenian Quarter.

FEASTS: 27 November (Eastern Church); 22 April (Western Church).

No James the Greater, Saint

Also known as Giacomo; Jacobo; Jacobus; Jaime; Jacques; Santiago; San Diego; Sant Yago.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

The Apostle James the Greater was the son of Mary Salomé and the fisherman Zebedee. If Mary Salomé is the daughter of Saint Anne, as many believe, then James and his brother John were Jesus' first cousins. According to the Gospels, Jesus nicknamed James and his brother the Sons of Thunder. Saint James is among the greatest and most popularly venerated of all saints. He is a powerful, forceful saint invoked for protection and healing, and the subject of an ancient and still very popular pilgrimage.

Legends suggest that following the crucifixion of Jesus in 33 ce, James left Judea to travel. In 40 ce, he was in Saragossa, now part of modern Spain, where he witnessed an apparition of Mary being transported from Jerusalem on a throne carried by angels. James prostrated himself before the vision. Mary gave him a jasper column and a small statue of herself, saying: "This place is to be my home. This image and column will be the title and altar of the temple that you will build." This was centuries before Marian veneration was authorized. In the context of the first century, the pillar and statue of a female divinity is far more reminiscent of Pagan practices, possibly Phoenician, or of subversive, officially forbidden Jewish traditions.

After building a chapel in Saragossa as directed, James returned to Jerusalem where, in 44 ce, he became the first martyred Apostle, executed by King Herod Agrippa. His disciples placed his body aboard a ship with no sails or rudder that eventually reached Galicia, now part of Spain, where the ruling Pagan queen was requested to provide a burial place for James.

Wild bulls were delegated to select his burial place. James' body was placed in a cart drawn by the bulls. They pulled for ten miles and then stopped in a field. James was buried there in a marble sarcophagus and left to rest in peace. Eight centuries later, a hermit followed some unusual stars to this field and discovered what was identified as the grave of Saint James. A shrine built on the site was named Compostela, short for Campo de Estrellas (Field of Stars) in honor of the astral display that led to the discovery of the grave. It is now, as it has been for centuries, among the most famous and popular pilgrimages on earth.

When Saint James miraculously saved a knight and his horse from drowning, the two emerged from the water covered in scallop shells. That's the official

reason why the scallop shell is the emblem of the shrine of Compostela. The grooves on a scallop shell are also symbolic of the roads leading to Compostela. Yet another theory suggests that this emblem may precede Saint James in the region. Scallop shells have historically been emblems of water spirits, most famously Aphrodite. Prior to becoming a Christian pilgrimage site, the region of Compostela may have been dedicated to a Celtic water spirit. The pilgrimage route, now known as the Way of Saint James, was once a Roman trade route nicknamed the Milky Way.

There are different paths of Saint James, which are sometimes venerated independently—meaning that some devotees honor one form of Saint James to the exclusion of others, although each is acknowledged as an aspect of this multi-faceted saint.

- Saint James the Warrior, also known as Saint James the Peacemaker (Saint James doesn't negotiate; he makes and enforces peace)
- Saint James on Horseback, whose path eventually evolved into Santiago Matamoros
- Saint James the Traveler, also called Saint James the Pilgrim, or James of Compostela

In his warrior paths, James is invoked for general protection, victory, and justice. He provides justice on behalf of those who have been lynched or hung and may be invoked to prevent these circumstances. Request his assistance when you need a divine protector to battle on your behalf.

In his path as a traveler, James is invoked for healing, especially of joint disorders like arthritis and rheumatism. He is petitioned to heal any condition that obstructs or prevents mobility or walking, as well as any other health crisis. Saint James the Traveler is invoked to sweep obstacles from your path.

In any guise, he is invoked for a bountiful apple harvest and on behalf of apple trees. If you have an ailing or failing apple orchard, request his help. In the African Diaspora traditions of Vodou and Santeria, Ogun, the spirit of iron, is syncretized to Saint James Major, especially in his guise of Saint James on Horseback. Images of Saint James may be intended to represent Ogun, who is also a fierce warrior spirit of righteousness and victory.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: warriors; pilgrims; travelers; shoemakers; hatmakers and milliners; those who died by hanging or have survived being hanged; those who

harvest scallops and other mollusks.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Different images are used to depict the different paths of Saint James.

- As Saint James the Warrior, he is a knight in armor.
- As Saint James on Horseback, he is depicted dressed in military garb, riding a white horse, armed with a lance or sword, and *always* triumphant over his enemies. He may be depicted in the act of trampling them.
- As Saint James the Traveler, he dresses like a pilgrim and wears a broadbrimmed traveler's hat, similar to those associated with the Pagan deities Odin, Mercury, or Hermes, except that James' hat is embellished with a scallop shell, the symbol of Compostela.

**ATTRIBUTES**: Cross of Saint James. The lower part of the vertical bar is a sword. Also sword; scallop shell; cockleshell; pilgrim's staff; book.

COLORS: blue; red.

FEASTS: 25 July (Western Church); 30 April (Eastern Church); 30 December, local celebrations. Whenever the feast of Saint James on 25 July falls on a Sunday, it is considered a Jubilee Year at his shrine in Compostela.

**BOTANICALS**: Saint James' Cross (*Amaryllis formosissima*); Saint James Wort, also known as ragwort (*Senecio Jacobaea*).

SACRED ANIMAL: Saint James rides a white horse.

SACRED SITE: Cathedral of Saint James of Compostela in Galicia in northwestern Spain, where his remains are reputedly enshrined. In the medieval era, Compostela was the third most popular Christian pilgrimage, superseded only by Rome and Jerusalem. Currently, over 100,000 visitors journey to his shrine annually; tens of thousands walk the pilgrimage route.

**RITUAL**: The Way of Saint James, the pilgrimage route to Compostela, the most popular Western European pilgrimage route since the Middle Ages. The pilgrimage is traditionally made on foot; however, it may also be made by bicycle, on horseback, or riding a donkey. Theoretically, the pilgrimage begins whenever you start out; however, over the centuries, certain routes have become

established and extremely popular, with stops at other shrines along the way. The pilgrimage may take weeks or months to complete, depending on route and schedule.

**OFFERINGS**: miniature boots; bridles; quirts (a riding whip with a short handle and a rawhide lash); whisky; red wine; red apples; hard cider; white or red candles; the French scallop dish, Coquilles Saint Jacques (literally, Shells of Saint James). For large requests, promise to walk the Way of Saint James.

SEE ALSO Andrew, Saint; Anne, Saint; Apostles; Barbara Caballera; Bona of Pisa; Foy, Saint; James the Just; Mary; Marys of the Sea; Santiago Matamoros; Senjak; Seven African Powers; Viridiana, Saint and Glossary: Apparition; Path; Pilgrimage; Syncretism.

Note: Saint Solution and Soluti

Also known as Saint James the Lesser; James the Younger; James of Jerusalem; James the Righteous.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

James is described as the "lesser" of the two Apostles named James, not because he's less important, but because he's the younger of the two, or conversely to camouflage just how important he really was.

Everyone is in agreement as to the manner of James' death. As described by his contemporary, author Josephus (37–c.100), in approximately 62 ce, James was dashed from a pinnacle of the Jerusalem Temple and stoned to death in the Kidron Valley. Everything else about James, however, is subject to heated, impassioned argument.

- Those who maintain that Mary remained a virgin for her entire life consider James the son of her sister or cousin, Mary Jacobe, and thus either Jesus' first or second cousin.
- Those who believe that after having given birth to Jesus, Mary and Joseph had natural marital relations perceive James as Jesus' half-brother.
- Still others describe him as Jesus' full brother—various texts refer to him as the brother of Jesus, including references by his contemporaries Josephus and

#### Saint Paul.

Saint Jerome identified James the Just with James the Lesser, and this has become general Roman Catholic belief. Eastern Catholics and the Orthodox Church tend to perceive the two as different individuals. James may also be the "Teacher of Righteousness" mentioned in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The Roman Catholic Church considers James a saint, albeit one who does not receive as much veneration or attention as the other Apostles, despite being among the first to witness the risen Christ. Others suggest that this lack of attention is because the historical James is an embarrassment to the Roman Church. Following the death of Jesus (or his disappearance, depending on who's describing this scenario), James picked up his mantle and was the first leader of Jesus' followers, the early Christians. He was the very first bishop of Jerusalem. Alternatively, if you understand Jesus to have been a claimant to the throne of Judea, then, upon his death, James was next in line as heir. (And how that relates to Mary Magdalen and any possible heirs of Jesus is another complex topic.)

James clashed with Paul, whose own vision for Christianity's future would ultimately be the path taken by the Church. Hence James' once extremely significant role is minimized. He is the subject of various recent and controversial archaeological finds, including an ossuary bearing the inscription "James son of Joseph, brother of Jesus."

Various books describe the influence of James on early Christianity, including Robert Eisenman's *James the Brother of Jesus: The Key to Unlocking the Secrets of Early Christianity and the Dead Sea Scrolls.* James is the patron saint of pharmacists and those who are dying.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: James is usually envisioned as a bearded man holding a book.

**ATTRIBUTES**: book; fuller's club, reputedly the weapon used to strike the final blow against him following his stoning.

FEASTS: 1 May (Anglican); 3 May (Roman Catholic); 23 October (Episcopalian, Orthodox, and Lutheran).

**SACRED SITES:** Different traditions ascribe different locations to James' final resting place.

- He is reputedly buried in the Bnei-Hezir tombs, built into the rock in the foothills of the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, not far from where he died.
- According to Armenian tradition, however, the Cathedral of Saint James in Jerusalem's Armenian Quarter is built over the site of James' tomb.

**OFFERINGS**: The historical James the Just was an ascetic vegetarian who dressed only in linen. Offer charitable deeds, candles, incense, or water in a stone or glass cup.

SEE ALSO Anne, Saint; Apostles; Bartholomew; Saint; James the Greater, Saint; Jerome, Saint; Jude, Saint; Mary; Marys of the Sea; Paul, Saint; Simon, Saint.

## 👡 Jaramillo, Don Pedro

**PRONOUNCED**: har-a-mee-yo.

**CLASSIFICATION:** unofficial saint.

Pedro Jaramillo (1829–3 July 1907) is a folk saint extraordinaire. Of Tarascan Indian ancestry, he was born poor near Guadalajara, Mexico. Clairvoyant and a master healer, he worked as a laborer until an experience changed his life. There are different versions of exactly what happened, but this is the one most frequently told:

While riding through some brush, Don Pedrito was hit on the nose by a tree branch. The injury was extremely painful and prevented him from sleeping. Frustrated, he walked into the woods to a nearby freshwater spring, where he lay down and intuitively buried his nose in the mud. He lay there for three days, until the pain subsided. He walked home and went to sleep, but was awakened by a disembodied voice advising that God had given him special powers of healing and ordering him to dedicate his life to the sick and injured.

His birth name was Pedro Jaramillo. Don is an honorific: a title indicating respect. Those who love him and wish to be affectionate, but still respectful, refer to him as Don Pedrito. Pedrito is an affectionate diminutive for Pedro.

In 1881, Don Pedrito's mother became very ill. He prayed for her recovery,

vowing that if she died, he'd leave Mexico forever. She did and he did. Don Pedro crossed the border into the United States, settling on the Los Olmos ranch near Falfurrias, Texas, where he soon established himself as a *curandero*, a traditional healer incorporating herbalism, and spiritual and shamanic techniques. The miraculous cures he produced led to renown; sometimes as many as 500 people at a time camped out at Los Olmos Creek waiting to consult him.

Don Pedrito's healing techniques incorporated prayer, petition, and very simple, mundane items: lemons, canned tomatoes, inexpensive olive oil, and especially water and mud. His cures were often humorous—but effective! In the most famous case, someone consulted him on behalf of a woman suffering from migraines. Asked what to do, Don Pedrito advised that the woman's head should be cut off and fed to hogs. Informed of this suggestion, the suffering woman was immediately livid, enraged, outraged—and her headaches ceased and never returned.

Don Pedrito's clairvoyant skills were also in demand; he advised where to dig wells successfully. He never claimed to possess special healing powers, attributing all miracles and cures to God who had chosen him as an intermediary. He was periodically investigated for practicing medicine without a license, but, as he did not charge for his services, no legal action was ever taken, although he was sometimes harassed by local authorities. Local physicians were not pleased with business lost to Don Pedro. He did accept donations, much of which he then donated to the poor, buying food by the wagonload to feed those seeking his services. He always lived very simply and modestly. He never married but did adopt two sons. Among the most popular folk saints, he continues to heal from beyond the grave and is invoked by healers and curanderos for assistance. Don Pedro also communicates via spirit mediums, who channel him.

Don Pedro is consulted for healing, protection, and prosperity. He himself successfully made the border crossing from Mexico to the United States and so he is invoked by those who would literally like to follow in his footsteps. He is particularly popular with athletes, who invoke him for improved skills, good fortune, success, and placement on teams.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: Don Pedrito did not turn people away; his sympathies were with the poor, modest, humble, and polite.

MANIFESTATION: He appears as an elderly man dressed in black with a long

white beard.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Mass-produced candles, statues, and photographs of Don Pedrito are readily available.

**SACRED SITE**: his grave and pilgrimage site near Falfurrias, Texas. The cemetery in which he is buried is now called the Pedro Jaramillo Cemetery.

NUMBERS: 3; 9.

SEE Glossary: Curanderismo.

### ∾ Jerome, Saint

Also known as Hieronymus; Geronimo; Jeronimo; Gerome; Jeroen.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Jerome is the English variant of the name Hieronymus, which means "sacred name." Saint Jerome (c. 347–30 September 420) was born Sophronius Eusebius Hieronymus of elegant Illyrian parentage in Stridon, a town in Dalmatia, then a Roman province. (Stridon's present location is unclear; it may be in modern Croatia or Slovenia.) He was not born a Christian but was baptized in either 360 or 366 in Rome, where he had traveled to study rhetoric, philosophy, Greek, and Latin.

Jerome was a great traveler; beginning in 373, he journeyed with friends through Thrace, Asia Minor, and Syria. The men fell desperately ill in Antioch and two of Jerome's companions died. Jerome, himself, experienced recurring bouts of serious illness. During one of these episodes, he had a profound spiritual vision that convinced him to devote himself solely to God.

Jerome retreated to the desert to live the life of a hermit. Already a linguist, he began to study Hebrew. He lived in the desert for about five years before returning to Antioch, where he was ordained by its bishop. By 382, Jerome was back in Rome, where he became a close advisor and secretary to Pope Damasius, who commissioned him to revise the current Latin translation of the Bible. The Vulgate, as Jerome's translation is known, became the Latin translation of the Bible officially sanctioned by the Roman Catholic Church.

Despite his close relationship with Damasius Jerome was a controversial man

in Rome and had many enemies. Not one to mince words, he criticized other priests, many of whom held grudges against him. Jerome also became embroiled in scandal. He attracted a devoted circle of noble, wealthy widows, encouraging their spiritual and monastic tendencies—often to the displeasure of their families —while they supported him and his work with generous financial donations.

Thus in 385, following the death of his protector, Damasius, Jerome deemed it wise to leave Rome. He traveled to Antioch, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Egypt. He eventually settled down near Bethlehem, where he spent the last three decades of his life as a hermit, devoted to the translation of sacred texts and a prolific correspondence. He died there following a long illness.

Saint Jerome encouraged the veneration of relics, a controversial practice even in his day, on the basis that God works miracles through them.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: librarians; translators; linguists; Bible scholars; archaeologists; foreign correspondents; students; archivists; children.

**ATTRIBUTES**: lion; owl; skull; books and writing implements; the trumpet that will sound on Judgment Day.

FEASTS: 15 June (Eastern Church); 30 September (Western Church).

SACRED SITE: Jerome was buried in a cave beneath the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, but his relics were reputedly translated to Rome's Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore.

**SEE ALSO** *Gabriel Archangel, Saint; James the Just; Lucifer, Saint; Moses; Seven African Powers and Glossary: Relics.* 

## 👡 Jesús Malverde

EPITHETS: The Angel of the Poor; The Generous Bandit; The Narco Saint.

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

Jesús Malverde is patron of smugglers and those in the illegal drug trade. He is

invoked for protection and also to keep business booming. Comparatively few saints condone and assist criminal activity or actions that exploit and harm others. Those who are willing to do so are thus incredibly valued by their devotees and lavishly propitiated. (If you have a falling out with a saint who specializes in love or prosperity, you may be able to transfer devotions to one of the hundreds of others. The pool of saints who patronize criminals, on the other hand, is very limited.)

Among the blessings for which Jesús Malverde is invoked are:

- protection from police and law enforcement
- release from prison
- prevention of arrest or conviction
- to make smugglers invisible
- to provide and protect abundant marijuana and opium poppy crops

Because of this, Jesús Malverde (literally, Jesus the Bad Green) has developed something of a reputation. Law-enforcement agents often look with suspicion upon those possessing his emblems, amulets, or medallions.

However, Jesús Malverde is a complex being who cannot easily be pigeonholed. He is more than just the Narco Saint. Many of his devotees have no criminal history or inclinations, or any associations with smuggling or drugs. Plenty of ordinary men and women swear by Jesús Malverde, too. He is also petitioned for healing, lawful and gainful employment, true love and happy marriages, fertility, safe childbirth, reunion with loved ones, and especially for safe travel. Many credit him with saving them from car, plane, or other vehicular crashes, and also for miraculous healings, healthy babies after years of infertility, and saved lives. And besides, criminals are not the only ones who occasionally need an invisibility cloak, protection from law enforcement, or help with moving something surreptitiously.

Many keep Jesús Malverde's image in their cars—some seeking his protection for whatever the car is being used to smuggle, while others seek protection from injury and accidents. Because displaying his very recognizable image tends to attract police attention, it is often hidden within the car, rather than placed openly on the dashboard or around the rearview mirror. Tuck an image into the glove compartment or under the seat. Some devotees obtain tattoos of Jesús Malverde works both sides of the drug world:

- He also protects individuals from drug lords and dealers.
- He is invoked to protect loved ones from addiction or from falling prey to any danger associated with drugs or the drug trade.
- He helps those seeking to leave the drug trade and make a fresh start.

Who is Jesús Malverde? There is no historical evidence for his existence. Different versions of his legend exist, as do different suggestions for his true identity, but the bottom line is that he was a Robin Hood–like figure, an outlaw from Culiacán in Mexico's state of Sinaloa, who stole from the rich and gave to the poor.

Betrayed by his closest friend for the bounty on his head, Jesús Malverde was captured and hung from a tree on 3 May 1909. The local governor, in whose side he had been a thorn, refused to permit burial, so his body was left to hang from the tree until it decomposed and fell, piece by piece, to the ground. The hard-hearted governor still refused burial, so sympathizers began to build a cairn, gradually covering the body with stones. The governor died a month after Jesús Malverde. Devotees do not consider this a coincidence.

After his death, Jesús Malverde appeared to an elderly woman. In exchange for a promise to visit his grave, he revealed the location of hidden gold coins. She discovered the treasure exactly where he said it would be and pilgrimages to his grave began. The first to pray there in identifiable groups were local prostitutes; it is only in recent years that "respectable people" have openly venerated him. His veneration has grown exponentially in recent years and his devotees now derive from every walk of life.

The outlaw Jesús Malverde continues to provide for the poor. His shrines attract lavish contributions from grateful drug dealers and traffickers. Custodians of his shrines have historically used funds to provide for the many local poor so that, in essence, proceeds from the drug trade benefit the community. Donations have been used to provide thousands of wheelchairs, as well as coffins and funerals for the indigent.

In the 1980s, a young oyster diver in Mazatlán, Mexico, entangled underwater by ropes, had a vision of Jesús Malverde and was able to free himself. He credited Jesús Malverde with saving his life and, in gratitude, spent many years helping tend the Culiacán shrine.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: the unjustly accused; smugglers; exporters; drug dealers; drug counselors; immigrants lacking papers, especially those smuggled across borders; those refused help elsewhere; the abandoned; the poor.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Jesús Malverde is depicted as a brown-eyed handsome man with a stylish mustache. Traditional images include a bust or a scene from his execution that shows a noose already around his neck and flung over a tree branch, and his hands tied behind his back. He is cool, suave, nonplussed, and immaculately groomed. More recent images, in which Malverde is depicted seated and surrounded by money with a money bag in his lap, may derive from those of fellow saint, Maximon. Jesús Malverde is frequently shown in the company of the Lady of Guadalupe.

COLOR: green.

## SACRED PLANT: Cannabis sativa.

**SACRED SITES:** His chapel in Culiacán, Sinaloa, attracts thousands, including some involved in the drug trade and many who are not. He also has many smaller shrines and is the subject of countless home altars.

**RITUAL**: Jesús Malverde was a skilled thief. Capture his attention by stealing one of the small rocks kept in his Culiacán chapel. Hold on to it carefully; if he fulfills your request, you must return it to him together with another rock.

FEAST: 3 May.

**OFFERINGS**: green candles; rocks; flowers; garlands; wreaths; milagros; rum; tattoos. Give him a bottle of Malverde beer, which features his image on the label, or visit his grave. Give offerings on behalf of the poor in his name; on his feast day, throw a party in his honor. Celebrate him in song.

SEE ALSO Colonia, Sarita; Gaucho Gil; Guadalupe, Lady of; Maximón and Glossary: Saint, Unofficial.

EPITHETS: Earth Treasure; Womb of the Earth.

CLASSIFICATION: Bodhisattva.

The Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha first arrived in Japan together with Buddhism in the eighth century, achieving great popularity in the tenth. In Japan, Jizo evolved into a beloved spirit of folk religion. While scholars and devout traditional Buddhists may consider Jizo just a local name for Ksitigarbha, many devotees perceive Jizo as an independent and distinct holy being.

Jizo is the guardian of dead babies, including those stillborn and those never born because of terminated pregnancies, whether due to miscarriage, abortion, or any other reason. Any mother may request his protection for a child she has lost for any reason.

Jizo's sacred function is to rescue children's souls from the less pleasant aspects of the after-life. He patrols the borders of the Buddhist Death Realms, searching for the souls of children and infants, born or unborn. When he finds them, he quickly slips them into his long sleeves in order to hide them from vicious demons. Then he transports them to safety.

Jizo also protects living children, guarding against all dangers and healing any illness. He protects against fire and traffic accidents, locates lost valuables, and is invoked to interpret dreams or omens. He is petitioned for fertility and spiritual, emotional, or physical healing. He protects against all forces of evil, regardless of origin, and guards women in childbirth.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: everyone, living or dead, but especially babies; children; pregnant women; the souls of stillbirths and miscarried, aborted, and unborn fetuses; firefighters; mediums and fortunetellers; travelers and pilgrims. Jizo is the patron of anyone in pain. Anyone can request and receive his help and blessings.

**MANIFESTATION**: Jizo most frequently appears to people as a monk, although he famously takes many forms. He usually, but not always, appears to be male. He may also manifest in the guise of a cat. There are many famous stories in Japan of Jizo manifesting in order to perform miracles—for instance, suddenly appearing between a devotee and an assailant to divert a blow or blade.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Images of Jizo are placed outside to serve as a guardian or maintained on a home altar. The standard image is a simple geometric depiction of Jizo as a bald monk; his eyes are closed in meditation and his hands are held in prayer. Some Jizo statues resemble small, round children, while others are phallic in appearance.

Under the name Mizuko Jizo, he is a portrayed as a monk holding a baby in his arms and with at least one small child at his feet clutching his robe. *Mizuko* literally translates as "Water Baby." This image is traditionally placed in a cemetery or on a home altar to serve as a baby's memorial. (This may be done whether the baby was born or not.)

### SACRED ANIMALS: cat; wolf.

**NUMBER:** 6, indicating that Jizo can help anyone trapped anywhere on the Wheel of Life.

Traditional Buddhist cosmology divides existence into six realms:

- The Hell Realms (an after-life where dead souls are purified)
- The Hungry Ghost Realm
- The Animal Realm
- The Realm of the Spirits
- The Realm of the Deities
- The Human Realm

**FEAST:** The twenty-fourth day of every month is dedicated to Jizo. Jizo Bon or the Confession of Jizo ceremony occurs annually on 24 August. This feast is associated with many rituals, especially those associated with the dead, including séances.

### **RITUALS:**

- Attach small pieces of children's clothing to statues of Jizo to better enable him to care for their souls or to request him to guard a specific child's soul.
- Red children's clothes are also attached to Jizo's statues by parents as a gesture of gratitude for delivering a child from serious illness or danger.
- On Jizo's feast day, climb Japan's sacred Mount Osore (Mount Fear)—a dormant volcano reputed to be a gateway to the Realm of Death. Many statues of Jizo are found on this mountain; offer each statue special rice dumplings.
- Women who seek Jizo's protection for their lost children create cairns by

heaping small stones into the shape of a stupa (a mound-like shape).

SACRED SITES: Jizo has many shrines and temples throughout Japan and elsewhere, especially Hawaii. However, any statue of Jizo is innately a shrine, particularly larger statues. Small stone statues of Jizo placed at crossroads and boundaries serve as roadside shrines.

ALTARS: Jizo is usually venerated with one solitary image or in groups of six images; however, some shrines contain huge groupings of Jizo statues.

**OFFERINGS**: incense; rice; tea; water; miso; stones; good deeds; charitable acts. Attach red bibs or baby bonnets to his image or make a pilgrimage to one of his shrines.

SEE ALSO Kwan Yin.

## ∾ Joan of Arc

Also known as Jeanne D'Arc; La Pucelle; Giovanna d'Arco; Juana de Arco.

EPITHETS: The Maid of Orleans; The Maid of Lorraine.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

No saint is more famous than Joan of Arc (c. 1412–30 May 1431). Even those who know nothing about saints are familiar with the story of the brave young French peasant girl who, inspired by her visionary experiences and guided by saints and angels, led the French army to victory but was then captured and burned at the stake. Joan is beloved and admired by many people possessing no interest in religion or spirituality. Many consider her in purely historical or political terms, although Joan herself was intensely spiritual, albeit rebelliously so.

If you are unfamiliar with her story, there are literally countless books, films, and plays that retell it from every possible perspective. Joan of Arc is firmly entrenched in popular culture. She is the subject of verses, paintings, songs, sculptures, operas, plays, television, and movies. She's made the transition to the 21st century quite well, making frequent appearances in comics, video games,

anime, and even an episode of *The Simpsons*, in which she rides off with a prince and lives happily ever after.

Joan's popular renown preceded her sainthood by centuries. Joan of Arc is the only person condemned by a church court for crimes against religion who was later declared a saint of the very same church. Joan may be the most famous saint in the world now, but for centuries, she was the most famous unofficial saint. It took almost five centuries for her canonization. Joan emerged as a powerful symbol of French nationalism during World War I. She was officially recognized as a saint on 16 May 1920 by Pope Benedict XV as part of an effort to restore diplomatic relations between France and the Holy See after that war.

Joan's birthday is unknown. She herself may never have known it. She is estimated to have been born in 1411 or 1412, because she identified herself as "nineteen or thereabouts" shortly before her death in 1431. The day traditionally given as her birthday, 6 January, was assigned later for symbolic reasons, as it is the Feast of the Epiphany.

Joan began having mystic experiences at age thirteen. She heard mysterious voices insisting that it was her destiny to help France's true king regain his throne. She resisted for over three years, arguing with them, but finally submitted to their directions.

Joan was young, poor, unsophisticated, and uneducated. She had absolutely no military training. She could not read or write. Any religious training or other schooling she possessed was learned from her mother. And yet she had incredible visionary experiences. Joan heard voices and received visitations from Saints Michael Archangel, Catherine of Alexandria, and Margaret of Antioch. She was granted a vision of Saint Gabriel Archangel and a host of angels. She demonstrated strong powers of healing by touch, leading some to accuse her of witchcraft.

Her death was humiliating, brutal, and excruciatingly painful. No mercy was shown to her. Her parents, who stood in the crowd during her execution, were forbidden to see their daughter during her lengthy captivity. (Her father, Jacques d'Arc, died within months of Joan, reputedly of a broken heart. Her determined mother led the campaign for Joan's vindication.) At the stake, Joan was forced to don a paper hat on which was written: "Heretic, Relapsed Apostate, Idolatress."

Manzz who are described as having been "humad at the stales" work

technically cremated at the stake, as they were given "mercy killings" before the pyre was lit. The executioner climbed a ladder behind the stake and either strangled the victim or cut his or her throat. Joan, on the other hand, was forced to endure being truly burned alive. Her torture was exceptionally protracted, because the pyre was built higher than usual to afford the gathered crowds a better view. Her corpse was pulverized and the ashes thrown into the river to prevent them from being collected as relics, because Joan was already being proclaimed an unofficial saint. Within hours of her death, one of her judges confided to a friend that he regretted his participation in her death.

Different and deeply held visions of Joan's history and spirituality exist.

- Some perceive her as a very simple person of conventional Catholicism.
- Others associate her with subversive esoteric spirituality.

Joan had a close relationship with King René d'Anjou—so close that many believed them to be lovers. René had a strong interest in metaphysics; his kingdom was a haven for occultists and Jews. The grandfather of the prophet Nostradamus served as René's personal astrologer. Another of Joan's close allies, Gilles de Rais, was executed for witchcraft in 1440, just scant years after Joan's death, condemned for murders to which he confessed under severe torture. Many associate Joan with the Knights Templar or the Priory of Sion. Although more conventional devotees dismiss these allegations as slander, Joan's esoteric associations are among the reasons that she remained an unofficial saint for centuries after her death.

Joan is also symbolic of French identity and the secular French state. She is the emblem of the French far-right political party, the National Front, chosen by its leader Jean-Marie Le Pen as a symbol of French sanctity and resistance to invaders.

A 15th-century deck of cards found in Polminhac, France, incorporated images of historical figures, including Joan in the guise of Athena.

Joan has inspired a seemingly endless number of creative works. A tiny sampling of the most renowned includes:

• Mark Twain's 1896 Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc

- George Bernard Shaw's 1923 play Saint Joan
- Carl Dreyer's 1928 film The Passion of Joan of Arc
- Bertolt Brecht's 1930 play Saint Joan of the Stockyards
- Leonard Cohen's 1970 song Joan of Arc

Joan's portrait has been painted by illustrious artists, including Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Sir John Everett Millais, Annie Louisa Swynnerton, Howard Pyle, Jules Bastien-Lepage, Pinckney Marcius-Simons, and Sir William Blake Richmond. Most of these paintings were created before Joan was proclaimed an official saint. Renée Falconetti, Ingrid Bergman, Jean Seberg, Leelee Sobieski, Milla Jovovich, and Hedy Lamarr are among the actresses who have portrayed Joan on the silver screen.

Joan is petitioned for courage in the face of adversity and the strength to be true to one's own convictions. Request her assistance if you, too, wish to commune with angels and saints. Joan may also be invoked to provide protection against spiritual, magical, and physical dangers. Appeal to her to protect your home and loved ones:

- 1. Designate a small gray candle for each member of your household for whom you seek Joan's protection. If gray candles are unavailable, use silver or white ones.
- 2. Using a sharp-pointed tool, scratch each person's name into the candle intended to represent him or her, one name per candle.
- 3. Petition Joan, invoke her protection, and then light the candles.
- 4. While they're burning, petition some more.
- 5. Repeat this ritual eight more times, for a total of nine consecutive spell days.

Joan is the matron of those who work in the field of radio. She is the guardian of radio itself and, as such, may also be invoked for protection against hostile EVP (electronic voice phenonmena)—inexplicable voices or other "audio events" transmitted over media or captured on tape. Although other explanations for these mysterious phenomena are offered, many consider them paranormal—radios, tape recorders, and other forms of electronic media are believed to serve as portals for ghosts, demons, and other harmful beings. If you feel threatened by EVP emanating from any media source—not just radios—Joan of Arc may be invoked for rescue and assistance.

Historically, Joan did not approve of drinking, swearing, or sexual vulgarity. Behave yourself in front of her altar or images if you wish to find favor.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: Joan of Arc is officially the matron saint of prisoners, rape victims, those falsely accused, and soldiers; but she is invoked by all who love, admire, or marvel at her.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: a young girl in battle armor. She has a characteristic bowl haircut and may be depicted on horseback, kneeling in prayer, or surrounded by flames. The image of the Anima Sola is also used to represent her, although not officially.

ATTRIBUTES: suit of armor; sword; banner.

**SPIRITUAL ALLIES:** Joan was very devoted to Black Madonnas and may be venerated along with them. She invoked the assistance of the Black Madonna of Blois in April 1429 and attended Mass before the Black Madonna of Orleans daily while in that city, crediting her with her victory of 7 May.

COLOR: gray.

**SACRED ANIMALS:** horse; white dove. Bystanders attested that such a dove hovered around her banner as she rode into battle; witnesses to her execution claimed to see a white dove emerge from her mouth with her dying breath.

FEASTS: Joan is unique in having both a religious and a secular feast. 30 May, the anniversary of her death, is her Vatican-decreed feast; 8 May is Joan of Arc Day, a national holiday in France celebrating the withdrawal of English troops from Orleans following their defeat by Joan's forces. An annual festival is held in Orleans on that day.

#### SACRED SITES:

- La Maison de Jeanne d'Arc, the house in Orleans where Joan reputedly lived during her stay in that city, is now a museum dedicated to her.
- The Cathedral of Saint Croix in Orleans, where Joan attended Mass in 1429, contains stained-glass windows that depict scenes from her life.

SACRED DAY: Tuesday.

**OFFERINGS**: She was an unpretentious peasant girl. Give her French country food rather than gourmet offerings; toy horses and knights in armor are also appropriate. Build her an army or give her gifts having to do with the saints and angels she loved, or offer any of the innumerable products named in her honor—like beer and cheese. Bring her incense or swords, or say prayers for her soul. Although candles are a standard votive offering, Roger Pratt, proprietor of New York City's Altar Egos store, suggests that a glass of water placed before her image may be more appropriate, considering the circumstances of her death.

SEE ALSO Anima Sola; Catherine of Alexandria, Saint; Gabriel Archangel, Saint; Margaret of Antioch, Saint; Marys of the Sea; Michael Archangel, Saint; Sarah, Saint and Glossary: Black Madonna; Relics; Saint, Unofficial.

#### 👡 John of God

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Bells allegedly rang spontaneously at the moment when John Ciudad (8 March 1495–8 March 1550) was born in Evora, Portugal, to extremely poor but devout peasants. When John, an only child, was eight, a mysterious man claiming to be a mendicant priest stopped at the family cottage. John's parents offered him their hospitality. In the morning, the stranger had vanished and John was gone, too.

The man eventually left John with strangers in Oropresa, a town approximately sixty miles west of Toledo, Spain. John lived with this family until he was grown. (His mother died of a broken heart within a few months of his disappearance; his father joined the Franciscans.)

John worked as a shepherd until, at age twenty-two, his employer wanted him to marry his daughter. John ran away to live a debauched, dissolute life. A mercenary soldier, he drank, gambled, swore, patronized prostitutes, and trafficked in slaves. His military career ended in disgrace when, assigned to guard a cache of valuables, he left his post and the valuables were stolen. He was court-martialed. Some officers thought he should be hanged, but John was eventually dishonorably discharged. He drifted from job to job and city to city but eventually became a spiritual merchant, peddling religious books and holy cards—whether initially as a cynical act or as an attempt to make amends is now subject to debate.

In 1536, John was carrying a heavy load of books on a rocky Pyrenean mountain road when he encountered a ragged, barefoot, beautiful child walking alone. John ended up carrying the boy, who gradually became increasingly heavy. When they reached a spring, John set the boy under a shady tree and went to get a drink. He heard the boy call him. When he turned, the ragged child had transformed into an apparition of the Holy Child, who handed John an open pomegranate crowned with a cross and told him that, from now on, his name was John of God and his cross would be Granada. The apparition vanished and John, profoundly moved and overwhelmed, traveled to Granada.

On 20 January 1537, the Feast of Saint Sebastian, the fiery mystic John of Ávila was preaching in Granada when, suddenly, someone in the crowd started howling like an animal. It was John of God. He ran howling through the streets, tearing out his hair and beating his breast. He was brought to an insane asylum in the parlance of that time, a "House of God"—where he was given the standard treatment: tied to the bed and beaten daily. Nothing helped, until John of Ávila arrived to see him and calmly advised him that if he wished to serve God, he should stop being hysterical and do something useful. John's breakdown terminated immediately. Released from the hospital, he made a pilgrimage to the Black Madonna of Guadalupe in Extremadura, who healed him.

John returned to Granada and rented a house, transforming it into a hospital for the poor and indigent with forty-six beds. *No one* volunteered to help; having witnessed his very public breakdown, everyone kept their distance except the sick and needy. So John did *everything* in his hospital himself, single-handedly. Eventually, he was reduced to begging in the streets of Granada for alms to care for his patients. He attracted the assistance of angels, including Raphael Archangel. Finally, other men joined him in his mission of healing. John of God is among the saints who reputedly bore the stigmata.

John leaped into a river to save a drowning man and died on his fifty-fifth birthday from what is described as an overexerted heart. After his death, the men who worked with him in his hospital declared themselves a religious order, the Brothers of Saint John of God, or the Brothers Hospitallers. The order was officially approved in 1572 and is now responsible for the pope's medical and dental care.

John is specifically invoked against heart disease, mental illness, and alcoholism, but he may be appealed to for any kind of healing. He may be petitioned for a good death. **FAVORED PEOPLE**: booksellers; bookbinders; publishers, especially those specializing in spiritual works; alcoholics; alcoholic booksellers, bookbinders, and publishers; those who care for alcoholics; those who are mad as hell and can't take it anymore; firefighters; heart patients; hospital workers; hospice workers; those who are dying.

ATTRIBUTES: crown of thorns; heart; alms.

**SPIRITUAL ALLIES:** Venerate him beside the Black Madonna of Guadalupe (La Extremeña) and the Holy Child, especially Baby Doctor Jesus.

FEAST: 8 March.

**OFFERINGS**: Don't give him alcohol; offer water instead. Also simple food; medical supplies (both actual and miniature models); a toy doctor's kit; heart-shaped milagros.

SEE ALSO Camillus, Saint; Guadalupe; Raphael Archangel, Saint; Sebastian, Saint and Glossary: Black Madonna; Stigmata.

## ∾ John of Nepomuk

Also known as Jan Nepomucky; John Nepomucene.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

John (c. 1330–20 March 1393), the son of the mayor of Pomuk—a town now known as Nepomuk— in Bohemia, entered the priesthood. Following years of study, he moved to Prague, where he rose to a high rank in the local church, serving as confessor to the wife of King Wenceslas IV.

John became embroiled in a political battle between the king and the bishop of Prague. John and the bishop's other followers were arrested, interrogated, and tortured, reputedly by the king himself. (The bishop, meanwhile, escaped.) The other priests were set free, but John was taken under cover of night to the Charles Bridge and thrown into the Moldau River. Although John was genuinely caught up in the political intrigue, he was killed because he refused to tell the king what his wife had said during confession. Another version of his legend and there are several—suggests that John did not survive the torture chamber. He died on the rack and his body was tossed into the river at night in an attempt to hide the evidence.

A crown of stars marked the spot where John's body came to rest. His corpse was retrieved and buried in the Cathedral of Saint Vitus. Four months later, the bishop denounced the king to the pope, describing John as a "holy martyr." He was canonized in 1729, although he had been popularly considered a saint for centuries.

In 1725, during the investigation for his sainthood, John's tongue was discovered to be dried out. Within three-quarters of an hour, however, it had spontaneously regained its shape and fresh, vital color. John's tongue is now preserved in a reliquary in the cathedral of Prague.

John's statue is frequently placed on bridges. He is the guardian of bridges. He is invoked against floods and drowning but petitioned for rain when needed. He is invoked against diseases of the tongue, and to gain and maintain a good reputation.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: those who hear confessions; those who keep secrets; sailors; mariners.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: John is portrayed wearing a canon's habit, a biretta hat, and a *mozetta*, a type of cloak. He is usually depicted with his finger on his lips and the motto: "I remained silent."

**ATTRIBUTES**: a halo of five stars.

SACRED FLOWER: water lily.

SACRED SITES: the Pilgrimage Church of John Nepomuk on Green Hill in the town of Zdar nad Sazavou in the Czech Republic; his tomb in Prague's Cathedral of Saint Vitus.

FEASTS: 20 March; 16 May.

For John's "official" website, with information in Czech, English, and German, go to *http://www.sjn.cz.* **see also** *Vitus, Saint and Glossary: Relics; Saint, Unofficial.* 

## 👡 John Paul II

#### CLASSIFICATION: canonization pending.

During his lifetime, Pope John Paul II (18 May 1920–2 April 2005), born Karol Joseph Wojtyla in Wadowice, Poland, was described as the most recognized man in the world. He served as pope from 1978 to 2005, the second-longest reign of any pope. During that time, he elevated more saints than any previous pope. He was responsible for 482 canonizations and 1338 beatifications. So perhaps it was no surprise that virtually immediately after his death, calls were made for his own sainthood. John Paul II's successor, Pope Benedict XVI, waived the standard five-year waiting period so that the case for John Paul's sainthood could be launched immediately.

John Paul suffered from Parkinson's disease, a degenerative disorder of the nervous system, often resulting in impaired speech and motor skills. The illness is characterized by tremors; in its advanced stages, it is not an illness that can be hidden. As a public figure who traveled extensively despite his failing health, John Paul forced many to confront the realities of illness and the deterioration of the physical body.

Parkinson's disease remains an illness without a cure, but at least one miraculous recovery is already being attributed to the spirit of Pope John Paul. Apparitions of John Paul have reputedly been witnessed. One of his robes was cut into 100,000 pieces to serve as relics.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Mass-produced altar images and candles bearing his image are available; however, a photograph cut from a magazine serves just as well and offers the devotee a broader choice of images.

#### **SACRED SITES:**

- his tomb, located in the Vatican catacombs beneath Saint Peter's Basilica
- Krakow is the center of his veneration in Poland; a hospital and airport are named in his honor.
- The Pope John Paul II Center: Be Not Afraid in Krakow was officially launched on 2 January 2006 and was under construction during the writing of this book. The center's church will feature a vial of John Paul's blood, taken shortly before his death during medical proceedings. There are plans to

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incorporate it within the church's altar.

FEAST: 2 April.

**OFFERINGS**: traditional Polish food; candles; incense; charitable donations.

# 👡 John The Baptist

Also known as John the Forerunner; Yokhannan; Yahya; Juan Bautista; Joao; Jean-Baptiste; Ivan; Prophet Yahia; Yahya ibn Zakariah; Iahia; Johannes; Hans; Giovanni Battista.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

John the Baptist, among the most venerated and beloved saints, is the subject of a tremendous trove of magic spells, rituals, and conspiracy theories. Depending upon their spiritual orientation, people tend to understand and define him in one of the following three ways:

- John the Baptist is a Christian saint who may have been Jesus' cousin. He is the forerunner who paved the way for Jesus, the Messiah. John's feast is an exceptionally popular Christian festival, but nothing other than that.
- John the Baptist is the true Messiah, upstaged by Jesus, who usurped his role. Theories blaming Jesus for John's death are ancient. Conspiracy theorists suggest that John's true identity was suppressed and kept secret by the Vatican, but that clues are planted in various paintings by Leonardo da Vinci, who is alleged to have been a devotee of John, as well as in select other places, if you know how to look. (And if you don't, plenty of books have been published in recent years that will point out these clues.) This premise is among the underlying themes of Dan Brown's bestselling 2006 novel, *The Da Vinci Code*.
- The name and image of John the Baptist serve as a mask for one or more forbidden Pagan spirits. John's associations with the sacred, magical, and healing powers of water made syncretism natural. His summer feast, coinciding roughly with the summer solstice, allowed extremely beloved Pagan festivals to continue, albeit undercover. That's why so many magic spells are associated with him, something that neither a conventional Christian

nor a Jewish prophet would be inclined to condone. From the perspective of folk religion, John the Baptist is the magical saint extraordinaire.

John the Baptist was, in fact, a Jewish prophet who inclined to ascetism and in trouble with the law, fled to the Judean desert, where he dressed in animal skins and subsisted on wild honey, carobs, and locusts. (Locusts are the only kosher insects.) Relatively little is known about him, but some believe that he was affiliated with the Essenes, an ascetic, esoteric Jewish community linked with the Dead Sea Scrolls and apocalyptic theology. Until the publication of *The Da Vinci Code*, John the Baptist's primary fame derived from two episodes in his life:

- His baptism of Jesus
- His own death

Some perceive John as the personality who bridges the Old and New Testaments. He followed in the footsteps of the Old Testament prophets. (Some consider him to be the literal reincarnation or second coming of the prophet Elijah.) He was unafraid to speak the word of the Lord against kings and queens.

John publicly protested against the marriage of Herod, king of Judea, to Herodias, the king's former sister-in-law—a union that, through strict interpretation of Jewish law, could be construed as incestuous. John thus earned the undying enmity of Queen Herodias, who plotted his demise. When King Herod promised her daughter, Salome, anything her heart desired following her performance of the Dance of the Seven Veils, Herodias encouraged Salome to request John's head on a platter.

John the Baptist was beheaded in approximately 30 ce. The whereabouts of his head remain mysterious and are the subject of much speculation. One theory suggests that it briefly resurfaced among the treasures of the Knights Templar.

John the Baptist is perceived as the last and greatest prophet by the Mandaeans, a spiritual tradition centered for centuries in Iraq. The Mandaeans acknowledge that John baptized Jesus but do not believe he was beheaded. Instead, an angel of death, in the guise of a small child, appeared to John who recognized the angel's true identity and went with him willingly.

John's feast on 24 June. corresponding to Midsummer's Dav. is among the

oldest on the Church calendar. It has been celebrated on this day since the fifth century. It is a highly unusual Christian feast, as it celebrates the saint's birth, rather than his death as is customary.

Saint John's Eve, the night preceding the feast, is considered among the most magical nights of the year, when botanicals are believed to be at the peak of their mystical power. Plants harvested from dusk to dawn on Saint John's Eve allegedly possess enhanced magical and healing powers. The festival is traditionally celebrated with bonfires and water rituals. It's a night devoted to love divination and fertility rituals—and often sexual license. John's second feast, in August, commemorates his death and does not receive nearly as much attention.

No historical evidence exists indicating that John was actually born on 24 June, any more than there is evidence that Jesus was born on 25 December. It is theorized that their births were deliberately commemorated near the solstices, either to permit newly converted, previously Pagan Christians to continue celebrating festivals coinciding with these days or to make a spiritual point. In the Gospel, John the Baptist says of Jesus: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). Saint Augustine (354–430) pointed out the solstice symbolism in that statement, the metaphor for the waxing and waning sun. During the winter solstice, near Jesus' birthday, the sun begins to wax, or grow greater, whereas during the summer solstice, near the birthday of John, the sun, at its peak, begins to diminish or wane. Taken a step further, this metaphor may indicate waxing and waning prophets and waxing and waning religious traditions —the emergence of Christianity and the New Testament from the Jewish Old Testament.

John the Baptist is believed able to fulfill any petition but is especially invoked for healing. He is petitioned for help with convulsive, seizure, or spasmodic disorders. He banishes bad dreams and protects against spiritual or magical dangers. Many of John's associations with healing are macabre.

- A medieval remedy for headaches involved meditating on images of John's severed head. Allegedly, if you look at it long enough, your own will start to feel better.
- He is invoked before surgery, because his beheading may be construed as the worst possible outcome of surgery. John is thus petitioned to make sure that *your* surgery is successful and that you survive.

Saint John's Bread is a folk name for carob seeds, a staple of John's diet. Offer them to him with a glass of water and some honey if you feel that you are in exile and need his help.

John the Baptist is beloved in many diverse spiritual traditions.

- The Mandaeans, also known as the Nazoreans, an ancient Gnostic spiritual tradition centered for centuries in Iraq, are sometimes called the Christians of Saint John.
- For the Druze, another West Asian spiritual tradition, mainly centered in Israel, Lebanon, and Syria, John the Baptist is venerated as Al Khidr, the Green Man.
- Masonic Orders claim him as their patron.
- In Haiti, he is classified among the spirits known as the lwa.
- In Brazil, he is the head of the Oriental Line of Umbanda spirits, which includes spirits deriving from what are perceived as spiritually evolved civilizations, including the Aztecs, ancient Egypt, China, Inca, India, Israel, and Japan.

Throughout Europe, John the Baptist is perceived as the special protector of witches, midwives, and all who heal and work with herbs. In Siberia, Saint John's Feast Day is called Ivan Travnik (John the Herbalist) or Ivan Koldovnik (John the Magician).

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: innkeepers; hoteliers; prisoners; those condemned to death; those who care for birds; sword smiths; those who forge cutlery and scissors; chimneysweeps; orphans; those abandoned on doorsteps and thresholds.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: John is the subject of innumerable icons. His image appears in churches throughout the world. Artists have drawn inspiration from John and various episodes of his life—from the child companion of Jesus, to the ascetic desert prophet, to his death and its aftermath. John is the patron saint of Florence, Italy, birthplace of the Renaissance, so he appears in many works of art. Titian painted his portrait, as did Caravaggio. Leonardo da Vinci's paintings *The Virgin of the Rocks* (two slightly different versions exist)—which depict John with Jesus, Mary, and an angel—have been scoured for hidden, subversive

meanings, as have Da Vinci's other portraits of John. Gustave Moreau and Aubrey Beardsley created many images featuring John's head on a plate.

ATTRIBUTES: lamb; the platter atop which his severed head will rest.

COLOR: red.

SACRED ANIMAL: John the Baptist is the patron of birds.

FEASTS: The Western Church recognizes two feasts of Saint John: 24 June, marking his birth; and 29 August, the anniversary of his death, also known as the Decollation (the Beheading) of Saint John. The Eastern Orthodox Church recognizes six feasts of Saint John: 23 September, the date of his conception; 7 January, marking the transfer of his relics; 24 February, commemorating the first and second finding of John's head; 25 May, the third finding of his head; 24 June, his birthday; and 29 August, his beheading. The first day of the Ethiopian calendar is dedicated to Saint John.

SACRED PLANTS: No saint is more closely associated with botanicals. The following seven are known as the Herbs of Saint John: hawkweed, mistletoe, mullein, mugwort, wormwood, orpine, and Saint's John Wort. The Herbs of Saint John are tossed into midsummer bonfires. Ashes from the fire are later collected, placed in a small charm bag, and carried as a protective amulet and talisman that is believed to attract love, romance, and fertility. John is also closely associated with many other botanicals, including ferns, roses, plantain, yarrow, and vervain.

John has dominion over healing and magical plants in general.

- According to Russian tradition, any plant harvested before dawn on Saint John's Day is innately magical.
- Similar traditions exist in Italian folk healing, which teaches that the most therapeutically powerful herbs are those gathered on Saint John's Eve before dawn.
- Wear a mugwort wreath around your brow on Midsummer's Eve to banish headaches for a year.
- Gather blossoming Saint John's Wort at midnight on Saint John's Eve. If the blossoms remain fresh in the morning, this is an auspicious sign that the rest of the year will be happy; if the blossoms have wilted, magical protective

measures may be in order.

- For good luck and happiness, add fresh flowers to your bath and then bathe at midnight on Saint John's Eve.
- Hang Saint John's Wort over your bed or place it beneath your pillow on Saint John's Eve in order to receive dreams of your true love.
- If you rise at dawn on Midsummer's Day and pick a sprig of Saint John's Wort with the dew still clinging to it, tradition says you will marry within the year—but only if you do not speak, eat, or drink from the time of rising until after the plant is picked. A second part to this spell claims that if you slip the plant beneath your pillow and go back to sleep—still without eating, drinking, or speaking—your true love will appear in your dream.
- Another spell suggests that if a naked, silent woman picks a sprig of Saint John's Wort from her garden at midnight or sunrise on the feast of Saint John, she will conceive within the year.
- Gather Saint John's Wort on Saint John's Eve and allow the plant to dry. Place it in a glass jar or bottle near a window to keep the premises safe from fire.

A sinister botanical spell compels an errant lover's return:

- 1. Gather three roses on Saint John's Eve.
- 2. Bury two secretly before sunrise: one under a yew tree (frequently found in old cemeteries), the other in a freshly dug grave. (If you can't find one; dig a little grave for the rose.)
- 3. Place the third rose under your pillow; leave it there for three nights and then burn it.
- 4. Allegedly, if this is done correctly and with complete secrecy, your lover will obsessively think and dream of you with no relief until your reunion.

SACRED SITES: John is the patron of natural springs. He presides over Louisiana's Lake Pontchartrain, popularly known as Saint John's Lake, where Vodoo Queen Marie Laveau once presided over Saint John's Eve rituals.

Many sacred sites around the globe are dedicated to him, including:

- the Greek Church of John the Baptist in Jerusalem, founded in the fifth century. This is the oldest church in Jerusalem and the original Hospital of Saint John for which the Knights Hospitallers, also known as the Order of Saint John, are named.
- The grotto of the Franciscan Church of Saint John the Baptist in the Jerusalem

suburb of Ein Karem may be built on the site of the home of Elizabeth and Zachariah, John's parents, and may be the site of John's birth.

- Aachen Cathedral in Germany, built by Charlemagne, houses what is described as the cloth on which John's severed head was placed. This cloth, along with other precious relics, is displayed every seven years.
- Munich's Residenz Museum, formerly the Bavarian royal palace, claims to house John's head, tracing the relic back to those collected by Duke Wilhelm V in the 16th century.
- The Monastery of Saint John the Baptist, once in Armenia, now in modern Turkey, reputedly contained his relics.
- The Topkapi Museum in Istanbul has what is identified as John's right arm on display.
- The Sanctuary of John the Baptist in the Coptic Monastery of Saint Macarius between Cairo and Alexandria is built over what is identified as John the Baptist's tomb.
- The Armenian Apostolic Church of Saint John in West Bengal possesses what is described as part of John's hand. Each January, pilgrims are blessed with this hand.
- the Basilica of Saint John Lateran in Rome
- the Cathedral of John the Baptist in Turin, home of the Shroud of Turin
- Rome's Church of Saint Sylvester in Capite claims to house fragments of John's skull.
- Amiens Cathedral, the largest cathedral in France, also claims to possess his head. Amiens became an important pilgrimage site in 1206 based on the claim that returning Crusaders had brought John's head from Constantinople.
- the Chapel of Saint John the Baptist at Rocamadour, France
- The Black Sea island Sveti Ivan (literally, Saint John) acquired its name in the 11th century when a new monastery was dedicated to John. An earlier fifth-century basilica, abandoned between the seventh and ninth centuries, may also have been dedicated to Saint John.
- The Shrine of the Prophet Yahia in the Grand Mosque of Damascus, also known as the Umayyad Mosque, is said to contain John's head. In the fourth century, a church dedicated to John the Baptist stood at this site. Rumored to house John's severed head, the church was an important pilgrimage site during the Byzantine era but was demolished in the early eighth century and replaced by the present mosque. A chapel dedicated to John remains—he is revered by Muslims who consider him a prophet. A legend suggests that when the church was demolished. John's head was discovered still covered in flesh

and hair. His shrine is considered a place of intensely magnified spiritual and magical power.

• The Cetinje Monastery in Montenegro claims to possess John's right hand.

**OFFERINGS**: springwater; carob; honey; figs; any of the many plants associated with him; a pilgrimage to one of the sacred sites associated with him. Efforts to preserve and maintain natural springs and rivers, especially the Jordan River, are also appreciated.

In August 2010, archaeologists in Bulgaria announced the discovery of a sarcophagus containing the bones of John the Baptist. The alabaster reliquary was found embedded in an altar within the ruins of a fifth-century monastery on the Black Sea island of Sveti Ivan. Part of a cranium, a tooth, and an arm bone were found inside the box.

SEE ALSO Amadour, Saint; Andrew, Saint; John the Conqueror; Khidr, Al; Laveau, Marie; Mary; Mary Magdalen; Odile, Saint; Onofrio, Saint; Rita, Saint; Seven African Powers; Simon Magus and Glossary: Holy Water; Pilgrimage; Relics; Syncretism.

## ∞ John the Conqueror

Also known as High John the Conqueror; John the Conkeroo; Juan El Conquistador; High John De Conquer.

CLASSIFICATION: Folk saint.

John the Conqueror is an African American folk saint—a trickster who brings joy, victory, and success. He bestows luck, power, prosperity, and prowess, and vanquishes all evil. Author and folklorist Zora Neale Hurston (1891–1960) calls John the Hope Bringer.

John the Conqueror mysteriously emerged in the pre–Civil War American South during the brutal days of slavery. He was a legendary slave hero—an African prince who, although enslaved, was never subservient, always defiant and served as inspiration for other slaves. John provided humor under the bleakest circumstances, playing successful tricks on overseers, masters, and oppressors. Some claim that the character Brer Rabbit is based on John the Conqueror. He is the master of turning tables and reversing situations.

John may have been born in Africa or he may have been born on an American plantation, the son of an African prince. Some consider him an avatar of the African trickster spirit Eshu-Elegbara, reborn as a man in order to comfort, protect, and guide his oppressed constituents.

Precisely what happened to John following the Civil War and Emancipation is unknown. Hurston writes in her essay "High John De Conquer": "Like King Arthur of England, he has served his people, and gone back into mystery again. And like King Arthur, he is not dead. He waits to return when his people shall call again."

John has never entirely departed, however. The name "John the Conqueror" also refers to a magical root charm, the dried root of a species of morning glory native to Mexico known as *Ipomoea jalapa* or *Ipomoea purga*. (Saint John's Wort, another plant with magical associations, refers to John the Baptist, *not* John the Conqueror.) The essence and power of John the Conqueror, the folk saint, is contained within John the Conqueror, the botanical root. The root may also be used to summon the saint as needed. Place it on his altars.

John the Conqueror root is a component of literally countless magic spells. It is used to defy evil, provide magical safety, and attract financial success and security. Women may use it for any of those purposes, but the root also bestows additional powers on men, offering male sexual prowess and virility. A man with an active John the Conqueror root charm is believed to be sexually irresistible and unconquerable in any area of life, hence the reference to it in the classic blues song "Hoochie Coochie Man." In this context, the more phallic-looking the root, the more potent it is believed to be.

According to testimony offered in the 1930s to folklorist Harry Middleton Hyatt, chanting the phrases "John over John" or "John the Conqueror" is sufficient to provide protection against malevolent magic and witchcraft.

Author Steve Sanfield has compiled traditional legends of John the Conqueror in his 1989 story collection, *The Adventures of High John the Conqueror*.

ICONOGRAPHY: Magical potions, powders, and oils allegedly containing John the

Conqueror root are marketed under the saint's name and are easily obtainable in virtually every botanica or spiritual supply store. Although all legends of John the Conqueror identify him as a black man, the traditional image used to market his products is that of an older white king. In a marketing context, John the Conqueror is depicted as a regal, crowned, white-bearded, white-skinned man seated upon a throne. He may resemble images of white-bearded Jehovah or of the tarot Emperor. This was a 20th-century marketing ploy: as John the Conqueror is the epitome of power, so this image was intended to express the abstract concept of power, not to give a realistic portrait. More recent imagery portrays John as an African king, reminiscent of Saint Balthazar.

**SPIRITUAL ALLIES:** John is often invoked with other saints, including Anthony of Padua and Martha the Dominator.

**BOTANICAL:** High John the Conqueror root.

SEE ALSO Anthony of Padua, Saint; Balthazar, Saint; John the Baptist; Martha, Saint; Martha the Dominator; Seven African Powers.

# ∾ John the Revelator

Also known as John the Divine; John the Seer; John the Evangelist; John of Patmos; the Eagle of Patmos; The Beloved Disciple.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by virtually all branches of Christianity.

As the old song goes, John the Revelator wrote the Book of the Seventh Seal. John is considered the author of the last book of the New Testament, known variously as the Book of Revelation, the Apocalypse of John, or, colloquially, the Book of the Seventh Seal. Some suggest that he authored the original manuscript, but that the present book was later revised by unknown editors. Coincidentally perhaps, Saint John is invoked to mediate between authors and editors.

Some biblical scholars think John the Apostle, John the Divine, and John the Revelator are one and the same individual, but others perceive them as three distinct personalities. Some scholars believe that the Book of Revelation and the Gospel of John were authored by the same individual; others do not.

If John the Revelator is the same person as John the Divine (and there are those with doubts), then he may be the foremost of Jesus' Apostles, known as the Beloved Disciple, reputedly the brother of James the Greater and thus Jesus' cousin. By trade a fisherman, he was a disciple of John the Baptist. John was the only Apostle actually present at the Crucifixion, standing among the mourning women at the foot of the cross.

Jesus may have commended his mother, Mary, to John's care and John may have traveled with her to Ephesus, now in modern Turkey, following the Crucifixion. According to legend, the Romans attempted to kill John by throwing him into a vat of boiling oil. He survived and was then exiled to the Greek island of Patmos for practicing magic, as authorities understood his miraculous survival to be irrefutable evidence of witchcraft. In Patmos, he experienced the revelations and visions that he documented in the Book of Revelation. John reputedly died at a very advanced age in approximately 100 ce, the only one of the original Apostles to die a natural death.

Other theories regarding John's identity exist as well.

- Some scholars identify him as one of Jesus' brothers, hence his guardianship over Mary, their mother.
- Some, but not all, references and portrayals of John may serve to mask Mary Magdalen, who may be the true Beloved Disciple. Some images said to portray John—notably the one in Da Vinci's *Last Supper*, but others as well—appear to be images of women and thus may actually be Mary Magdalen.

In life, John was reputedly a healer and exorcist who raised several people from the dead. As a saint, he performs miraculous healings. Ethiopian tradition suggests that John was the first to create sacred paintings possessing the power to heal.

Saint John is specifically invoked against poisoning and to heal burns. He may be petitioned to oversee any aspect of book production and to keep peace between publishers, authors, and editorial staff. Because he transformed pebbles and straw into gems and gold, he is considered the patron saint of alchemists.

The traditional American song "John the Revelator" straddles the

chasm between blues and gospel music. Blind Willie Johnson's 1930 version was included in Harry Smith's influential Anthology of American Folk Music. The many recorded renditions include those by Son House, the Dirty Dozen Brass Band, John Mellencamp, Curtis Stigers and the Forest Rangers, and a version by Taj Mahal and Sam Moore on the Blues Brothers 2000 soundtrack.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: authors; publishers; editors; artists; alchemists; oil blenders; bookbinders; booksellers; printers; paper makers; millers.

**ATTRIBUTES**: book; cauldron; serpent inside a chalice; eagle.

COLOR: red.

GEMSTONE: emerald.

SACRED SITES:

- John's grave is allegedly in Selçuk, Turkey, near Ephesus.
- The Cave of the Apocalypse in Patmos, Greece, is where he allegedly authored the Book of Revelation.
- Many churches are dedicated to him, including New York City's beautiful Episcopal Cathedral of Saint John the Divine.

FEASTS: 8 May (Orthodox); 27 December (Roman Catholic).

**OFFERINGS**: red candles; red wine; writing implements. Write petitions in small books and place them on the altar; serenade him with John the Revelator.

SEE ALSO Apostles; John the Baptist; Mary; Mary Magdalen.

# ∾ Jonathan ben Uzziel

Also known as Yonatan ben Uzziel; Yonosson ben Uzziel.

**EPITHET:** The Marrying Saint.

CLASSIFICATION: Jewish saint.

Jonathan ben Uzziel is credited as the author of the *Targum Jonathan*, an Aramaic translation of the Book of Prophets. (*Targum* is a Hebrew word meaning "translation" or "interpretation.") Many consider him to be the greatest of the students of Hillel, the famous first-century Jewish sage. Jonathan died very young, before he could marry and fulfill the commandment to be fruitful and multiply. He vowed to spend the after-life helping others find marital bliss, and hopefully their soul mates. According to testimonials, Jonathan has made good on this vow. Allegedly, those who visit his grave to light a candle in his memory and seek his blessings will marry within the year. Jonathan ben Uzziel also fulfills petitions made on behalf of others—for instance, for parents frustrated by their children's failure to marry.

**FEAST**: twenty-sixth day of the Hebrew month of Sivan, corresponding in time to the astrological sign Gemini.

SACRED SITE: his grave in Amuka, near Safed, Israel.

#### 🔊 José Dolores

**EPITHET:** Protector of the Poor.

CLASSIFICATION: Gaucho saint; unofficial saint.

The Spanish name José Dolores literally means "Joseph of the Sorrows" and evokes images of the suffering Madonna pierced by swords. There are varying versions of his legend. José was a gaucho who fell afoul of the law. Traveling incognito, he found work as a ranch hand and fell in love with a young woman whose mother had serious objections to their romance. She plotted against José, recruiting help from a local police chief, who, coincidentally, was the girl's uncle and also in love with her.

José Dolores was invited to a party where he was ambushed by police. Wounded, he escaped, finally collapsing against a tree. The police trailed him. When they caught up with him, they shot him in the back. The girl's uncle beheaded him, presumably to collect the bounty, or perhaps just because he was cruel.

José Dolores may or may not already have manifested supernatural powers while he was alive. Mothers may already have sought his healing skills on behalf of their children. Part of the irony of Jose Dolores' myth is that he needs to lay low in order to save himself but seems incapable of doing so. He draws attention to himself, whether because he manifests healing powers, or because love makes him lose his head and throw caution to the winds. It was no secret that the girl's family possessed strong connections with the police. Dolores should have known they were likely to be in attendance at the party and avoided it; yet he attended just the same.

There is debate as to the true identity of this saint. His full name is usually, but not always, given as José Dolores Cordoba. His date of death is generally given as 14 February 1858, Saint Valentine's Day. He may have been born in 1805, but those who envision him as a young lover may push that date forward. Soon after his death, miracles were associated with him. He is invoked for fertility and all kinds of healing, but especially of eye ailments, and for relief of social anxieties like shyness and fear of public speaking.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** a handsome dark-haired horseman.

SACRED SITE: His shrine in San Juan, Argentina, was built over his death site.

**OFFERINGS**: cigarettes; alcohol; toy horses; coffee; maté; prayers for his soul; donations to the poor (especially clothing, toys and food) offered in his name; pilgrimage.

SEE ALSO Gaucho Saints; Valentine, Saint.

#### 🔊 José Negro

**CLASSIFICATION:** unofficial saint.

In life, José Negro (literally, Black Joseph) was a powerful and beloved Cuban *santero*—a Santeria priest—dedicated to the spirit of the crossroads, Elegua. His power was such that when he died, he found himself elevated to the status of unofficial saint. José Negro is petitioned for healing, success, and good luck, especially with new ventures.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: José Negro is depicted as an elderly man, seated in a chair and holding a cigar.

SPIRITUAL ALLY: He may be venerated along with Elegua.

OFFERINGS: cigars; rum; candy.

SEE ALSO Seven African Powers and Glossary: Santeria.

## 🔊 Joseph, Saint

Also known as San José; San Giuseppe.

**EPITHET:** The Worker.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Saint Joseph, husband of Mary and thus the stepfather or adoptive father of Jesus, is among the most beloved of all Christian saints. Information on his life derives from the Gospels and from apocryphal texts. In Coptic tradition, Joseph was a widower with four sons and two daughters from his first marriage, which had lasted fifty-two years. He was old when he married Mary, according to the Copts, and died at the age of 111. Other legends describe him as a carpenter who taught Jesus his trade. Joseph may have been of royal or priestly descent, or both.

Joseph's popularity expanded *exponentially* in the 16th century after Teresa of Avila dedicated the motherhouse of her order to him. He is particularly beloved in southern Italy where various rituals have emerged in his honor, most famously and deliciously his special feast-day offering known as the Saint Joseph's Table.

The Saint Joseph's Day offering table may be prepared by an individual or a family, or by a community working together. It may be created as an annual tradition or done specifically to request a favor from the saint, or to acknowledge favors received. In some Sicilian traditions, nineteen people—Saint Joe's special number—are invited to the table; in others, crowds are anticipated and no one is turned away. Creating his feast table is considered a special honor, subject to many blessings, as is merely attending the resulting festivities. To attend or prepare Saint Joseph's table is to be in the presence of the sacred.

Saint Joseph's Table originated in Sicily as a form of devout Catholic veneration. Introduced to the United States by Sicilian immigrants, it

soon gained popularity among non-Catholics as well, especially in New Orleans, where local favorites like potato salad and deviled eggs were added to the Italian feast. The Saint Joseph's Table tradition has since been adopted by the Spiritual Churches of New Orleans, the Hoodoo community, and independent practitioners.

What is described as Saint Joseph's Table is usually arranged in three tiers, rather than on one flat surface. A statue of Saint Joseph dominates the top level, surrounded by flowers, candles, decorations, and food. Statues of other saints may be incorporated as desired or appropriate.

Special breads and other foods are incorporated into his feast.

- No meat is served, but there should be twelve varieties of fish or twelve cooked fish.
- Breads are created in various, symbolic forms, including birds, flowers, crosses, and ladders. Some are eaten immediately; some serve as decoration; some are preserved as talismans. Allegedly, a bit of Saint Joseph's Bread, kept in the house all year, ensures that there will always be sufficient food to eat.
- *Huge* breads (15- to 20-pound loaves) are formed in elaborate shapes like wreathes; or the *Pane Grosso* (literally, "big bread"), which is made to resemble a flowering rod.
- Bread crumbs are present, symbolizing the sawdust in a carpenter's workshop.
- Saint Joseph is patron of pastry and pastry chefs, thus all kinds of pastries are served, including fig cookies, Sfinci di San Giuseppe (sweet fried bread or doughnuts served plain or filled with Chantilly cream, also known as *sfingi* or *zeppoli*), and decorated sheet cakes with "Saint Joseph" written across them in frosting.
- Bowls of fava beans, known as Saint Joseph's Beans, are placed on the table, which transforms them into Mojo Beans, also known as Lucky Beans. Every guest at the feast should take at least one bean away with them. Keep one in your wallet and it will never be empty—or so goes the legend. Keep another in your kitchen and your pantry will never lack food.
- Hammers and nails are also placed on Saint Joseph's Table. After the feast is over, drive the nails into front doors using the hammers to obtain Joseph's blessings.

Saint Joseph is an extremely versatile saint and considered exceptionally

generous. Devotees claim that he can fulfill any request. According to a Sicilian legend, Saint Peter was once busy and requested that Saint Joe guard Heaven's gates for a little while. Saint Peter had to hurry back, because Saint Joseph let *everyone* in. An alternative version describes how Saint Joseph, the carpenter, built a ladder so that souls denied admission by Peter could climb in through the window.

Saint Joseph is traditionally petitioned for anything having to do with paternity or the home.

- Invoke him to keep marriages intact despite provocation.
- Invoke him to end slander and damaging gossip.

As Joseph is believed to have died before the Crucifixion, he is the patron of happy, peaceful death, which he may be requested to provide. He is invoked by those who fear illness and suffering. On the other hand, unofficially speaking, because he is the patron of the good death, his image is utilized in magical murder spells to provide a "good death" for someone who may not wish one—or at least not yet.

Joseph is also invoked by those who fear that their employment is in jeopardy.

- 1. Dedicate a candle to Saint Joseph.
- 2. Scratch your name and the name of your employer into the candle wax.
- 3. Burn the candle while petitioning Saint Joseph to help you keep your job

Saint Joseph's image is used to sell houses quickly. This tradition was allegedly begun by Teresa of Ávila, who buried medallions depicting the saint while simultaneously petitioning his assistance in obtaining land for convents. It worked for her and apparently works for many other people, too.

The ritual has evolved so that it is now most commonly used to sell property rather than to obtain it. Medals may still be used, but the modern ritual involves burying a small Saint Joseph statue upside down, usually facing away from the house. As the tradition has become very popular, small inexpensive statues are readily available. Saint Joseph "real estate kits" are even commercially available. Realtors may slip the image of Saint Joseph into the backyards of property they have contracted to sell without the knowledge of the homeowners.

What happens to the statue after the house is sold is subject to debate:

• Some recommend leaving it buried.

• Others feel that since the point of turning him upside down was to make him work faster, once Saint Joseph has accomplished his task, he should be relieved. His statue should be removed and kept in a place of honor. (Wait until all the papers are signed and the deal is really done before moving him.)

Joseph may also be invoked to find housing (rentals, sublets, and safe haven, as well as home purchases). It is traditional to give him a key if he comes through for you, although typically not a key to your dwelling. Keys are often left for him at public shrines, thus antique keys or keys that are no longer in use make fine, safe offerings.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: fathers; stepfathers; those who lovingly raise children not biologically their own; families; orphans; each family's black sheep; family members who are not bragged about; young unmarried women; unwed mothers; the homeless; real estate brokers; bakers; pastry chefs; travelers; carpenters; builders and workers of all kinds; those born on the nineteenth day of any month.

**ATTRIBUTES**: chalice; monstrance; carpenter's square; saw; hammer; nails; flowering rod, because of a legend that a flowering rod indicated that Joseph was divinely chosen to marry Mary. The tarot Ace of Wands traditionally displays this image and may be placed upon Joseph's altar.

SACRED DAY: Sunday.

NUMBER: 19.

**FEASTS:** 19 March (the anniversary of his death); 1 May (honoring Joseph the Worker).

COLORS: green; yellow.

SACRED FLOWER: lilies.

**PETITION:** It is traditionally believed that even if he is inclined to fulfill your petitions, you must first give to the poor before receiving Joseph's favors and blessings.

**RITUALS**: Saint Joseph's Eve is celebrated with bonfires; carpenters sweep out their workshops annually and burn all the woodchips and shavings in Saint Joseph's honor.

#### SACRED SITES:

- Montreal's Oratory of Saint Joseph is visited by over two million people annually. Olive oil placed before the statue of Saint Joseph, then bottled and sold to visitors of the Oratory, reputedly possesses healing properties.
- The Loretto Chapel in Santa Fe, New Mexico, is famous for its "miraculous" spiral staircase rumored to have been built by an apparition of Saint Joseph himself.

**OFFERINGS**: The traditional vow in exchange for a favor is to cook and provide a banquet for the poor.

SEE ALSO André, Saint; Mary; Peter, Saint; Philomena, Saint; Teresa of Ávila, Saint and Glossary: Apparition.

## No Joseph of Arimathea

Also known as Joseph of Glastonbury.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Joseph of Arimathea is the wealthy, well-connected man who came forward to claim the body of Jesus and provide burial for him on land that he may have owned. Joseph is believed to have been a member of the Sanhedrin, the Judean government. After Jesus' body was removed from the cross, Joseph demanded custody from Pontius Pilate himself and received it. He appears in all four official Gospels, as well as in various apocryphal texts, although no other historical evidence for him exists.

- Those who subscribe to the words of the Gospels consider Joseph of Arimathea to be Christ's secret disciple and an early missionary.
- Those who subscribe to conspiracy theories or to unauthorized or heretical versions of the Crucifixion (Hugh J. Schonfield's bestselling 1965 book, *The Passover Plot*, for instance) consider Joseph to be a primary coconspirator.

Either way, Joseph is privy to confidential secrets and a man of power and influence. He knows where the bodies are buried—or not, as the case may be.

How did Joseph accrue his fortune? Legend has it that he was a tin merchant, traveling back and forth between Judea and Cornwall's tin mines. After the Crucifixion and the subsequent Roman destruction of Judea, Joseph headed north to familiar territory where he already had friends and possibly property. One legend suggests that owing to the tin trade, there was already a Jewish settlement in Marazion, Cornwall, and that's where Joseph was heading. He first went to Gaul, possibly in the same boat as Mary Magdalen, Saint Sarah, and Saint Martha, arriving in Britain in 63 ce.

Joseph of Arimathea is the subject of an incredible number of diverse, contradictory legends. He is identified as the Guardian of the Grail, the man who smuggled it from war-torn Judea. What this means depends on your understanding of the Grail.

- Joseph of Arimathea, as the escort of Mary Magdalen, served as the guardian of the sacred blood line—the *sang real*.
- Joseph carried and hid the chalice containing Jesus' transfigured blood from the Last Supper or a cup—possibly the same cup—in which Joseph had collected Jesus' blood spilled during the Crucifixion.
- A Georgian legend suggests that the Grail Joseph carried was Jesus' bloodsoaked burial shroud, which he would have had access to as the man who collected his body.
- All or some of the above; the theories are not mutually exclusive.
  - The location of Arimathea, from whence Joseph hailed, is now unclear, although many believe it to be Ramathaim-Zophim, near Jerusalem.
  - Glastonbury, in Somerset, England, where Joseph traveled, was a mystical center of pre-Christian British spirituality—reputedly a convergence point for several ley lines.

The most traditional Christian version of Joseph's legend suggests that when he arrived in England with his small party, the local king, Arviragus, a Pagan, gave them approximately 1440 acres of land in Glastonbury. The archangel Gabriel appeared to Joseph and directed him to build a twisted wattle-and-clay church on a spot where a Pagan goddess had previously been venerated. Reputedly the first place of Christian worship on British soil, this may also have been the very first above-ground Christian church. First-century Christian chapels in Rome were hidden underground in catacombs. Joseph of Arimathea dedicated this church to Our Lady of Glastonbury, who is generally understood to be Mary, Jesus' mother, although some suggest that this Lady is really intended to be Mary Magdalen.

A legend suggests that Joseph traveled to the magical Celtic Isle of Avalon, which may or may not really be Glastonbury Tor, once so surrounded by fens, bogs, and marshes that its high ground resembled an island. He carried the Grail with him, which eventually became closely associated with King Arthur and his knights. According to some legends, the Grail knight Percival was Joseph's direct descendent.

Among the relics that Joseph reputedly brought to Glastonbury was Jesus' staff; however, more subversive legends suggest that actual physical relics, possibly the burial shroud or even Jesus' body, were brought to Avalon or buried in Glastonbury or Cornwall. There is a subversive element inherent in the entire legend—that Joseph is the Grail guardian, not Peter, implies an alternative apostolic lineage.

After Joseph's death, the little wattle chapel fell into disrepair and was abandoned, but it was rediscovered a century later, when Christian missionaries arrived and were shocked and impressed to discover a preexisting church. They repaired and restored the chapel, which eventually became Glastonbury Abbey, although not the existing building.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: tin miners; tin merchants; artists who work with tin; funeral workers; grave diggers; funeral directors; undertakers; coffin bearers; those who prepare dead bodies for funerary rituals; perfumers; aromatherapists; those who preserve ritual secrets and sacred treasure; travelers; guardians.

**ATTRIBUTES**: a flowering staff; a perfume or balm jar. In addition to or rather than being a tin merchant, Joseph is sometimes described as a manufacturer of perfume. The perfume jar may also indicate his affiliation with Mary Magdalen, who shares this attribute.

**SACRED SITE:** Glastonbury, especially the Chalice Well. According to tradition, fearing thieves, Joseph safeguarded the Grail by burying it deep within the

Glastonbury hillside. A miraculous healing spring welled up at this precise point. As the water runs through the Grail before reaching the surface, it is stained red with Christ's eternal blood. (The water in the Chalice Well genuinely is red. The scientific explanation is that the color is caused by red iron-oxide minerals in the local soil.)

This legend doesn't take into account that Glastonbury was sacred long before Christianity arrived in the region. A Christian gloss may have been used to explain the redness of the water, replacing earlier descriptions of it as the menstrual blood of the Glastonbury goddess. On the other hand, if Joseph really did have the Grail or other sacred relics in his possession, what better place to cache them than somewhere too sacred to search? Joseph reputedly brought Jesus's wooden staff to Glastonbury. One night, he stuck it into the ground before going to sleep. When he awoke, the staff had miraculously sprouted into a living tree. For centuries, the Holy Thorn was a major Christian pilgrimage. Cut down by Puritans during the English Civil War, the roots were salvaged and kept hidden. The tree was eventually replanted in its original spot in 1951. In December 2010, vandals hacked the tree apart. Botanists have verified that the tree originated in the Middle East.

The earliest documented reference to the Grail dates from approximately 1140, when William of Malmesbury, a historianmonk, described how Joseph brought the Grail and Holy Thorn Tree to Glastonbury in 73 ce.

**SACRED TREE:** Glastonbury Thorn, also known as Holy Thorn (a variety of hawthorn).

FEASTS: 17 March (Western Church); 31 July (Eastern Church); 1 August (Episcopalian church).

SEE ALSO Gabriel Archangel, Saint; Martha, Saint; Mary; Mary Magdalen; Marys of the Sea; Sarah, Saint; Sidi Ali Sanhaji.

# No Joseph of Cupertino, Saint

**EPITHET:** The Flying Friar.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Joseph Desa (17 June 1603–18 September 1663) was born in Cupertino, near Brindisi, now in modern Italy, the son of a poor carpenter who died or disappeared before Joseph was born. His mother, driven from their home by creditors, gave birth to Joseph in a stable. By the time he was eight, Joseph began experiencing ecstatic visions that left him staring and gaping into space, earning him the unkind childhood nickname that was the Italian equivalent of The Gaper.

Joseph fell into trances easily, at any time and any place. The sound of a church bell, the mention of a saint's name, thinking about events in Christ's life —seemingly any provocation could send him into deep, ecstatic trance from which he could not be roused even by sticking him with needles.

Joseph sought a spiritual vocation but lacked education and so was apprenticed to a cobbler. In the meantime, he tried to enter one religious order after another, but to no avail. One rejected him for being nearly illiterate; another refused him because his visionary experiences made him an unreliable worker. Joseph of Cupertino is a saint now, but when he was alive, he was considered strange and weird by secular and religious people alike. He was an embarrassment; he fell into trances *anywhere*.

Finally, he was accepted into a Franciscan order at Cupertino and eventually became a priest. His visionary experiences intensified. In addition to trances, he heard celestial music and began to levitate. To modern ears, this may sound "cool," but the Franciscans were not pleased.

In 1630, Joseph was participating in a procession honoring Francis of Assisi when he suddenly took to the air, hovering over the crowd. When he finally touched down and realized what had happened (he had been entranced and unaware), he was so embarrassed that he ran to his mother's home and hid. That was his first public levitation; with time, they occurred more frequently. He seemingly had no control over them or his trances.

Joseph's ability to levitate caused the general public to recognize him as a holy man. He demonstrated healing powers, reputedly curing various illnesses including measles, so he was much in demand. Joseph annoyed his superiors in the monastery by refusing to accept donations and gifts from those he helped, even the wealthy cvcii uic vvcuiuiy.

For thirty-five years, Joseph of Cupertino was essentially kept under house arrest, forbidden to attend choir, say Mass, walk in a religious procession, or basically go out in public. He was given a room with a private chapel and ordered to stay there. Because there was official doubt as to whether his experiences were inspired by heavenly or diabolical forces, Joseph was periodically questioned by the Inquisition, once being detained for several weeks. He was sent from one monastery to another. The crowds he attracted wherever he resided were overwhelming and troublesome. Not recognizing a future saint, the monasteries did not wish to keep him. Joseph never complained, but one could argue that he was persecuted.

Joseph of Cupertino is the patron of those who fly: airplane passengers, pilots, crew, flight attendants, paratroopers, aviators, astronauts, hang gliders, parasailors, and those who wish to levitate or who can't help doing so. Should you ever find yourself flying through the air for any reason—a strong gust of wind or if you're hit really hard—it wouldn't hurt to invoke Joseph of Cupertino, if you have the presence of mind to remember. He may also be invoked for healing. Joseph is the patron of students because he, himself, was a poor one and thus knows what it means to struggle with schoolwork.

Maximilian Schell stars as the flying friar in the 1962 film *The Reluctant Saint*, which is based on the life of Joseph of Cupertino.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: a friar in flight.

FEAST: 18 September.

**SACRED SITE**: His relics are in a crystal urn housed in the crypt of the Church of Saint Joseph Cupertino in Osimo, Italy.

SEE ALSO Francis of Assisi and Glossary: Relics.

#### ∾ Juan Soldado

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

Juan Soldado literally translates as Soldier John but is the Mexican equivalent of GI Joe. His real name was Juan Castillo Morales and he was executed for the murder of a child on 17 February 1938. Unlike many saints, official or

otherwise, Juan Soldado is a verifiable historical person.

On 14 February 1938, eight-year-old Olga Camacho was found raped and murdered in Tijuana, Mexico. Later that day, Juan Castillo Morales, a twentyfour-year-old soldier, was arrested for her murder and incarcerated in the Tijuana jail. A lynch mob soon gathered. By the next morning, the mob had burned police headquarters to the ground. Rioters prevented the fire department from coming to the rescue—some lay down before the fire trucks; others slashed the trucks' tires.

Military authorities quickly stepped in, seeking to appease the raging crowd and maintain control. Juan Castillo was brought before a military tribunal, convicted, and sentenced to death. His death was horrific and brutal. He was transported to the cemetery where he is now buried at eight in the morning on 17 February and forced to dig his own grave while the large crowd that had gathered watched. He was then ordered to flee.

The "law of flight" was notorious. If a prisoner tried to escape, the police were authorized to shoot to kill, so prisoners were frequently forced to "flee" at gunpoint just so the police could shoot them. Normally, this was done with comparative secrecy. While the public was aware of the existence of this phenomenon, it was not usually performed in front of them. As far as is known, Juan Castillo Morales is the only person in Mexican history ever publicly killed like this.

Morales realized his fate, wept, and begged for mercy, but he was forced to run and was shot to death. His corpse was dragged approximately thirty-five yards and dropped into its waiting grave. The crowd, which had clamored for his blood, was shocked and distressed by his execution. It was apparently one thing for a lynch mob to kill him, but another for the police to flout the law openly.

Veneration of Juan Soldado began almost immediately following his death. The very next day, an older woman, possibly Juan's mother, placed a stone on the death site, leaving a note requesting that others do the same and pray for Juan Soldado's soul. Miracles were soon attributed to his intervention.

Rumors began circulating that Juan was, in fact, not guilty but had been framed to protect the true guilty party, his superior officer—hence his saint's name, Juan Soldado, the implication being that he was the poor grunt picked to die for the officer elite. One legend claims that the officer eventually confessed following a visit from Juan's ghost; however, there is no evidence of this and it may be wishful thinking. Juan's innocence is very important to some devotees, although not to others who are more concerned with the miracles he produces than they are with Juan's character while he was alive

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Although some devotees would strongly disagree, it is important to point out that it is very possible that Juan Soldado was not innocent of the crime. Evidence against him did exist. It has been suggested that he was caught virtually redhanded with blood staining his uniform. Devotees argue that he was set up by superiors to be the fall guy, but Olga Camacho's family was and, according to reports, still is convinced of his guilt. His elevation to sainthood has been very painful for them. Olga, the victim of the crime, was originally buried in the same cemetery as Juan, but the family, offended by the attention paid to her convicted murderer, had her body transferred to another cemetery.

Juan Soldado is invoked for every kind of miracle; however, his specialty is immigration. Tijuana is a major city on the Mexico–United States border. Juan Soldado has emerged as the special patron of those who want to cross into the United States illegally. By extension, he may be petitioned by anyone seeking to gain entrance to someplace where they are not welcome or permitted. He is also invoked for any issue involving justice, especially in cases where people believe the worst about you, with justification or not.

Stones placed at Juan Soldado's graveside shrine have become part of a petition ritual:

- 1. When requesting a favor, remove one of the small stones from the altar.
- 2. Keep this stone safe, because if and when your petition is granted, you must bring this same stone back, placing it on the altar with another, new stone.
- 3. If, when returning the stone to the shrine, you make a second, new petition, take the original first stone with you again, but leave the second bonus stone behind.
- 4. If Juan Soldado fulfills this second petition, then the stone is yours to keep. It does not have to be returned but should be kept on your person at all times

**FEASTS:** 17 February, the anniversary of his death, but he is also celebrated on 24 June, the Feast of John the Baptist, his name saint, and thus quite possibly his birthday. John the Baptist also died by execution.

**SACRED SITES:** In recent years, shrines dedicated to Juan Soldado have emerged far from Tijuana in both Mexico and the United States, but that city remains the center of his veneration.

<sup>•</sup> He is venerated at two sites in Tijuana's Municipal Cemetery Number One (Deptoén Jardin Número Line): the place where he died and his nearby group

(ranceon Jarom roumero Ono). the place where he died and his hearby grave. There has been a graveside chapel there since at least 1985.

• Juan Soldado's image in Tijuana's wax museum also serves as a point of veneration.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; coffee; beer; rum or other hard liquor; cigarettes; cigars; stones.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, see Paul J. Vanderwood's book, *Juan Soldado: Rapist, Murderer, Martyr, Saint* (Duke Univ. Press, 2004), which explores Olga Camacho's murder and its aftermath. **see also** *Gaucho Gil; John the Baptist* and Glossary: *Name Saint; Saint, Unofficial.* 

## ∾ Judas Iscariot

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

Depending on perspective, Judas Iscariot is the most evil man in existence or the most unfairly vilified. Judas was the Apostle blamed for selling Jesus to the Roman authorities for thirty pieces of silver. Arguments affirming or repudiating his guilt can and have filled books. Legends are too numerous and wide ranging to list, but here's one: the apocryphal Gospel of Barnabas suggests that it was really Judas who was crucified in Jesus' place, as Jesus had already ascended to Heaven.

Judas was so unpopular that the other Apostle named Judas—now known as Saint Jude— felt obliged to become the patron of impossible causes, just so he would be venerated despite his name and sorry associations. Effigies of Judas Iscariot created to resemble red devils are ritually destroyed during Holy Week festivities in regions that were once part of Colonial Spain.

In Guatemala, Judas is associated with Maximón, but he is also venerated independently as a *very* unofficial saint. When native Guatemalans were first introduced to Christianity and told the story of the selling of Christ, they understood Judas to be the ultimate ruthless, but successful, salesman—the salesman who will cut any deal for a profit. Thus Judas Iscariot is the unofficial saint of businesspeople and merchants. Place his image in your place of business facing the direction from which business is expected to emerge to stimulate sales and protect profits. **ICONOGRAPHY**: Images of Maximón may be used to represent him, but Judas figures resembling horned, cloven-hooved red devils are more commonly used. No attempt is made to have Judas resemble a realistic human being. The image is stylized.

**OFFERINGS**: liquor; cigarettes. Judas is assumed to possess all vices.

SEE ALSO Apostles; Jude, Saint; Maximón and Glossary: Saint, Unofficial.

## ∾ Jude, Saint

Also known as Saint Judas Thaddeus.

**EPITHET:** The Miraculous Saint.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Are you desperate? Does your cause or quest seem utterly lost and bereft of hope? Does whatever you require to remedy your situation or make you happy seem like an impossibility? If you don't know where to turn and you have doubts that anyone or anything can help, it may be time to invoke Saint Jude, the patron of hopeless causes and desperate people.

Jude is an abbreviated form of Judas. Jesus had two Apostles named Judas:

- Judas Iscariot
- Judas Thaddeus

In the early days of Christianity, there was so much confusion as to which apostle was which that their identities began to merge and intertwine. Eventually, the Church began consistently referring to Judas Thaddeus as Jude to minimize confusion and emphasize his distinct identity. It wasn't enough.

Although the Apostles were among the most venerated of all saints, devotees avoided Saint Jude because he reminded them of Judas, who was vilified by the Church as the betrayer of Christ. This may have been a sincere desire on the part of devotees to distance themselves, or because Judas Iscariot was identified with the devil and, during a time when witches accused of consorting with Satan were regularly burned at the stake, it was considered wisest to stay as far as possible from anyone with even tenuous associations with Satan

#### mom anyone with even tenuous associations with outain.

Poor Saint Jude was reputedly extremely despondent over this lack of veneration and frustrated as well. He was eager to work with people, eager to take his place among the miracle-producing saints, and so he vowed to fulfill any sincere request directed to him, provided it wasn't harmful or illicit.

That's the legend anyway. Perhaps over the centuries, Saint Jude has bent his rule about not responding to illicit requests. The drug traffickers of Medellín, Colombia, have historically demonstrated deep devotion to Saint Jude. Thieves and drug users, finding themselves in impossible situations, also call on him, reputedly with some success. Be that as it may, that Saint Jude was able to rehabilitate himself, salvage his reputation, and emerge as one of the most popular of all saints is testament to his ability to work miracles.

Judas Thaddeus was the brother of James the Just, so, depending on your interpretation of James' true identity, Jude may be the cousin of Jesus, his full brother, his stepbrother, or his half-brother. According to legend—and iconography—Saint Jude bore a strong physical resemblance to Jesus. Jude was reputedly a powerful healer and exorcist while he was alive.

Ask Saint Jude for whatever you need. He is traditionally invoked to heal illness, break addictions, provide release from imprisonment, and grant safety from danger. He reunites families, locates missing persons, and rescues from financial disaster.

#### To request Saint Jude's assistance

- 1. Place a fresh bunch of basil in water before his image every day for nine days. Use a fresh bunch of basil each day (a total of nine bunches). Basil wilts quickly, so you can't pick or purchase it all at the same time.
- 2. Light a small green candle each day for nine days, for a total of nine small candles—or you can use one large nine-day (novena) candle.
- 3. Pray, petition, and invoke Saint Jude's aid.

MANIFESTATION: Saint Jude is robed in green and bears a sacred medal on his chest.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** The flame of enlightenment shoots from Saint Jude's brow.

**ATTRIBUTES:** an anchor, oar, and boat hook because he was a fisherman, but also because they are signs of hope and help; a club because he was bludgeoned to death; axe; sword.

**SACRED DAY:** Sunday. Some venerate Jude on the twenty-eighth day of each month.

FEASTS: 19 June (Eastern Church); 28 October (Roman Catholic).

COLOR: green.

GEMSTONE: chrysoprase.

NUMBER: 28.

BOTANICALS: basil; mint; patchouli; scattered starwort (Aster passiflora).

**RITUAL**: The traditional vow in exchange for favors granted is to testify publicly of miracles received. Standard fulfillment involves placing an ad in a newspaper's classified section, although larger or more artistic testimonials may also be offered. It is crucial that the testimonial be *public*. You need not sign your full name or identify yourself, but you must testify on behalf of Saint Jude and spread the word about his miraculous powers. It is sufficient to write something like: "Thank you, Saint Jude, for the favors given."

SACRED SITES: Jude's body was reputedly brought to Rome and placed in the crypt of Saint Peter's Basilica in the Vatican. A statue of Saint Jude renowned for producing miracles stands in Mexico City's Church of San Hipolito. Many shrines and churches are dedicated to him and most will offer novenas (nine-day prayer rituals) on your behalf in exchange for minimal donations. Among the most historically significant are:

- the Saint Jude Thaddeus Shrine in Chicago
- the International Shrine of Saint Jude in Our Lady of Guadalupe Chapel, the oldest church building in New Orleans

**OFFERINGS**: candles; incense; charitable donations and good deeds in his name; pilgrimage to one of his shrines; public testimonials.

#### Julian the Hospitaller

**EPITHET:** The Poor Man.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Julian, the sixteen-year-old only child of a French duke, was out hunting one day. While pursuing a stag, he became separated from the rest of his party. He came upon the stag and shot it with an arrow but, before dying, the animal suddenly spoke, prophesying that, one day, Julian would kill his own parents. To Julian's credit, he appreciated that a talking deer should be taken seriously and, following in the footsteps of Oedipus, he ran away, attempting to escape his fate.

He wandered, praying. He loved his parents and beseeched God to save him from this terrible destiny. Julian wound up in Rome, where he met the Pope, who ordered him to spend two years "over the sea." This may indicate Outremer, the Kingdom Over the Sea, the French name given to the Crusader States or the Kingdom of Jerusalem. Indeed, Julian is said to have traveled to Syria, where he enlisted in the Knights Hospitallers, fought in the Crusades, and was knighted.

French pilgrims advised Julian that his parents had died of natural causes and he was relieved, believing he had escaped destiny. Returning to Europe, he fought in Spain against the Moors. He married a countess who owned a castle and they lived happily for two years. Meanwhile, Destiny approached . . .

Julian had been misadvised by those pilgrims; his parents were still very much alive and had never stopped searching for their beloved only child. Word of Julian's exploits and success reached them and they headed for Spain. They arrived at the castle unexpectedly while Julian was again out hunting. His gracious wife, at home alone, greeted her in-laws lovingly and put the weary travelers to bed in the room she usually shared with Julian, the most comfortable room in the castle. Meanwhile, she went to sleep in another room.

Julian arrived home late and saw two forms in the bed where he only anticipated one. Jumping to conclusions, he sliced both bodies in half with one strike of his sword. His wife, awakened by the noise, rushed in and explained all. Julian tried to kill himself with the same sword, but his wife stopped him. Julian vowed to do penance and his wife vowed to support him.

The two buried his parents, donned beggars' rags, and hit the road. Again,

Julian went to Rome and sought an audience with the pope, who ordered him to travel to a place of perilous passage and there establish a hostel for travelers and the poor.

Julian and the countess discovered a region thick with thieves, near a treacherous stream. They built a roadhouse with their own hands, with beds made from grass. Julian became a ferryman. After many years of hardship, Julian ferried a leper over the stream and offered him hospitality for the night. The leper asked Julian if he could have the countess for the night. Julian said no; but she said yes. When she approached the stranger's bed, he had mysteriously vanished, but his disembodied voice announced that they had been tested and were now absolved from all sins. Julian and the countess ran their inn and ferry service for seven more years. Then one night, thieves killed them in the exact same way Julian had killed his parents. Miracles were soon attributed to him.

Julian's story is found in *The Golden Legend*, a 13th-century compilation of lives of the saints, now considered not to have much historical credibility. There is no historical documentation that Julian ever existed, or even consensus on when he may have lived. Julian's legend was spread throughout Europe by troubadours, possibly just because it's a great story or perhaps, as some suggest, because embedded within it are mystic secrets. Europe's troubadours considered Julian their patron saint.

Invoke Julian's aid to help find lodgings when you're traveling. When every single hotel room seems to be taken already, ask Julian to help find an acceptable resting place.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: circus people; carnival workers; clowns; jugglers; ferrymen; pilgrims; travelers; wandering musicians; innkeepers; hotel employees; those who are hospitable; the childless; murderers.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: young man with a stag; young knight; young man attacking two people in a bed; young knight with a hunting hawk perched on his gloved hand. Julian the Hospitaller is sometimes depicted in a small boat with Jesus and Saint Martha, whose leashed dragon swims beside the boat. Julian holds his oar. The image serves as a traveler's talisman.

**SPIRITUAL ALLY:** Basilisse, his wife, is not officially a saint but is sometimes venerated along with Julian anyway.

ATTRIBUTES: oar; sword.

SACRED ANIMAL: stag.

SACRED SITE: Julian's identification with any actual location is shrouded in mystery. He is particularly beloved in Malta, home of the Knights Hospitallers, where a town, San Giljan, is named in his honor.

FEASTS: 29 January; 12 February.

SEE ALSO Jacobus Molensis the Martyr; Martha, Saint.

## 🔊 Julian of Norwich

Also known as Lady Julian; Dame Julian; Juliana.

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

As with Hildegard of Bingen, many assume that Julian of Norwich (1342–after 1416) is canonized and thus an official saint—however, she is not. The official reason is that not enough documented information exists about her to complete the canonization process. In fact, very little is known of her early life, not even her original name.

The English mystic Julian of Norwich was an anchoress, a woman who, although called to a solitary life of spiritual contemplation, remains "anchored" in the world, as opposed to a nun who withdraws into a convent. An anchoress may or may not also be a nun. It is likely that Julian of Norwich was a Benedictine sister.

Julian of Norwich lived in a cell attached to the Church of Saint Julian, who was bishop of Le Mans, just off one of Norwich's main streets. Many assume that she is the Saint Julian to whom this church is dedicated, but she is not. Instead, she most probably adopted the name of the saint. It is likely that anchoresses had occupied Julian's cell before her and continued to do so after her demise.

Julian is the author of *Revelations of Divine Love*, which reveals sixteen mystical visions of Jesus and is believed to be the first book published in English by a woman. At age thirty, Julian suffered a serious illness that she did not expect to survive. On 13 May 1373, after experiencing a series of visions of Jesus and Mary, Julian found herself healed. There are two versions of

*Revelations of Divine Love*—a short one and a long one. The first, written shortly after her experiences, is a narrative of her visions. The second, written twenty years later, contains Julian's analysis and commentary as well. According to Julian, God created humanity from love and it is love, not sin, that fundamentally determines human existence.

Julian became well known. People came to visit her in her cell and consult with her. However, her true fame arose after her death with the publication of her writings. It is not known how or when she died. She was last known to be alive in 1416, when she was seventy-three years old.

The Order of Julian of Norwich (OJN), now centered in Wisconsin, was founded in 1985 by Father John-Julian Swanson in order to renew the traditions of contemplation and mystical spirituality in the Episcopal Church. For more information, go to www.orderofjulian.org.

Julian of Norwich is invoked to heal anxiety. It is traditional to invoke her assistance while within a grove of trees. Pick up a fallen leaf or twig and chant her prayer—one given to her, she said, by God:

All shall be well And all shall be well And all manner of things shall be well.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Julian is envisioned in the garb of a nun.

FEAST: 13 May, the anniversary of her healing.

COLORS: blue and red, based upon her visions and writings.

SACRED SITE: The Shrine of Julian is in Norwich. Her cell was destroyed during the Reformation. The Church of Saint Julian was destroyed by bombs during World War II. In response to the growing popularity of Julian's *Revelations*, both were rebuilt. In 1953, the church, together with its attached cell, was rededicated to Bishop Julian of Le Mans, but mainly intended to serve as a shrine church for Lady Julian.

**OFFERINGS**: hazelnuts—a reference from her writings. Distribute copies of her writings; give a book to a friend or donate one to a library; make a pilgrimage to her shrine.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, go to www.julianofnorwich.org. see also Hildegard of Bingen and Glossary: Saint, Official; Saint, Unoffical.

#### 🔊 Juliana, Saint

Also known as Juliana of Nicomedia; Santa Giuliana.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Saint Juliana, a mysterious saint, was allegedly martyred in 304 ce during Diocletian's persecution of Christians, possibly along with the now more famous Saint Barbara. There is no proof of Juliana's existence, although this in itself is not conclusive—it was a long time ago and proof sometimes gets lost. What does exist regarding Juliana are legends and some striking images.

Saint Juliana is among the saints commonly depicted with dragons. Exactly why is unclear. In Christian tradition, dragons are associated with Satan and Paganism. However, in other traditions, including those from areas later converted to Christianity, dragons symbolize menstruation and women's fertility. Coincidentally perhaps, Juliana is venerated as the matron saint of fertility and childbirth. She is invoked for successful pregnancies and easy labor. Juliana is almost invariably depicted with powerful fertility symbols like cauldrons and dragons.

Juliana's legend says that she was the young, beautiful daughter of a noble Pagan named Africanus. Unknown to her father, Juliana had secretly converted to Christianity and vowed herself to Jesus. When her father sought to arrange a marriage for her, her secret was exposed. She was tortured, burned, boiled in oil, and finally beheaded.

During the Middle Ages, Juliana was an extremely popular saint, especially in the Netherlands. She is invoked by pregnant women for anything having to do with pregnancy or childbirth, but she is a miracle healer who may be invoked by anyone—pregnant or otherwise— to heal any ailment

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Juliana is portrayed in various ways:

- As a beautiful girl riding a dragon
- As a beautiful girl leading a dragon by a chain
- In Christian mythology, dragons are identified with the devil, so Juliana is also depicted leading a chained devil or scourging one.
- As a beautiful woman inside a big cauldron
- As a beautiful naked girl hanging from her hair

ATTRIBUTE: cauldron.

FEASTS: 16 February (Roman Catholic); 21 December (Orthodox).

**OFFERINGS**: images of dragons; a cauldron; silver and gold chains; candles; incense. Burn candles or incense in a cast-iron cauldron.

SEE ALSO Barbara, Saint; Margaret of Antioch, Saint; Martha, Saint.

## 🔊 Juliet

Also known as Giulietta.

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

Yes, this is the Juliet of *Romeo and Juliet* fame. Yes, she is a fictional character. And yet somehow, Juliet has emerged as an active saint who offers romantic blessings in Verona, Italy. She's not *real*, you object. Well, perhaps that same objection can be made of many other saints for whom no historical documentation exists. Somehow, *some* spirit is responding favorably when petitioned for help. If the saint is not Juliet herself, then it's a romantic spirit who has assumed her name.

The story of Romeo and Juliet, those star-crossed lovers, was apparently first documented on paper by Italian writer Luigi da Porto in 1524 and then immortalized at the end of the 16th century by William Shakespeare. Was the story based on truth? Who now knows? The Capuleti and Montecchi families, anglicized as Capulets and Montagues, did genuinely inhabit Verona.

In 1905, the city of Verona acquired a 14th-century estate known as the Casa da Giulietta, or Juliet's House. The house's balcony evoked memories of the lover's ill-fated romance and became a tourist destination. The primary focus of veneration is the resident bronze statue of Juliet. Allegedly rubbing the statue's

right breast brings good luck in general, but especially in love. The House of Juliet served as inspiration for the 2010 romantic movie, *Letters to Juliet*.

Juliet is credited with the performance of romantic miracles. Petitions directed to her in the form of letters sent from all over the world are delivered to her house, whose walls are covered with notes requesting her assistance. The local government has requested that devotees e-mail their messages to Juliet, if possible, as the walls are becoming damaged by the overwhelming mail.

Juliet's House tends to evoke a love/hate reaction. Some consider it a seedy tourist trap and a magnet for pickpockets. Others are enchanted with Juliet's emergence from the pages of fiction. Tragically unlucky in love herself, she now bestows romantic happiness on others.

It is not necessary to travel to Italy to receive Juliet's help. Like other folk saints, she is venerated on home altars as well as at her public shrine

- 1. Pick an image to represent Juliet. She has inspired a tremendous number of artists including John William Waterhouse, Sir Frank Dicksee, and Ford Madox Brown. Choose an image that resonates with you.
- 2. Compose a letter to her requesting assistance. Spell out precisely what you seek.
- 3. Place the note under a white, pink, or silver candle, then burn the candle.

SACRED SITE: house of Juliet at Via Capello 23 in Verona, Italy. Juliet's tomb is reputedly on the Via del Pontieri in Verona.

**OFFERINGS**: flowers; incense; candles; perfume; anything appropriate for a romantic young girl.

#### 🔊 Julitta, Saint

Also known as Julietta; Giulitta; Iyalota.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Julitta, a rich Christian widow from Anatolia, moved to Tarsus with her baby son, Cyriacus, and two household maids in order to escape the persecution of Christians. Persecution followed her; Julitta was denounced and arrested. Her son was brought before the magistrate with her.

Julitta was defiant and the three-year-old mimicked her. She was tortured and forced to witness his death. Julitta remained defiant, refusing to weep; instead celebrating that little Cyr, as he is popularly known, had earned the crown of martyrdom. In anger, the magistrate increased her torture. She was killed slowly and horrifically, finally dying by beheading. The bodies of Julitta and Cyr were tossed onto a dung heap but rescued by the two maids, who buried them together in a nearby field.

Centuries later, Saint Cyr revealed himself to Charlemagne; as a result, he and his mother became popularly venerated saints. Julitta is usually venerated with her son. She is petitioned for domestic happiness and peace and to prevent the death of children, especially from illness, but for any reason.

FAVORED PEOPLE: torture victims; widows; single mothers.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Various images of Julitta exist. She is depicted holding Saint Cyr, being burned at the stake, or dead with a fountain emerging from her blood. She is also pictured standing beside oxen.

FEASTS: 16 June; 15 July. The Ethiopian Church honors her on the fifteenth day of each month, along with her son.

SEE ALSO Cyr, Saint.

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#### 👡 Kahlo, Frida

**CLASSIFICATION:** unofficial saint.

Frida Kahlo (6 July 1907–13 July 1954) was once an obscure historical figure, overshadowed by her then more famous husband, artist Diego Rivera, and best known for her affair with Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky. Decades after her death, however, Frida's first name is sufficient to identify her virtually worldwide. Her iconic image is equally well known. Frida has literally evolved into an icon—her ubiquitous image is instantly recognizable, appearing everywhere from tee shirts to throw pillows, from jewelry to Mexican restaurant menus. Even those who don't really know who she is recognize Frida's distinctive image.

That image now appears on votive as well as commercial imagery. Not only is Frida among the world's most popular artists, by the close of the 20th century she had also emerged as a beloved and responsive folk saint with an evergrowing constituency. A *New York Times* article described the crowds who flock to her home, now a museum, as "pilgrims" (2 March 2008).

Magdalena Carmen Frida Kahlo y Calderón, the third of four daughters, was born in Coyoacán, Mexico. Her mother was of Spanish and indigenous Mexican descent. Her father, of Hungarian Jewish ancestry, had immigrated to Mexico in 1891. Frida originally intended to attend medical school, but her entire life changed as a result of a disastrous traffic accident when she was eighteen. Waylaid by excruciating pain and intensive medical procedures, she devoted herself to art, with herself as her primary subject. Frida painted her first selfportrait in 1926, one year after her accident.

Kahlo painted self-portraits that expressed her own personal reality—the grief, heartbreak, and humiliation that filled her life. Despite her glamorous appearance and her bravado, Frida's life was filled with physical and emotional

pain:

- The polio she suffered at age six permanently damaged one of her legs, causing her to limp. The long dresses she favored were initially an attempt to hide her disfigurement.
- A horrific traffic accident shattered her body, necessitating over thirty operations and impairing her capacity to bear the children she deeply desired.
- One leg was eventually amputated.
- Her love life was turbulent and traumatic. In Frida's own words, "I suffered two grave accidents in my life. One in which a streetcar knocked me down and the other accident is Diego."

Frida and Diego are credited with reinvigorating and reviving the Mexican style of votive painting known as *retablos*. Appropriately, Frida's own image is now incorporated into retablos as well as *nichos*, votive candles, and statues suitable for home altars.

In life, Frida was a dedicated social activist who cared deeply about people. Frida is now petitioned to intercede with healing, romance, love, and fertility all issues that caused her tremendous grief and pain during her lifetime. Petition her protection while traveling, especially when using public transportation. Request her help to step out from the shadows if you feel that your creative light is blocked by more dominating people.

Many books are devoted to Frida's life, as well as cinematic biographies, both documentaries with actual footage of her and fictional depictions. She has been portrayed by actresses Salma Hayek (in the 2002 film *Frida*) and Ofelia Medina (in the 1986 film *Frida Naturaleza Viva*).

A line from a letter dated 18 December 1939, written by Frida to her friend and lover Nickolas Muray, serves as a mantra for modern devotees: "I think that little by little I'll be able to solve my problems and survive."

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Images created by Frida herself or based upon them are typically incorporated into her votive imagery. Frida made no attempt to blend into a crowd. Her distinctive image is easily recognizable. She camouflaged her poliowithered leg by dressing flamboyantly in long, indigenous Mexican clothing but did not minimize her dark unibrow. Frida is a favorite subject of Mexican Day of

the Dead art—sculptors and other artists create variations on her paintings featuring Frida as a skeleton.

**SPIRITUAL ALLY:** Frida is frequently depicted with another Mexican icon— Guadalupe. Sometimes, their images and identities are merged. The image of Frida's face superimposed onto Guadalupe's body has become so popular that it has acquired its own name: Fridalupe.

SACRED SITE: The Casa Azul (The Blue House) in Mexico City—where Frida was born, lived, and died—serves as her shrine. Her ashes are in an urn in the house. Diego donated the house and contents to the Mexican people after her death. It is preserved as it was during Frida's life.

**FEASTS:** the anniversaries of her birth and death; many devotees also celebrate Frida on 2 November, Día de los Muertos, Mexico's Day of the Dead.

**OFFERINGS**: cigarettes; sugar skulls with her name written across the forehead; votive candles bearing her image; works of art; Mexican folk art; tequila—there is a Frida Kahlo brand of tequila that bears her image on its label.

SEE ALSO Guadalupe and Glosary: Relics; Retablo.

## ∾ Kenelm, Saint

#### CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Saint Kenelm was an Anglo-Saxon boy king who is now a saint who presides over two sacred wells. The story of his brief life and murder is mysterious; it is unclear how much is true and how much is propaganda.

According to legend, Kenelm was seven years old in 819 when he became king of Mercia (one of England's Anglo-Saxon kingdoms) upon the death of his father, King Cenulf. Kenelm is not mentioned in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which states that Cenulf's brother, Ceolwulf, became king. However, Kenelm is mentioned in some early ninth-century charters, so it's possible that he reigned very briefly—perhaps only days or weeks—between the reigns of the two adult brothers.

Kenelm's older sister, Quendreda (a.k.a. Cynefrith), felt that she should have

inherited the throne instead of the little boy, or at least so goes the legend. In a scenario that could have inspired the story of *Snow White*, Quendreda allegedly persuaded her lover, Ascobert, to take the boy hunting in the lonely Clent Hills and kill him. Ascobert beheaded the boy and buried him beneath a thorn tree.

Kenelm's murder and burial place were revealed by miracles. The pope was in Rome celebrating Mass at Saint Peter's Basilica when, all of a sudden, a white dove flew into the church. It dropped a scroll at the pope's feet that read:

In Clent, at Cowbach, lies under a thorn His head off-shorn, Kenelm king-born.

The pope ordered the archbishop of Canterbury to investigate. A white cow led investigators to a grave on a steep slope beneath a thorn tree. A blood-stained knife was found beside the body. When the corpse was lifted, a healing spring immediately gushed from the grave. Kenelm was brought home to Winchcombe, then the capital of Mercia, and buried beside his father. In the process of carrying Kenelm home, the body was briefly laid on the ground at Sudely Hill while his bearers rested, resulting in the miraculous appearance of another healing spring. A chapel was later built on the site.

The story continues that while the body was being carried home, Quendreda was discovered reading her psalter backward, indicating that she was working some sort of malevolent magic spell. Suddenly, in the middle of reading, her eyeballs popped out of her head and she fell forward on her book and died.

- There is no evidence that Quendreda ever ruled or otherwise profited from Kenelm's death.
- There is also no evidence that Quendreda, an actual historical person, was ever accused of murder. In 824 ce, documents indicate that she was abbess of Southminster.

If indeed Kenelm was murdered, it is more likely that his death was arranged by supporters of the man who did become king. The *Anglo Saxon Chronicles* show Kenelm and Quendreda's uncle ascending the throne. It is possible that Quendreda was designated the fall guy, perhaps long after the death of all direct participants.

Saint Kenelm was widely venerated as a child martyr during the Middle Ages, although clearly he was killed for political, not religious, reasons. He is

mentioned in the *Canterbury Tales*. He produces miracles of healing and, as evidenced by that dove with the scroll, may be petitioned to reveal hidden crimes and locate missing bodies.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: a crowned boy king tramples a woman who has fallen forward onto an open book. This image may also be interpreted as depicting Kenelm's or Christ's ascendancy over the female spirit previously venerated at his well.

SACRED SITES: Saint Kenelm was venerated at Winchcombe Abbey, where his tomb and shrine were located. Many miracles were attributed to him and it was a major pilgrimage site until the Reformation. The Abbey was demolished in 1539 and Kenelm's shrine has disappeared. He still presides over two English wells: one in Winchcombe and one in the Clent Hills, where a chapel allegedly marks the site of his murder and burial. At least eight English churches still bear his name. There is evidence that the wells now associated with Kenelm were once associated with pre-Christian spiritual traditions.

FEAST: 17 July.

SEE ALSO Joseph of Arimathea; Well Saints.

∾ Khidr, Al

Also known as El Khidr; El Knizr; Al Khidri.

EPITHETS: Eternal Life Prophet; The Green Man; The Verdant One.

CLASSIFICATION: folk saint venerated in various spiritual traditions.

Al Khidr literally means the "green one" or the "verdant one" in Arabic. Depending on spiritual tradition, this mysterious sage may be considered a saint, prophet, holy man, or even an angel. His true name is unknown. It is unclear when he lived or if he ever died. Al Khidr may have discovered and consumed the fabled Water of Life, thus achieving immortality. Al Khidir, the Green Man, is the patron of youth, good health, fertility, spring, and life everlasting.

Al Khidr is revered by some branches of Islam, especially the Sufis. He is perceived as compatible with Islam because it is believed that he supports and serves the Prophet. Al Khidr is also venerated by diverse spiritual traditions, including the Bektashi, Druze, Kizilbash, Nosairi, and Yezidi. The heartland of Al Khidr devotion is in Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Israel, and the Balkans.

The patron saint of travelers, Al Khidr serves as a spiritual, mystical, and sometimes actual tour guide, providing rescue service as needed. He manifests mysteriously and miraculously to rescue or guide travelers in need; when no longer needed, he vanishes.

Al Khidr was venerated long before the emergence of Islam, although exactly how much before is unknown. He may predate Christianity and Judaism as well. Legends identify him as a traveling companion of Moses. He may also have traveled with Alexander the Great, serving as an advisor. Some identify him with the Arthurian Green Knight.

Al Khidr epitomizes the goodness and generosity inherent in the world. He initiates those who walk mystical paths. Many Sufi saints describe meeting with Al Khidr, who may offer them a cloak, symbolizing their initiation. Depending on tradition, Al Khidr may be identified with Elijah the Prophet, John the Baptist, and especially Saint George, whose feast day he shares. In other words, some identify Saint George and Al Khidr as two names for one and the same being.

- In Europe, Saint George is sometimes known as Green George.
- In Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, and Palestine, images of Saint George may be identified as Al Khidr.
- Vows made to Al Khidr may be fulfilled at shrines dedicated to Saint George.

**MANIFESTATION**: Al Khidr is described as a traveler on a gray horse. However, in this modern age, he may have transitioned to a gray car or even a Greyhound bus. His footsteps reputedly leave a green imprint. Places where he sits or things that he touches may also turn greenish. He may appear greenish himself, a lingering effect of drinking the Waters of Immortality. Look at his hands to identify him definitively—one of his thumbs lacks a bone.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Al Khidr appears among Persian miniatures, but images of Saint George or the Green Man are also used to represent him.

SACRED PLANTS: all green plants, but especially cannabis.

COLOR: green.

TIME: spring.

**SACRED SITES:** Al Khidr is considered responsible for the existence of many desert springs and oases.

- Khidrlik—literally, Khidr's Place—a popular Turkish place-name, usually refers to high places.
- Sanctuaries or sites associated with Al Khidr are also often linked to the Crusaders, including sites in Damascus and Jerusalem and a spring in Nablus ('Ayn al-Khidr).

SITES closely associated with Al Khidr include:

- the shrine of Beit Jala, near Bethlehem, associated with Al Khidr by Muslims, Saint George by Christians, and Elijah by Jews. The shrine is associated with miraculous cures of mental illness.
- Abadan Island in Iran is dedicated to Al Khidr.
- A hot spring is named in his honor near Elbassan, Albania.
- Local belief suggests that Al Khidr resides in Kataragama in Sri Lanka and that Moses once visited him there.

FEAST: 23 April.

SEE ALSO Elijah the Prophet; George, Saint; John the Baptist; Miriam; Moses; Well Saints.

## ∾ Ksenya, Saint

Also known as Saint Xenia; Ksenya Blazhennaya.

**EPITHETS:** Servant of God; Holy Fool.

CLASSIFICATION: Orthodox saint.

Saint Ksenya, ascetic and holy fool, was a person of grace and charity who brought joy, good fortune, and health wherever she went. She is the saint of family happiness.

- Ksenya provides miracles of healing, including terminal illnesses.
- Ksenya protects against domestic and spousal abuse.

- She helps women deal with their husbands' drinking problems.
- She will help alcoholics if they ask her directly.
- Ksenya performs miracles of employment, helping people find work.

Based on what is known of her life, Ksenya Grigorievna Petrovna was born into minor Russian nobility. She married an older army colonel who essentially drank himself to death and is suspected of being abusive and violent toward her, although she did not complain.

Ksenya's husband died suddenly at a drinking party without receiving the Holy Mysteries, the last rites. She took this very hard. She was twenty-six and childless. After his death, she gave away all her possessions, literally everything, including her home. To protect her, relatives sought to have her declared insane and institutionalized. The physician who examined her said she was the sanest person he'd ever met.

Ksenya disappeared. She left Saint Petersburg, crisscrossing Russia for eight years as a wandering pilgrim, traveling from shrine to shrine, reciting the Jesus prayer. When she finally returned, she was clothed in her husband's old uniform and would answer only to his name, Andrei Theodorovich, since, as she told people, "Ksenya is dead."

She moved into the Smolensk cemetery where she slept year round, even in the bitter Russian winter, and where she is now buried. She wore her husband's uniform until it gave out. Then she wore rags, but only red and green ones, the colors of her husband's uniform.

People initially mocked her and were cruel to her, but gradually Ksenya was recognized as a holy woman, a fool for God. She demonstrated clairvoyant powers, although her prophesies were delivered in an oblique fashion. For instance, she might tell someone to go home and make blinis, a hint that death was near—blinis are traditional Russian funeral fare.

People began to take Ksenya into their homes, offering her food, clothing, and alms. She never begged. Instead, people begged her to accept their gifts. She accepted only the barest necessities, although she ate regularly in people's houses. As for money, Ksenya rejected everything except very specific small copper coins, the equivalent of pennies, which featured an image of a horseman and were called "the king on horseback." These were the *only* coins she accepted and which she gave away, together with her prophesies. Ksenya once gave a coin to a woman she passed on the street, saying mysteriously: "It will be extinguished." The woman went home to find her house on fire. Indeed, the

flames were quelled.

Ksenya's very presence was noticed to bring luck.

- People whose homes she visited became lucky.
- Children she blessed stayed healthy.
- Cab drivers begged to drive her places for free, or even for her just to sit in their cabs, because whatever cab she entered received great business that day.

Ksenya was aware of her approaching death, visiting friends to bid them farewell, saying she was preparing for a "distant road." She disappeared, but eventually her body was discovered beneath a tree in the cemetery. Friends buried her and placed a monument on her grave. A small chapel was later erected; owing to popular demand, a larger one replaced it a generation later.

Ksenya died between 1796 and 1806 but continues to appear to devotees in visions and dreams. Her miracles continue. For example, Ksenya appeared in the flesh to a devotee in 1951, a Russian émigré living in Tehran whose husband was deathly ill. Ksenya healed him and left. She also appeared in a vision to Maria Feodorovna, wife of Russian tsar Alexander III and mother of the doomed Nicholas II. In response, Maria Feodorovna sponsored memorial services for her. As directed by Ksenya, she named a daughter after the saint, the Grand Duchess Xenia (1875–1960).

In 1963, Soviet authorities closed the graveside chapel for several decades. Contents of the chapel, including Ksenya's tombstone, were removed. However, the faithful continued to visit, standing outside the locked chapel. Ksenya was glorified by the Russian Church in 1988, its equivalent of canonization. Her chapel is once again open.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Saint Ksenya is usually portrayed in her husband's frayed uniform.

COLORS: green; red.

SACRED SITE: her grave in the old Smolensk cemetery in Saint Petersburg.

**OFFERINGS**: flowers; candles; oil lamps; icons. Sponsor services at her grave;

give to charity in her name (even just coins to beggars and panhandlers).

**SEE ALSO** *Seraphim of the Wonder Worker, Saint* and Glossary: *Apparition; Holy Fool; Icon.* 

## 👡 Kwan Yin

Also known as Guanyin; Kuan Yin; Quan Am (Vietnam); Kannon (Japan); Kwan-Um (Korea); Kwan Yam; Kwan Iam (Macao); Kwan Eim (Thailand); Kwan Im (Indonesia).

EPITHETS: She Who Hears the Cries of the World.

CLASSIFICATION: Bodhisattva.

The beloved bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara's name literally means "the one who responds to the cries of the world," in Sanskrit. Translated into Chinese, the name becomes *Kwan Shih Yin*. According to Buddhist dogma, Kwan Shih Yin— or Kwan Yin, as the name is shortened—is merely a Chinese name for Avalokiteshvara. The earliest Chinese statues of Kwan Shih Yin or Avalokiteshvara appeared in the fifth century ce, depicting him as a slight, graceful, androgynous man.

Over time, however, Kwan Yin transitioned and is now understood by billions of devotees to be a distinct, unique bodhisattva, independent from Avalokiteshvara. Kwan Yin is now most frequently envisioned as female, although in Japan, where this bodhisattva is called Kannon, the male form still predominates, although not exclusively.

Kwan Yin, in her present form, emerged from China's wild northwestern frontier, by the Silk Road, sometime between the seventh and ninth centuries ce. During the ninth and 10th centuries, she moved into the Chinese heartland, accompanied by detailed legends of her life, which do *not* correspond to Avalokiteshvara, but rather to the Taoist goddess, Miao Shan. In other words, Kwan Yin's name corresponds to the Chinese translation of Avalokiteshvara, but her mythology echoes that of an indigenous Chinese spirit.

It's possible that devotees of Miao Shan adopted the name Kwan Yin as Buddhism became socially dominant at the expense of Taoism, which was then increasingly dismissed as "folk religion." Alternatively, many devotees believe that Miao Snan, who was born a human princess, may have been an avatar—a reincarnation—of the historical Avalokiteshvara.

Another theory suggests that she may be a spiritual descendent of Christian saints or Pagan goddesses. Indeed, some historians believe that statues of Isis, Mary Magdalen, and Mary the Blessed Mother traveled the length of the Silk Road, evolving along the way, and finally emerging in China as Kwan Yin. Images of Kwan Yin holding a child are almost identical to those of Isis and Horus or the Madonna and the Holy Child. During the 17th century, when Christianity was outlawed in Japan, secret Christians created images—now called Maria-Kannon—that resembled traditional images of Kwan Yin but were intended to represent Mary. These statues often feature a cross discreetly placed in an inconspicuous spot.

Although Avalokiteshvara is beloved, Kwan Yin is beloved exponentially more. A spiritual phenomenon, she is venerated throughout the Buddhist world, but she transcends religious barriers.

- Her images are found in Taoist, Shinto, Confucianist, and Hindu shrines, as well as in Buddhist temples.
- She is also adored by Western goddess devotees, East Asian practitioners of folk religion, and independent practitioners.

The fact that so many individuals and traditions lay claim to Kwan Yin is testimony to her power and generosity. She is among the most active saints in the world, a true worker of miracles with literally billions of devotees. She epitomizes compassion and protects the helpless—especially women, children, and animals. She also guards against attack by both animals and humans. She offers protection everywhere—in the realms of the living and the dead, and in any other dimension. She guides and protects travelers, especially those who travel by sea and air.

Kwan Yin can heal any ailment or condition, including infertility. She may be requested to provide male children. Kwan Yin breaks the cycles of rebirth, punishment, and retribution. She provides luck, good fortune, and material success.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: women; children; exiles; travelers. But Kwan Yin vows to respond to anyone who calls out her name in a moment of fear or suffering. She helps, not because of who you are, but because of who she is. She is the special protector of those born in the Year of the Rat.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Kwan Yin is portrtayed in a great variety of ways:

- She is typically depicted as a kind, beautiful woman dressed in white.
- She may be portrayed carrying at least one child, indicating her ability to bestow fertility.
- She may be portrayed with 1000 eyes and 1000 arms, indicating her ability to see all and help all.
- Kwan Yin may be accompanied by a small girl and boy, her acolytes.
- She may be depicted riding or seated on a dolphin, giant carp, dragon, lion, or *hou*, a mythic lionlike creature.
- There are several colossal statues of Kwan Yin throughout East Asia, including in China and Macao.

**ATTRIBUTES:** rosary; lotus; a sutra vase from which pours compassion; a willow branch indicating her powers of exorcism (Chinese tradition suggests that demons flee from the presence of willow); a fish basket.

COLOR: white.

SACRED ANIMAL: all of them, but especially horses and peacocks.

GEM: pearl.

METAL: iron.

NUMBER: 19.

SACRED TREE: willow.

**SACRED SITES:** Kwan Yin has innumerable temples, shrines, and home altars throughout the world. This is but a brief sampling of some of her most significant pilgrimage sites:

- She has shrines on all nine Chinese sacred mountains—four Buddhist, five Taoist.
- Her primary shrine is Pu To Shan, a small mountainous island in the East China Sea. The entire island is dedicated to her. Apparitions of Kwan Yin are frequently reported here, especially in the Cave of the Tidal Sound.
- The Hasedera Temple in Nara, Japan, houses a thirty-one-foot statue of the Eleven-faced Kannon, said to be the largest wooden statue in Japan. (Kannon has eleven faces, the better to see anyone in need.)

- The Kwan Yin Shrine in the He Hua Temple in Amsterdam, completed in 2000, the largest Buddhist temple built in the traditional Chinese style in Europe.
- The Kwum Yam Shrine on Repulse Bay Beach in Hong Kong is adjacent to the Longevity Bridge. (Reputedly, crossing this bridge adds three days to your life span.)
- the Hall of Three Saints in Shanghai, where Kwan Yin is enshrined with Amitabha and Dai Shi Zhi
- Some anticipate that the Chonggyesa Temple in a suburb of Seoul, South Korea, will become the Buddhist equivalent of Lourdes, as it houses a statue of Kwan Yin associated with miracles of healing. The 500-year-old gilded wood statue is considered miraculous in itself, as white flowers mysteriously sprout from its head.
- The statue of Guam Yin of the South Sea of Sanya on China's Hainan Island, which was enshrined in 2005 and stands 354 feet tall, is the tallest statue of a bodhisattva on earth.
- the bronze Kin Iam statue that stands in Macao's Outer Harbor. Including its pedestal, it stands eighty-eight feet tall.
- The Kwan Yin Shrine on the Chao Phraya River in Bangkok was constructed in the 19th century by the resident Chinese community.

#### FEASTS:

- the first and fifteenth of each lunar month: the new moon and the full moon
- the ninteenth day of the second Chinese month, her birthday
- the ninteenth day of the sixth Chinese month, when she became a Buddha
- the ninteenth day of the ninth Chinese month, the day she first wore her sacred pearls

**RITUALS**: Kwan Yin is a vegetarian. Her image on restaurant menus often indicates that vegetarian fare is served. Give appropriate offerings (i.e., don't give her steak). Many devotees adopt a vegetarian diet in her honor, even those who do not traditionally eat vegetarian on her sacred days.

One hundred poems attributed to Kwan Yin serve as a divination device. This device may be used for any divination purposes or to communicate with her. Mass-produced versions of Kwan Yin's oracle are available.

**OFFERINGS**: oranges; pomegranates; spices; incense; Iron Kwan Yin Oolong tea, also known as Iron Buddha tea; charitable donations on behalf of needy women,

children, and wildlife. At one time, Pu To Shan, her sacred island, was a de facto nature preserve. The island is now a major tourism site, so humans encroach on the habitat of Kwan Yin's beloved wild creatures. Any gesture on behalf of preserving Pu To Shan should gain favor.

SEE ALSO Avalokiteshvara; Bernadette, Saint; Confucious; Dai Shi Zhi; Mary; Mary Magdalen; Three Saints in the West and Glossary: Black Madonna; Syncretism.

# L

## 👡 Lal Shabaz Qalandar

**CLASSIFICATION:** Sufi saint.

Lal Shahbaz Qalandar (1177–1274 ce), the highly influential Sufi poet, mystic, and saint, was born the son of a dervish in Marwand, now in modern Afghanistan. His birth name was Syed Shah Hussein. He demonstrated tremendous occult powers even in childhood, eventually becoming a wandering Sufi under the name Lal Shahbaz Qalandar:

- *Lal* means "red"; he is said to have worn a red cloak.
- *Shahbaz* is a falcon; falcons fly free. The name may be intended metaphorically, reiterating the implications of *Qalandar*, but legend has it that Lal Shahbaz really could levitate and fly.
- The literal meaning of *Qalandar* is "free from boundaries." The pious explanation is that this describes his brilliant intellect, but Qalandar traditionally also refers to wandering, nonaffiliated Sufis and has historically often served to indicate less-orthodox saints and holy men.

Lal Shahbaz danced as a dervish and used marijuana for spiritual purposes. (Islam forbids alcohol, but botanical intoxicants are at least theoretically permitted.) A miracle-working healer, he magically produced fresh-water springs.

Lal Shahbaz halted his wanderings in the ancient city of Sehwan, now in modern Pakistan. When he arrived, the city was largely Hindu and a shrine dedicated to Shiva in his guise as the Shiva Lingam was an extremely important pilgrimage site. The city continues to be a major pilgrimage site, but now the destination is Lai Snadaz s grave snrine, where he is venerated by Muslims and Hindus alike.

Female dancers and entertainers of Lahore's once famous red-light district consider Lal Shahbaz Qalandar their spiritual patron and guardian. In response to changing times and economic pressure, most are now ordinary sex workers. However, many belong to castes once associated with sacred prostitution incorporating shamanic song and dance. They consider Lal Shahbaz their intercessor.

COLOR: red.

SACRED DAY: Thursday.

**FEAST:** On the eighteenth day of Sha'aban, the eighth month of the Islamic calendar, there is a very popular three-day festival at his shrine, historically attended by over half a million pilgrims.

SACRED SITE: his tomb at Sehwan, Pakistan, built in 1356. One golden door was donated by the shah of Iran, another by Pakistani prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

**OFFERINGS**: floral garlands; flowers; candles; oil lamps; pilgrimage. It is also traditional to present luxurious fabric tomb coverings at his shrine.

SEE ALSO Joseph of Cupertino; Khidr, Al.

## 👡 Lalla

*Lalla*, a Berber word that literally means "Lady," is an honorific, a term of respect, for women in Morocco. It is used for human women, but the same honorific is also used to address female Muslim saints, female Jewish saints, female djinn, or other female spirits. They are virtually always addressed with the honorific, so *Lalla* has become part of their names.

SEE ALSO Lalla Beida; Lalla Haoua; Lalla Izza Hamad; Lalla Luna Bat Khalifa; Lalla Mennana; Lalla Solica; Lalla Taja; Lall Zohra Bint El Kouch; Sidi.

### 👡 Lalla Beida

Also known as La Blanche.

EPITHETS: Lady White; La Dame Blanche.

Casablanca literally means "white house." And whose white house might that be? The house of Lalla Beida. Casablanca is named in honor of this saint, whose name literally means Lady White. Lalla Beida is the presiding spirit of the city of Casablanca or, as it is known in Arabic, Dar el Beida.

Born in Kairouan, Tunisia, Lalla Beida was the only daughter of the 14thcentury holy man Sidi Allal el Kairouani, now also venerated as a saint. Her birth date is unknown; few details are known of her life. Some suggest that she was originally a pre-Islamic sea spirit. One thing is for certain: back in her day, the city that contains her shrine was not yet called Casablanca; it was known as Anfa and was once an old Phoenician port.

The region around Anfa resisted conversion to Islam. In the eighth century, the Berghouata Berbers formed an independent kingdom with Anfa as its capital. Though they resisted repeated attacks, they were finally conquered by the Almoravids in 1068, the same Muslim Berber dynasty that also conquered Spain. Anfa became an important Moroccan port and eventually a lair for the Barbary pirates.

Lalla Beida's father was en route to Senegal when his ship foundered at Anfa. Fishermen rescued him, but he was left stranded there. When his wife died in Kairouan, he sent for Lalla Beida. Her boat was wrecked as well, in the very same spot as her father's. Unlike him, however, Lalla Beida was not rescued. She drowned. Her father buried her beside the sea. Miracles were soon attributed to her and her whitewashed shrine.

In 1468, the Portuguese, sick of the pirates, sacked, burned, and conquered Anfa. When they rebuilt the city in 1575, they renamed it Casa Branca, Portuguese for White House, in honor of Lalla Beida's white shrine. Lalla Beida protects residents of Casablanca as well as visitors and provides miracles of healing and fertility.

**MANIFESTATION:** She reputedly earned her moniker from her very fair complexion.

COLOR: white.

**SACRED SITE:** La Maison de la Blanche (House of the White Woman) by rue de Tnaker in Casablanca. Her father is buried near her.

**OFFERINGS**: white flowers; candles; white benzoin incense; pilgrimage to her shrine.

SEE ALSO Lalla.

## 👡 Lalla Haoua

Also known as Lady Eve.

Lalla Haoua is a saint credited with healing madness and mental illness at her shrine in Marrakech, albeit via harsh methods. Lalla Haoua is allegedly buried beneath a pillar called the Sariat L'Aaquel (Pillar of Wisdom) located near a fountain in the courtyard of Marrakech's old *moristâne* (asylum). She may initially have been the spirit of the spring, which is believed to have healing properties. It's not entirely clear whether the saint, the spring, or both provide the cure.

The mentally ill were chained to the pillar in hopes that their condition would improve. The heads of misbehaving children were knocked against the pillar three times while Lalla Haoua was invoked to make them behave and "know better." The child's shirt was then washed in the fountain, followed by its face and hands.

SACRED PLANT: *kelkh*, a kind of wild fennel ritually used to treat mental illness.

SEE ALSO Lalla; Well Saints.

## ∾ Lalla Izza Hamad

Bring a comb if you visit Lalla Izza Hamad's Marrakech shrine, renowned for providing fertility miracles. Women travel to her shrine to invoke her aid in their quest to bear children. Light a candle for Lalla Izza Hamad and request her blessings. Give the comb to the *mokaddema* (the shrine guardian), provided a knowledgeable one is on duty, so that she can comb and plait your hair, a ritual

perceived as combing out the obstacles preventing conception. When finished, the mokaddema retains the comb, along with any pulled-out hairs, so that when the women leave, those obstacles stay behind in the shrine, where they dissolve.

SEE ALSO Lalla.

## 👡 Lalla Luna Bat Khalifa

CLASSIFICATION: Jewish saint.

Lalla Luna Bat Khalifa, a Jewish saint from Rabat, Morocco, died at age 130. In death, she's a saint, but in life, she was a devotee. Lalla Luna dedicated her life to caring for the Moroccan holy man Rabbi Yehuda Gadol Gil'ad. After he died, she dedicated her life to tending his grave. Eventually, in gratitude for her devotion, he transmitted his healing powers to her. However, her sainthood is based entirely on her own merit. Lalla Luna became an acclaimed faith healer. Her own body essentially served as a healing spring; Lalla Luna's saliva demonstrated curative powers.

Having passed to the Other Side, Lalla Luna Bat Khalifa remains a miracle healer; her specialty is throat ailments. Ask her to come to you in your dreams and heal you.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; prayers for her soul; good deeds and charitable donations in her name.

SEE ALSO Lalla; Well Saints.

## 👡 Lalla Mennana al-Misbahiya

Also known as Lalla Mannana.

CLASSIFICATION: Sufi saint.

Lalla Mennana, the matron saint of Larache, Morocco, is profoundly identified with the *hadra*, mystic trance rituals incorporating dance, rhythm, chanting, and singing. The hadra, rooted in Sufi tradition, has many purposes, including

invocation of spirits and saints, healing, exorcism, and, not least, attainment of spiritual ecstasy.

Larache, located not far from Tangier, is built over the ancient Phoenician city of Lixus and is reputedly the site of the mythic Garden of the Hesperides. Lalla Mennana is the daughter of Larache's patron saint, Sidi Jilali ben Abd Allah al-Masbahi. When her father died in 1715, she danced the hadra at his grave. Today, women dance the hadra in her honor and to invoke her presence and blessings. She is a miracle worker, renowned for feats of healing, rescue, and fertility.

According to legend, Lalla Mennana died tragically on the eve of her marriage while visiting her father's grave. When her husband looked for her on their wedding night, he instead discovered a white dove, which led him to where she lay dead and where she is now buried. Her grave is a major pilgrimage including an annual processional through Larache.

Lalla Mennana provides blessings of healing, fertility, and marital happiness, but also protects and sponsors those who seek mystical, esoteric wisdom.

SACRED SITE: her tomb in the Cemetery Lalla Mennana (named in her honor) in Larache.

SACRED ANIMAL: A white dove is her emblem.

TIME: new moon.

**FEAST:** Lalla Mennana's annual feast coincides with the fourth day of the festival honoring the birth of the Prophet.

**OFFERINGS**: candles for her soul; charity and good deeds in her name; pilgrimage to her shrine. Dance for her or sponsor other dancers.

**SEE ALSO** *Lalla*; *Sidi*.

## ∾ Lalla Solica

Also known as Lalla Sol Ha-Tzaddika; Solika la Sainte; Solica Hatchouel.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Jewish saint.

Lalla Solica is the single most famous and widely venerated female Jewish saint. Executed for refusing to repudiate her faith, in death she transcends all boundaries. She is venerated by those of all spiritual affiliations including Jews, Muslims, Christians, and others. Men as well as women seek her blessings and assistance. She is no longer a local saint; people travel from all corners of the world to visit her grave shrine in Fez, Morocco.

Sol Hatchouel was born in Tangier in 1817, the younger of two children of a family of modest means. Her father was a merchant, but also a very educated man. Bible-study groups were held regularly in the Hatchouel home. Solica developed a friendship with Tahra de Mesoodi, a neighboring Muslin woman. Her arrest was based solely on testimony from Tahra, who told local authorities that Solica had converted to Islam but then repudiated it—an act of apostasy punishable by death. Tahra's testimony may have been intended maliciously, as some believe, or she may sincerely have wished to save Solica's soul.

Perhaps the facts of Solica's case were not considered quite romantic enough for a folk saint. Although contemporary accounts of her arrest and execution exist, various legends have also emerged in which her arrest is triggered by a frustrated suitor. In one, Solica refused a proposal of marriage from a Muslim man, who then told authorities that she had converted to Islam but reneged. Alternatively, she caught the eye of the sultan's son who wanted her to convert so that they could marry, but she refused. Perhaps to force her hand, he had Solica accused and imprisoned.

Solica was arrested and brought before the governor of Tangier. She vociferously and repeatedly denied the accusation, instead suggesting that Tahra was mistaken. It was a case of one woman's word against another's. In the context of their society, Tahra's testimony was given more weight.

Solica was then sent to Fez to appear before the sultan, where she again denied all charges. Her parents were ordered to pay for her transport to Fez, but could not afford the fee. They appealed to the Spanish vice-consul to intervene in the case. He made efforts on Solica's behalf, but to no avail, although he did pay her transport fee, the equivalent of forty dollars.

Between her arrest and her execution, Solica was detained incommunicado in a lightless dungeon with an iron collar around her neck and chains on her hands and feet. She was transported to Fez in fetters, riding on a mule. Her beauty, oravery, and demeanor rouched many nearts, which was a predicament for the government. Solica was a beautiful, sixteen-year-old girl. The government was not eager to execute her. They pleaded with her to admit that she had converted to Islam and rejoin the faith. She refused. The sultan allegedly offered to marry her if only she would swear allegiance to Islam. Her parents begged her to save herself. Despite being advised otherwise by the sultan, his son, her parents, and even her rabbi, she preferred to die rather than repudiate her own religion. She was beheaded in Fez in 1834.

The Jewish community of Fez paid a ransom for Solica's head and body and the bloodstained earth from her execution site. They built her a special tomb, from which she proceeded to perform miracles, especially on behalf of children.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Lalla Solica inspired French artist Alfred Dehodencq's 1860 painting, *Execution of a Moroccan Jewess*, which is housed in the Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme in Paris.

**SACRED SITE:** Lalla Solica is buried in the Jewish cemetery of Fez near two other saints. Local legend suggests that the Shekhina—the female presence of God—descends upon their graves every Friday night.

**OFFERINGS:** light candles in her memory; read psalms.

SEE ALSO Alodia, Saint; Lalla; Nunilo, Saint.

## 👡 Lalla Taja

CLASSIFICATION: Folk saint.

Lalla Taja was a beautiful, courageous, independent young woman who lived in Casablanca's old Medina near the end of the 19th century. (The *medina* is the medieval quarter of the city, characterized by a warren of narrow, labyrinthine streets.) Disturbed by the number of orphaned and abandoned children she witnessed, Lalla Taja decided to help them, beginning various social programs and actions on their behalf. She sought funds to care for the children. When the local Belgian consulate donated money toward her cause, rumors spread that she was having an affair with a consulate employee.

Neighborhood men confronted Lalla Taja and stoned her to death in the street. She was denied burial in the local Muslim cemetery. However, local women, many of whom had worked with her on behalf of the children, persuaded the Belgian Consul to bury her on land belonging to the legation. The local women continued Lalla Taja's good works. Lalla Taja began producing miracles from beyond the grave. Once a local saint, her shrine is now visited by women from all over Morocco and beyond. She is honored with an annual festival.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: Lalla Taja's compassion for children remains renowned; request help as needed.

SACRED SITE: her tomb-shrine on Place de Belgique in Casablanca.

**OFFERINGS**: donations on behalf of orphaned and abandoned children; candles; incense; pilgrimage.

SEE ALSO Lalla.

## 👡 Lalla Zohra Bint El Kouch

Also known as Lalla Fatima Zohra.

CLASSIFICATION: Sufi saint.

Lalla Zohra Bint El Kouch literally means Lady Zohra, the Nubian's Daughter. Her father, Sheikh Abdallah, a 17th-century freed slave, became the head of a religious brotherhood so powerful that the sultan closed it down. Lalla Zohra demonstrated miraculous powers during her lifetime. She was allegedly a woman by day and a dove by night.

Now a saint, she is petitioned for healing, fertility, and protection. Lalla Zohra provides rescue from disaster. Women dedicate their children to her, invoking her blessings to protect them. It is traditional for children dedicated to Lalla Zohra to refrain from eating the meat of pigeons or doves.

SACRED SITE: her grave, built in the 17th century, located near the Koutoubia Mosque in Marrakesh, Morocco.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; incense; flowers. It's traditional to name daughters in her honor.

### 👡 Lastarria, Tito

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

Tito Lastarria, militia leader, mayor, and city treasurer of Rancagua, Chile, was reputedly a vicious man whose neighbors disliked him intensely. When rumors circulated that his power, prestige, and wealth derived from a pact with the devil, they took matters into their own hands. Lastarria was buried alive in his family's crypt.

The story doesn't end there. The crypt evolved into a shrine, as people began approaching it to beseech Lastarria's protection. He is also asked to extract revenge on someone's behalf—provide him with the details and he'll do the rest. Petitions are traditionally left at his tomb or even written on the tomb. Payment is steep, however. Allegedly, once the final cross on the mausoleum falls, Lastarria will emerge from his grave and collect the souls of everyone who ever asked him for help.

**FAVORED PEOPLE:** Lastarria is traditionally associated with students, sex workers, and transvestites, but anyone may request his help.

SACRED SITE: Rancagua is approximately an hour's drive south of Santiago.

## 👡 Laveau, Marie

**EPITHETS**: The Queen of Conjure; The Pope of Voodoo.

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

Marie Laveau, the self-proclaimed Pope of New Orleans Voodoo, is also a queen of mysteries. Credited with formalizing the traditions of New Orleans Voodoo, Marie was simultaneously a devout Roman Catholic who attended Mass daily and maintained an excellent relationship with her parish priest. She was a spirit medium and a hairdresser, a community activist and philanthropist, and a spell caster.

- In life, she was a profoundly generous and proactive woman who worked tirelessly on behalf of her constituency.
- In death—if indeed, she died, which some question—she remains an active wonder worker and provider of miracles.

Marie's spiritual influence cannot be overstated. Her own personal blend of Haitian Vodou, Catholicism, and Hoodoo transformed New Orleans Voodoo and eventually the entire Western world of magic and mysticism. She is sometimes considered to be among the inspirations for New Orleans' Spiritual Churches, but this suggestion is controversial. Indeed, many in this Church are highly offended at the hint of any association with the unrepentant Voodoo Queen.

Marie's life and death are cloaked in mystery. Born in New Orleans a free woman of color—a specific legal classification at that time—she was of mixed African, European, and Native American ancestry. Her date of birth is usually given as 1801, but some believe her to be older. By approximately 1850, she was widely acknowledged as the leader of the New Orleans Voodoo community. A courageous, sharp, intelligent, and compassionate woman, she personally ministered to the ailing during the periodic yellow fever outbreaks that plagued New Orleans, assisted the poor, and actively worked to rescue and redeem slaves. She disliked injustice and oppression.

Before Marie Laveau, African spiritual traditions and magical practice were largely hidden in the shadows. Devotees of these traditions behaved with extreme discretion. Marie—fearless, defiant, and proud—became the public face of Voodoo. Although she also held private ceremonies, she presided over huge public rituals and she may be considered the first Voodoo celebrity—or even the first modern witch celebrity.

Marie presided over annual Saint John's Eve festivities at Lake Pontchartrain. By the 1870s, thousands of spectators of all colors, backgrounds, and religious persuasions flocked to spend Saint John's Eve with Marie, where she famously danced with her snake, le Grand Zombi—so many that special trains had to be added to accommodate the crowds. (Le Grand Zombi does not refer to *zombies*, as in the living dead, but to *zombi*, as in the Vodou snake magician spirit Simbi, who is a patron of mediums and magical adepts.)

Those who knew her described her home as filled with lit candles. She had a statue of Saint Anthony turned upside down to make him "work" more efficiently, as well as images of Saint Peter and Saint Marron. She also maintained an altar in the back of her house that featured statues of a bear, a lion,

a tiger, and a wolf.

Marie was reputedly magically long lived, in the nature of an alchemist or Taoist adept. According to one legend, an elderly Marie Laveau entered Lake Pontchartrain, submerged, and then reemerged appearing decades younger. She essentially shed her skin like the snakes with whom she is now so closely associated. Devotees consider this proof of her power, while skeptics believe this was a sleight-of-hand trick enabling the elder Marie to retire and pass on her career intact to her daughter, also named Marie. Part of the confusion regarding Marie's life may be because mother and daughter were both publicly active in New Orleans at the same time.

Some believe Marie Laveau died on 15 June 1881. Others believe she never died but kept regenerating herself and her power. Many claim to have witnessed Marie's ghost in New Orleans and she is a popular feature of New Orleans ghost tours.

Marie continues to protect devotees who make pilgrimages to her grave. Traditionally invoked for practical matters, especially healing and legal assistance, Marie may also be requested to serve as a spiritual guide, especially for those seeking to learn and practice Voodoo.

#### Marie Laveau Water

This formula is attributed to Marie Laveau. It is sometimes also marketed under the names Blessing Water or Holy Water. It allegedly offers spiritual protection and psychic enhancement, and is used for ritual cleansing.

One cup rain water One cup spring water One cup coconut water One cup lavender water or lavender hydrosol, *or* twenty drops of essential oil of lavender One cup rose water or rose hydrosol One cup Holy Water

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: An exceptionally generous saint who reputedly responds to many pleas from people from all walks of life, Marie protects healers, mediums, Voodooists, mystics, independent women, children, sincere public defenders, the

enslaved, and those who actively seek to liberate slaves.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: According to her daughter Philomène, Marie Laveau never permitted anyone to paint her portrait or take her photograph. That said, an 1835 painting of a woman by artist George Catlin has long been reputed to be a portrait of Laveau. This portrait, in turn, inspired Frank Schneider's *Portrait of Marie Laveau* painted in the 1920s and now in the collection of the Louisiana State Museum. Schneider's painting is the basis for most current votive images of Laveau, who is usually envisioned as a tall, regal woman wearing a turban or Creole-style head wrap.

COLORS: blue; white; pink.

**SPIRITUAL ALLIES:** Marie was deeply devoted to John the Baptist and Anthony of Padua.

## SACRED SITES:

- Her grave in New Orleans' oldest cemetery, St. Louis Cemetery Number One, has been nicknamed the "Wishing Tomb." Controversy exists regarding which Marie Laveau is buried here, mother or daughter. The tomb is inscribed Marie Glapion, which may be the mother's married name or the daughter's maiden name. Traditionally, people knock on the tomb three times to request attention, or draw three Xs in red brick or chalk on the tomb. (This practice is sometimes discouraged by cemetery authorities.) Offerings are left at the grave. Some believe another tomb nearby, also marked with Xs, is Marie's true grave.
- Saint Louis Cathedral in New Orleans, the oldest cathedral in continual use in North America, is where Marie attended Mass.
- Marie worked from her home at 152 Saint Ann Street in New Orleans, offering personal consultations and leading rituals. Her cottage was demolished in 1903. The site where it stood is now 1020-1022 Saint Ann Street.
- Lake Pontchartrain, where Marie presided over so many Saint John's Eves, is also strongly associated with her.

**OFFERINGS**: pilgrimage; seven dimes; red anisette; flowers; candles; salt water; hair ornaments and hairdresser's supplies and tools; Creole food; gifts inspired by Voodoo and Roman Catholicism.

SEE ALSO Anthony of Padua; Black Hawk; DeLille, Henriette; John the Baptist; Marron, Saint; Peter, Saint; Philomena, Saint; Seven African Powers and Glossary: Holy Water; Vodou, Voodo or, Hoodoo.

## ∼ Lawrence, Saint

Also known as San Lorenzo; Saint Laurent.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Lawrence (died 258), an archdeacon during the Church's early days in Rome, was in charge of Church finances. When he heard predictions of the beginning of persecutions against Christians and of his own imminent arrest, he sold all the Church's possessions, distributing proceeds to the poor and needy. When Roman authorities arrived and demanded that Lawrence turn over the Church's valuables, he assembled the poor and announced that *they* were the Church's treasures. Needless to say, he was arrested and tortured. He ultimately died on a gridiron, essentially grilled to death.

Lawrence never lost his composure or sharp, sardonic wit. According to a famous legend, he told his executioners to turn him over, as he was already "done" on one side. His bravado stimulated onlookers to convert to Christianity.

Saint Lawrence is invoked against burns of any kind. He is requested to heal injuries caused by fire and also to prevent and extinguish fires. He is invoked against fever and any illness or condition associated with burning sensations. If you feel as if you're burning, regardless of cause, Lawrence may be able to help. He also protects crops from burning up and specifically helps them survive the burning August sun. Last but not least, Saint Lawrence is invoked against poverty.

The Perseid Meteor Showers, which occur annually in August, often coincide with the feast of Saint Lawrence. They are also known as the Tears of Saint Lawrence.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: cooks; restaurateurs; confectioners; pasta makers and chefs; comedians; librarians; archivists; dieters; the poor.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Saint Lawrence is usually dressed in red.

ATTRIBUTES: book; grill; money bag.

BOTANICAL: common balsam (Impatiens balsama).

COLOR: red.

**RITUAL:** It is traditional to refrain from cooking on his feast, but to serve only cold foods.

FEAST: 10 August.

**SACRED SITES:** Saint Lawrence is the patron saint of Rome and several churches there are dedicated to him. There is debate as to the precise spot where Lawrence met his demise, and so two different churches vie for the honor of standing atop the site.

- The Church of San Lorenzo in Panisperna is reputedly built over the site of his death.
- The Papal Basilica of San Lorenzo Outside the Walls, which claims to contain the stone on which Lawrence's body was laid after his death, is also reputedly built over the site of his execution.
- The gridiron of his martyrdom is allegedly within a closed recess behind the main altar of the Basilica of San Lorenzo in Lucina.

**OFFERINGS**: water; donations and good deeds on behalf of the poor.

SEE ALSO Foy, Saint.

# 👡 Lazaro Blanco

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

In the 19th century, Lazaro Blanco was traveling on horseback during a wild thunderstorm, trying to get from Feliciano to La Paz in Argentina. He was fatally struck by lightning and buried near a stream beneath a carob tree. A wooden cross marked the spot. Years later, when the region was wracked by drought, a man dreamed that if Lazaro Blanco's remains were moved to consecrated ground in a cemetery, the entire community would benefit. He did as directed in his dream and the rains began to fall immediately, earning Lazaro a reputation as a miracle worker.

SACRED SITES: his tomb in the cemetery of San José de Feliciano and the carob tree under which he was first buried.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; flowers; parties and dances held in his honor.

## 👡 Lazarus, Saint

Also known as San Lazaro; Lazariah; Azariah.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

This Saint Lazarus is *not* the Lazarus who was resurrected by Christ. (For that saint, see the entry for *Lazarus of Bethany*.) Instead, he is the leper mentioned in the Gospel of Luke. In a parable, Jesus described how Lazarus lay suffering on the doorstep of a rich man, covered with suppurating sores; his sole companions were dogs who licked his sores. The wealthy man, whether through meanness or obliviousness, never showed Lazarus the slightest mercy or compassion. When Lazarus died, he went straight to Heaven and the bosom of Abraham, while the rich man, when he died, traveled to a realm of punishment instead.

From the most conventional standpoint, Saint Lazarus, who dwells in the bosom of Abraham, is pivotally positioned to be a powerful intercessor. However, Saint Lazarus is a comparatively obscure saint, so you may be surprised to observe the quantity of statues honoring him for sale in spiritual supply stores.

The mystery is solved when you realize that the name and image of Saint Lazarus are intended to represent Babalu Ayé, among the most beloved, popular, and least obscure of Santeria's spirits. Babalu Ayé suffers from smallpox and has dominion over the disease. He decides who will recover from it and who will not. As smallpox has become increasingly rare, Babalu Ayé—and thus Saint Lazarus—are now associated with AIDS, another dread disease. Like Lazarus, Babalu Ayé is accompanied by faithful dogs that lick his suppurating sores. In Haitian Vodou, the image of Saint Lazarus is sometimes used to represent the constit of the grossroads. Dapa Logba, another outcomely prominent and popular. spini oi me crossioaus, rapa Legoa, anomei extremety prominent and popular African Diaspora spirit.

However, the original Catholic saint was not completely obscure. He is the patron of the Order of the Hospital of Saint Lazarus, founded in the 12th century after Templar and Hospitaller knights were afflicted with leprosy. A Templar rule stipulated that knights who contracted leprosy must transfer to the Order of Saint Lazarus. All knights of this order were lepers. They carried out military duties, as well as nursing and caring for their compatriots. The Order of Saint Lazarus founded and maintained a hospital for lepers beside Jerusalem's northern wall.

Saint Lazarus is renowned as a master healer. His specialties include deadly infectious diseases and epidemics. He is also a guardian of dogs.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: a frail, ragged, and minimally dressed beggar leans on a walking stick, accompanied by two dogs. (The image sometimes looks as if a particularly decrepit tarot Hermit has wandered into the tarot Moon landscape.)

**SACRED SITE:** The Shrine of Saint Lazarus in El Rincón, near Havana, Cuba, has been visited by leaders as diverse as Pope John Paul II and Fidel Castro.

COLORS: purple; brown.

**FEASTS:** The official feast day of this Saint Lazarus is 21 June, but as he is often confused with Lazarus of Bethany, he is also celebrated on 17 December. The primary feast at his shrine in Cuba is held on 17 December.

**RITUAL**: Use an inexpensive, anatomically appropriate milagro to request Saint Lazarus' aid with healing. If he helps you, offer a more expensive milagro in thanks; if he truly performs a miracle for you, it's traditional to thank him with life-size milagros formed of precious materials like gold.

**OFFERINGS**: water; candles; offerings on behalf of the ailing, poor, or homeless; popcorn; pilgrimage. Do not give him wine; if it spills, it hurts his sores.

SEE ALSO Damien, Saint; John Paul II; Lazarus of Bethany, Saint; Seven African Powers and Glossary: Santeria; Syncretism; Vodou, Voodoo, Hoodoo.

👡 Lazarus of Bethany, Saint

Also known as Lazarus of the Four Days; Lazaro; Lazaro; Lazare; Lazar; Eliezer; Azariah.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha, lived in the village of Bethany near Jerusalem and were close friends of Jesus Christ. Those who consider Mary of Bethany to be the same person as Mary Magdalen also consider Lazarus to be the Magdalen's brother.

Lazarus is the subject of a famous miracle recounted in the Gospel of John. Martha comes to Jesus in distress, bewailing the death of her beloved brother. Although Lazarus has been dead for four days, Jesus resurrects him, returning him to life.

There are various versions of what happened to Lazarus following the Crucifixion. He may have traveled to France on the same boat as his sisters. A Roman Catholic legend suggests that he became the first bishop of Marseille. An Eastern Orthodox legend, however, suggests that Lazarus traveled to Cyprus instead, where he became the first bishop of Larnaca.

The Gospel of Luke recounts a parable told by Jesus featuring a beggar named Lazarus. These men, both named Lazarus, are generally considered to be two distinct individuals. However, there is an inherent dilemma. In terms of biblical importance, Lazarus of Bethany is clearly the more significant of the two. Many consider the resurrection of Lazarus to be among the pivotal moments of Christ's life and possibly the event that—because of the incredible acclaim it brought to him—may ultimately have precipitated Jesus' arrest and crucifixion.

On the other hand, in the context of folk religion and magic, Lazarus the Beggar is clearly the more significant and beloved saint. His role in folk religion far outweighs his appearance in the New Testament. In response to this dilemma, the two saints are frequently confused and conflated. Iconography associated with Lazarus the beggar is often applied to Lazarus, the friend of Christ. Many churches bless dogs, the constant companions of Lazarus the Beggar, on the feast day of Lazarus of Bethany, for instance. (For the beggar saint, see *Lazarus*, *Saint.*)

Lazarus phenomenon or Lazarus syndrome is a medical term indicating someone who, having been declared dead and after failing to respond to resuscitation efforts, then spontaneously and mysteriously returns to life.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: The miraculous raising of Lazarus from the dead has long been a favorite subject of artists. Among the masters to paint Lazarus are Caravaggio, Van Gogh, and Rembrandt. Lazarus may be portrayed as an apostle or a bishop, or wearing a shroud or winding sheet.

SACRED SITES:

- Bethany is now called Al-Eizariyah, the Arabic form of the name Lazarus. The Tomb of Lazarus, traditionally believed to be the site of his resurrection, has long been a pilgrimage site for Christians and Muslims. By the late fourth century, a church was established at the site, now occupied by the Mosque of Al-Uzair. Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches are situated nearby.
- The Church of Saint Lazarus in Larnaca, Cyprus, is reputedly built over the saint's tomb.
- The Cathedral of Saint Lazare in Autun, France, is said to house his relics.

**SPIRITUAL ALLIES:** Lazarus is often venerated with his sisters, Martha and Mary.

FEASTS: 17 December (Roman Catholic). In the Orthodox Church, Lazarus Saturday is celebrated the day before Palm Sunday. Lutherans venerate Saint Lazarus together with his sisters on 29 July.

RITUAL: In Russian tradition, it's customary to eat caviar on Lazarus Saturday.

SEE ALSO John the Revelator; Lazarus, Saint; Martha, Saint; Mary Magdalen; Marys of the Sea; Myrrh Bearers, Holy.

# 👡 Le Chan

CLASSIFICATION: folk saint.

Le Chan, a renowned warrior woman, was born in An Bien Village in Vietnam, which was then under Chinese occupation. Her father, Le Dao, was a teacher and healer. The local Chinese governor was enamored of Le Chan and wished her to become his concubine. In response, her family hid her from him in a coastal village.

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Swearing revenge, Le Chan established a secret revolutionary base where the Tam Back River meets the River Cam. For the next ten years, she trained volunteers.

Le Chan and her volunteer army joined the Trung sisters in their insurrection against China, with Le Chan serving as a general. The rebellion was initially successful and the Trung sisters became queens. Le Chan was responsible for defending the Hai Tan region. In 42 ce, the Chinese launched a successful counterinsurgency. Le Chan continued leading troops even after the suicides of the Trung sisters in 43 ce, but when the situation became hopeless, she drowned herself in the King Thay River rather than be captured and raped.

According to legend, Le Chan threw herself into the river, where she transformed into a stone that did not sink but miraculously floated back to her birthplace. The villagers recognized her in this form and understood that she was now a spirit—variously described as a goddess, a genie, or a saint. Very carefully, they carried the stone back to the village, not touching it with their hands. Instead, the stone was lifted from the river using rods, placed within robes, and carried in this way. Violent storms suddenly and unexpectedly erupted. The robes broke and the stone crashed to the ground, indicating the place where Le Chan wished to stay. Le Chan's temple was built on that very spot. She is invoked for protection, victory, and blessings of all kinds.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** A bronze statue of Le Chan that stands before Hai Phong's City Exhibition House depicts her in the guise of a valiant warrior. At over seven meters high, as of this writing, it is the second-largest statue in Vietnam. It was unveiled on 31 December 2000 to inaugurate the first day of the 21st century.

FEAST: the eight to tenth days of the second Vietnamese lunar month.

**SACRED SITE:** Nghe Temple in An Bien was a small thatch-roofed shrine for centuries, but in 1917, it was rebuilt on a grander scale. Le Chan is venerated with her parents.

**OFFERINGS**: incense; candles; fresh fruit; flowers.

SEE ALSO Trung Sisters.

## 👡 Le Van Duyet

CLASSIFICATION: folk saint.

Le Van Duyet (1763–30 July 1832), soldier, viceroy, and eunuch, was once the most powerful leader in southern Vietnam. A military leader and kingmaker, he helped Gia Long, the first emperor of the Nguyen Dynasty, attain power and served as his lieutenant. Le Van Duyet came into conflict with Gia Long's successor, Minh Mang.

Following Le Van Duyet's death, Minh Mang punished him by having his mausoleum destroyed and his tomb flogged. By 1841, political winds had shifted and Le Van Duyet was rehabilitated and his mausoleum rebuilt. It was enlarged in 1937, but the Communist regime disapproved of Le Van Duyet, who was instrumental in establishing the Nguyen imperial dynasty, which was blamed for losing Vietnam to the French. Le Van Duyet was perceived as politically compromised. His mausoleum was shut down between 1975 and 1989, when it was reopened as a "historical and cultural relic." Refurbished again in 2008, it is currently operating as a shrine. Le Van Duyet has emerged as a particularly beloved saint whose constituents derive from many ethnicities and spiritual traditions. Christians and Buddhists flock to his shrine, as do those of other religions.

Le Van Duyet has not forgotten the humiliation inflicted on him and his tomb. He remains extremely sensitive about his shrine and will not tolerate disparaging remarks or even jokes. Reputedly, while alive, Le Van Duyet looked so menacing that his enemies took one look at him and fled. In death, Le Van Duyet retains his martial tendencies. Devotees are careful always to speak respectfully of him, his shrine, and his mausoleum.

Le Van Duyet is invoked to make criminals, enemies, ghosts, demons, and dangerous people flee. He maintains order and protects against chaos and disaster. He provides personal protection and also guards business assets.

While alive, Le Van Duyet was renowned for his ability to divine the future. The area surrounding his mausoleum is traditionally full of fortunetellers except during periodic government crackdowns.

SACRED SITE: His Lordship's Mausoleum in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon).

**SPIRITUAL ALLY:** Le Van Duyet is honored along with his wife, who is enshrined with him.

**FEASTS:** Festivities at his shrine are popular and thus may begin before the official start and linger after the official end.

- He is celebrated on the first day of the eighth Vietnamese lunar month, the anniversary of his death.
- 30 July, the anniversary of his death according to the Western calendar, marks another feast.
- Le Van Duyet is also feted on Tet, the Vietnamese lunar New Year.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; incense; pilgrimage. If he fulfills your request, the traditional payment is to plant a tree on the grounds of his mausoleum.

SEE ALSO Ho Chi Minh; Trung Sisters.

# 👡 Leonard, Saint

Also known as Leonard of Noblac; Leonard of Limoges.

CLASSIFICATION: Anglican and Roman Catholic saint.

Leonard (died 559), a Frankish nobleman, converted to Christianity at the same time as the Merovingian king Clovis I. Clovis became Leonard's godfather. Leonard went to live as a hermit in the Forest of Limoges, where he built himself a cell and ate only fruits and vegetables. One day, Clovis was hunting in the forest with his pregnant queen when she went into early, dangerous labor. Leonard prayed intensely and his prayers were credited with saving mother and baby. As a reward, Clovis gave him as much land as he could ride around in one night on a donkey. Leonard also asked for and was given the right to free any prisoners at any time, if he deemed them worthy.

He exercised this prerogative numerous times but is also credited with miraculous releases. Prisoners who invoked his name watched their chains drop off or received surprising reprieves. Many brought their chains to him as votive offerings. He gave many ex-prisoners work on his extensive lands so that they could maintain honest professions. The Abbey of Noblac that Leonard founded was once a popular stop on the pilgrimage road to the shrine of Saint James of Compostela.

Saint Leonard is petitioned for protection against any kind of imprisonment, literal or metaphoric. He is the guardian of miners and women in labor.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: miners; prisoners, especially prisoners of war and political prisoners; locksmiths; laboring women; horses.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** a man holding locks, chains, and fetters.

**BOTANICAL:** yew tree.

FEAST: 6 November.

**OFFERINGS**: chains; locks; handcuffs; manacles; candles; incense; fruit; vegetables; Calvados or other fruit brandies or liqueurs.

SEE ALSO James the Greater.

## 👡 Liberata, Saint

Also known as Santa Librada.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Some women bear twins or triplets. The mother of Saint Liberata (c. 119 ce–18 July 139 ce) gave birth to nine daughters on the same day. Rather than perceiving this as a blessing or miracle, she was terrified, because at that time and place, multiple births were believed to be the product of different fathers. She feared that her husband, Lucius Castelius Severus, Roman governor of the Iberian provinces of Gallaecia and Lusitania (now in modern Spain and Portugal), would interpret her babies as indicating major infidelities. And so, the mother ordered her midwife to drown the baby girls in the Miñor River.

The midwife, a secret Christian, did not drown the babies, but surreptitiously distributed them among several families. The girls were baptized and tutored by the future Saint Ovidius, bishop of Braga. When they were twenty, all nine girls were accused of being Christians and brought before the governor, who was, coincidentally, their father.

Their mother took one look at the nine girls, recognized her lost babies, and confessed all. Their father was delighted to meet his beautiful, erudite daughters and welcomed them home to a life of luxury—if they would renounce Christianity. All nine refused and were imprisoned in a tower. The sisters broke free (allegedly just to save their father from the terrible sin of killing his

children). They liberated other prisoners and escaped into the mountains, where they waged guerrilla warfare against Rome.

Ultimately they were captured and beheaded; a healing spring appeared at the spot where their heads were lopped off. Saint Liberata is enshrined in the Cathedral of Sigüenza in Guadalajara, Spain. She is the matron of that city.

Liberata shares her feast day with Saint Uncumber, who is also sometimes called Liberata: liberate is a synonym for "unencumber." The two saints are frequently confused.

By the Middle Ages, Liberata had become associated with female sexuality. She has dominion over conception, fertility, and childbirth. A Spanish rhyme requests her blessings of easy, pain-free childbirth:

Santa Librada, Santa Librada, que la salida sea tan dulce como la entrada.

(Translated, Saint Liberata is asked to ensure that the baby's exit is as sweet as its entry.)

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: By the Middle Ages, Liberata had emerged as the matron saint of prostitutes and sex workers, invoked for protection and well-being.

**FEASTS:** 18 January commemorates Liberata's death; 20 July marks the day her relics were brought from Aquitaine to Sigüenza.

**SACRED SITES**: her tomb in the Cathedral of Sigüenza; Aguas Santas (Holy Waters), the spring that emerged at her death.

SEE ALSO Marina of the Holy Waters, Saint; Quiteria, Saint; Uncumber, Saint; Winifride, Saint.

# 👡 Liborius, Saint

Also known as Saint Liborio.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Liborius (348–396 ce), the scion of a noble Gaulish family, was a close associate of Martin of Tours. He died in Martin's arms and thus Liborious, the fourth bishop of Le Mans, is invoked for peaceful deaths. His specialty is healing calculi—kidney or gall stones. He is also invoked against that mysterious ailment, colic.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Saint Liborius is depicted as a bishop holding a book with stones or pebbles strewn across the pages.

**ATTRIBUTES**: three stones on an open Bible or pebbles scattered over an open Bible, indicating his power over gallstones and kidney stones.

COLOR: gold.

SACRED ANIMAL: peacock.

SACRED SITE: Liborius is buried in Paderborn Cathedral in Germany.

**FESTIVAL**: An annual nine-day celebration begins the Sunday after his feast at Paderborn.

FEAST: 23 July.

**OFFERINGS**: white and gold candles; charitable donations and good deeds performed in his name; pilgrimage.

SEE ALSO Martin of Tours, Saint.

# 👡 Lidwina

Also known as Lidwine; Liduina; Lydwin; Lydwina; Lidweena.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Lidwina (1380–14 April 1433) was fifteen years old when she fell while ice skating near her home in Schiedam in the Netherlands. She broke a rib in the fall and never recovered. Instead, her condition continued to deteriorate. Although

she experienced brief periods of remission, Lidwina was disabled for the rest of her life. She became paralyzed, with the exception of her left hand. Blood flowed from her nose, ears, and mouth. She spent much of her life in excruciating pain.

Parts of Lidwina's body reputedly fell off, including skin, bones, and some of her intestines. Her parents kept these parts in a vase, where they never rotted but reputedly emitted a fragrant aroma now associated with the odor of sanctity. These parts received so much attention from visitors that Lidwina finally asked her mother to bury them, which she did.

Many now believe that Lidwina was suffering from multiple sclerosis. Another theory is that because of her family's precarious financial situation, Lidwina was not taken to a physician after her injury, which became infected, leading to her other health problems.

During her own lifetime, Lidwina's condition was controversial.

- Some perceived her illness as a mark of her sanctity.
- Some considered its origin to be diabolical.
- Four soldiers from the occupying army of Philip of Burgundy accused Lidwina of faking her illness, convinced that her swollen body indicated pregnancy and that the father was her local priest.

Shortly after her accident, Lidwina began experiencing visions in which she received messages from God. Miracles also began occurring in the room where Lidwina spent most of her time. She began an increasingly austere fast that continued until her death. Eventually, it was claimed, she miraculously existed without eating at all.

Lidwina gained fame as a healer, although she was unable to heal herself. The army of Philip of Burgundy, which occupied Schiedam, was suspicious of her and perhaps of her influence over the townspeople. Guards were ordered to keep watch over her to determine whether she was truly ill and whether she really subsisted without food. A document from this time attesting to Lidwina's miraculous nature still exists.

Lidwina died at age fifty-three. Her grave immediately became a pilgrimage site. A chapel was built over it in 1434, a year after her death. Lidwina was canonized in 1890.

FAVORED PEOPLE: the chronically ill; those suffering from multiple sclerosis; ice

skaters; those for whom a diagnosis cannot be made or whose illnesses cannot be identified; those lacking health insurance or medical care.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Lidwina is sometimes portrayed at the moment of her ice-skating accident. Alternatively, she is portrayed as a bedridden invalid—an angel brings her a crown or a blooming rosebush.

ATTRIBUTES: ice skates; rosebush; crown. She is often accompanied by an angel.

SACRED SITE: Basilica of Saint Lidwina in Schiedam near Rotterdam.

FEAST: 14 April.

SEE ALSO Therese Neumann.

## 👡 Loewe, Rabbi Judah

Also known as the Maharal.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Jewish saint.

Rabbi Judah Loewe ben Bezalel (c. 1525–1609), Talmudic scholar, Kabbalist, magician, mystic master of the Ineffable Name, and leading rabbi of Prague, is now best known as the creator of the Golem.

A Golem is an artificial man created from clay and brought to life by various spiritual and magical techniques, including mastery of the names of power. Rabbi Loewe created a Golem to protect Prague's Jewish community from persecution—a kind of a magical body guard. Eventually, this Golem became uncontrollable and Rabbi Loewe destroyed it. Its remains are allegedly among the debris in the attic of the Prague synagogue known as the Altneuschul.

Rabbi Loewe and his Golem—there are others, but his is the most famous are the subject of many books, films, and plays. Legends of the Golem inspired Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*. Rabbi Loewe has developed a reputation as a master magus—in Lisa Goldstein's 2002 novel *The Alchemist's Door*, he collaborates with Dr. John Dee, the famous British astrologer and alchemist.

Rabbi Loewe's priority during life was protecting Prague's embattled Jewish community, guarding them against political and physical abuse, but also from spiritual harm. A plague once broke out in the Prague Ghetto, affecting only young children. Rabbi Loewe prayed to discover the cause. He fell asleep. In his dream, the Prophet Elijah led him to a cemetery where Rabbi Loewe saw the souls of children rising from their graves. He abruptly woke up. Discovering that it was nearly midnight, the witching hour, he got up and went to the graveyard, arriving at precisely midnight. Children's souls did indeed rise and begin to dance. Loewe saw that one dancing soul had left its shroud lying on its tombstone and he quietly retrieved it.

When the dance ended, all the souls returned to their graves, except the one missing its shroud. The little soul pleaded with Loewe to return the shroud so that it could return to its tomb; Loewe refused until the cause of the plague was revealed to him. Eventually, the soul revealed that an evil sorcerer had invoked harmful spirits, causing the plague. After the sorcerer's name and location were revealed, Loewe returned the shroud.

Rabbi Loewe went to the sorcerer's house and looked in the window, where he saw lit candles and a man standing within a drawn pentacle. At the spell's pivotal moment, Loewe cried out a different finish, directing conjured spirits to attack the sorcerer instead. The sorcerer went up in a flash of smoke and the plague immediately terminated.

Rabbi Loewe had no fear of ghosts or demons and could communicate with angels. He once encountered the Angel of Death, who was examining a long list of names of souls he was assigned to collect. Rabbi Loewe spontaneously grabbed the paper out of the angel's hand and destroyed it, thus saving many lives. Only a tiny bit of paper with one name written on it remained in the Angel of Death's hand. Rabbi Loewe died that night.

Loewe continues to offer protection from beyond the grave. Crowds journey to his tomb in Prague's Old Jewish Cemetery to request his assistance and blessings. Small notes detailing needs and desires are tucked into the tomb to expedite the process. He is invoked for healing, success, fertility, to bless marriages and new ventures, and to avert disaster.

Scenes of people petitioning Rabbi Loewe, including putting notes on his grave, may be witnessed in House of Life, the 2007 film by Allan Miller and Mark Podwal.

FEAST: The *yahrzeit*, or anniversary of his death, is commemorated on the eighteenth day of the Hebrew lunar month Elul, which corresponds to the

astrological sign Virgo.

#### SACRED SITES:

- his tomb in Prague's Old Jewish Cemetery
- Prague's Old-New Synagogue (*Altneuschul*), where he remains so beloved that ever since his death, the synagogue's seat number one, his chair by the eastern wall, has never been reassigned but remains reserved for him.

**OFFERINGS**: candles and prayers in his memory; recitation of psalms; good deeds and charitable donations in his name, including upkeep of the Prague cemetery.

SEE ALSO Elijah the Prophet.

# 👡 Longinus

Also known as Longino; Longuinho; Longinus the Centurion.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Crucifixion is a method of execution that was used by the Romans from approximately the sixth century bce until the fourth century ce, when it was abolished by Emperor Constantine, the first Christian emperor, out of respect for its most famous victim, Jesus. It is a slow and excruciating way to die. There are faster, more efficient methods of execution, but crucifixion does more than merely terminate life. It is also an exercise in extreme humiliation. Roman crucifixions were typically performed out in the open, so death occurred in full public view. Despite countless medieval paintings and statues of Christ and the saints wearing strategically placed loincloths, victims of crucifixion typically died naked, all private parts and bodily functions exposed.

Crucifixion served as social control; crowds watching protracted, brutal, and lingering deaths were intimidated and dissuaded from actions that could potentially earn this punishment. Bodies were typically left on crosses to rot and serve as grim reminders of what befell enemies of Rome. Victims of crucifixion were typically only permitted burial or funeral rites if substantial bribes were offered. Depending on the methods used, it could take as long as three days to die by crucifixion, but death could also be hastened, typically by lancing the person hanging from the cross. Historically, this was done for several reasons:

- as an act of mercy, perhaps in response to a bribe from a victim's loved ones
- Since Roman guards were not permitted to leave a crucifixion before the victim was dead, death might be hastened if a guard wished to leave his post.
- to guarantee that the victim was really dead

A Roman soldier pierced Jesus Christ in the side with a lance during the Crucifixion. Although the soldier is not named in the Gospels, within centuries, a tremendous body of lore had developed around him and his lance. By the fourth century, he had been given the name Longinus and identified with the centurion who testified that "in truth, this man was the son of God" (Mark 15:39). In some legends, Longinus is described as having been virtually blind until blood and water flowing from Christ's wound dripped into his eyes and his vision was instantly restored.

Also according to legend, Longinus, experiencing a spiritual epiphany following the Crucifixion, abandoned the army and joined the Apostles but eventually fled to Cappadocia, where he became a monk. He ran afoul of the law and was punished by having his teeth pulled out and his tongue removed. Miraculously, however, Longinus continued to speak clearly and had the strength to grab an axe and destroy some idols. He was martyred shortly thereafter.

By the 14th century, his role was expanded and Longinus was counted among those who cleansed Christ's body after it was removed from the cross. It is now unknown whether any of these legends are based on any sort of valid oral tradition, or whether they were an attempt to minimize Roman involvement in the Crucifixion following Rome's conversion to Christianity.

Longinus may be a Latinized version of a Greek word *longche*, meaning "lance." He is, thus, essentially Saint Lance or Holy Lance. His weapon—the socalled Spear of Longinus—has, in fact, exerted more fascination than the soldier who wielded it, at least in the context of folk religion and occultism. Also known as the Spear of Destiny or the Holy Spear, this lance reputedly has the power to restore lost vision.

Many legends purport to explain what happened to this lance following the Crucifixion:

- It was reputedly among the miraculous treasures unearthed in Jerusalem by Saint Helena.
- In the sixth century, Antoninus of Piacenza, a pilgrim and early travel writer, described the relics he witnessed in Jerusalem including the Spear of

acochoca ane reneo ne wianessea in serasareni, incluanis are opear or

Longinus.

• It may have been in the possession of Saint Maurice.

Various spears currently compete to be proclaimed the true Spear of Longinus, including an iron spear housed in the Hofburg Museum in Vienna that was in Adolf Hitler's possession during World War II; the Vatican Lance housed in Saint Peter's Basilica; and the Echmiadzin Lance of Armenia. The spear stars in assorted books and conspiracy theories, notably the belief that Hitler began World War II in order to gain possession of the Spear of Destiny.

Longinus is an extremely popular folk saint in Brazil, where he is called São Longuinho and where he fulfills a role played by Saint Anthony of Padua elsewhere—finder of lost objects. Longinus is the subject of a Portuguese rhyme and ritual:

São Longuinho, São Longuinho Se eu achar (name the lost object) dou três pulinhos.

Translated this means:

Saint Longinus, Saint Longinus If you find (name the lost object), I will give you three jumps.

Should Longinus return your missing item, you must promptly jump three times in his honor.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Longinus is portrayed as a centurion at the foot of the cross on which Jesus is crucified. He is also portrayed in the act of piercing Christ's side, as, for example, in a famous painting by Fra Angelico.

ATTRIBUTES: lance; spear.

FEASTS: 15 March (Roman Catholic); 16 October (Orthodox and Roman Catholic); 22 October (Armenian Apostolic).

SACRED SITES:

• His relics are in the Church of Saint Augustine in Rome.

• His shrine in Saint Peter's Basilica in the Vatican is the location of the famous

statue of Longinus by Bernini.

• The Chapel of Saint Longinus is in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

SEE ALSO Anthony of Padua; Helena, Saint; John the Revelator; Joseph of Arimathea; Maurice, Saint; Myrrh Bearers, Holy; Peter, Saint.

## 👡 López, Francisco

**CLASSIFICATION:** Gaucho saint.

Francisco López predicted that false testimony would be the cause of his death. According to his legend, his prediction came true. Francisco López was falsely accused of theft and murder. He escaped but, even though he was a fugitive on the lam, he could not resist a visit to his sweetheart—which, of course, was what the police were anticipating.

Francisco López was ambushed at a dance, bound, tortured, and deprived of water. When he faced the firing squad, he did not go quietly but grabbed a soldier's bayonet and proceeded to do as much damage with it as possible, until finally he was nearly decapitated. The police left him for dead, but he lingered until a local man ventured near to offer comfort. Francisco López requested that his San La Muerte amulet be extracted from beneath his skin so that he could finally die in peace. He also requested that after his death, a dance be held in his honor rather than a wake, and he promised to serve as an intercessor. López said that those who were in need of water or who must locate something that is lost should request and pray for his help. In his words: "I will be close to God and will try to get for you everything that you ask of me."

Miracles were immediately attributed to him. However, local church and law enforcement reacted negatively and aggressively to his veneration. In the early 20th century, his grave shrine was demolished and his remains were exhumed and moved to a cemetery in Corrientes, Argentina.

COLOR: red.

**OFFERING**: Dance for him. Francisco López loved dancing and allegedly does not accept petitions unless accompanied by a dance.

SEE ALSO Gaucho Saints; Muerte, San La.

# ∾ Louis, Saint

Also known as San Luis Rey; Saint Louis King of France.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

King Louis IX of France (25 April 1214–25 August 1270) is the only French monarch to be canonized. Louis, the Crusader King, participated in the seventh and eighth crusades. In 1270, the eighth crusade approached the city of Tunis where Louis hoped to convert the sultan to Christianity personally. The Crusaders took the city but were then struck with an epidemic of dysentery that felled many, including Louis. Saint Louis is traditionally invoked before starting new ventures and projects. He is petitioned to heal terminally ill children. He assists parents with large families and may be invoked to remedy difficult marriages. In the tradition of Haitian Vodou, Agasou, a spirit associated with Dahomean royalty, is syncretized to Saint Louis.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: barbers and hairdressers; button makers; construction workers; crusaders; distillers; embroiderers; needleworkers; masons; prisoners; sculptors; stonecutters; soldiers.

FEAST: 25 August.

SACRED SITES: His tomb in Tunis remains a pilgrimage site. Some of his relics are buried there; others are in Palermo. Most of his corpse was buried in the French royal necropolis in Saint-Denis but disappeared during 16th-century religious conflicts. The Cathedral-Basilica of Saint Louis King of France in New Orleans, established in 1727, also draws devotees.

**OFFERINGS**: frankincense; French wine; candles.

SEE ALSO Denis, Saint; Sidi Bou Said.

👡 Lucifer, Saint

Also known as Lucifero Calaritano; San Lucifero.

Lucifer Calaritanus (died 20 May in approximately 370), the bishop of Cagliari, Sardinia, is venerated as a saint in Sardinia as well as wherever Sardinians have immigrated. His status as a saint, however, is subject to dispute and not just because of his name. Lucifer was a fiery and entrenched opponent of Arianism, an early branch of Christianity that disagreed with the Vatican on the interpretation of the Trinity and the true nature of Jesus Christ. Lucifer was an argumentative, uncompromising man, and he may have been excommunicated. Saint Jerome condemned his followers, known as the Luciferians. Perhaps coincidentally, Jerome is responsible for translating the Hebrew words *Helel ben Shachar* ("Shining One, Son of the Morning") from Isaiah 14:12 as "Lucifer," beginning the association of that name with Satan.

Lucifer may be translated as Light Bringer and is now most associated with the fallen angel of that name. In Saint Lucifer's time, however, and among the general Pagan populace, it was a popular first name, associated with various Pagan deities—for instance, Diana Lucifera, the childbirth-assisting aspect of the goddess Diana who encourages babies to emerge from the darkness of the womb into the light.

There is also disagreement as to whether the Lucifer venerated as a saint in Cagliari is really this historical Bishop Lucifer or possibly another man with the same name, perhaps an early martyr. Lucifer, which means Light Bearer, was not an uncommon name during the Pagan Roman era, although it now has unfortunate connotations for a Christian saint.

FEAST: 20 May.

# SACRED SITES:

- the Church of Saint Lucifer in Cagliari
- A chapel dedicated to him in Cagliari's cathedral reputedly contains his tomb.

SEE ALSO Jerome, Saint; Lucy, Saint; Luke, Saint.

Also known as Lucia; Lucie.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Saint Lucy, who reputedly died in approximately 304, has two official stories and several unofficial histories. In the first official story, Lucy is a beautiful young Sicilian noblewoman who secretly converted to Christianity and made a vow of chastity. When a marriage was arranged for her, Lucy bet that if she literally removed her eyes, the groom would retract his proposal. She wasn't wrong. The groom fled. And luckily for Lucy, God was so impressed with her determination that he stuck her eyes back in their sockets, healed them, and miraculously blessed her with sight once more.

The second official story suggests that Lucy stalled the marriage for three years, all the while praying intensely to her intercessor, Saint Agatha, for guidance and rescue. As proof of her existence and of the validity of Lucy's Christian faith, Saint Agatha cured Lucy's mother's hemorrhagic bleeding disorder. Mom was convinced. She told Lucy that she didn't have to marry if she didn't want to and canceled the wedding plans.

The rejected suitor was outraged. He reported Lucy to Roman authorities, who arrested and tortured her. Attempts were made to send her to a house of prostitution, but the small girl miraculously became too heavy for even a team of oxen to transport. Her eyes were gouged out as part of her torture, but miraculously her vision was restored. Attempts were made to burn her alive, but the flames spontaneously died out. Finally, Lucy was stabbed in the throat and died. She now heals afflictions of the eye, restores sight, bestows clairvoyance, and also averts and removes the Evil Eye. Lucy is among the most beloved saints in all of Christianity.

Less officially, Lucy ranks among the most beloved saints of folk magic. She is among the saints most closely associated with witchcraft and magic spells, and especially the Wild Hunt—that marauding host of spectral spirits who ride through winter nights accompanied by souls that the Church considered damned, like suicides and unbaptized babies.

It is difficult to reconcile the official and unofficial sides of Saint Lucy. The Church now acknowledges that her hagiography is built on legend and folklore. It's widely believed that different female spirits operate under her name, including the goddesses Juno Lucina, Freya, and Hulda. Lucy's veneration is widespread; different deities may wear her mask, depending on region.

Before the Gregorian calendar reform of 1582, the Feast of Saint Lucy fell on

the shortest, darkest day of the year, the winter solstice. The name Lucy derives from a Latin root word meaning "light." Lucy the Lightbringer rules that longest night. It is considered an optimum time for magic spells, divination, and spiritual activity. In Austria, Lucy's Light is a folk name for second sight—psychic ability.

Hungarian folk tradition openly acknowledges two saints named Lucy: one is the official saint; the other is described as a "strange being." Hungarian girls and women were forbidden to do any sort of traditional women's work on Lucy's feast—no washing, sewing, weaving, or cleaning. Instead, the day was spent reveling and celebrating Lucy.

Hungarian folk tradition considers Saint Lucy's Eve to be among the most effective times for successful divination, while her feast day marks the opportunity to begin construction of a Saint Lucy Chair. The magical Saint Lucy Chair must be built by hand from nine different kinds of wood without using nails. Construction *must* conclude on December 24, before Christmas Eve.

If constructed correctly, the chair offers its builder a brief opportunity to identify secret witches by seeing what is otherwise invisible. This person must fill his or her pockets with loose poppy seeds—you'll soon see why—and bring the chair to church, where it must be placed against the back wall or behind the last pew. If the maker of the chair stands on it during Midnight Mass, any secret witches attending church will be exposed by the horns now displayed on their heads. These horns are invisible to everyone but the person standing on the Saint Lucy Chair.

Of course, standing atop a chair made of nine types of wood in the back of a church during Midnight Mass is hardly discreet. The maker of the chair is also exposed—to the community at large, but especially to the secret witches. It is in the witches' interest to silence their witness before their identities are publicly revealed. Thus it is recommended that at the conclusion of Midnight Mass, the chair's maker run home as quickly as possible with the chair, scattering poppy seeds along the way. Allegedly, the pursuing witches are so obsessive-compulsive that they will be forced to stop and pick up every last seed, enabling their target to arrive safely home, where the chair must immediately be burned. At least one such chair is on display in the Ethnographic Museum in Budapest.

In German folk tradition, Saint Lucy's Eve is notorious for an upsurge in spirit activity, most notably the Wild Hunt. Witches and practitioners go out to join the Hunters, although others hide behind locked doors.

In Switzerland, Saint Lucy accompanies Father Christmas on his gift-giving rounds. Lucy gives gifts to girls, while Father Christmas gives them to boys. She is sometimes considered Mrs. Christmas. In Bohemia, Saint Lucy hunts for scoundrels on the eve of her feast. When she finds them, she puts them in her basket and carries them into deep subterranean caverns, where she cuts open their bellies, stuffs them with straw, and adds them to her doll collection.

Saint Lucy, whether in her official or unofficial guise, is petitioned for physical healing and to avert eye disease, but she is also the subject of many rituals to avert or banish the Evil Eye.

## A Tuscan Charm Against the Evil Eye

- 1. Craft a wreath from rue and red ribbons.
- 2. The afflicted person must spit through this wreath three times while begging Saint Lucy for protection.

# A Verbal Charm to Avert the Evil Eye

This charm is based on Germanic healing chants:

Saint Lucy came from Rome with a golden chalice in her hand Eye against eye Drive away the Eye Saint Lucy banished envy and malice Drive away the Eye!

The poet Dante Alighieri (c. 1265–1321) credited Saint Lucy with healing his eyes, damaged by the river of tears he shed after his beloved Beatrice died. Saint Lucy appears in his Inferno and, more recently, in The Trials of Saint Lucia, an add-on to the Dante's Inferno video game, in which she can fly. Lucy also appears in the Persona 3 video game, in which her special skill is locating enemies.

Eyes are painted on the prows of Mediterranean fishing boats. These eyes allegedly help the boat navigate—essentially, the boat can now "see" where it's going—but also protect it and its passengers from danger, both physical and spiritual. These eyes are often described as belonging to Saint Lucy, but the tradition may have existed long before the saint's lifetime.

Los Ojos de Santa Lucia, also known as Los Ojitos de Santa Lucia, are eyeshaped amulets that reputedly ward off the Evil Eye and are typically given to babies and children. The name literally means Saint Lucy's Eyes or Saint Lucy's Little Eyes, but *ojitos* may be interpreted as "beautiful eyes" as well.

In Sweden, the Feast of Saint Lucy is celebrated with a ritual in which young girls embody the saint. Each household designates one young girl to serve as Saint Lucy, usually a family's eldest or youngest daughter. The girl rises before dawn to fix breakfast and coffee for the rest of the household. Ritual foods may be prepared and served, including saffron buns, cross-shaped pastry flavored with saffron, or the pastry called *lussekatter* or "Lucy's Cats." The girl dresses as Saint Lucy in a white dress and wears a crown of lit candles.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: those born on the thirteenth day of any month; those who don't need eyes to see; clairvoyants.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: a young woman holding a plate or dish with her eyes on it. Sometimes she also has eyes in her head, but she may have empty sockets. Alternatively, she is portrayed as a young woman praying before Saint Agatha's tomb or with a dagger at her throat.

**ATTRIBUTES**: a pair of eyeballs on a plate; eyes; lamp; sword; palm of martyrdom.

SACRED DAY: Tuesday.

FEAST: 13 December.

COLORS: green; magenta; yellow; white.

**BOTANICALS**: arnica (*Arnica montana*); golden trumpet tree (*Tecoma stans*), also called Saint Lucy's Eyes (the plant contains psychoactive alkaloids); cypress arbor vitae (*Thuja cupressoides*).

SPIRITUAL ALLIES: Saints Lucy and Agatha are often venerated together and will

share an altar. Lucy may also be venerated beside Saint Anthony of Padua.

**RITUAL**: Lucy once saved her hometown of Syracuse from famine—a ship carrying grain pulled into the harbor while people were petitioning Lucy. One version of the legend suggests that Lucy herself appeared at the boat's helm. In commemoration of this miracle, some communities serve wheat dishes and specifically semolina pasta on her feast day, while others avoid eating milled grains. Saint Lucia Pudding, also known as *cucci*—a Sicilian festival dish—is made from wheat berries.

#### SACRED SITES:

- The Basilica of Saint Lucy is reputedly built over the site of her martyrdom.
- The Church of San Geremia in Venice houses Lucy's relics. They were stolen on 7 July 1981 but were restored in December of that year.

**OFFERINGS**: dishes cooked with saffron; cakes; cookies; eye-shaped milagros; white candles; divination tools.

- Offer Lucy one white candle when invoking her to heal one eye.
- Offer her two white candles when both eyes require healing.
- Offer her five white candles, arranged in the shape of a cross if requesting assistance with the Evil Eye.

SEE ALSO Agatha, Saint; Anthony of Padua; Lucifer, Saint; Margaret of Cortona and Glossary: Syncretism.

# 👡 Luke, Saint

Also known as San Luca; Lucas.

**EPITHETS**: The Illuminator; The Bringer of Light; The Light Bearer.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Saint Luke, author of the Gospel of Saint Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, was probably born in Syria of Greek ancestry. He may have been a slave, albeit a highly educated one. He was reputedly a talented healer and a great painter. Luke is reputedly the only non-Jewish author of the four official Gospels. He is considered the first Christian physician. A companion of Saint Paul, he never married nor was he martyred, but died peacefully at age eighty-four.

Many Black Madonnas, both paintings and statues, are attributed to Saint Luke, who allegedly created many portraits of Mary and Jesus. He is credited with at least seventy images of the Madonna. Saint Augustine denied this legend, as do many art historians. Many of the images attributed to Luke are the wrong age to be his work. Most are estimated to have been created in approximately the 12th century. However, some of the images may derive from Luke's time and, regardless of what art experts say, many still identify Luke as their creator. These images are now distributed all over the world. At least ten are in Russia, with Rome running a close second. Saint Luke's name is attached to all sorts of mysterious, possibly subversive, aspects of Christianity.

In Serbia, Saint Luke is venerated as a healing saint. His relics, taken to Smederevo in 1453, were acclaimed for producing miraculous healings.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: artists; sculptors; painters; bachelors; brewers; butchers; healers; physicians; authors; glassworkers; glassmakers; glassblowers; stained-glass artists; lace makers; goldsmiths; jewelers.

**ATTRIBUTES**: paintbrush; artist's palette; book; pen.

EMBLEM: winged ox or calf.

SACRED ANIMAL: bull.

**BOTANICAL**: floccose agaric (really a mushroom but traditionally classified with botanicals).

FEAST: 18 October.

SACRED SITES: Luke's relics are in the Basilica of Saint Justina in Padua, Italy. In 2001, DNA testing indicated that these relics are likely to be those of Saint Luke. DNA was extracted from a molar in the coffin. Saint Luke's cranium—his head —was brought to Prague's Cathedral of Saint Vitus in 1364.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; art supplies.

**SEE ALSO** *Amador*, *Saint*; *Apostles*; *Mary*; *Paul*, *Saint* and Glossary: *Black Madonna* 

# M

#### 🔊 Madama, La

**CLASSIFICATION:** unofficial saint.

La Madama is the matron saint of fortunetellers, psychics, mediums, and healers. She derives from the Puerto Rican spiritual tradition known as Espiritismo or Spiritism, which is related to modern Spiritualism, but based on the teachings of Allan Kardec (1804–1869). However, images of La Madama are frequently given as a gift by one fortuneteller to another, and many devotees are unfamiliar with Espiritismo. They may be of any religious persuasion or none. Devotion to La Madama has also become prevalent among Hoodoo practitioners.

La Madama is a powerful healer who banishes demons, ghosts, and nightmares. She is renowned for her quick response to prayers and petitions, and is invoked for prophetic dreams, especially dreams for winning lottery numbers or general good fortune. The appearance of La Madama, especially if unbidden, may indicate someone's destiny, talent, and aptitude toward mediumship, clairvoyance, or healing. She offers devotees practical assistance as well, helping find clients, hone skills, and obtain payment from recalcitrant clients.

*Madama* is a generic term used in Espiritismo to identify non-Hispanic, female spirits of African descent. La Madama spirits are the immortal souls of women who, when they were alive, served as shamans, mediums, diviners, and healers, and are thus naturally attracted to those with similar aptitudes. There are an infinite number of La Madamas, just as there are an infinite number of guardian angels. Thus one person's Madama may not be identical to another person's Madama. These spirits may be understood as the equivalent of spirit guides; they reveal their individual histories through mediumship. However, some perceive that there is one major La Madama who presides over the entire host of Madama spirits and that she is the saint. Some perceive all La Madamas to be an aspect of this saint, in the same manner that different manifestations of the Virgin Mary are considered facets of the same holy being.

FAVORED PEOPLE: fortunetellers; psychics; mediums; traditional healers.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** The traditional, mass-produced Madama is a statue of a cook or kitchen worker. A strongly built, dark-skinned black woman, she usually wears a head wrap and large white apron over a long red dress. Her image is sometimes mistaken for that of Aunt Jemima, the American pancake icon.

A La Madama statue placed near the door serves as a spiritual guardian. The most effective Madama for this purpose holds a broom with which she sweeps away evil. Images, sold with and without brooms, come in all sizes, from inches tall to virtually life size. If unable to find one, an old traditional cast-iron Aunt Jemima figure may serve as a substitute. Hand-crafted La Madama images also exist, often in the form of soft, stuffed dolls.

ATTRIBUTES: broom; fan.

**AMULET:** An image called Seven Madama Powers (Siete Potencias Madamas) serves as a protective amulet: seven Madamas are portrayed. The largest holds a book, while six smaller figures surround her.

COLORS: usually red and white, but sometimes black and white.

**OFFERINGS**: flowers; liquor; candles; black coffee; tobacco products, especially cigars or snuff; seashells, especially cowrie shells; red fabric; fortuneteller's tools (tarot or playing cards, crystal ball, bones); fruit; therapeutic herbs; healing elixirs; Florida Water cologne.

SEE ALSO Black Hawk; Mary and Glossary: Vodou, Voodoo, Hoodoo.

# 👡 Magi, The

Also known as Three Kings; Three Wise Men; Three Kings of Cologne; Three Kings from the East; The Saint Kings; Three Holy Kings.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as saints by most branches of Christianity.

"In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, 'Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.' "

This excerpt from the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew is the only reference to the three "wise men," now also commonly known as the Magi or the Three Kings. They appear in no other Gospel, nor do they appear in other contemporary writings, like those of first-century chronicler Flavius Josephus.

The Gospel of Matthew further explains that the appearance of these wise men and their search for the future King of the Jews evoked panic in Judea's reigning king, Herod, whose own claim to the throne was tenuous. Herod questioned the wise men and requested that they return to him when they discovered the child. The wise men did, indeed, locate baby Jesus. They delivered gifts of frankincense, gold, and myrrh, but, warned by a dream, they immediately left town rather than pay another visit to Herod as previously arranged.

That is all the documented information about the wise men. Everything else is folklore and conjecture. The English translation "wise men" is a euphemism, a substitute for the original word *magi*, the plural of *magus*, a synonym for magician or sorcerer. The original magi were a learned class of Medes and Persians who practiced magical arts and indigenous Iranian spiritual traditions. By the first century of the Common Era, the magi had been supplanted in Persia by Zoroastrianism—the religion based on the teachings of Zoroaster, also known as Zarathustra—but a few still played a role as royal advisors. Many other magi became traveling magicians. The biblical Magi could also accurately be called mages or magicians.

The historical magi are so closely identified with the magical arts that the very word "magic" derives from their name. The magical art most associated with the magi is astrology. The biblical Magi are often portrayed *literally* following an unusual star but, as master astrologers, this may not have been necessary. The information they possessed may have been garnered from astrological charts and horoscopes. In other words, an astrological map may have led them to Bethlehem.

As Christianity became an established religion, the magical aspects of the Magi were played down. Instead, legends arose suggesting that they were kings seeking to pay tribute to the King of Kings. The Gospel of Matthew never names the Magi, nor does it proclaim their number; however, by the seventh century, the legend of the Magi as Three Kings already existed. In Puerto Rico, the concepts are blended—they are known as Los Reyes Magos, which may be interpreted as the Wizard Kings or the Sorcerer Kings.

Different traditions suggest different backgrounds, names, and identities for the Magi.

- In the Western Church, the names of the Magi are traditionally given as Balthazar, Melchior, and Gaspar, or variations of those names.
- The Ethiopian Orthodox Church identifies them as Kesad, Awnsom, and Albetar.
- Still other names are suggested by the Armenian and Syrian branches of Christianity.

The Roman Catholic Church declared the Magi saints and assigned each his own feast day, as well as one for them to share. They are venerated as a trio, but Saint Balthazar, the African king, also has a sizable independent following, especially in the Western Hemisphere.

The Magi are described as coming "from the east." If you consider history, this would logically be Iran, which is indeed east of Judea, now modern Israel.

- Iranian tradition claims the city of Saba, near modern Tehran, as the Magi's hometown.
- Ethiopian tradition, which identifies the Magi as Men of Divination, suggests that they were descendents of Zoroaster. (Zoroaster's family did, in fact, derive from Iran's magi caste.)

However, this was not generally known, so many diverse legends developed regarding their provenance. The standard Western legend suggests that one king came from Africa, one from Asia, and one from Europe, thus offering representatives from all corners of the Eastern Hemisphere. Other traditions suggest that individual wise men, kings, or magi derived specifically from Armenia or India. Many Chinese Christians identify one wise man as being from China.

The gifts they brought suggest that the Magi either were from the Horn of Africa or stopped there for some shopping, as gold, frankincense, and myrrh are all available there. Alternatively, they were from what is now Yemen, another of the rare places on earth where frankincense and myrrh are harvested.

Not all spiritual traditions have overlooked the Magi's magical connections, although whether this is perceived positively or negatively differs. The

Jehovah's Witnesses perceive the Magi with disfavor, citing the many biblical injunctions against sorcery and the practice of magic. They point out that via their magical arts, the Magi revealed the identity of baby Jesus to Herod, thus exposing him to danger and almost death. The African Diaspora spiritual tradition, Vodou, conversely celebrates the Magi's magical prowess. They are syncretized to the snake spirit Simbi, renowned as a great magician. Perhaps fittingly, the Magi are invoked in many folk magic spells.

The Magi managed to locate baby Jesus despite great distances. They are, thus, magically invoked to help locate missing persons, animals, or goods.

- 1. Inscribe their names—Balthazar, Caspar, and Melchior—into a flat beeswax tablet.
- 2. Place the wax beneath your pillow when you go to sleep.
- 3. Pay attention to your dreams. The Magi may reveal locations explicitly, but they may also give hints as to direction and location, or the perpetrator of your loss.

Perhaps it takes a witch to fight a witch. The Feast of the Epiphany is celebrated on the thirteenth day after Christmas. For various reasons, Epiphany Eve, the night of 5 January, is feared in European folk religion as a night when witches are out on the prowl, led by witch queens Berchta, Befana, Herta, and Hulda and accompanied by spectral hosts. To protect against them or any malevolent spellcraft, write the first letter of the names of each Magi on your door. This echoes the Passover legend but, instead of blood sprinkled on the door, initials are sufficient. No specific material is required for writing the initials, but Holy Water may be most effective.

*C*, *M*, *B*—the initials of the Magi (Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar) —form an acronym for Christus mundum benedicat, or "Christ blesses the world." This acronym is believed to provide spiritual protection and is thus posted over doors for good luck and safety. You can post a holy card or write the initials in chalk or other material.

The Magi are also invoked for healing and preventing sudden death. Their purported relics play a role in author Umberto Eco's 2000 novel *Baudolino*, while the Magi themselves play a significant role in the Japanese manga/anime

series Neon Genesis Evangelion.

FAVORED PEOPLE: travelers; astrologers.

**ATTRIBUTES:** The Magi bore gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh and these are their standard attributes. However, the historical magi caste is identified in ancient rock carvings by baresman. The baresman, also known as a barsom, is a bundle of twigs used in Zoroastrian and pre-Zoroastrian spiritual rituals and healing practices.

**BOTANICAL**: star-shaped flower, Star of Bethlehem (*Ornithogalum* spp.), a primary component in the traditional homeopathic crisis remedy best known under the brand name Rescue Remedy.

SACRED SITE: Marco Polo described seeing the graves of Magi in Saba, Iran implying that they had found their way home. However, another legend says Saint Helena discovered their bodies in Jerusalem. She had them transported to Constantinople, from whence they were eventually transferred to Milan and finally to Cologne in modern Germany. Their relics are now reputedly housed in a golden sarcophagus, the largest reliquary in the Western world, in Cologne Cathedral (the Kölner Dom). Within the reliquary are three golden-crowned skulls believed to belong to the Magi.

**RITUAL**: A King Cake is traditionally served on their feast day. This is a widely spread tradition. Depending on region, the cake may take different shapes or be made from different ingredients. What the cakes possess in common is that a baby-shaped toy, ring, or other small object is baked into the cake. Whoever receives the slice of cake with the charm is crowned king or queen of the feast. Alternatively, that person must provide the cake and possibly a party the following year on the Feast of the Three Kings.

FEASTS: The Magi may be celebrated on Christmas Eve, but they are more usually honored on 6 January, corresponding to the Feast of the Epiphany. In Spanish-speaking countries, this day is known as El Día de Reyes, or "the day of the kings." Children may be given gifts on this day, rather than on Christmas. In turn, they leave beverages for the traveling kings, as well as grass and water for their mounts, before going to sleep the night before. **OFFERINGS**: grass for their camels, donkeys, or horses. Reproduce their gifts by offering frankincense and myrrh resins, plus gold beads or coins.

SEE ALSO Balthazar, Saint; Gaspar, Saint; Gaucho Gil; Helena, Saint; Laveau, Marie; Melchior, Saint; Moses; Simon Magus and Glossary: Holy Water; Relics; Syncretism.

### ∾ Mai Mishra

Also known as Mai Misra.

CLASSIFICATION: Siddi saint.

Mai Mishra may be the most beloved of the female Siddi saints. The sister of Baba Ghor and Baba Habash, she traveled with them from Ethiopia to Gujarat, now in modern India, where Baba Ghor had been ordered to slay a "female demon." In other versions of the legend, Baba Ghor's party traveled to India for other reasons, but was waylaid by the sorceress-demon-goddess Makhan Devi when she attempted to sell them poisoned buttermilk. In all versions of the myth, however, it is Mai Mishra who actually defeats Makhan Devi.

Mai Mishra is considered a powerful exorcist. She is invoked to provide miracles of healing and fertility. Many among the Siddi community consider her an ancestress as well as a saint. Although most versions of the legend suggest that Baba Ghor's party embarked for India from Ethiopia, his family's origins remain unclear. They may have been of Ethiopian ancestry, but may also have originated in Nigeria or Nubia. The name Mishra may derive from *Misr* in Egypt.

**ATTRIBUTES**: twenty-one clay pots; the coconut rattle named in her honor.

SPIRITUAL ALLIES: her brothers Baba Ghor and Baba Habash.

#### SACRED SITES:

- her tomb in the Ratanpur shrine complex in Gujarat, India, where her brothers are also buried. Malevolent spirits exorcized at this shrine are traditionally banished within the tree overlooking her tomb.
- her shrine in Karachi, Pakistan

**OFFERINGS**: candy; sweets; oil lamps; pilgrimage. When requesting Mai Mishra's assistance with fertility, it is customary to affix small, brightly painted wooden cradles to the frames protecting her tomb.

SEE ALSO Baba Ghor; Baba Habash; Siddi Saints.

### 👡 Maid of Ludomir

Also known as the Maiden of Ludomir.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Jewish saint.

Hannah Rochel Vebermacher, born circa 1806 in the town of Ludomir, which is now in modern Ukraine, was not only a prophetess, scholar, miracle worker, Kabbalist, exorcist, mystic, charismatic healer, and herbalist, she was also that rarest of beings—a female Hassidic rebbe. Adored and loathed in her lifetime, she remains controversial.

After trying to have children for over ten years, her parents received a blessing from a Hassidic master who assured them they would conceive within the year. Hannah Rochel was thus a pampered, indulged only child. She was, essentially, her father's only son in the form of a girl. She demonstrated spiritual inclinations early, demanding and receiving an education that normally would have been reserved for a boy. A brilliant student, she learned Hebrew and Aramaic, studied Torah and Talmud, and was given access to holy books, all highly unusual for a girl of her day.

Hannah Rochel was fourteen when her mother died. She took her mother's death very hard, spending hours at the grave daily, weeping and praying. One day, something caused her to run wildly through the cemetery. Finally collapsing on a grave, she entered a coma that lasted weeks. It is theorized that she may have hit her head on the grave stone.

Upon awakening, she told her father that she had been to Heaven, where she received a brand-new "lofty" soul. Sure enough, she displayed expanded knowledge of prayers and scriptures. She began interpreting doctrine and manifesting healing powers, curing via charms, herbs, blessings, and the laying on of hands. She crafted and blessed amulets.

The Maid of Ludomir vowed never to marry. This may be acceptable, or even commendable, for a Christian holy woman, but for a Jewish woman it was

scandalous. She canceled a previously arranged betrothal, even though she was in love with her fiancé and had previously desired the match. She began wearing men's ritual clothing and assuming men's ritual roles. Perceived as resembling Joan of Arc, the Maid of Lorraine, people began to call her the Maid of Ludomir. Whether this was initially meant as mockery or a compliment is debatable, but devotees use the title with love and respect.

Her father, a wealthy merchant, died, leaving his entire fortune to his only child. A single woman, she had complete financial independence. Lacking father, husband, or brother, she had no one to tell her what to do. Her money was her own. She used it to build her own house of prayer and study, again absolutely unheard of for a woman. She essentially built herself a pulpit and became a public religious leader. She lived like a man, hiring a woman to cook and clean for her. A rich woman, she refused to accept money for blessings and healing, making her extremely popular among the poor, but evoking hostility from physicians who accused her of stealing their clientele.

Men and women came to study and pray with her. She taught from behind a curtain, so as not to violate laws of modesty, but many found the concept of a woman instructing men to be sufficiently shocking. The Maid of Ludomir became famous; many traveled from great distances to see her.

- Some perceived her as a holy woman in possession of the Holy Spirit.
- Others viewed her as an abomination.

Rumors spread that she was possessed by a *dybbuk*; some threatened to have her dragged from her study house and exorcised. Others believed she possessed the *ibur* of a holy man, which enabled a woman to perform her feats. (A *dybbuk* is a type of possessing ghost, an invasive spirit that cleaves to a living person, often causing mayhem. An *ibur*, conversely, is the soul of a deceased holy person that cleaves to a living person, but for beneficial spiritual purposes. An ibur is welcomed and treasured. A dybbuk must be exorcised.)

The Maid finally acquiesced to *constant* pressure to marry, but afterward both she and others perceived that she had lost her healing powers. She began to lose devotees. Divorcing her husband, she emigrated to Palestine, then an arduous journey for an older woman. There she began healing and teaching again, attracting a following of Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jewish and Muslim women. When men joined them, she made them sit in the back, a complete reversal of typical Jewish gender roles. She wore men's ritual clothing, led pilgrimages to Rachel's tomb and the Western Wall, and may have lived to 100.

Few physical traces of Hannah remain. Her prayer house was destroyed during World War II. Her tomb, if she had one, is now unknown; her grave on the Mount of Olives is described as a pilgrimage site, but another legend suggests that she spoke the Ineffable Name of God and was immediately transported to Heaven.

The Maid of Ludomir is traditionally invoked for miracles of fertility and for healing, especially of children. Mothers concerned for their children's safety and welfare call out her name. (Call her the Maid or, in Yiddish, *di Moid*, not her given name.) Petition her for financial independence, so that you are free to live as you please.

MANIFESTATION: In life, at least in her youth, the Maid was a redhead.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; prayers for her soul; sponge cake; a shot of Slivovitz or similar alcoholic beverage.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**, see Nathaniel Deutsch, *The Maid of Ludomir* (Univ. of California Press, 2003) **see also** *Barzani*, *Asenath; Elijah the Prophet; Joan of Arc; Rachel; Teresita*.

#### 👡 Maimonides

Also known as the Rambam (an acronym for Rabbi Moses ben Maimon).

**CLASSIFICATION:** Jewish saint.

Moses ben Maimon (March 1135–13 December 1204), better known as Maimonides, was a rabbi, physician, philosopher, and among the most influential Torah scholars. Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas thought highly of his writings.

Born in Córdoba, he left Spain in 1148 to escape persecution of the Jewish community. For the next ten years, he and his family traveled through southern Spain and North Africa. They settled in Egypt in 1168. In Cairo, he served as Saladin's personal physician and as the spiritual head of the Egyptian Jewish community. A dedicated healer, he treated patients of all religious persuasions.

After his death, he became a figure of legend, appearing in folk tales from

places he may never have visited while alive. He evolved into a stock character of Jewish folklore, joining a cast including Elijah the Prophet and the demons, Samael and Lilith. In many stories, he functions as a master magician—which is highly ironic, as, during his lifetime, this was very much *not* his orientation.

Maimonides, now renowned as an early devotee of rationalism, was controversial in his lifetime. Highly influenced by Neoplatonism, he discouraged superstition and was among those most actively opposed to amulets and angelology. He disliked poetry and criticized astrology, then an integral discipline for many physicians.

In life, Maimonides would have been appalled by the cult of saints and even more so to discover that he is considered one. His grave is the object of pilgrimage. Some claim that he performs miracles. All the legends in which he is a magician may indicate that his attitude toward magic has changed in the afterlife, or they may be an attempt at final victory from his opponents.

**SACRED SITES:** 

- Although he died in Egypt, his body was buried in Tiberias, Israel. The tomb is on Ben Zakkai Street.
- The Rambam Museum, featuring meditation gardens, is located near his grave.
- The Maimonides Synagogue in Cairo, where the Rambam worshipped, was reopened in May 2010 after two years of restoration by the Egyptian government, which considers it an Egyptian antiquity, not a Jewish house of worship.
- His house in Fez still exists and may be visited.
- A statue of Maimonides stands in Spain's Córdoba Synagogue, which now functions as a museum.

**FEAST:** the anniversary of his death on the twentieth day of the Jewish lunar month Tevet.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; prayers for his soul. Sponsor needy students; make donations to the poor in his honor.

SEE ALSO Albertus Magnus; Elijah the Prophet; Ernesto, Saint; Ho Chi Minh.

# ∾ Mammes, Saint

Also known as Mamas Mammas Mamet Mammès (French) Mamès

(Spanish); Mamante (Italian); Mema (Aramaic).

CLASSIFICATION: venerated by most branches of Christianity.

Legends regarding Saint Mammes conflict with each other. Not all may reference the same person. According to his most famous legend, his parents, Theodotus and Rufina, were Christians living in Caesarea, which is now known as Kayseri in modern Turkey. They were jailed as Christians during the third century while his mother was pregnant with Mammes, who was born in jail. Orphaned when his parents were executed, Mammes was raised by a wealthy widow who died when he was fifteen.

After her death, he lost protection or somehow came to the attention of anti-Christian authorities. Mammes was first tortured by the governor of Caesarea and then again by order of Roman emperor Aurelian. He was thrown to lions, but they became docile in his presence. He was rescued by an angel, who ordered the boy to hide in the nearby mountains. (An alternative legend suggests that the lions were not so docile and that Mammes was, in fact, devoured by one.)

Mammes preached to wild animals. A lion was his constant companion. He visited a local duke, who condemned him to death. Fatally struck in the stomach with a trident, he dragged himself close to a theater, where he succumbed to his injuries.

According to Cypriot legend, Mammes was a cave-dwelling hermit who resisted attempts by authorities to tax him. He was arrested, but while guarded by armed soldiers, he saw a lion attack a lamb. He broke free, grabbed the lamb, jumped on the lion's back, and rode it into town, where authorities decided to free him *and* to exempt him from taxation. Although Mammes is traditionally invoked by nursing mothers, he may also be helpful to those who can't pay their taxes or are morally opposed to taxation.

*Mammes* sounds like "mammary," and Saint Mammes is invoked for milk by nursing mothers.

#### Saint Mammes Assistance Ritual

Traditionally, bread and cheese were brought to a church, but this ritual may also be accomplished at a home altar.

- 1. Place the offering on the altar while you pray, petition, light candles, and communicate your desire to Saint Mammes.
- 2. Bring your bread and cheese outside and offer them to the first person you see. (If the person turns you down, keep offering until someone takes them.)

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Mammes is envisioned as a young boy holding a lamb and riding on a lion.

SPIRITUAL ALLY: Saint Blaise.

SACRED ANIMAL: lion.

FEASTS: 7 August (Spanish tradition); 17 August (Western Church); 2 September (Eastern Church).

SACRED SITES: The 12th-century Langres Cathedral, also known as Cathédrale Sainte-Mammès, in Langres, France, is where his relics are housed, including his head. An alternative legend suggests that his head is housed in the Church of Santa Maria Magdalena in Zaragoza, Spain. Many churches are dedicated to Saint Mammes in Cyprus and Lebanon, including the Church of Mar Mema in Edde, Lebanon

SEE ALSO Blaise, Saint.

# 👡 Manikkavachakar

**PRONOUNCED**: man-eek-ah-vah-chachk-ahr.

CLASSIFICATION: Hindu saint.

Manikkavachakar was born to a Brahmin family in the village of Vaadavur (Vaatapuri) in Pandya Desa, in what is now the modern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. He is a historical person; however, the era in which he lived is wildly disputed, ranging from the third to the ninth to the 14th centuries.

His name, Manikkavachakar, means "one whose words are like gems." From a very early age, he demonstrated great devotion to the Hindu deity Shiva and great kindness to all living beings. Although he desired a spiritual vocation, his brilliance came to the attention of the king, who summoned him to court and appointed him chief minister.

The king sent Manikkavachakar on a mission to locate and purchase fine Arabian horses. Manikkavachakar used the trip as an excuse to visit shrines and temples. At one, he had a spiritual experience so profound that he abandoned his horse-shopping mission. Spontaneously deciding to remain, he stripped off all his finery and donated the money intended for the horses to this temple.

News of his actions eventually reached the king, who demanded Manikkavachakar's return. But how could he return without either the horses or the money? Manikkavachakar appealed to Shiva, who appeared to him in a dream. In this dream, Shiva handed him a jewel, telling him to deliver it to the king along with the news that the horses would appear on a specific day.

When Manikkavachakar awoke with the jewel in his hand, he gathered up his courage, traveled back home, and offered the king the jewel and Shiva's message. He declined to resume his official duties and the king threw him into prison.

In the meantime, Shiva assumed the form of a horse trader. Transforming his sacred creatures, jackals, into beautiful horses, Shiva had them delivered to the king's palace on the date predicted. The king was pleased. He released Manikkavachakar from captivity and stabled the transformed jackals with his prized horses. At midnight, the jackals reassumed their own true form, devoured the real horses in the stable, and escaped. When the king learned of the slaughter of his horses, he had Manikkavachakar thrown back into jail, where he languished until the king himself had a spiritual encounter with Shiva, who ordered his release. Manikkavachakar spent most of the rest of his life in the temple of Shiva at Chidambaram writing and singing passionate hymns, many of which survive. One day, he entered the temple's inner sanctum and vanished. Now considered among the great Hindu saints, his image appears in many temples.

ATTRIBUTE: a book.

SPIRITUAL ALLY: Shiva.

**SACRED SITES:** Manikkavachakar has many pilgrimage sites throughout Tamil Nadu in India, especially:

- The temple at Chidambaram, where he vanished. His disappearance is understood as indicating that he reached salvation.
- The Temple of Tiruvannamalai and the Temple of Tirupperundurai, also

known as Aavudaiyaar Koil.

SEE ALSO Mirabai.

na Margaret of Antioch, Saint

- -

Also known as Marina; Marine; Margarita; Marguerite; Saint Margaret in the West.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Satan manifested to Saint Margaret of Antioch in the form of a dragon or gigantic snake. Mouth gaping open, he swallowed her whole, but Margaret's goodness and purity were so potent and distasteful to him that she was immediately spat out unharmed and on her way to sainthood. She is now the matron saint of pregnancy and childbirth.

That's the official version of Saint Margaret's most famous legend. Here's the unofficial version. Snakes are the creatures most associated with reproduction and female reproductive health. They are traditionally envisioned as women's spiritual and magical teachers, especially in the region from whence Margaret comes. (Antioch is now Antakya, Turkey, near the Syrian border.) Maybe she wasn't disgorged because she was just too good to die. Maybe she emerged because she passed her test. Only by facing and surviving her spiritual trial by dragon was she able to acquire the needed wisdom and secrets to perform her new role.

The episode with the snake was merely a prelude. According to her official legend, Margaret, the daughter of a pagan priest, secretly converted to Christianity. A Roman prefect fell in love with her, but she rejected him. He had her tortured, hoping that she would reject Christianity instead, but his plan didn't work.

Margaret was bound with chains and placed inside a cauldron of boiling oil, but a miraculously timed earthquake shook her chains loose and she emerged unscathed. She was killed by beheading but, just before her death, she made some public promises:

- She vowed to protect women who prayed to her before childbirth.
- Margaret promised that any fearful woman who called out to her during

childbirth would receive her blessings.

- She declared that anyone naming a church for her or who burned candles dedicated to her would obtain anything their hearts desired.
- She promised that those who invoked her on their deathbed would be saved from Hell.

Needless to say, with promises like those, Margaret quickly became among the most beloved and widely venerated Christian saints, with numerous churches named in her honor.

- Saint Margaret is invoked for fertility and protection during pregnancy and childbirth.
- She is invoked against hemorrhagic bleeding of all kinds, but especially uterine bleeding.
- She protects against kidney ailments
- Margaret rescues petitioners from natural disasters, especially earthquakes, storms, and floods.
- She trounces demons and malevolent spirits.
- She is among the Fourteen Holy Helpers.

Margaret's death is variously dated from the late third century to the early fourth, but there is no historical documentation for her whatsoever. Although incredibly popular for centuries, she has always been a somewhat disreputable saint, perceived as bribing devotees with extraordinarily lavish promises and indulgences. Margaret of Antioch is among the saints most criticized by Protestant reformers.

As early as 494, not long after her alleged death, Pope Gelasius I declared her legend apocryphal and sought to discourage veneration. Unlike Saint George, who is always depicted in the act of killing the dragon, Margaret is frequently portrayed simply in a dragon's company. Sometimes she leads it on a leash. Those just looking at the picture with no prior knowledge of her legend might think it was her pet. Her attributes, like a cauldron, are indistinguishable from those of Pagan fertility goddesses. Her name evokes the sea rather than Christian virtues. (The Eastern Church calls her Saint Marine or Marina; Margaret means "a pearl.")

Margaret's father may not be the only Pagan in this story. Suspicion has existed for centuries that Margaret may, in fact, be a Pagan goddess like Aphrodite attempting to slip beneath the radar in the guise of a saint. Antioch was among the first areas dominated by militant Christianity. Her devotees may have sought to continue worshipping her discreetly. Her promise that they would not go to hell has added resonance in that context. The Vatican finally officially suppressed Margaret's cult in 1969 for lack of historical evidence, but she continues to perform miracles.

In the Balkans, where she is called Saint Marina, her Pagan affiliations are more blatant. She is the Mistress of Snakes who protects people from snakes, but also protects and liberates the snakes. She heals *and* inflicts snake bite. She is associated with holy springs and wells, where people deliver offerings to her.

**MANIFESTATION:** In the Balkans, Margaret/Marina appears on full-moon nights as a beautiful woman with long, flowing hair.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** A beautiful long-haired woman stands beside or upon a dragon.

ATTRIBUTES: dragon; cauldron.

MINERAL: pearl.

ELEMENT: water.

PLANET: moon.

BOTANICALS: poppy; dragonhead (Draecocephalus virginianum).

FEASTS: 13 July (Eastern Church); 20 July (Western Church).

**SPIRITUAL ALLIES:** Saint Margaret frequently appears with Catherine of Alexandria. They manifested together to Joan of Arc. The three saints (Joan, Catherine, and Margaret) will share altar space. She may also be venerated with Saint Marina the Monk; the two once shared a grotto, Mar Marina in Tripoli, Lebanon, north of Beirut.

SACRED SITES: Margaret was once especially popular in England, where over 250 churches are dedicated to her, including Saint Margaret's Anglican Church in Westminster Abbey, the parish church of the House of Commons. Another significant site is the Basilica of Saint Margaret in Santa Margherita Ligure, near Genoa, Italy.

OFFERINGS: gifts befitting a water goddess; candles; incense.

SEE ALSO Catherine of Alexandria; Bethen; Fourteen Holy Helpers; George, Saint; Guglielma; Joan of Arc; Marina of the Holy Waters; Marina the Monk; Martha, Saint; Saint; Well Saints.

### no Margaret of Castello, Blessed

Also known as Margaret of Metola.

CLASSIFICATION: canonization pending.

When Margaret of Castello (1287–13 April 1320) was born in her family's castle in Metola, Italy, her wealthy, noble parents were dismayed. Margaret was blind and one of her legs was over an inch shorter than the other. Her parents kept her hidden for the first six years of her life; then they walled her up in a cell in a chapel in the forest. She couldn't get out and no one could see her, but she could receive the sacraments and attend Mass through a hole in the wall.

Margaret was left there for fourteen years. (An alternative version says she was only hidden there for seven years.) Her parents finally brought her home beneath a heavy dark veil and locked her in a castle dungeon for seven more years.

Margaret never grew over four feet tall. She developed a hunchback and suffered malnutrition and neglect. Eventually, after these years of captivity, her parents brought her to a Dominican convent in Castello seeking a miracle cure for her. When no cure was forthcoming, they abandoned her there.

Margaret wanted to join the convent, but she was rejected. For several years, she lived sheltered by several poor families in Castello, who noticed that those caring for Margaret were consistently blessed with good fortune. Eventually, Margaret became a lay Dominican and spent her time in prayer and contemplation and helping the poor. She was locally perceived as a holy woman, and miracles were soon attributed to her. On at least one occasion, she was witnessed levitating.

Margaret died of what are described as "natural causes." The townspeople demanded that she be buried inside the church, an honor above the standard burial outside in the graveyard. The local priest protested but then acquiesced when a young girl was miraculously and dramatically healed during the funeral.

(A disabled girl lay down beside Margaret; the crowd saw dead Margaret's arm move over her and the girl rose, completely healed.)

- Margaret, who received no miracle cure, bestows them on others.
- Margaret exorcises demons and evil spirits.

An unofficial saint for centuries, she was removed from her coffin in 1558, as it was rotting. Her clothes had dissolved to dust, but her body was discovered to be completely intact. Over 200 miracles are attributed to her. She was beatified in 1609 by Pope Paul V, but her canonization remains pending.

**FAVORED PEOPLE:** Margaret of Castello is the matron of the abandoned, the unwanted, those with disabilities, and those whose presence or appearance embarrasses others.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: A small, blind, hunchbacked woman in Dominican garb leans on a staff with one arm, offering blessings with the other.

COLOR: white.

SACRED SITE: Margaret, hidden for so much of her life, now lies visible beneath the high altar of the Church of San Domenico in Città di Castello, Italy.

FEAST: 13 April.

**OFFERINGS:** flowers; candles.

SEE ALSO Ksenya, Saint and Glossary: Anchorite; Incorrupt; Saint, Official; Saint, Unofficial.

# ∾ Margaret of Cortona

**EPITHET:** The Magdalen of the Seraphic Order.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

The childhood of Margaret of Cortona (c. 1247–22 February 1297) could have inspired the fairytale "Snow White." When she was seven, her mother died. Her father a tenant farmer from Italy's Tuccany Limbria border, seen remarried. Her

stepmother was cruel to Margaret, an extraordinarily beautiful and charismatic child.

Sometime during her teens, possibly as young as thirteen, Margaret met her prince. She fell in love with a young nobleman who told her that because of differences in social status, he could never marry her, but asked her to come live with him as his mistress. Margaret lived openly out of wedlock with him for nine years, flaunting her relationship rather than keeping it secret, living a luxurious, glamorous life far beyond her original peasant status. She gave birth to his son. People were scandalized, but she told them that she would die a saint and that pilgrims would visit her shrine.

One day, her lover's favorite dog came home alone and led Margaret to his murdered body. (It's unknown who killed him or why.) His parents immediately threw Margaret and her son out of the family castle. She briefly returned home to her father and stepmother. Her stepmother didn't want them and Margaret was not discreet, engaging in very aggressive, theatrical penance like putting a noose around her neck on Sundays and kneeling outside the church door for all the neighbors to see. Her embarrassed father soon kicked her out of the house as well.

Homeless, without money or friends, Margaret begged in the street and contemplated prostitution, but instead sought help from Cortona's Franciscans. She publicly renounced her old life as sinful in order to gain refuge with them. It is unclear how sincere she was at first. She earned her keep by midwifery and nursing. Three years later, she joined the Third Order of Saint Francis, taking vows of celibacy and poverty. She wore a nun's habit, but lived outside the convent, first in a hospital, then in a church.

In 1277, at age thirty, Margaret began experiencing mystical, ecstatic visions, including intense personal communications with Jesus. She described herself as his oracle, delivering messages as directed. The Franciscans recorded some of her prophesies and messages.

Margaret struggled with her beauty and sexuality all her life. She told the Franciscans that there would be a struggle between her and her body until death. Margaret consumed virtually nothing—only water, tiny bits of bread, nuts, and raw vegetables. She slept on the cold floor, wore a hair shirt, engaged in selfflagellation, and never bathed or washed her clothes. To her despair, she remained beautiful. She wanted to slice off her upper lip and nose, but her confessor absolutely refused his permission.

Margaret, a gifted fundraiser, founded a still-existing charity hospital in

Cortona. Recognized as a holy woman in her lifetime, she performed miracles of healing, becoming something of a celebrity and the subject of much gossip. She was always notorious, and many doubted her sincerity and whispered about her relationships with priests.

Dante Alighieri, author of the Divine Comedy, was reputedly among those visiting and consulting Margaret, whom some believe may be the inspiration for Lucia, the psychopomp who leads Dante through Hell.

Margaret foretold the date of her death, telling her confessor that she wished to die of starvation. She indeed died of the effects of self-starvation combined with extreme mortification of the flesh. (Self-flagellation combined with poor hygiene equals severe infections.) People both secular and clerical begged her to eat and save herself. On her deathbed, Margaret was terrorized by an apparition of the devil who told her that God would never forgive her because her extreme fasting constituted suicide. However, Jesus, in an opposing vision, told her to ignore those urging her to eat, as they did not understand the true nature of her illness. Margaret was canonized in 1728. She is acclaimed for miracle healings, especially for alleviating mental illness.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: orphans; the homeless; single mothers; midwives; the falsely accused.

SACRED SITE: Margaret was buried in the church in Cortona where she lived, which was later rebuilt and dedicated to her. Her body is exposed in a glass-sided reliquary.

FEASTS: 22 February; 16 May.

**SEE ALSO** *Lucy*, *Saint*; *Margaret of Hungary* and Glossary: *Apparition*; *Relic*; *Tertiary*.

# ∼ Margaret of Hungary

Also known as Szent Margit.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

In 1242, the Tatars invaded Hungary. King Bela IV, brother of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, vowed that if his kingdom was saved, he would consecrate his unborn child to God. As he prayed, a storm rose that lasted for three days. When it subsided, his enemy was gone. A couple of months later, Margaret (1242–18 January 1271) was born.

In fulfillment of her father's vow, when she was three, the little princess was delivered to the Dominican convent at Veszprém. At age twelve, she took final vows as a nun. A couple of years later, Ottokar, Iron King of Bohemia, sought to seal an alliance with Hungary by marrying beautiful Margaret. Everyone but Margaret considered this a great plan.

- Pope Alexander IV agreed to annul her vows.
- Her parents assured her that she would still be honoring her promise to God by sacrificing herself for her county, as she was not marrying for love.

Margaret declared that she'd rather die than abandon her vows. She threatened to cut off her nose and lips to repulse her suitor. Her parents took her seriously and acquiesced. They built her a convent on an island in the middle of the Danube—previously called the Isle of Rabbits, now known as Saint Margaret's Island—where she presided over the daughters of Hungary's elite.

Margaret refused to pull rank as princess; instead she reserved the worst tasks for herself, cleaning latrines, and washing up vomit and excrement from seriously ill nuns. She mortified her flesh, ate almost nothing, and deliberately froze her hands in icy water. She wore an iron girdle and shoes spiked with nails. Her austerities led to her early death.

Margaret first began producing miracles in childhood. She could control water, protecting her island from floods by making the Danube rise and fall as she pleased. At age ten, Margaret asked two Dominican friars briefly visiting Veszprém to extend their stay. When they refused, she told them she would make it rain so hard they couldn't leave and she did.

Margaret is credited with miracles of healing and resurrection of the dead. Although the beatification process was begun only seven years after her death, she was not canonized until 1943. Saint Margaret of Hungary is invoked against floods; however, she may be able to control any form of water. ATTRIBUTES: book; white lily.

**SACRED SITE:** Margaret Island, Budapest, where the ruins of her convent may be visited.

FEAST: 18 January.

SEE ALSO Elizabeth, Saint; Isabel of Portugal, Saint; Lucy, Saint; Margaret of Cortona, Saint; Margaret of Scotland, Saint; Uncumber, Saint.

### Nargaret of Scotland, Saint

EPITHET: The Pearl of Scotland.

CLASSIFICATION: Anglican and Roman Catholic saint.

Margaret was born in approximately 1045 in southern Hungary, the daughter of a German princess named Agatha and the exiled English prince, Edward Atheling, also known as Edward the Exile and Edward the Outlaw. Margaret's paternal grandfather was the English king Edmund Ironside. Edward the Outlaw was exiled from England after the Danish conquest in 1016, but a significant portion of his countrymen considered him the true heir to the throne.

Margaret was raised at the court of King Stephen, the first Christian king of Hungary. In 1057, she moved to England with her family after they were summoned by the childless king then reigning there. The expectation was that Edward the Exile would be made his heir; however, he died of mysterious causes, possibly poison, two days after his arrival in England. Margaret's brother, Edgar, was widely considered to become the heir presumptive, but this was never officially declared.

Margaret and her family remained in England until the Norman Conquest of 1066 when, feeling unwelcome and vulnerable, Agatha decided to return to Hungary with her son and two daughters. Their destination eluded them—fierce gale storms drove their ship up the Firth of Forth to Dumfermline, Scotland, where King Malcolm III welcomed them to his court, offered the family refuge, and soon requested Margaret's hand in marriage.

King Malcolm Canmore, born in approximately 1031, was the son of King Duncan, whose assassination is the subject of Shakespeare's tragedy, *Macbeth*.

Malcolm defeated Macbeth in 1057, ascended Scotland's throne in 1058, and married Margaret sometime between 1068 and 1070. They had eight children, six sons and two daughters. Several of Margaret's sons eventually became kings of Scotland, while her daughter Edith, also known as Matilda, married England's King Henry I, the son of William the Conqueror.

Margaret devoted her time and money to charity and the poor. She sponsored the elderly, orphans, and the ailing. Always devout, she fasted to such extremes that she developed permanent digestive disorders.

The British Isles were then torn between the Roman Catholic and Celtic Churches. In 1069, King Malcolm, encouraged by Margaret, officially abolished the Celtic Church in Scotland. She died in Edinburgh Castle on 16 November 1093, three days after the death of her husband and eldest son in battle with English forces.

Margaret was actively venerated as an unofficial saint until her canonization in 1250. She had been buried beside her husband in Dumfermline, but after Margaret was deemed an official saint, it was decided to move her relics to someplace more appropriate. Her tomb was opened on 19 July 1297, but all attempts to lift her body failed. She was just too heavy. Increasingly stronger men were summoned, but to no avail. Finally, someone quipped that maybe Margaret didn't want to be separated from her husband. Immediately, her body became light enough to lift. The bodies of Margaret and Malcolm were both removed and placed together under the high altar.

When Scotland became fervently Protestant, in an effort to keep them safe, their bodies were moved once more, allegedly to Spain, where King Philip II reputedly enshrined them in a church. Saint Margaret's head—her cranium, a sacred relic—was known to be in the possession of her descendant, Mary Queen of Scots. The head traveled to Fife, Antwerp, and finally back to Scotland, where it was displayed for public veneration as late as 1785. The whereabouts of Margaret's head and the bodies of Malcolm and Margaret are currently unknown.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Margaret is envisioned as a beautiful crowned queen.

#### ATTRIBUTE: a book.

SACRED SITES:

- Margaret's empty grave at Dumfermline
- Saint Margaret's Chapel, the oldest building in Edinburgh

- Saint Margaret's Hope, the bay on the Fife coast where the ship bearing Margaret and her family landed in Scotland
- Margaret's cave in Dumfermline, once her spiritual retreat, is now a pilgrimage site.
- Margaret also has associations with the Wemyss Caves in Fife.

FEASTS: In 1693, the pope changed Margaret's feast from the anniversary of her death to 10 June, but 16 November is still celebrated in Scotland.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; good deeds on behalf of the needy; Scottish goods and handicrafts.

SEE ALSO Hilda, Saint; Margaret of Hungary and Glossary: Relics; Saint, Official; Saint, Unofficial.

# 👡 María Francia

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

María Francia's parents insisted that she marry a man she didn't love. In a truelife tale reminiscent of Orpheus and Eurydice, María Francia went to cut flowers in her garden on her wedding day. She was bitten by a snake and died, dressed in her wedding gown. The tragic romantic aura of her death attracted public attention. In addition, her grave's proximity to the crypt of popular saint Dr. José Gregorio Hernández may have encouraged people to venerate her. (This was prior to his transfer to the Candelaria Church.)

Now also an extremely popular folk saint, María Francia's specialties include helping lovers marry whomever they desire. She is invoked for help with passing tests and exams, including university entrance tests, tests to establish student aid or scholarships, driving exams, or similar bureaucratic tests. María Francia is petitioned for love, success, good fortune, and prosperity.

FAVORED PEOPLE: brides; students.

**ICONOGRPAHY:** María Francia is envisioned as a beautiful bride.

ATTRIBUTES: book; rose.

SACRED SITE: her grave in the Cementario del Sur in Caracas, Venezuela, where notes are left for her.

**OFFERINGS**: flowers; candles; bells; notebooks and school supplies; school uniforms. Children are named in her honor.

SEE ALSO Hernández, Dr. José Gregorio; Loewe, Rabbi Judah and Glossary: Saint, Unofficial.

### ∾ Maria Goretti, Saint

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Maria Goretti (16 October 1890–6 July 1902) was the daughter of poor Italian sharecroppers. Her father died of malaria when she was nine. The family descended even deeper into poverty, her mother struggling to feed six children. At age eleven, Maria was attacked by their landlord's son, twenty-year-old Alessandro Serenelli, who tried to rape her. She resisted and was stabbed fourteen times. Rushed to the hospital, she underwent surgery with no anesthesia. Maria survived for twenty hours, during which time she publicly forgave her attacker.

Serenelli, sentenced to thirty years hard labor, was unrepentant until, six years into his imprisonment, Maria appeared to him in a vision, offering flowers. Repenting, he experienced a religious conversion and joined the Capuchin Order as a lay brother after his release on Christmas day, 1928. He allegedly prayed to Maria daily, calling her his "little saint," and offered testimony on behalf of her canonization.

In 1950, Maria's killer joined her mother and a crowd of a half million people when Maria became the youngest saint in the canon. (Although technically, younger saints, like Saint Cyr, have appeared on the Vatican's official calendar roll of saints, these were added before the establishment of the modern canonization process. They are not historically verifiable people.) To accommodate the crowds, the canonization was held in Saint Peter's Square rather than inside the church. Pope Pius XII described Maria Goretti as a model and protector for young girls. Saint Maria Goretti is petitioned for help with lying, cheating, and abusive spouses. Allegedly, she encourages them to behave. Maria Goretti's canonization evokes bitterness from some survivors of rape. For years, educators distorted Maria's story, using her as an example to teach that death was preferable to loss of virginity. Maria Goretti was not canonized for resisting rape or for preserving her virginity. She was canonized for the saintly act of forgiving her killer and for miracles attributed to her after death.

FAVORED PEOPLE: rape victims; crime victims; young people.

**ATTRIBUTES:** fourteen lilies; knife.

FEAST: 6 July.

SACRED DAY: Friday.

COLOR: pink.

**OFFERINGS**: pink candles; pink carnations; white lilies; toys and gifts appropriate for an eleven-year-old girl, the age at which Maria died.

SEE ALSO Agnes, Saint; Anastacia; Antonietta Meo; Cyr, Saint; María Soledad and Glossary: Saint, Official.

### ∾ María Lionza

Also known as María Leonza.

**EPITHETS:** La Reina; The Queen.

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

The name María Lionza is used to indicate a spiritual tradition as well as a saint —or maybe even two. María Lionza was first venerated by Venezuela's Indians under the name Yara. The Venezuelan state of Yaracuy literally means Yara's Place.

Various legends describe Yara's life, with different origin stories offered. She may have been a young Spanish girl who somehow ended up living alone in

Venezuela's jungles, or she may have been the daughter of an Indian chief. A tribal prophesy foretold that the birth of a green-eyed girl would be a harbinger of disaster. Yara was that green-eyed baby. Refusing to kill her as he was advised, her father instead abandoned her in the jungle. The prophecy was fulfilled when Spanish invaders arrived shortly after her birth.

Different legends ascribed different fates to young Yara. Some versions suggest that she was raised and protected by animals, while others claim that she drowned or was devoured by an anaconda. Following her death, she emerged as a potent holy being.

Legends of María Lionza inspired Green Mansions, the classic 1904 novel by author W. H. Hudson and the 1959 film adaptation starring Audrey Hepburn.

Following the Spanish conquest of Venezuela, devotees refused to abandon Yara and instead attempted to integrate her into Catholicism. They began calling her Santa María de la Onza (Saint Mary of the Jaguar or Saint Mary of the Mountain Lion.), which eventually evolved into María Lionza. Her veneration then spread, until she became the primary focus of a rapidly expanding religion named after her that blends indigenous Venezuelan and African traditions with Spiritism and Christianity.

In this religion, saints and spirits are divided into "courts." For example:

- The Celestial Court, which includes angels and official saints
- The Court of Healers, which includes Dr. José Gregorio Hernández and Francesca Duarte
- The Court of Africans, which includes the Seven African Powers
- The Court of Liberators, led by Simón Bolívar

Devotees address the court that best fulfills their needs. The holy being known as María Lionza presides over these courts like a queen. She is invoked for protection, success, healing, and virtually anything a devotee desires.

After World War II, secular authorities attempted to suppress religious aspects of María Lionza, celebrating her as a national myth instead. Simultaneously, attempts were made to syncretize María Lionza to the Virgin of Coromoto, an apparition of Mary who appeared to the chief of Venezuela's Coromoto Indians in 1651, encouraging him to abandon the forest, join the Spanish settlement, and convert to Catholicism.

On 7 October 1944, Pope Pius XII declared the Virgin of Coromoto to be the Patroness of Venezuela. Some devotees fervently consider María Lionza to be the Virgin of Coromoto, but others adamantly do not. (And the Virgin of Coromoto is never considered to be María Lionza; identification between the two runs in only one spiritual direction.)

The traditional image of María Lionza depicts her as a green-eyed Indian woman living among animals in a jungle paradise, but after World War II, a secondary iconic image evolved that portrays her as a beautiful, crowned Creole woman wearing a blue-and-white colonial-era gown. (Blue and white are Mary's colors.) This image is also identified as the daughter of the original María Lionza, who is sometimes described as Venezuela's first *mestiza*—a woman of mixed European and Indian ancestry.

A legend suggests that the elder Maria bore a conquistador's child, possibly that of the infamous Lope de Aguirre, the Wrath of God, who, in fact, did have a *mestiza* daughter, Elvira. Mother and daughter share the name María Lionza. The younger is also considered a folk saint and the two may be venerated individually or together.

**MANIFESTATION:** María Lionza manifests as a beautiful naked jungle goddess or as a crowned, bejeweled princess wearing Spanish clothing.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: The most famous image of María Lionza is the twenty-foot-tall statue that loomed over the freeway bisecting Venezuela's capital city, Caracas. Placed there in 1957 by dictator and María Lionza devotee Marcos Pérez Jiménez, it portrays her as a nude, voluptuous Indian woman riding a tapir. The statue evolved into a public shrine. Devotees run across five lanes of heavy traffic to lay flowers at her feet. Pollution, humidity, and constant traffic vibrations damaged the statue, which broke dramatically on 6 June 2004, splitting apart at the waist, the top half toppling backward, but it has since been repaired.

COLOR: blue.

**SACRED ANIMALS**: All, but a blue butterfly serves as her special messenger and she rides a tapir.

ELEMENT: water.

**SACRED SITE:** María's home, Mount Sorte, approximately 180 miles west of Caracas, was declared a national park in the 1980s and is an extremely popular pilgrimage site. María is also the subject of countless home shrines.

FEAST: 12 October, coinciding with the day Columbus arrived in Venezuela.

**RITUAL**: Special María Lionza rosaries feature seven decades, hypothetically to represent each of the Seven Courts of María Lionza, even though more than seven courts exist. María Lionza "novenas" last seven weeks or days, rather than the traditional nine.

**OFFERINGS**: flowers, especially yellow and red roses; candles; tropical fruit.

SEE ALSO Alejo, San; Bolívar, Simón; Brigid, Saint; Correa, Diffunta; Ernesto, Saint; Duarte, Francisca; Hernández, Dr. José Gregorio; Madama, La; Mary; Seven African Powers and Glossary: Apparition; Novena, Saint, Official; Saint, Unofficial; Syncretism.

# 👡 María Salomé

Also known as Madre María.

EPITHET: The Lady of the Black Cloak.

María Salomé Loredo Otaola (11 October 1854–2 October 1929) was born in Spain of Basque ancestry and moved to Argentina with her family in 1869. She was privileged and wealthy, but by 1881, she was desperately ill with breast cancer. When physicians were no longer able to help her, Maria Salomé visited the famed healer Pancho Sierra—"without faith and without hope," as she later recounted. He healed her and advised her that although she would have no more biological children, she'd have thousands of spiritual children.

Becoming a disciple of Pancho Sierra, her talent as a *curandera* emerged. Arrested for practicing medicine without a license in 1914, María Salomé dedicated herself to charity, donating her wealth to the poor and forming her own church, now officially recognized in Argentina, which blends belief in reincarnation with Christianity. A popular saint, Madre María is invoked for virtually everything, but especially for miracles of healing. **ICONOGRAPHY:** Madre María is depicted on religious medals together with Pancho Sierra.

FEASTS: 2 October, the anniversary of her death; the second and twenty-second days of each month; Mother's Day; All Soul's Day, 2 November.

SACRED SITE: her grave in the Chacarita Cemetery in Buenos Aires.

**OFFERINGS**: flowers, especially red and white carnations.

SEE ALSO Sierra, Pancho and Glossary: Curanderismo.

### ∾ María Soledad

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

María Soledad Morales (19 September 1973–9 September 1990), a seventeenyear-old Argentinean schoolgirl who dreamed of becoming a model, went to a party where she was drugged, raped, sodomized, and killed by two men. After mutilating her face, apparently in an attempt to prevent her from being identified, they dumped her naked body by the roadside.

The young men were soon identified, and one was revealed to be the son of a prominent Peronist national congressman. Other party guests were also from privileged, influential backgrounds, while María came from a working class family. Justice was not forthcoming. A cover-up was attempted.

Arrests were only made in response to massive social protests. The principal of María's high school organized silent marches each Thursday evening, a new form of protest in Argentina. The men were finally brought to trial in 1996, but a mistrial was declared. They were convicted and incarcerated in 1998. Years of protests combined with national television coverage of her killers' trial kept María Soledad in the public eye. She is now an unofficial saint invoked for justice and is considered an extremely persistent advocate.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** A school photograph is María Soledad's most beloved image.

SACRED SITE: her grave shrine in Catamarca, Argentina.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; flowers; stuffed animals.

SEE ALSO Almita; Evita, Saint; Maria Goretti, Saint and Glossary: Saint, Unofficial.

👡 María Torribia, Saint

Also known as María de la Cabeza, Saint Maria of the Head.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

When the son of María Torribia (died 1175) and her husband, the future Saint Isidore, fell into a deep well, his parents could do nothing but pray. In response, the water rose with the little boy on its surface, gently carrying him up to his parents. María and Isidore were so shocked and overwhelmed by this experience that they immediately took religious vows. Although they remained married, they were celibate and thus never had another child. (Their son died later in his childhood.)

After the deaths of her husband and child, Maria became a hermit, experiencing prophetic dreams and visions. Acclaimed for her miracles, she was canonized in 1697. Her head, considered a sacred relic and contained in a reliquary, is carried in processions and used to invoke rain in times of drought.

FAVORED PEOPLE: farmworkers.

SACRED SITE: Her relics are in Torrelaguna, a municipality of Madrid, Spain.

FEASTS: 9 September is her feast day; María shares 15 May with her husband.

**SPIRITUAL ALLY:** Saint Isidore the Laborer.

SEE ALSO Isidore the Laborer, Saint and Glossary: Relics; Saint, Official.

# ∾ Marina of the Holy Waters

Also known as Saint Marina de Aguas Santas; Marina di Galicia.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Saint Marina of the Holy Waters is Saint Liberata's sister and one of the Nine Holy Twins. Allegedly, when Marina was beheaded, a spring of water gushed out from where her severed head touched the earth. Whether her name is coincidental is subject to debate. Marina comes from Galicia, a region of Spain with deep Celtic roots, and Celtic healing wells are frequently associated with severed heads.

The name Marina of the Holy Waters may also refer to Margaret of Antioch, who is closely identified with healing springs elsewhere in *Europe*.

**ATTRIBUTE:** baptismal font.

SACRED SITE: Church of Saint Mariana de Aguas Santas in Orense, Spain.

FEASTS: 18 January; 18 July.

SEE ALSO Denis, Saint; Liberata, Saint; Margaret of Antioch; Nectan, Saint; Well Saints; Winifride, Saint.

# 👡 Marina the Monk

Also known as Marina the Syrian; Marina the Ascetic.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Marina, born in what is now Lebanon sometime during the fifth or sixth century, was very young when her mother died. Her father, Eugenius of Bithynia, then joined a monastery. In order to stay together, Eugenius disguised Marina as a boy, renaming her Marinus. Her female identity remained a lifelong secret, and Marina/Marinus eventually took vows as a monk too.

She spent virtually her entire life at the monastery in Qannoubin, Lebanon, but once while traveling, she spent one night at an inn, where she was observed by another young woman, possibly the bartender. When this young woman conceived out of wedlock, she accused the young monk of fathering her child in order to protect the true father's identity. Marina, refusing to defend herself, was dismissed from the monastery and forced to beg outside its gates, living in a nearby grotto.

When the child was born, Marina, still in monk's garb, was given custody. According to legend, she was miraculously able to nurse the baby. Eventually, Marina and child were re-admitted to the monastery, but Marina was forced to do penance via the most menial tasks. (The boy later became a monk, too.)

Marina's feminine identity and the biological impossibility of her having fathered a child were only discovered after her death when her body was prepared for burial. She had left a note for the other monks explaining her history. Marina was quickly hailed as a saint. Miracles of healing were attributed to her immediately after her death and continue to be. Saint Marina the Monk is also invoked for help with childbirth and lactation.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: breast-feeding mothers; cross-dressers; those with assumed identities or disguises.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Although in life she passed perfectly as a man, her images clearly depict her as a woman dressed in monk's clothing, usually accompanied by a child.

**RITUAL**: In the Balkans, perpetual fires are extinguished on her feast day, then relit.

SACRED SITES:

- Saint Marina's Grotto in Qannoubin, Lebanon, where eighteen Maronite patriarchs are entombed. Marina was reputedly once entombed there as well, but, according to legend, her miracle-working relics were eventually stolen and brought to Constantinople, where they were stolen once more and brought to Venice. Their whereabouts are now unknown.
- The Church of Santa Maria Formosa houses a veil said to have belonged to Marina.
- Her right hand is allegedly kept at her shrine in the Church of the Holy Virgin in Harat-al-Rum, Cairo.
- Her left hand may be in Saint Catherine's Sinai Monastery, although other sites also claim to have her hands.

**FEASTS:** 12 February (Roman Catholic); 17 June (Orthodox Church); 17 July (Maronite Church; she is also celebrated on this day in Venice); 21 August (Coptic Chruch).

**OFFERINGS**: candles; incense; gifts for the baby.

SEE ALSO Catherine of Alexandria; Gerard Majella; Margaret of Antioch; Pelagia, Maron, Saint; Saint and Glossary: Relics.

### 👡 Mark, Saint

Also known as Saint John Mark.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Saint Mark (died 25 April 68), the first bishop of Alexandria, had a bird's-eye view of the formative years of the Christian Church. Born to a Jewish Levite family in the city of Cyrene, now in modern Libya, he may have been the cousin of Saint Barnabas. Mark traveled with Barnabas and Saints Peter and Paul and is credited as the author of the oldest of the official Gospels. He served as Peter's secretary and began writing his Gospel while in Rome with Peter. Some believe that the Gospel of Mark is based on Peter's memoirs.

After Peter's execution, Mark fled to Alexandria, bringing Peter's and his own writings with him. He is credited with establishing the first "official" church in Alexandria, although the city was already a volatile hotbed of Gnostic traditions, some Christian and some not. Mark died there during violence between Christians and Pagans.

Mark allegedly also wrote a second, secret gospel that he gave to the church in Alexandria for safekeeping. In 195 ce, Clement, bishop of Alexandria, in a letter written to one of his canons, described this secret gospel as being "read only to those who are being initiated into the great mysteries," and complained that the Carpocratians, Gnostics perceived as heretical, had gotten hold of a copy. The whereabouts of this secret gospel and Clement's letter are currently unknown. Great debate rages as to whether the letter was a forgery or the general article, which is now kept hidden by the Church.

To encourage Christian veneration, the feast day of the popular Alexandrian Pagan deity Serapis and many functions associated with him were reassigned to Mark. In 828, Venetian merchants stole Mark's body, ostensibly to protect it, as Egypt was now under Muslim rule. Mark was brought to Venice, where he became patron of the city. Mark also remains patron of Egypt, and a relic was returned to the Coptic Church there in 1968.

- Saint Mark heals and causes ailments and afflictions of the ears.
- He is invoked against sudden and unexpected death.
- He liberates prisoners and slaves.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: secretaries; notaries; travelers; prisoners; glaziers; glassblowers; glass painters, as well as painters in general; opticians; interpreters.

ATTRIBUTES: pen and book.

**EMBLEM:** winged lion.

SACRED ANIMALS: pigeon; lion.

**BOTANICAL**: clarimond tulip.

SACRED SITES:

- Saint Mark's Basilica in Venice
- Saint Mark's Square in Venice
- Saint Mark's Basilica in Rome
- Saint Mark's Coptic Cathedral in Cairo is the seat of the Coptic pope.
- Saint Mark's-in-the-Bowery, an Episcopal church, is the oldest site of continuous worship in New York City.

FEAST: 25 April.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; marzipan (whose name may derive from Marci panis, or "Mark's bread").

SEE ALSO George, Saint; Luke, Saint; Marina the Monk, Saint; Nicholas, Saint; Paul, Saint; Peter, Saint.

# 👡 Maron, Saint

Also known as Saint Maroun; Mar Maro (Aramaic); Maroon; Marron.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Maron horn circa 350 is the namesake of the Maronite Church which is named

in his honor. He is its most renowned saint. A priest who became a hermit, Maron lived an austere life on a mountain near Antioch, which had previously been a Pagan sacred site dedicated to the West Semitic god Nabu, Lord of Wisdom and Writing. Maron moved into the ruins of Nabu's temple.

Maron is considered among the fathers of monasticism. Never satisfied with standard levels of ascetism, he consistently sought new ways to push his limits. He owned a tent but rarely used it, preferring to live outside. He spent entire nights standing in prayer and fasted for weeks. His reputation as a holy man grew and he attracted disciples. After his death, this following evolved into the Maronite Church.

Maron was a miracle worker, performing feats of healing that contributed to his fame. His date of death is estimated to be sometime between 407 and 423.

The Maronite Church is an Eastern Catholic Church, one of twentytwo autonomous churches forming the Catholic Church. The name honors Saint Maron, whose disciples are considered the founders of the Maronite tradition. Some prayers in the Maronite Church are said in Aramaic, the language spoken by Jesus. Lebanon is the heartland of the Maronite Church, but there are also communities elsewhere.

SACRED SITE: Monastery of Saint Maron in Lebanon.

FEAST: 9 February, an official national holiday in Lebanon.

SEE ALSO Charbel, Saint; Rafqa Rayess, Saint.

# ∾ Marron, Saint

Also known as Maron; Maroon; Raymond-Maron.

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

Marie Laveau counts among the devotees of Saint Marron, an unofficial saint of New Orleans. The word *marron* means "brown" or "chestnut" in French. It also sounds similar to the Spanish word *cimarron* meaning a "wild one." In the

Caribbean, the word "maroon," derived from cimarron, refers to escaped slaves, especially those who established and maintained free communities, usually in harsh terrain. The Maroons of Jamaica and Surinam are famous. Although less well known, Maroon communities once inhabited the swamplands of Louisiana as well.

Saint Marron may be understood as Saint Run-away. He is the patron of escaped slaves, the saint of run-aways or wild ones. Saint Marron is identified with Saint Raymond Nonnatus, the canonized patron saint of slaves.

Saint Marron remained relevant after the abolition of slavery in the United States. Slavery, although once legal, is morally wrong. Saint Marron continues to defy unjust or unfair laws, including those perceived as unfair by the petitioner, whether or not others agree. Images of Saint Raymond Nonnatus, standing in for the iconless Marron, are sprinkled with Holy Water and then placed wherever the long arm or eye of the law must be averted.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: slaves; run-aways; those who assist slaves and run-aways; prisoners; those who defy unjust laws; those who prefer *not* to be found or located.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: No official iconography for Saint Marron exists—or at least not yet. In the meantime, images of Saint Raymond Nonnatus serve to represent him.

COLOR: brown.

SACRED SITE: Saint Raymond's Chapel in the Central City section of New Orleans was demolished in September 2008 following damage from flooding during the Hurricane Katrina levee disaster.

SEE ALSO Black Hawk; Laveau, Marie; Raymond Nonnatus; Zumbi; and Glossary: Holy Water; Iconography; Saint, Official; Saint, Unofficial.

### ∾ Martha, Saint

**EPITHET:** The Lady.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Martha of Bethany was the sister of Lazarus and Mary and a close friend of Jesus. The Gospel of Luke describes Jesus' visit to the home of the siblings, when Martha complains to him about how her sister has relegated all the serving and housework to her. In the Gospel of John, Martha affirms her faith in Jesus, who rewards her by resurrecting her beloved brother, Lazarus, who had by then been dead for four days.

Those two references are the only *official* references to Martha, although she also appears in the Gnostic gospel, *Pistis Sophia*. Martha is, however, the star of much folklore. According to Catholic legend, she traveled to France on the same little boat as Mary Magdalen, Mary Salomé, and Mary Jacobe, the Marys of the Sea. Martha did not stay with the Marys in the town of Ratis, as she had heard about troubles in Tarascon, a town ravaged by a dragon known as the tarasque. (The town is named in the dragon's honor.) No one could stop the predations of the tarasque, either by force or by magical or spiritual means, so Martha set out to try.

Martha is described as a meek woman and the people of Tarascon initially scoffed at her. Martha simply went up to the dragon and charmed it. She removed her girdle and the dragon willingly wore it, as an obedient dog wears a leash. Unfortunately, Martha could control the dragon, but not the crowd. When she led the tamed tarasque before them, the mob overwhelmed her and killed the tarasque, much to Martha's despair and grief. She then disappears from history until the 12th century, when a body discovered in a crypt beside a well in Tarascon was identified as hers. Martha then became an extremely popular saint, as she remains. Most of the folklore regarding Martha stems from the 12th century but may be based on older oral traditions. According to the Eastern Orthodox Church, Martha, Lazarus, and their sister, Mary, traveled to Cyprus, where they died. Orthodox legends contain no lore regarding Martha taming dragons.

- Saint Martha is invoked to prevent, banish, or tame bad bosses.
- She protects against evil spirits and people.
- Invoke Martha against animal attack.
- She heals gallstones and kidney ailments.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: housewives; those in service industries: servants; maids; valets; butlers; housekeepers; cooks; waiters; waitresses; food-service employees; innkeepers; snake charmers; travelers.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Her traditional *popular* iconography—old holy cards, for instance—usually portrays Martha in the company of the tarasque. Perhaps perceived as too fantastic or too Pagan, it's difficult to find dragon imagery in more recent conventional and official Roman Catholic iconography. Instead, scenes from the Gospels are substituted, for example, Jan Vermeer's 1654 painting *Christ in the House of Mary and Martha* or Diego Velázquez' 1618 painting of the same name.

**SPIRITUAL ALLIES:** Martha appears on traveler's amulets with Jesus and Julian the Hospitaller; also her siblings, Lazarus and Mary.

ATTRIBUTES: keys; ladle; broom; girdle.

SACRED ANIMAL: dragon.

**SACRED DAY:** Tuesday.

COLOR: green.

**SACRED PLANTS**: rosemary; tarragon; hyssop.

**SACRED SITE:** Saint Martha's Collegiate Church in Tarascon. René d'Anjou, king of Provence who had a castle in Tarascan, organized a festival there in her honor that is still celebrated annually on the last Sunday in June.

FEASTS: 4 June (Eastern Church); 29 July (Western Church).

SEE ALSO Joan of Arc; Joseph of Arimathea; Julian the Hospitaller; Lazarus of Bethany; Margaret of Antioch, Saint; Martha the Dominator; Mary Magdalen; Marys of the Sea; Myrrh Bearers, Holy; Veronica, Saint; Well Saints.

### ∾ Martha the Dominator

Also known as Marta la Dominadora; Marta la Mala.

Saint Martha became extremely popular in the 12th century. The famous story about her taming the dragon told in the previous entry captured the public imagination. In Spain, by the end of the 12th century, the legend and the saint

nad transformed: Martha the Meek of Bethany evolved into Martha the Dominator, an erotic, dominatrix spirit invoked in romantic spells and commanding rituals.

This was *never* officially sanctioned and *always* considered subversive. There are two ways of considering Martha the Dominator:

- She is an aggressive aspect of Saint Martha.
- She is not Martha of Bethany, but a distinct spirit, possibly a forbidden spirit addressed by the name of an officially approved saint.

Although some insist that there is only one Saint Martha, some Martha the Dominator devotees prefer not to consider her a saint—because they believe a saint will not do what Martha the Dominator is asked to do. Even in the 12th century, some perceived the associations between the character in the Gospels and the woman of folklore as tenuous. This Martha, completely divorced from sainthood, is sometimes called Marta la Mala. This literally means Martha the Bad or Martha the Wicked, but once had added resonance and implications. Spanish women accused of witchcraft back in the witch-hunting era were popularly called *mala mujer* ("wicked woman").

Martha was perceived as the epitome of la mala mujer: an aggressive, assertive woman who used magic to attain her goals. Martha the Dominator is a man-tamer. Spells invoking her help were recorded by the Spanish Inquisition.

- Martha is requested to bind men just as she bound the tarasque.
- Spells attempt to make a man follow the spell caster like an obedient puppy in the way that the tarasque followed Martha.

In a sad parallel to the story of Saint Martha and the tarasque, devotees of Martha the Dominator were allegedly able to tame the male monsters in their lives but were unable to control the murderous passions of the crowd, as represented by the Spanish Inquisition.

Is Martha really wicked? Inquisition records suggest that many of the women who invoked her feared the men they attempted to control by magic. These men were perceived as controlling and physically, emotionally, and economically abusive. Although not explicitly articulated, many women who sought Martha's expertise as a menster tamer did so because they perceived themselves as being experiise as a monster tamer and so because mey perceived memserves as being at the mercy of monsters.

Martha is an Aramaic name translated as "Lady." Perhaps adding to Martha the Dominator's formidable reputation, the Spanish variant Marta resembles the Spanish word for death, muerte. Santa Merta, an offshoot of Martha the Dominator, has emerged in the Dominican Republic. Although she is addressed as a saint, Santa Merta is considered a powerful demon. She is accompanied by snakes and a child.

Martha the Dominator retains her popularity and continues to help women with forbidden spells and passions.

# Martha the Dominator Oil

- 1. Using a mortar and pestle, grind spikenard root shavings, licorice root, the herb sweet flag (calamus), and myrrh resin together.
- 2. Add this to a jar or bottle and cover with olive oil.
- 3. Use this oil to dress candles dedicated to Martha, or carry a cotton ball soaked with this oil for spiritual protection and courage.

A traditional chant addressed to Martha the Dominator is incorporated into love spells.

- 1. Dedicate a green or purple candle to Martha the Dominator.
- 2. Scratch the name of the person whose love you seek into the wax.
- 3. Rub the candle with Martha the Dominator oil, all the while focused on your desire.
- 4. Hold the candle in both hands and chant: Saint Martha, conquer (desired person's name) Keep me in his/her mind.
- 5. Repeat the chant a minimum of three times, then light the candle.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Images of Martha and the tarasque are traditionally used to represent Martha the Dominator. The snake-charmer image associated with the African crocodile goddess Mami Wata is now also used to represent her, especially in Latin American spiritual traditions.

SEE ALSO Martha, Saint; Muerte, La Santissima.

# ∾ Martín Caballero

**PRONOUNCED**: cab-ah-yair-oh.

San Martín Caballero literally means Saint Martin the Horseman or Saint Martin the Chevalier in Spanish. He is a magical Latin American manifestation of Martin of Tours. The patron of small businesses, he is invoked for success.

- The image of San Martín Caballero allegedly bestows luck and prosperity.
- Shrines dedicated to him are maintained in stores and restaurants.
- In establishments where liquor is served, small altars are traditionally hidden behind the bar or placed in another discreet spot to encourage customers to drink more.

Traditionally, a business' first dollar or other currency earned is offered as tribute to San Martín Caballero. (Frame it, place it on or over his altar, stick it beneath his statue—but don't lose it or spend it.) Bars, taverns, cafés, roadhouses, and restaurants keep water and a little grass on the altar for San Martín's horse. According to legend, as long as his horse is kept fed, the kitchen will never run out of food and beverages.

San Martín Caballero is also the patron of domestic happiness, but in exchange for his blessings in this department, you must feed his horse—some grass weekly and a glass of fresh water daily should do it. A glass of wine or something stronger for the horse's rider won't hurt either.

# The Secret of the Virtuous Horseshoe

The Secret of the Virtuous Horseshoe is a popular Latin American amuletic magic spell dedicated to San Martín Caballero, intended either to draw money to the spell caster or to ease the pangs of relocation. The Virtuous Horseshoe may be purchased ready-made, in which case it is sufficient to chant the incantation to activate the spell, but you can easily craft it yourself. You will need a real iron horseshoe, not a plastic replica. Horseshoes are magically activated by having been affixed to horses. In other words, you want a *used* horseshoe, not a virginal

one. These are easily and inexpensively available from farriers or stables.

- 1. Wrap a horseshoe in red silk thread until only the very tips are exposed.
- 2. Attach the wrapped horseshoe to a square of cardboard, with the horseshoe turned so that the points are facing down.
- 3. Decorate the cardboard and horseshoe with sequins, glitter glue, holy cards, medallions, and votive images of San Martín Caballero. You may add complementary spiritual images, too—other saints, for example—as long as San Martín has the most, and the most dominant, images.
- 4. When the physical aspect of the spell is complete, activate the Virtuous Horseshoe by repeating the following verbal charm twenty-one times: *Citron nueve (see-tron noo-ev-eh)*

San Martín de Loba, Martin of the She-Wolf, is yet another path of Martin of Tours, but it's likely that this path is really the Roman god Mars in disguise, not the devout holy man. Wolfish Martin is the patron of wheelers, dealers, and hard bargainers. Invoke Martin de Loba for protection, prosperity, and sharp wits during business negotiations.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: bartenders; restaurateurs; women who ply their trade in bars.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: The classic icon of Martin of Tours on horseback giving half his cloak to a beggar is used to represent Martín Caballero.

ATTRIBUTE: horseshoe.

COLOR: red.

FEAST: 11 November.

SEE ALSO Martin of Tours, Saint and Glossary: Path.

# ∾ Martín de Porres, Saint

**EPITHET:** Brother Broom.

#### **CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Martín de Porres (9 November 1579–3 November 1639) was one of two illegitimate children born in Lima, Peru, to Juan de Porres, a Spanish knight, and Ana Velázquez, a freed slave of African and indigenous Panamanian descent. He was baptized by the very same priest in the very same basin as Saint Rose of Lima, who later became his good friend. His father initially abandoned Martín and his mother and sister, but later took the children to live with him in Guayaquil, Ecuador.

When his father was named governor of Panama, Martín returned to Lima and was apprenticed to a barber, a trade which, at that time, involved more than just cutting hair, but also incorporated herbalism and surgery. Martín, devoutly religious, entered the Third Order of the Dominicans when he was fifteen. Because of his dark complexion, he was only accepted as a lay servant. He performed menial tasks and was nicknamed Brother Broom. It took nine years, but Martín's exceptional powers, humble personality, and intense spirituality convinced the monastery to accept him as a full-fledged member.

Martín abased and mortified himself; he spent hours in prayer nightly, fasted intensely, and never ate meat. He had himself flogged until he bled on a regular basis. He continued as a barber/healer, performing miracles of healing with the herbs he grew in his cell and also by the laying on of hands. Other friars complained that he was transforming their monastery into a hospital. Once reproved after allowing a really filthy beggar to sleep in his cell, Martín responded that as far as he knew, compassion was preferable to cleanliness. Martín ministered to *everyone:* rich, poor, black, white, Indians, nobility, and slaves. He helped establish an orphanage and a foundling hospital.

Martín adored animals and was able to communicate with them psychically. He ran a veterinary hospital/animal shelter from his sister's home, treating not just livestock, but pets like cats, dogs, and birds, which was revolutionary for his time.

Martín, ordered to poison the mice infesting his monastery, instead summoned the mice to him, reprimanding them for their bad behavior. He offered them a deal: he would personally feed them if they would leave the monastery. The mice accepted his terms and were no longer seen in the church, but lined up outside each evening, where Martín served them dinner. Martín de Porres died of quatrain fever on 3 November 1639. Veneration began immediately after his death. The shroud from his funeral was cut into squares and preserved as relics. The process of canonization began in 1660 but took over three centuries to be completed, although he was venerated as an unofficial saint in the meantime. He was canonized in 1962, coinciding with the United States Civil Rights movement. He is petitioned for racial harmony.

In life, Martín was a miraculous fundraiser, raising miraculous quantities of cash and alms in miraculous amounts of time. He raised his sister's entire dowry in just three days. Thus he is invoked against poverty; ask him to raise some funds for you.

Martín is also invoked for pest control, to peacefully remove stubborn vermin, and for protection from animal attack. He also soothes and tames overly rambunctious children. Martín demonstrated gifts of clairvoyance and prophecy, accurately predicting the date and hour of his death, and was able to bilocate and levitate. He is invoked in many magic spells; for example, wrap a rope or cord around the feet of his statue and request that he help keep a straying spouse home.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: African Americans; those of mixed race; those possessing paranormal or supernatural skills; suriphobics; hairdressers; barbers; herbalists.

ATTRIBUTES: broom; hairdressers' tools (shears); dog.

EMBLEM: a dog, a cat, and a mouse eating from the same dish.

COLORS: purple; white.

FEAST: 3 November.

**SACRED SITES:** 

- Casa San Martín de Porres, his birthplace, is preserved as a historical site and open to the public.
- his shrine within the Church and Convent of Santo Domingo in Lima, Peru
- Saint Martín de Porres National Shrine in Memphis, Tennessee

**OFFERINGS**: candles; donations and good deeds on behalf of animals or animal shelters.

SEE ALSO Francis of Assisi, Saint; Delille, Henriette; Rose of Lima, Saint and

Glossary: Saint, Official; Saint, Unofficial.

## ∾ Martin of Tours, Saint

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Martin (c. 316–8 November 397) was born in Sabaria, Pannonia, now Szombathely, Hungary. From a Roman military family, his father was an officer in the Imperial Horse Guards and Martin was named in honor of the Roman soldier's patron deity, Mars. He grew up in Cisalpine Gaul (now Italy) where his father was stationed.

Martin began going to church at age ten, against his Pagan parents' desires. (The Church was already legal.) He joined the Roman army at age fifteen, serving in the cavalry and in the emperor's bodyguard. His most famous legend describes how, while still a soldier, he encountered a beggar. Having nothing else to give, he sliced his heavy officer's cloak in half and gave that. Later, he experienced a vision of Christ wearing his cloak.

Eventually finding Christianity incompatible with the Roman army, Martin left to become a cleric, founding the first European monastery and becoming bishop of Tours. Hailed as a wonder worker, he healed lepers and raised the dead. He was a renowned exorcist. Saint Martin actively and aggressively converted Pagans in fourth-century Gaul, chopping down sacred trees and destroying shrines and holy places. Martin, who died of natural causes, is considered the first Christian saint who was not a martyr. He is sometimes known as the "thirteenth apostle."

Saint Martin condemned the practice of executing heretics, arguing that excommunication was sufficient punishment.

Martin was and is an incredibly popular saint. Like many other exceptionally popular saints, he has both an official and a shadow side. His great popularity stems at least partly from his close associations with French royalty. Merovingian king Clovis promised his Christian wife, Clotilde, that he would convert if he were victorious over the Alemanni. When he won, he attributed his victory to the intervention of Saint Martin. Saint Martin was witnessed descending from the heavens to fight beside Austrian forces against the Ottomans in the 16th century.

Saint Martin's November feast may derive from ancient New Year's rites, akin to Samhain, the Celtic New Year festival and forerunner of Hallowe'en. There's speculation that Martin's holiday was once a ten-day festival. His feast day also coincides with an old Roman feast of Bacchus. Saint Martin is the saint of geese and wine. According to legend, he, like Dionysus and Jesus, could turn water into wine.

Saint Martin heralds the year's new wine. In France, Beaujolais Nouveau, a new, very young wine, is scheduled for release shortly after Saint Martin's Day. It's traditional to eat goose on Saint Martin's Day. At one time, literally every family in England, France, and Germany killed, cooked, and ate a goose on Martin's Day. (In Denmark, the goose was cooked and eaten on Saint Martin's Eve.) It's theorized that vestiges of sacrificial rites survive in this tradition. The Martinmas goose's wishbone is used to predict upcoming winter weather, although by the 17th century, German Protestants were denouncing this divination tradition.

- Martin is invoked to protect horses and geese. He is petitioned to triumph over overwhelming odds and rescue and preserve honor.
- Saint Martin is invoked against poverty.
- He is petitioned when someone needs clothing.
- Saint Martin is invoked to heal alcoholism and strengthen resolve.
- He is invoked to cure the common cold.

Biscotti di San Martino, a hard cookie traditionally served on his feast day, has its own little rhyme: Pan'e Vino, San Martino, which literally means "Bread and Wine, Saint Martin," but sounds better in Italian. These very hard anise-flavored biscuits are meant to be softened by dipping them into new wine. Once upon a time, these cookies were cut into various shapes, including phalluses. They are believed to be the direct descendents of phallic-shaped focaccia bread once served at the Roman Thesmophoria festival. In Venice, butter cookies shaped like Martin on horseback are eaten on his feast. **FAVORED PEOPLE**: soldiers; vintners; wine sellers; alcoholics; the oppressed; equestrians; horse breeders; beggars; drunks; innkeepers.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** The classic image of Saint Martin depicts him as a Roman soldier on horseback dividing his cloak and giving half to a naked beggar.

**EMBLEM:** globe of fire.

SACRED ANIMALS: woodpecker; geese.

**SPIRITUAL ALLY:** While he was alive, Saint Martin was extremely devoted to Saint Agnes. They may be venerated together.

**BOTANICALS**: mugwort, whose primary culinary use is to flavor geese; juniper, also used to flavor geese; mountain ash (*Sorbus aucuparia*); Weymouth pine (*Pinus strobes*).

FEASTS: 11 November, Martinmas. This may be a continuation of a pre-Christian Germanic festival that evolved into a Christian celebration in approximately the middle of the sixth century. An old German tradition of killing a black rooster on Saint Martin's Day may hark back to these traditions. The Orthodox Church honors Martin on 12 November.

### SACRED SITES:

- Basilica of Saint Martin on Rome's Esquiline Hill
- Basilica of Saint Martin in Tours, France
- Saint Martin Ludgate, an Anglican church in the City of London

**RITUAL**: His festival is celebrated with bonfires. Throw a party in his honor and serve goose and wine, reserving some for Martin.

**OFFERINGS**: wine; bread; cheese; flax; wool. Hay and oats were once left outside to be eaten by passing horses and donkeys as an offering to Martin, their patron.

SEE ALSO Agnes, Saint; Apostles; Benedict, Saint; Elen of the Roads; Geneviève, Saint; Martin Caballero, San.

# 👡 Martinian, Saint

## CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Martinian (died c. 422 ce), a devout Christian born in Caesarea, now in modern Israel, was eighteen when he became a hermit by moving to a remote location in Cappadocia, now in modern Turkey. He lived there in solitude for twenty-five years, fasting, praying, wrestling with temptation, and earning a reputation as a wonder worker.

A harlot decided to test Martinian's resolve. (According to one version of this legend, Satan sent her.) Approaching his cell on a dark, stormy night, she begged for shelter lest she be devoured by wild beasts. Martinian felt obliged to admit her. Once inside, she tried to seduce him. Martinian responded to the fire in his loins by kindling a big fire and stepping into it, choosing to burn his body but save his soul from Hellfire.

Zoë, the harlot, was so shocked and impressed that she took Martinian's advice to assume a spiritual life. Martinian did not emerge from the fire unscathed, but very badly burned and injured. It took him a long time to recover, during which he garnered much attention, as people were very impressed by his self-immolation.

It was too much attention for Martinian, who just wanted to be left alone to pray. Seeking a more remote location, Martinian found a small, isolated, uninhabited island where he expected to live in peace. Even here, he could not avoid women. Beautiful young Photina, the sole survivor of a shipwreck, landed on his beach.

Martinian didn't wait for any seduction attempt; he knew the island wasn't big enough for both of them, so he walked into the sea. He fared better this time; a dolphin gave him a ride to shore. Martinian lived the rest of his life as a wandering hermit, not trusting any one spot to provide long-term safety. He is venerated along with Saints Photina and Zoë.

- Invoke his assistance to help resist temptation of any kind and to meet your goals.
- Saint Martinian performs feats of healing and rescue.

FAVORED PEOPLE: burn victims.

ICONOGRAPHY: Icons and images of Saint Martinian may be available, but if not,

the Hermit tarot card or male images of the Anima Sola may substitute.

FEAST: 13 February.

**OFFERINGS**: bread; water; images of dolphins; charitable donations; good deeds in his name; candles.

SEE ALSO Anima Sola; Photina, Saint; Zoë, Saint and Glossary: Anchorite.

# 👡 Mary

Also known as Maria; Marie; Marya; Miriam; Maryam; Mariam; Blessed Mother; Blessed Virgin; Virgin Mary; Madonna; Holy Mother; Theotokis; Panagia; Panayia.

**EPITHETS:** Queen of Angels; Star of the Sea; Queen of the Seven Swords; Our Lady of Sorrows; Consoler of the Afflicted; Our Lady of the Way; She Who Shows the Way.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by every Christian denomination that acknowledges saints.

To describe Mary as the foremost and most preeminent of Christianity's saints is a massive understatement. Although technically classified as a saint and sometimes described as the first saint, Mary transcends that status. Devotion to Mary rivals that of her son Jesus and, for some devotees, even exceeds it. Many perceive Mary as the epitome of the feminine divine: she has been described as "Christianity's goddess." For this reason, Mary is also exceedingly controversial. Christian denominations that object to veneration of saints tend to reserve their deepest ire for Marian devotion.

It is virtually impossible to describe devotion to Mary in a single encyclopedia entry. The topic is deserving of its own encyclopedia and, in fact, many such exist. This entry thus focuses on the practical aspects of her veneration.

The details of Mary's life derive from the Gospels, legends, and folklore. She was born to a Jewish family in Judea Folklore suggests she was born in

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Nazareth. Her parents are generally acknowledged as Saints Anne and Joachim. Mary's own birth was miraculous. Her previously childless mother was already aged. An angel announced Mary's imminent birth to Joachim in an echo of the Old Testament tale of the matriarch Sarah and the birth of Isaac. As a young girl, Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but, before they could be married and the marriage consummated, the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary announcing that she would bear the promised Messiah, who would be conceived, not through intercourse with a man, but by the Holy Spirit. Mary did conceive without losing her virginity. Joseph, although taken aback, was reassured by the angel and married Mary anyway.

Mary's virginity is the subject of intense faith and contention. That she remained eternally virginal is official Vatican doctrine. In 1996, Pope John Paul II issued a statement reaffirming that Jesus was Mary's only child. Some consider the brothers and sisters of Jesus mentioned in the Gospels to be Joseph's children from an earlier marriage. Other Christian denominations, however, perceive that although the conception of Jesus was indeed virginal, after his birth, Mary and Joseph enjoyed natural marital relations through which other children—the brothers and sisters of Jesus—were conceived.

Many perceive Mary's perpetual virginity as indicative of her special sanctity and her unique status among women. Others ridicule the notion of a virgin birth or are even offended by the concept, perceiving sexual union as sacred. A longheld legend, believed by some but considered malicious by others, suggests that she conceived Jesus after being raped by a Roman soldier named Pantera. The suggestion that Pantera was Jesus' biological father dates back to at least the second century, when it was recorded by the Roman author Celsus, who described Mary as an "adulteress" driven from home by her carpenter husband. (The writings of Celsus no longer exist, but their content survives in a detailed refutation of them written by Christian scholar Origen in the third century.) The two versions are not inherently contradictory—in the second century, a rape victim might be considered guilty of adultery.

Mary makes appearances throughout the Gospels. She was a witness to her son's life and ministry, as well as his death.

- She was present at Jesus' first public miracle when he turned water to wine during the wedding at Cana.
- She is named among those who witnessed the Crucifixion.

Mary then disappears from the Gospels. Her death is not recorded in scripture. Depending on tradition, she may have died in Jerusalem or in Ephesus. Some years after her death, legend has it, her grave was opened by the Apostles and discovered to be empty, leading to the conclusion that her body had been transported to Heaven. Her corporeal assumption, formally known as the Assumption of Mary, is official doctrine for the Catholic and Orthodox churches.

Veneration of Mary was not dogma or even officially condoned until 431, when the Council of Ephesus officially sanctioned devotion to *Maria Theotokos* or Mary the God-Bearer. However, Mary was already the subject of intense, if unofficial, devotions long before this, particularly in formerly Pagan communities whose previous religions had involved devotion to paired-motherand-son deities—a Holy Mother and a Divine Child like Isis and Horus or Kybele and Attis. This was not discouraged by the early Christian Church, which dedicated the city of Ephesus, previously a stronghold of goddess worship, to Mary.

Mary assumed roles and titles previously associated with goddesses. As the Stella Maris, Mary is the Star of the Sea, a title shared with goddesses Isis and Ishtar. In some cases, forbidden devotion to banished goddesses may hide beneath Mary's robes. According to Charles Godfrey Leland's influential 1899 book *Aradia or the Gospel of the Witches*, images of Mary, especially when portrayed with the crescent moon, mask the Italian goddess Diana.

Mary possesses many aspects, which may be understood as the multitudinous facets of one supremely holy and complex being. However, some devotees, especially in the context of unauthorized folk religion, understand each of these facets as independent sacred beings whom they may venerate to the exclusion of others. Thus you may be specifically devoted to Our Lady of Carmel, Our Lady of Guadalupe, or the Madonna of Czestochowa.

Mary, the epitome of the compassionate, merciful mother, performs every type of miracle. She may be requested for any sort of favor. She has the power to heal any illness or affliction. Unlike so many other saints, Mary is not particularly associated with magic spells, but there are specific and official rituals associated with her, especially praying the rosary and offering novena prayers. Mary is associated with numerous miracle-working icons and other images. Veneration of Mary is an extremely significant aspect of folk Christianity. She is especially associated with many plants that are believed to serve as vehicles for her power and sanctity. Mary's Bean derives from several species of flowering vines in the morning glory family (*Convolvulaceae*) that are native to Central America and the Caribbean. These seeds enter the sea and eventually wash up on the shores of northern Europe, especially Scotland's Hebrides and Orkney Islands. Also known as Crucifix Beans or Sea Beans, scientists refer to them as "drift seeds." Many varieties of drift seeds exist, but Mary's Bean has the greatest documented drift range of them all.

Mary's Beans are characterized by their mysterious appearance on northern shores and by cross-shaped markings on one side of the bean. The theory is that if these beans were lucky enough to survive the sea journey, then they will bring good fortune to their finder as well. They may be given as gifts or purchased, but the luckiest beans are the ones you find for yourself.

- Mary's Beans reputedly bestow luck and spiritual protection.
- Easy childbirth is allegedly guaranteed if a woman holds a Mary's Bean in her hand during labor.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: everyone—Mary is the matron saint of humanity. However, she is also the special matron of virgins, girls, mothers, mothers who have lost children, sailors, mariners, those who fish, those who sell or cook fish, chefs, weavers, producers of cloth, upholsterers, tapestry workers, manufacturers of needles and pins, crusaders, travelers, coffeehouse owners, distillers, blood donors, airline pilots and flight crews, and bicyclists.

MANIFESTATIONS: The most famous apparitions in the world are Marian apparitions. She has appeared—and continues to appear—to different individuals, as well as to entire communities. Her appearance and demeanor vary. She may or may not communicate directly with those who witness her. She may be kind or stern. She is sometimes witnessed weeping. Sometimes she delivers warnings of imminent danger. The places where Mary has appeared typically become pilgrimage sites, most famously Mexico City's Tepeyac Hill and Lourdes in France. Other locations associated with Marian apparitions include Knock in Ireland, Fatima in Portugal, Akita in Japan, Medjugorge in what is now Bosnia and Herzegovina, Zeitoun in Cairo, and Kibeho in Rwanda.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Mary is the subject of numerous miraculous and miracle-working statues, icons, and other images. There are reports of Marian statues weeping

tears of blood. Others reputedly possess the power to heal or provide for the needs of devotees. Although the paranormal phenomena associated with some of her images is sometimes mocked or ridiculed, the history of these images dates back to the earliest days of Christianity. In Ethiopian tradition, Saint Luke created images of Mary flanked by the angels Michael and Gabriel that were then distributed throughout the known world. These images of Mary were capable of speech; they were used to proselytize and contributed to the spread of Christianity. Two such images reputedly survive in Ethiopia, among the contenders for the earliest Christian nation.

For centuries, Mary was among the foremost subjects of artists in Christian nations, second only to her son. Various artistic conventions evolved; Mary is traditionally depicted nursing or carrying baby Jesus. The pietà, literally, Italian for "pity," portrays her cradling her dead son after his removal from the cross. Michelangelo's *Pietà*, the most famous of these images, is housed in Saint Peter's Basilica in the Vatican. As Our Lady of Sorrows, Mary is depicted with seven swords piercing her heart.

Mary is also often portrayed in unconventional and unusual ways, as exemplified by the phenomenon of the Black Madonna. An icon housed in the Church of Panayia Gorgona on the Greek island of Lesbos depicts Mary in the guise of a mermaid.

**ATTRIBUTES**: seven swords; rosary; scapular; roses; beams of light; the Sacred Heart; crescent moon; serpent beneath her feet.

**SPIRITUAL ALLIES:** Mary is venerated with Jesus, her mother, Saint Anne, or as part of the Holy Family—consisting of herself, Jesus, and Joseph. Ethiopian icons portray her with archangel Michael on her right and archangel Gabriel on her left. In Knock, she was witnessed with Joseph on her right and John the Revelator on her left. Mary is understood as the Queen of Saints. In Renaissance art, notably the paintings of Leonardo da Vinci, she is portrayed along with Jesus, John the Baptist, and his mother, Elizabeth, who, legend has it, was Mary's cousin. According to Russian tradition, Saint Nicholas is Mary's faithful ally.

COLOR: blue.

SACRED ANIMAL: Mary is often portrayed standing on a serpent.

## MONTH: May.

SACRED PLANTS: roses; Mary's Bean vine (*Merremia discoidesperma*); lady's mantle; rosemary; Mary's Herb (*Salvia divinorum*, also known as oracle sage); strawberry; calendula; lily of the valley; Madonna lily; snowdrop; virgin's bower (*Clematis vitalba*); Our Lady's Seal, also known as bryony (*Bryonia dioica*); arbor vitae (*Thuja occidentalis*). European apparitions of Mary frequently involve oaks, rather than any other type of tree.

**SACRED SITES:** Numerous pilgrimage sites are dedicated to Mary. What follows is but a sampling of the sacred destinations associated with her.

- The Church of the Visitation in Ein Karem, Jerusalem, is reputedly built over the home of John the Baptist's parents and the site where Mary came to visit John's mother, Elizabeth, when both women were pregnant.
- The Milk Grotto, also known as the Grotto of the Lady Mary, is a white cave shrine in Bethlehem where the Holy Family reputedly took refuge from Herod's Slaughter of the Innocents. While Mary was nursing Jesus here, a drop of her milk fell to the ground and was responsible for turning the grotto white. A church existed here by the fifth century. The grotto is visited by Christians and Muslims alike. The grotto's stones reputedly produce miracles of fertility and lactation. Place a stone beneath your mattress to enhance the likelihood of conception. Drinking water to which scrapings of stone have been added is believed to improve the quantity and quality of mother's milk.
- The altar of Our Lady of Sorrows in Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulchre marks the site where Mary received her son's broken body following his crucifixion.
- Mary's Tomb in Jerusalem is at the base of the Mount of Olives. A Crusader cave-church is built over the tomb.
- Mary's Well in the Cairo suburb of Matariya was reputedly produced when, during the Holy Family's flight into Egypt, a thirsty baby Jesus caused the spring to bubble miraculously from the ground. Legend says that after Mary washed their clothes in the water, fragrant balsam plants appeared where the water touched the ground. Many consider water from the well to be Holy Water with spiritually potent properties.
- The Shrine of Mary in Ephesus, Turkey, is visited by Christians and Muslims alike. Miracles have been attributed to the water found in the Well of Mary located near the shrine's exit.
- The Papal Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, the largest of the twenty-six

churches dedicated to Mary in Rome, was built in the fourth century on a site previously occupied by a temple dedicated to the goddess Kybele.

- The Shrine of the Holy House in Loreto, Italy, has been a pilgrimage site since at least the 14th century. According to legend, the house in Nazareth where Mary was born and raised was later converted to a church by the Apostles. Saint Helena erected a basilica over this shrine. Following the fall of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem, angels transported the house to Europe where, after a few previous stops, it came to rest in 1295. The present church was then built around Mary's house.
- The Church of Notre Dame de Puy in France, the site of many legendary miracles, the earliest reputedly occurring in 70 ce. The church, which crowns the summit of Mount Corneille, was built in response to a Marian apparition and is the home of a miraculous Black Madonna. Charlemagne visited Le Puy twice, in 772 and in 800. In 1998, the cathedral, which is on the Santiago de Compostela pilgrimage route, was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site.
- The Chapel of the Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal on rue de Bac in Paris, the motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul. Here, Catherine Labouré, a 24-year-old novice, experienced three Marian apparitions in 1830. Mary gave Catherine detailed instructions for crafting a "miraculous medal." The first medals were distributed in 1832 during a deadly cholera epidemic and quickly attained a reputation of being genuinely miraculous. The Miraculous Medal is believed to provide special graces if worn with faith and devotion at the hour of death.
- The Cathedral of Our Lady of Chartres, approximately fifty miles from Paris, houses a relic identified as Mary's veil and is the home of two Black Madonnas.
- According to legend, the Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar in Zaragoza, Spain, is built on the site of the earliest Marian apparition. Here, in approximately 40 ce, Mary appeared to Saint James the Greater, giving him a jasper pillar and a statue. James then constructed a chapel, reputedly the first church ever dedicated to Mary. The church has been rebuilt many times. The existing cathedral was constructed during the 17th and 18th centuries.
- Beginning on 2 April 1968 and continuing for approximately three years, an apparition of Mary appeared repeatedly over the domes of the Saint Mary Coptic Orthodox Church in the Zeitoun district of Cairo. Reputedly, millions of people of various spiritual orientations witnessed these apparitions, with many claiming to receive miraculous healings in response.

- The Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help in Champion, Wisconsin, is the site of the first officially approved Marian apparition in the United States.
- Other pilgrimage sites associated with Marian apparitions include the Basilica of Guadalupe in Mexico City; the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Fatima in Portugal; the Basilica of Our Lady of Ireland in Knock, Ireland; and the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes and the Basilica of Our Lady of La Salette, both in France.
- The Jasna Gora Monastery in Poland houses the miraculous icon known as the Black Madonna of Czestochowa, reputedly created by Saint Luke.
- The Black Madonna Shrine and Grotto near Eureka, Missouri, is a replica of the Czestochowa shrine.
- The Shrine of Our Lady of Tinos on the Greek island of Tinos houses a miraculous icon reputedly created by Saint Luke.
- The Chapel of Our Lady of the Gate of Dawn in Vilnius, Lithuania, houses an icon renowned for producing miracles. Pope John Paul II visited the chapel in 1993.
- The National Shrine of Our Mother of Perpetual Help in Baclaran, the Philippines, houses an icon of Mary to which numerous miracles are attributed. A novena service requesting Mary's intercession is held every Wednesday.
- The Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham in Walsingham, England, was a major pilgrimage site until the Reformation, when the shrine was largely destroyed. The pilgrimage and shrines dedicated to Mary were restored in the 20th century. There are Anglican and Roman Catholic shrines here.
- Saint Mary of Zion Church in Axum was built in 1635 after the original church on the same site was destroyed by Muslims. Axum is now part of Ethiopia but was once an independent nation and among those that vie for the honor of being the first Christian kingdom. The foundation stones from the fourth-century building may still be viewed. Widely considered Ethiopia's most sacred shrine, it stands beside the chapel said to contain the Ark of the Covenant. Another newer and larger church bearing the same name and standing nearby was founded in 1955 by Emperor Haile Selassie to mark his Silver Jubilee. This modern Church of Saint Mary of Zion permits women to enter. Women are only permitted into the courtyard of the older church.
- Beta Mariam, the Church of Saint Mary, may be the oldest of the eleven rockhewn churches in Lalibela, Ethiopia.

FEASTS: The schedule of feasts dedicated to Mary differs depending on

denomination. The Ethiopian Church, for instance, honors her with thirty-three feasts, one for each year of her son's life. The most widely celebrated Marian feasts include:

- 2 February, Feast of the Purification of the Virgin or Candlemas
- 25 March, Feast of the Annunciation or Lady Day
- 15 August, Feast of the Assumption or Mary's Heavenly Birthday
- 15 August, Feast of the Dormition (the Armenian Apostolic Church celebrates this feast on the Sunday closest to August 15)
- 22 August, Feast of the Assumption (Coptic Church)
- 23 August, Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary
- 10 September, Feast of the Nativity of the Virgin—Mary's birthday according to the Western calendar

**OFFERINGS**: candles; incense; roses; pilgrimage; donations and good works on behalf of the poor or needy; rosaries; ribbons.

SEE ALSO Anna Selbdritt; Anne, Saint; Anthony of Padua; Apostles; Bernadette, Saint; Delille, Henrietta; Gabriel Archangel, Saint; Guadalupe; Helena, Saint; James the Greater, Saint; James the Just, Saint; John the Baptist; John the Conqueror; John the Revelator, Saint; Joseph, Saint; Kwan Yin; Luke, Saint; Mary Magdalen; Marys of the Sea; Michael Archangel, Saint; Miriam the Prophetess; Nicholas, Saint; Nino, Saint; Non, Saint; Seven African Powers; Theophano, Saint; Therese Neumann; Thomas, Saint; Well Saints and Glossary: Apparition; Black Madonna; Holy Water; Icon; Novena; Rosary.

# 👡 Mary of Egypt, Saint

Also known as Mary the Egyptian.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by virtually all branches of Christianity.

Saint Mary of Egypt (c. 344–c. 421) is frequently called a "penitent prostitute," but that's not technically true. When she was twelve, she ran away from home in Alexandria to become a sexual adventuress. Claiming never to have accepted money in exchange for her favors, she boasted of her depravity instead. She was not a poor girl forced to sell herself; her stimulus was seduction and conquest.

She allegedly lived by begging, but exactly how she attorded the sumptuous clothes she is described as wearing is never explained—perhaps she accepted gifts. Mary spent seventeen years seducing young men and teaching them the arts of love, later telling Zosimus, her biographer, that "there is no mentionable or unmentionable depravity of which I was not their teacher."

When she was twenty-nine—the age astrologers associate with the pivotal Saturn return, an astrological planetary transit associated with tremendous personal change—Mary saw a crowd of men waiting to board a ship in Alexandria's harbor and was told that they were Christians en route to Jerusalem. The thought of seducing a boatload of holy men amused her, so she got on board. By the time the ship docked, she had had sex with every pilgrim.

In Jerusalem, she experienced an unexpected fit of self-loathing, followed by a spiritual epiphany. After attending Mass at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Mary heard a disembodied voice tell her that she'd find peace if she crossed the Jordan River. Taking John the Baptist as her role model, she spent the next fortyseven years living as a solitary hermit in the desert east of the Jordan. At first, she was tortured by memories, conflicting desires, and demons who mocked her. She ate only what could be found; her clothes rotted and fell to pieces, leaving her naked, covered only by her very long hair. Her only companion was an equally solitary lion.

Mary's story was recorded in a sixth-century text, *The Life of Our Holy Mother, Saint Mary of Egypt*, allegedly written by monks from Father Zosimus' hermitage and based on earlier oral traditions. When Zosimus had unexpectedly encountered Mary in the desert, she told him her story. Returning to the desert a year later, he discovered her dead body. Zosimus wanted to give her a proper burial, but the ground was hard and he was old and frail. A lion emerged from the wilderness, dug the grave, and waited as Zosimus recited prayers. The lion then vanished back into the thicket.

- Mary the Egyptian guards against demons and temptation.
- She is petitioned for hair growth.

**MANIFESTATION:** a deeply sunburned naked woman covered entirely by her extremely long hair. A lion is her constant companion.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** She may be portrayed as a sexy young naked woman or as a haggard, emaciated one.

**FEASTS:** 1 April (Eastern Church); 2 April (Western Church). The fifth Sunday of Lent is considered the Sunday of Mary of Egypt.

### SACRED SITES:

- Mary's gravesite, now lost, was a popular pilgrimage site in the sixth century.
- She has a chapel in Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the site of her epiphany.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; incense; water; images of lions; pilgrimage; locate her grave.

SEE ALSO Anthony of the Desert, Saint; John the Baptist; Mary Magdalen; Pelagia, Saint and Glossary: Anchorite.

∼ Mary Frances of the Five Wounds of Jesus, Saint

**EPITHET:** Saint of the Family.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Anna Maria Rosa Nicoletta Gallo (25 March 1715–6 October 1791), now better known as Saint Mary Frances, is a superstar among the many saints of Naples, her hometown. The daughter of an angry, raging man, she was ill treated, abused, and worked almost to death in her youth. When she was sixteen, her father tried to force her into a financially advantageous marriage, but Mary Frances refused, becoming a Franciscan tertiary on 8 September 1731 (meaning that although joining the religious order, she continued to live at home). Her father never got over the loss of a rich, prominent son-in-law. Mary Frances was never allowed to forget her decision.

Mary Frances was a religious ecstatic; her siblings and even sometimes her confessor mocked her. She allegedly received the stigmata, the five bleeding wounds of Christ, but as she did not wish to be a show-off or attract undue attention, she prayed that the visible signs would be hidden. Her prayers were answered: Mary Frances *felt* the stigmata without visibly demonstrating them, receiving the pain without the attention bleeding wounds attract. Every Friday, especially during Lent, she actually experienced the pain of the Crucifixion. A visionary and clairvoyant, Mary Frances spent her last thirty-eight years as a

recluse. She is now invoked for all blessings, especially peace in the family and fertility.

#### SACRED SITES:

- Her birthplace, an apartment near Speranzella Street in the Spanish Quarter of Naples has been converted to a shrine and museum. A chair has developed a reputation for providing fertility miracles for the childless.
- Her tomb is in the Church of the Alcantarines, Saint Lucia de Monte, Naples.

FEAST: 6 October.

**SEE ALSO** *Catherine of Siena; Francis of Assisi; Pio, Saint* and Glossary: *Stigmata; Tertiary.* 

# ∾ Mary MacKillop, Saint

Also known as Mary of the Cross.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

The first Roman Catholic saint from Australia, Mother Mary MacKillop was canonized on 17 October 2010 by Pope Benedict XVI. Born on 15 January 1842 in Fitzroy, Melbourne, Mary was the eldest of eight children of struggling Scottish immigrants. She was educated mainly at home by her father who, although a poor businessman, was an excellent teacher whose children received a first-class education. Their family life was unstable, however, because of their father's many failed business endeavors and his long absences from home.

As the eldest, Mary bore many of the household responsibilities. By age fourteen, she was working as a clerk at a stationer's shop. In 1860, at age eighteen, she had moved to southern Australia to serve as a governess to her cousins. There, she began to teach other children as well. She met the local priest, to whom she confided her desire to serve the poor. He, in turn, was concerned about the lack of Catholic education in the region. He invited Mary and two of her sisters to begin a local Catholic school, which they did in 1866.

Saint Joseph's School, housed in a stable, was open to anyone who wished to learn, whether or not they had the means to pay. In 1867, Mary became the first sister and Mother Superior of the newly formed Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart. By the end of that year. ten other women had ioined. By the end of 1869, over seventy Sisters of Saint Joseph had founded twenty-one schools throughout Australia, especially in remote areas. They also founded clinics and orphanages.

"Never see a need without doing something about it."—Saint Mary MacKillop, 1871

In early 1870, Mary and other Sisters of Saint Joseph became aware of allegations of sexual abuse of children by a local priest. Mary took these allegations seriously and reported them to the priest's superiors. The priest was sent back to Ireland. The public reason given for his removal from Australia was alcohol abuse.

His friend, another priest, swore vengeance against Mary and spoke against her to the bishop. Mary clashed with senior clergy and, on 22 September 1871, at age twenty-nine, was excommunicated by Bishop Sheil for insubordination. Turned out into the streets with no money or worldly goods and forbidden to have contact with anyone in the Church, she went to live with a Jewish family. Her short-lived excommunication was lifted five months later as Bishop Sheil lay on his deathbed. Mary died on 8 August 1909 in North Sydney.

The process to have Mary declared a saint began in 1925. She was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1995. In Mary's case, the two required miracles both involved cancer.

- The first involved a woman's recovery from terminal leukemia in 1961.
- The second was the recovery of a woman from terminal lung cancer in 1993.
- Other miracles attributed to Mary include recovery from severe burns and the awakening of a man in Ireland from an eight-monthlong coma.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: Because of her bravery in exposing clerical abuse, Mary is considered by many to be a spiritual advocate for survivors of sexual abuse, especially by those in positions of authority, and also for children in general.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: The most popular image of Mary MacKillop is a photograph of her in her nun's habit; an Australian postage stamp was issued to commemorate her canonization.

**BOTANICAL**: the Mary MacKillop Rose, bred and named in her honor.

SACRED SITES:

- The Mary MacKillop Memorial Chapel houses her tomb and is located in Mary MacKillop Place, a spiritual and cultural center in North Sydney. A museum dedicated to her is also there.
- the Mary MacKillop Centre in Penola, Australia
- Mary MacKillop Cottage in Arrowtown, New Zealand, where she lived in 1897.
- Saint Margaret's Church in Roy Bridge, Scotland, Mary's ancestral village, has a shrine dedicated to her. She visited there in the 1870s.

FEAST: 8 August.

**OFFERINGS**: pilgrimage; good deeds on behalf of the poor and needy, especially children; plant Mary MacKillop roses

SEE ALSO André, Saint; John Paul II.

# 👡 Mary Magdalen

Also known as Mary Magdalene; Maria Magdalena; Mary of Magdala; Marie Madeleine; Sainte Madeleine; Maudlin; Miriam of Migdal.

**EPITHETS**: Equal of the Apostles; Apostle to the Apostles; The Holy Myrrh Bearer.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Mary Magdalen is venerated as a saint by all branches of Christianity that acknowledge saints—although, depending on denomination, the legends told of her differ greatly.

Mary Magdalen has also been described as the "Christian goddess": she is beloved by many goddess devotees and Neo-Pagans who otherwise scorn Christian saints. Countless fictional depictions have been told of her life. She is the subject of almost equally numerous conspiracy theories. Mary Magdalen is variously portrayed as a penitent fallen woman, a high priestess, and the true first pope. She may have secreted the Holy Grail and taken it out of Judea following the Crucifixion, or she may, in fact, *be* the Holy Grail.

Who is this saint who simultaneously evokes such passionate devotion and

controversy? She is described as Jesus Christ's "beloved companion." But what precisely does that mean? Volumes have been filled trying to answer that question.

- Was she among Christ's most dedicated disciples?
- Was she among the women who raised funds to support Jesus and the Apostles?
- Was she a repentant sinner or the woman from whom Jesus cast out seven devils?
- Was she a prostitute and, if so, what kind? Secular or temple priestess?
- Was she Jesus' wife?

Mary Magdalen plays an exceptionally significant role in the New Testament. She is the only woman who is never mentioned in relation to a man. In other words, she is not identified as anyone's wife, mother, sister, or daughter unless, that is, you believe her to be the same woman as Mary of Bethany, in which case Saints Lazarus and Martha are her siblings. Mary Magdalen is present at Christ's crucifixion and burial and is also the first to witness the resurrected Christ.

The Hebrew word *migdal* or *magdala*, from which Magdalen derives may be translated as "tower," "castle," "fortress," or "a raised-up place." Her name may be interpreted as Mary from the Fortress or Mary Who Is the Fortress. The phrase "raised-up place" potentially implies subversive strains of Judaism, especially that surrounding the cult of the forbidden Hebrew goddess, Asherah of the Sea, whose symbols include doves and fishes. *Migdal* or *magdala* may also refer to a location in the Galilee, possibly Mary's home or birthplace. Mary may be of the Tribe of Benjamin and was possibly of royal blood, related to Israel's first king, Saul, rather than the Davidie lineage associated with Jesus.

Complicating the confusion of Mary Magdalen's identity is the ubiquity of the name Mary in the New Testament. It seems as if every other woman in first-century Judea was named Mary. So many Marys exist in the New Testament that their identities may have become confused.

In the Church's early years, the identities of these women were left ambiguous. According to the tenets of Eastern Christianity, Mary Magdalen, Mary of Bethany, and the unnamed woman of Luke 7:37–50 "who was a sinner" are three distinct individuals, whereas in Roman Catholicism, Pope Gregory the Great (540–604 ce) declared these three women to be one and the same. Eventually a fourth, "the woman taken in adultery" from John 8:3–11, was included as well. Mary Magdalen is also frequently confused and conflated with that self-avowed, repentant harlot, Saint Mary of Egypt.

Because of Mary Magdalen's controversial association with prostitutes, "Magdalen" has become a code word for a fallen woman. Magdalen Asylums, institutions intended to redeem and reform such fallen women, were named in her honor.

The suggestion that Mary may have been the wife of Jesus enrages many people, but these allegations were not invented by author Dan Brown, whose 2003 bestseller, *The Da Vinci Code*, is based on this premise. Neither were they invented by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln, authors of the 1982 study, *Holy Blood*, *Holy Grail*, which alleges that Jesus and Mary were the ancestors of France's royal Merovingian dynasty. Instead, these rumors date back 1500 years to the Gnostics and never entirely disappeared. According to the *Annals of Raynaldus*, written c. 1200, the French Cathars consider Mary Magdalen to have been Christ's concubine.

Mary Magdalen is a pervasive presence in Gnostic texts.

- The Gospel of Philip refers to Mary Magdalen as Jesus' "companion," using a Greek word that indicates "partner" and "consort."
- The Gnostic text known as the *Pistis Sophia* portrays Mary Magdalen in conflict with Peter.
- The Gospel of Mary, estimated to be written in the early second century, is sometimes attributed to her.

According to Orthodox Christian tradition, following the Crucifixion, Mary Magdalen traveled to Cyprus and Anatolia with Saint John and Mary. According to this version of her legend, Mary Magdalen was buried in Ephesus until her incorrupt remains were moved to Constantinople in the ninth century.

Mary Magdalen's official Roman Catholic hagiography says that after the Crucifixion, she traveled to France with Saint Martha, where she lived an ascetic life in a cave in Sainte-Baume. France has traditionally been an epicenter of devotion to Mary Magdalen and less official legends are told there as well. A subversive variant suggests that Mary Magdalen arrived in France with a party that possibly included Saints Martha, Lazarus, Joseph of Arimathea, and the Marys of the Sea along with the mysterious Saint Sarah. In the most subversive

version, Mary Magdalen is the widow of Jesus and the mother of his child or children. Depending on the version of the legend, Sarah may be their only child or she may also have a brother and sister.

- In the official version of the legend, Mary Magdalen travels to France as a missionary.
- In the unofficial version, she travels to France in order to smuggle her children to safety.

In Arthurian legend, Mary Magdalen collected Christ's blood in a chalice that she preserved and that was later identified as the Holy Grail, or the *san gréal*, Old French for "holy grail" or "blessed grail." (*San* is etymologically related to "saint," as in the Spanish *San* Juan.) Alternatively, Mary Magdalen is the guardian of the *sang réal*—literally, "royal blood," a sacred lineage dating back to Jesus.

Still other versions of Mary Magdalen's legend—no less subversive—suggest that she and Jesus were adepts in secret spiritual traditions devoted to goddesses like Isis or Asherah. Alternatively, she is described as a priestess of Atargatis, the Syrian goddess worshipped in Ashkelon whose symbols are doves and fish.

- Mary Magdalen is invoked for fertility and for happy, easy pregnancies and successful childbirth.
- She is invoked to provide women's financial independence.

In folk religion, Mary Magdalen is among the saints most invoked in magic spells, especially love magic—for instance, spells to provide or identify a soul mate. The eve of her feast is believed especially propitious for prophetic dreams. Rituals have evolved to take advantage of this magical night.

An English oracle is performed on the eve of Mary Magdalen's feast in the hope of receiving prophetic dreams. It must be done in complete silence while remaining totally focused on what you seek to know:

- 1. Blend wine, vinegar, and water in a dish and place it beside your bed.
- 2. Soak a stalk of fresh rosemary in this liquid.
- 3. Remove the stalk from the dish and shake off the excess liquid.
- 4. Place it between your breasts and then go to sleep.
- 5. Do *not* speak until after any dreams received are recorded.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: beauticians; hairdressers; aromatherapists; perfumers; pharmacists; lovers; prostitutes; prisoners; prisoners of love.

**MANIFESTATION:** Mary Magdalen reputedly has naturally red or henna-reddened hair.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Mary Magdalen is traditionally portrayed as a beautiful penitent. She is frequently portrayed with long, loose red hair kneeling at the foot of the cross or embracing Christ's feet. A great favorite of artists, she has been painted by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Anthony Frederick Sandys, and Jules-Joseph Lefebvre.

Reputedly, Leonardo da Vinci was a devotee. Furious debate rages as to whether it is Mary Magdalen or Saint John who is portrayed seated beside Jesus in Da Vinci's iconic painting, *The Last Supper*. It is theorized that many Black Madonnas, officially identified as the Virgin Mary, may actually depict Mary Magdalen.

Russian icons frequently portray Mary Magdalen holding a red egg. Her association with eggs is sometimes given as the reason for the tradition of painting and decorating Easter eggs.

Two tarot cards are also frequently used to represent Mary Magdalen.

- The High Priestess card, known in older tarot decks as La Papesse or "the female pope," is favored in esoteric traditions, which acknowledge Mary Magdalen, not Peter, as the true first pope.
- The Empress card, which shows a glamorous woman usually interpreted as being pregnant, is favored by those who perceive Mary Magdalen as bearing the Holy Child.

**ATTRIBUTES**: alabaster jar or box of perfumed unguent; chalice; skull; egg or red egg.

SACRED PLANTS: spikenard (*Nardostachys grandiflora*); ox-eye daisy, also known as maudlin daisy (*Chrysanthemum leucanthemum*); African lily (*Agapanthus umbellatus*).

**CONSTELLATION**: Mary Magdalen is identified with the constellation Virgo, interpreted as resembling a lone woman holding the divine child.

FEAST: 22 July.

SACRED SITES: France is the epicenter of veneration of Mary Magdalen. During the medieval era, there were over 125 French shrines dedicated to her there, with at least fifty of them also associated with Black Madonnas. She is among the most beloved saints, with many sites associated with her:

- the cave at Sainte-Baume near Marseilles, France, where one legend says she lived for thirty years and where some believe she was buried. Water dripping from the cavern walls reputedly has miraculous powers. The grove below the cave church was held sacred by local Pagans prior to Christianization.
- The stone that Mary allegedly used as a pillow during her stay in Sainte-Baume is now housed in the Abbey of Saint Victor in Marseilles. Those requesting that she heal persistent fevers are advised to rest their heads on this stone.
- The Shrine of Mary Magdalen in Vezelay, France houses relics identified as hers.
- The Church of Mary Magdalen in Rennes-le-Château, France, features a painting of Mary in a cave or grotto on the altar bas-relief. A persistent legend suggests that Mary and Jesus are buried together nearby.
- The Russian Church of Mary Magdalen in Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives was built by Tsar Alexander III in 1888.
- The Chapel of Saint Mary Magdalen in Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulchre is reputedly built over the spot where Jesus appeared to her after the Resurrection (John 20: 11–17). The chapel is also called *Mi Mou Aptou* ("Touch Me Not"), the words that Jesus spoke to her then.
- The Cathedral of Mary Magdalen, Equal to the Apostles, is the seat of the Orthodox Church in Warsaw, Poland.

**OFFERINGS**: white candles; spikenard; myrrh; alabaster boxes; Galilean or French wine; roses.

SEE ALSO Adjutor, Saint; Amadour, Saint; Bernard of Clairvaux; John the Revelator, Saint; Joseph of Arimathea; Kwan Yin; Lazarus of Bethany; Margaret of Antioch; Margaret of Cortona; Martha, Saint; Mary; Mary of Egypt; Marys of the Sea; Maurice, Saint; Miriam the Prophetess; Myrrh Bearers, Holy; Peter, Saint; Sarah, Saint; Seven African Powers; Simon Magus; Veronica, Saint and Glossary: Black Madonna; Relics.

# no Marys of the Sea, Saints

Also known as Three Ladies of Egypt; Maries de la Mer.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saints.

The individual saints collectively known as the Marys of the Sea are venerated by all branches of Christianity that recognize saints; however, the legend of the Marys of the Sea is specific to Roman Catholicism, and perhaps also to subversive, esoteric sects once centered in France. According to this legend, a small boat departed from either Judea or Alexandria sometime after the crucifixion of Jesus. It is unclear from which place the boat embarked; each has its advocates, depending on the version of the legend.

It is also unclear whether this little boat ever had sails and oars, or whether these were lost during the voyage. According to some versions, the passengers set sail of their own volition; in others, they were forcibly set adrift on the Mediterranean, perhaps with the expectation that they would die at sea. It was, however, a boat full of holy people and future saints.

Disagreement exists as to exactly who was on this boat. The passenger manifesto may have included Joseph of Arimathea, Lazarus, and Martha of Bethany, and as many as four women named Mary:

- Mary Magdalen
- Mary of Bethany
- Mary Jacobe
- Mary Salomé

Although some versions suggest that there were four Marys, they are usually envisioned as only three: Mary Jacobe and Mary Salomé, with either Mary of Bethany *or* Mary Magdalen. This is either because one Mary didn't journey with them, or because Bethany and Magdalen may be two names for the same person. Another version of the legend suggests that the three Marys aboard the boat were Mary Mother of Christ, Mary of Bethany, and Mary Magdalen, but this variant does not acknowledge the saints now known as the Marys of the Sea.

The boat eventually landed in what is now France's Camargue region, where the party split up, except for two of the Marys, Mary Jacobe and Mary Salomé, who remained together and are the two saints now venerated as the Marys of the Sea. Although they have separate feasts, they are typically envisioned as a pair and usually considered sisters.

Mary Jacobe and Mary Salomé appear in the Bible among the group of women who stood at the cross witnessing the crucifixion of Jesus. Who were they? Several theories exist, depending upon spiritual orientation.

- Mary Jacobe and Mary Salomé may be the Virgin Mary's sisters and thus Jesus' aunts.
- They may be the mothers of Saints John and James, Greater and Lesser.
- They may be Mary's daughters and thus the sisters of Jesus.
- Mary Salomé may have been the midwife who delivered the baby Jesus.

Even though there are only two Marys of the Sea, they are venerated as part of a trinity along with the mysterious Saint Sarah, who either met them in France or traveled there with them on the boat. She is the unspoken third saint of the sea, although, unlike the two Marys, Sarah is not an official saint. Who was she? Again, different explanations are offered:

- She may be their young Egyptian servant who traveled with them from Alexandria.
- She may be a Pagan priestess who met the boat in France.
- She may be the daughter of Jesus and Mary Magdalen, in which case, smuggling her to safety may have been the reason for the flight to France.

Depending on which version you prefer, either the Marys of the Sea are Sarah's caretakers or she is theirs. To further complicate the legend, the place where the passengers disembarked in France was an ancient settlement then known as Ra or Ratis, long the city of three goddesses: Artemis, Isis, and Kybele. These three had been venerated on its acropolis since at least the fourth century bce. The Three Marys—Jacobe, Salomé, and the Magdalen—are sometimes interpreted as corresponding to these three goddesses, with Saint Sarah corresponding to the holy child Horus, the son of Isis.

Legends of the Marys of the Sea and rumors about them circulated in the region for centuries. If these legends were true, then where were their bodies buried?, people wondered. René of Anjou, king of Provence, searched long and hard for them until, in 1448, relics were discovered and identified as belonging to Mary Salomé, Mary Jacobe, and Sarah. A church was built for them and the town was renamed in their honor—Les Maries-de-la-Mer. It became a significant pilgrimage site. The town is on the pilgrimage route to the sanctuary

of Saint James of Compostella. Since Mary Salomé is considered to be the mother of Saint James, many pilgrims sought to honor the mother as well as the son.

The trinity of the two Marys and Sarah is also the subject of the most important Roma (Gypsy) pilgrimage. The two Marys are official saints. Sarah is not. For a long time, only the Roma were permitted to venerate Sarah. From their perspective, the Marys are subordinate to Sarah but are also sacred.

During this annual pilgrimage in May, coffin-shaped reliquaries reputedly containing Jacobe's and Salomé's relics plus statues of Sarah and other saints are carried to the sea in a procession. There they are dipped three times before being returned to their shrine. Reputedly, simultaneously dipping tarot cards or other divination tools quickly into the sea enhances their power, but only if this is accomplished when all three statues are also in the water.

The Marys of the Sea are invoked for all blessings and especially for healing and happiness.

Who lies in the tomb identified as belonging to Saint Solomone in Istanbul's Church of Saint George? Officially, Saint Solomone is the mother of the Maccabees, but as she died by immolation, some theorize that the tomb actually holds Saint Mary Salomé. Orthodox lore rejects the tale of the flight to France; instead Mary Salomé and Mary Jacobe are honored as Holy Myrrh Bearers.

**ATTRIBUTE**: Their shared attribute, the Camargue Cross, is composed of an anchor, a heart, and a cross.

SACRED SITE: the French seaside town of Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, once called Sainte Marie de Ratis or Notre Dame de la Mer (Our Lady of the Sea).

FEASTS: the Roman Catholic feast of Mary Jacobe is 25 May, which coincides with that of Saint Sarah. Roma from around the world begin converging on Saintes-Marie-de-la-Mer during the preceding weeks. A second festival marks the feast of Mary Salomé on 22 October and includes another procession to the sea.

**OFFERINGS**: *navettes*, traditional French pastries in the form of their boat; candles; incense; fabric; pilgrimage.

SEE ALSO Amadour, Saint; Anne, Saint; Faith, Hope, and Charity; Joan of Arc; Joseph of Arimathea; Lazarus, Saint; Martha, Saint; Mary; Mary Magdalen; Miriam the Prophetess; Myrrh Bearers, Holy; Sarah, Saint and Glossary: Relic; Saint Official; Saint, Unofficial.

### Natrona of Moscow, Saint

Also known as Matryona Nikonova; Matronushka; Mother Matrona.

EPITHET: The Blessed Elder of Moscow.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Orthodox saint.

The exact date was not recorded, but Matrona was born in approximately 1885 to Dmitry and Natalya Nikonov, peasants who labored in Russia's Tula Province. Matrona, their fourth child, was born without eyes. Her poverty-stricken parents intended to send her to an orphanage, but Natalya had a dream in which an unspeakably beautiful white bird with empty eye sockets landed on her breast. Natalya interpreted this as a sign from God and kept her blind daughter close.

By age six or seven, Matrona was demonstrating profound powers of clairvoyance, telepathy, and prophesy. Described as being able to read people's thoughts and "see" their sins, Matrona accurately foretold natural and social disasters, as well as other dangers. She was able to diagnose ailments of body, mind, and soul, and also manifested miraculous healing powers. People transported ailing relatives in wagons and wheelbarrows to the Nikonov home so that Matrona could heal them. Word of the miraculous girl spread beyond her village, throughout the province and beyond. In gratitude, people brought food and gifts so that rather than being a burden, Matrona evolved into the family's primary breadwinner. At age seventeen, Matrona became paralyzed and was never again able to walk.

As a teenager, Matrona predicted the Russian Revolution, advising the local landowner, who had been kind to her family, to sell his property and leave Russia, although he did not take her advice. In 1917, in the wake of the revolution, Matrona, now a landless peasant, left home in the company of her mother and a female friend, seeking work, opportunities, food, and safety.

Matrona wandered, but by 1925 was in Moscow, where she would reside for

the rest of her life, staying with friends and relatives. After her mother's death in 1945, Matrona moved frequently, secretly sheltered in people's homes. Her two brothers lived in Moscow, but she could not stay with them as they were dedicated Communists and she was a devout and proselytizing Orthodox Christian—then illegal in the Soviet Union. Matrona's reputation as a healer, prophet, and religious leader grew and the Communists sought to arrest her.

Matrona, widely considered a holy woman, had many visitors who often traveled great distances to seek her advice and healing. Although many other religious people were exiled or sent to Stalinist labor camps, Matrona was never arrested. She was *almost* arrested several times but, consistently demonstrating foreknowledge, she managed to elude police. One police officer did find her because she had waited for him to arrive. She persuaded him to return home as quickly as possible, assuring him that she would make no attempt to escape. When he arrived home, he discovered his wife alone and on fire. He had just enough time to rescue her. He did not return to arrest Matrona.

Matrona saw as many as forty people daily. She lived a devout, ascetic life, fasting frequently. She led prayer vigils and performed exorcisms. She insisted that those who sought her help wear a cross and encouraged people to marry within the Orthodox Church rather than with civil unions, as encouraged by the Soviet government.

Matrona insisted throughout her life that she was merely an intercessor—that all miracles associated with her came from God, whom she served as a channel. She claimed that all who trusted in her and in her intercessions would be saved: "Everyone who turns to me for help I will meet at their death, every single one of them."

Matrona predicted her own death three days before it occurred, accepting all visitors during those three days. Just before her death, she announced that people should continue to tell her their troubles as if she were still living, adding, "I'll see you; I'll hear you; I'll come to your aid!"

Matrona died on 2 May 1952. Her grave quickly became a pilgrimage site, as miracles were attributed to her. Matrona was glorified, the Orthodox variant of canonization, in 1999. She continues to be credited with miracles of every kind —from healing illness and infertility to locating housing for those without and providing assistance with academic entrance exams. It is considered advisable to wear a cross when requesting her intercession and those who do not sometimes report unexpectedly receiving a cross shortly afterward. Oil from icon lamps burning before her altar reputedly has healing powers if applied topically.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Matrona is usually portrayed with closed eyes, wearing a white scarf, and raising her right hand in a gesture of blessing.

FEAST: 19 April or 2 May, depending on calendar used.

**SACRED SITE:** The Church of the Protecting Veil of Our Lady at Intercession Convent in Moscow, where her relics were translated in 1998. Miracles are attributed to an icon that Matrona commissioned while alive that is now housed in the church.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; incense; wear a cross in her honor; pilgrimage.

SEE ALSO Ksenya, Saint and Glossary: Icon; Intercessor.

# ∾ Maurice, Saint

Also known as Moritz; Mauricio; Mauritius.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Maurice (died c. 287) was commander of Rome's Theban legion, which converted to Christianity *en masse* and was then massacred in what is now Switzerland's Great Saint Bernard Pass for refusing to make offerings to Jupiter. Saints Victor and Ursus, members of the legion, died with Maurice. They may be venerated together.

Saint Maurice, once among Europe's most popular military saints, was the patron of the Holy Roman Empire. Legend has it that Maurice guarded the Spear of Destiny, also called the Spear of Longinus, the lance used to pierce Christ's side during the Crucifixion, in the process absorbing supernatural power. The Spear of Destiny can allegedly confer immortality and is a source of tremendous power that may be directed toward benevolent or selfish purposes. Myth has it that, if the lance is lost or taken away, its previous owner will die abruptly. The Vienna Lance, also called the Lance of Saint Maurice, currently housed in Vienna's Imperial Treasury, was used by the Holy Roman Emperors. Some believe it really to be Longinus' lance.

Mourian is involved if you need to be recoved from troublesome universited

parents. Specify exactly how you wish to be rescued non-uoublesome, unwanted bad parents to their final reward unless requested otherwise. If you just need money to get out of town, tell him.

FAVORED PEOPLE: soldiers; swordsmiths.

**MANIFESTATION**: Maurice, variously described as a black or a white man, is usually envisioned as a knight in shining armor with a red cross emblazoned on his chest.

ATTRIBUTES: banner; lance.

SACRED SITES:

- The Swiss resort San Moritz is named in his honor.
- A sarcophagus identified as his is in Marseilles' Basilica of Saint Victor.
- The Abbey of Saint-Maurice in Saint-Maurice, Switzerland, built over a temple of the Roman deity Mercury, also claims to possess Maurice's tomb and is allegedly where he died.
- The Cathedral of Saints Maurice and Catherine in Magdeburg was the first Gothic cathedral in what is now Germany.

FEASTS: 22 September (Western Church); 5 October (Coptic Church).

**OFFERINGS**: Maurice was the patron of the wealthy and powerful. He was traditionally given very lavish gifts. His abbey in Switzerland has a museum displaying priceless offerings.

SEE ALSO Bernard of Montjoux, Saint; Longinus; Mary Magdalen; Victor, Saint.

# ∾ Maximón

Also known as Maam; Don Pedro; Saint Simon; Brother Simon; Hermano Simon; Brother Saint Simon; Saint Simon Judas; Brother Peter; Hermano Pedro.

**PRONOUNCED:** mah-shee-mon.

**EPITHETS:** The Old Man; The Uncle.

**CLASSIFICATION:** unofficial saint.

Following the Spanish Conquest of what is now Guatemala, Roman Catholic missionaries forcibly replaced the images of indigenous Mayan deities with those of Christian saints. When they encountered the primordial deity Maam, whose name may be translated as "Grandfather" or "Ancient One," they attempted to replace him with Saint Simon.

Their plan backfired. Instead of the Mayan god fading discreetly into the identity of the saint, Maximón, as he became known, took on a whole new life and personality of his own: defiant, disobedient, sometimes profane, but always extremely powerful. In response, the Church attempted to backtrack, trying to syncretize him with the despised Judas Iscariot or even with Satan, but it was too late. Attempts to vilify Maximón served only to enhance his outlaw image and make his devotees adore him even more. Instead of merging with an official saint, Maximón has emerged as one of the most beloved, versatile, and powerful unofficial saints.

Maximón conjoins the names Maam and Simon (pronounced: seemohn in Spanish). Alternatively, some theorize that the name Maximón is purely Mayan, deriving from Maam and the word ximon meaning "bundle" or "tie up."

Over the centuries, Maximón has survived numerous attempts to suppress him and his veneration. Now more popular than ever before, he is venerated throughout the Americas and Europe, although the heartland of his devotion remains Guatemala. Maximón is generally considered benevolent, but he is a trickster. No miracle is beyond his power or outside his jurisdiction, but he is particularly associated with prosperity, protection, and healing, especially of addictions. Maximón breaks the chains of even the most powerful addictions. An extremely responsive spirit who accepts comparatively modest offerings, he responds to requests made on behalf of others, especially addicts.

Maximón, a liminal being of the crossroads, mediates between the living and the dead and between humans and spirits. He serves as a bridge between malevolent and benevolent spirits, and may thus be invoked as a potent and effective exorcist. If ghosts, demons, or other troublesome spirits are plaguing you, Maximón may be requested to overpower and banish them. He also repels and provides antidotes for the Evil Eye:

- 1. Place a black candle before an image of Maximón.
- 2. Sprinkle a circle of tobacco around the candle.
- 3. Burn the candle to repel the Evil Eye and remove its ill effects.

Maximón is invoked in numerous magical spells, rituals, and workings:

- Place his image in the home to provide luck, money, and protection.
- Place his image in shops to stimulate better business and to foil thieves and shoplifters.
- Maximón may be requested to punish thieves and enemies. If someone abuses or hurts you, whisper your needs directly into the ear of Maximón's image, then place the person's photo under his left foot or write a note and place it there.
- Coil a rope around Maximón's image or even around his neck to show him that you need his help capturing someone's heart or hobbling competing suitors. Whisper in his ear and tell him what you need.
- Wrap a rope around his image to keep your significant other from leaving with another.
- In Guatemala, Maximón is traditionally invoked for protection for or from antigovernment forces.

**FAVORED PEOPLE:** Maximón is a generous provider who potentially protects anyone and everyone.

**MANIFESTATION:** Maximón may indicate his presence via the smell of cigar smoke when no cigars are present. He also visits in dreams.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: The oldest and most traditional Mayan images of Maximón were masks and mysterious wrapped bundles. He is still venerated in this form, especially in Guatemala. Modern Maximón masks may be crafted with a round, open mouth designed to hold a cigar.

A modern and extremely recognizable votive image has also evolved, possibly based on the only known existing photograph of the shaman, wizard, and Maximón devotee, Francisco Sojuel (died c. 1907), who is credited with crafting the first modern Maximón mask. This votive image depicts Maximón as a mustached man wearing a black suit and a Stetson or similar hat. He may wear dark sunglasses and may have a beard. He is usually depicted seated. Statuary may merely depict him in a chair, but paintings often show him seated at a crossroads, often with a bag of money in his lap. He may wear an ammunition belt.

Votive images range from pocket-size to life-size. Sometimes, tubes are inserted into statues so that Maximón can actually "drink." Liquor passing through his system is then reserved for ritual use. The mouth of his statue may be open so that a real cigar or cigarette may be inserted. When lit, it appears that Maximón is actually smoking. Alternatively, the statue may be designed so that this tobacco offering is placed in his hand. Ashes and stubs collected, preserved, and placed in a small charm bag serve as talismans, allegedly bringing good luck. The modern image closest to his ancient one consists of a bundle of fabric topped with one or more Stetson hats.

Maximón's images are literally dressed. He often accumulates an extensive wardrobe, especially of the fine silk scarves he loves. Maximon is a fastidious saint whose clothes must be kept clean, lest he become unhappy. Hand-wash his clothing and belongings and preserve the rinse water to use as Holy Water that allegedly radiates magical and healing powers. This rinse water may also be supplemented with fragrances in order to enhance and maximize its power:

- 1. Hand-wash Maximón's clothing.
- 2. Add essential oils of citronella and lemongrass to the final rinse water.
- 3. Reserve this water. The scented water is believed capable of repelling malevolent witchcraft, sadness, despair, fear, and depression, and also offers spiritual protection. Add it to your own bath as needed.

**ATTRIBUTES**: money bag(s); staff; Stetson hat.

SACRED DAY: Tuesday.

#### SACRED PLANT: tobacco.

**COLORS:** His own primary color is black; he is usually envisioned dressed in black, but an elaborate color scheme is used to communicate with Maximón. The following list gives the colors commonly used to communicate with him. Burn the color candle that represents your needs:

Black: protection from envy, jealousy, enemies, and the deliberately cast Evil EyeBlue: good luck, employment Brown: protection from resentment and the accidentally cast Evil Eye Green: business, prosperity, cash Light blue: cash, travel, education, happiness Pink: hope, health Red: love, fidelity White: protection of children Yellow: protection of adults

**FESTIVAL:** Guatemalan festivals coincide with Holy Week, culminating on Good Friday.

SACRED SITES: Maximón is the subject of innumerable home shrines, but his major public shrine is in Lake Atitlán, Guatemala. This lake is associated, in traditional Mayan cosmology, with the sacred waters of creation. Other major Guatemalan shrines are located in San Andrés Xecul and Zunil. He may also be venerated at any crossroads.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; clothing for his images, especially hats, silk scarves, silk ties, and fine shirts; fabric; flowers, especially bougainvilleas, carnations, gardenias, and gladioli; fresh fruit; perfume, especially citrus scents; tobacco products, especially fine cigars; copal incense; beverages, including springwater, Coca-Cola (specifically Coca-Cola, not just any brand of cola soda), pineapple juice, tequila, rum, and aguardiente; pilgrimage. An elaborate offering when you really need a big favor or as fulfillment of a vow is forty candles plus copal incense.

SEE ALSO Judas Iscariot; Pascual, El Rey; Simon, Saint and Glossary: Holy Water; Syncretism.

# 👡 Meinrad, Saint

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Meinrad (died 21 January 861), a member of the socially prominent, elegant Hohenzollern family, became a Benedictine monk. Initially he was a teaching monk, but in 828, he retired to live as a hermit on the forested slopes of the Etzel, an Alpine mountain overlooking Lake Zurich. He developed a reputation as a holy man with healing and prophetic powers. Pilgrims began to flock to him and so, seven years later, he moved deeper into the forest, settling near what is now called the Fountain of Our Lady. His only regular companions were ravens and a three-foot-tall statue of Mary and the child Jesus given to him by Abbess Princess Hildegard of Zurich and now known as the Black Madonna of Einsiedeln.

Meinrad lived among the wolves and bears of the mountains and was never harmed. Eventually, woodcutters discovered his hideaway and gradually pilgrims once again began their trek to visit the holy man. On 21 January 861, Meinrad received guests whom he fed and sheltered. In reality, they were thieves who mistakenly assumed that he possessed treasure. When they realized that he had nothing of material value, they clubbed him to death.

After they killed him, the two men wished to search his little hut further, just in case the hoped-for treasure was well hidden, but candles spontaneously lit themselves near the old man's corpse and the thieves were spooked. Meinrad's ravens chased the murderers down the slope and into town, squawking and drawing attention. People recognized Meinrad's birds and suspected that something was wrong. When they climbed to Meinrad's hut to investigate, they found ravens guarding his body. His murderers were caught and executed by being burned alive. Meinrad, considered the saint of hospitality, is invoked for healing and justice.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Meinrad is portrayed as a dead Benedictine monk with ravens pursuing his murderers, or as a monk being beaten by two men.

ATTRIBUTES: club; ciborium; two ravens; walking staff in the form of a tau cross.

SPIRITUAL ALLY: Black Madonna of Einsiedeln.

**SACRED SITE:** Meinrad's head rests in a golden casket at the feet of his Black Madonna in the Shrine of Our Lady of Einsiedeln, approximately twenty miles from Zurich. It is a major pilgrimage site that thousands visit annually.

FEAST: 21 January.

SEE ALSO Anthony of the Desert; Seraphim the Wonder Worker and Glossary: Black Madonna; Relics.

## 👡 Meir Ba'al Ha Ness

Also known as Meyer Ba'al Ha Ness.

**PRONOUNCED**: may-eer bah-ahl ha ness.

**EPITHETS:** The Illuminator; Master of Miracles.

CLASSIFICATION: Jewish saint.

The origins of Rabbi Meir Ba'al Ha Ness, considered among the greatest Jewish sages and most powerful of saints, are mysterious. Even his real name is unknown.

- Meir is not his name, but means Illuminator.
- Ba'al Ha Ness literally means Master of Miracles, sometimes translated as Miracle Maker.

According to a Jewish legend, he was descended on his father's side from Roman emperor Nero, who converted to Judaism. Absolutely no documentation or corresponding Roman legends exist.

Meir, the prize student of the legendary Rabbi Akiba, was an active participant in the Bar Kochba revolt against Rome (132–135 ce). In its aftermath, Meir's in-laws were brutally killed by the Romans. When his wife Beruriah's sister was deported to Rome to serve in a brothel, Meir determined to save her.

Disguised as a Roman horseman, Meir traveled to Rome, where he attempted to obtain her release by bribing the bordello's guard with a bag of gold. The guard resisted, fearing that once the girl was missed, he'd be blamed and killed. After other attempts at persuasion failed, Meir told the guard to take the gold and release the girl, and he'd teach him a magical formula sure to save his life. If the guard cried out "God of Meir, answer me," Meir promised he would be rescued from all danger.

The scoffing guard demanded proof. Meir approached some vicious guard dogs, who immediately lunged at him. When he shouted, "God of Meir, answer me," the dogs were instantly soothed. The guard was convinced and Meir rescued his sister-in-law. As it turned out, the guard was right: he eventually did get in trouble for the loss of the girl and was condemned to hang. Meir's formula

 saved him. The rope around his neck broke during the execution, releasing the condemned man. This so impressed his executioners that they allowed him to go free.

Following the death of his wife, Beruriah, Rabbi Meir traveled to Babylon. He died outside Israel, but his body was returned. Meir had vowed never to lie down until the arrival of the Messiah, so he was buried standing up beside the Sea of Galilee.

- Meir promised to intercede personally on behalf of anyone who gave charity to the poor of Israel in his name. Needless to say, many charities are named in his honor.
- He is also invoked to find lost articles. If something is lost, immediately promise charitable donations in honor of Rabbi Meir and invoke his assistance.
- During crises and emergencies, repeat *Elokha d'Meir Aneini* (Hebrew for "God of Meir, answer me") three times, then, when possible, offer charity on behalf of Torah students in Israel.
- Perhaps because his own marriage ended so tragically, Rabbi Meir Ba'al Ha Ness is invoked to find a soul mate.
- 1. Light a candle for his soul.
- 2. Make charitable donations in his name or in honor of his wife, Beruriah.
- 3. Pray and request his help.

**FEAST**: the fourteenth day of the Hebrew lunar month Iyar (corresponds to the astrological sign Taurus).

**SACRED SITE:** People visit his grave in Tiberias to light candles and seek his blessing.

**OFFERINGS:** Light candles for his soul. Unlike many saints who accept any type of charitable donation, Rabbi Meir specified, while he was alive, exactly what he wished in exchange for intercession.

SEE ALSO Beruriah; Saint and Glossary: Intercessor.

# ∾ Melangell, Saint

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**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Melangell, the daughter of a seventh-century Irish king, renounced her status as a princess and became a nun. Her father arranged a politically advantageous marriage for her anyway, so she ran away from home to live a solitary life in the Tanat Valley in Powys, Wales, with the animals as her only companions. She lived in peace for fifteen years, until one day, the Prince of Powys was out rabbit hunting.

A rabbit, fleeing from the prince's hounds, ran up to Melangell, seeking refuge in the folds of her cloak. The hounds did not pursue but stood respectfully. (Another version suggests that the dogs trembled in fear.) When a huntsman attempted to blow his horn, it stuck to his lips. The prince was impressed. Realizing that he was in the presence of a holy woman, he gave her the valley, which she turned into the sanctuary of Pennant-Melangell, a place where animals were never harmed.

Saint Melangell is the guardian and matron of rabbits, hares, and other small animals, as well as of wild nature in general. Legend has it that if you are pursued by dogs, escape is assured if you cry out: "God and Saint Melangell be with me!" Alternatively, someone else can cry out, "God and Saint Melangell be with thee!" and have the same effect.

FEASTS: 31 January; 27 May.

SACRED SITE: The 12th-century Chapel of Saint Melangell, reputedly Britain's oldest Romanesque shrine.

SACRED ANIMAL: rabbits, known as "Melangell's lambs."

**OFFERINGS**: donations on behalf of animals and wildlife preserves; candles; pilgrimage.

SEE ALSO Ailbe, Saint; Giles, Saint; Gobnait, Saint.

## ∾ Melchior, Saint

**EPITHET:** King of Light.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint among most branches of Christianity.

Because Saint Melchior, sultan of Arabia, was the eldest of the Three Kings, his image is traditionally placed before the others in manger scenes. Melchior is usually credited with bringing the gift of gold and is invoked for blessings of wealth. (Alternative legends suggest that he brought the myrrh.)

FAVORED PEOPLE: travelers.

**APPEARANCE:** Melchior is a small, elderly man with a long white beard wearing crimson robes.

FEAST: 7 January.

FLAG: six gold stars on a blue field.

SEE ALSO Balthazar, Saint; Gaspar, Saint; Magi.

## no Michael Archangel, Saint

Also known as Michal; Micheal; Michel; Michiel; Michelangelo; Mihaek; Mihai; Mihailo; Mihále, Miguel; Michele; Quis Ut Deus.

EPITHETS: Captain of the Lord's House; Prince of the Heavenly Host.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Michael Archangel is venerated as a saint by Christians but is beloved by other spiritual traditions too, where he is venerated as an angel. Beloved by Pagans, Jews, Christians, Muslims, and the unaffiliated, his name means "Who Is Like the Lord." Statement or question? You decide.

Michael, as head of the Lord's army, crushed the rebellious fallen angels. Legend has it that if Lucifer could only have persuaded Michael to join him, Heaven would have been overthrown. Michael is one of only two angels named in the Old Testament. Gabriel Archangel is the other; the rest are anonymous. Both Michael and Gabriel serve as psychopomps: spirits who guide and accompany dead souls to the after-life. With Michael as an escort, there is nothing to fear. He may be requested to provide this service as needed. Michael adores heights. He often manifests atop mountains or standing on roofs. His shrines are traditionally built on mountain peaks. Veneration of Michael was often officially substituted for that of Pagan deities—specifically Mercury, Veles, and Wotan, but possibly others as well. In some African Diaspora traditions, Michael is syncretized to the warrior spirit Ogun. In Dominican Vodou traditions, the image of Michael is used to represent Belié Belcan, the spirit of justice.

Michael is invoked for protection from whatever frightens you. If you are worried about the safety of a loved one, he may be petitioned on their behalf. He accepts petitions from one person on behalf of another. He is the archangel of justice and may be invoked to provide justice for crimes committed against you. He is the special protector of victims of rape and may be invoked for protection against sexual abuse.

An old verbal charm invokes Michael's vigilant protection:

Fire of Michael to the right of me, Fire of Michael to the left of me, Fire of Michael above me, Fire of Michael below me, Fire of Michael within me, Fire of Michael all around me, Michael, with your flaming sword of cobalt blue, please protect me.

Michael is invoked for safety at sea. He is the patron of those suffering from seasickness or motion sickness. Michael is credited with miraculously producing numerous hot springs and mineral springs. He is also invoked for fire safety. He vanquishes hexes, curses, demons, and evil spirits. He protects against random evil, supernatural evil, and the Evil Eye. Michael is credited with terminating many historic epidemics and plagues.

According to legend, Michael is the angel with the flaming sword standing guard at the gates of Eden. A magic spell requests that he reproduce this service for you:

- 1. Fill small bags with grains of paradise, the spice also known as malagueta pepper (*Amomum malagueta*).
- 2. Attach these to the back of images of Michael Archangel. How many images you need depends on the number of entrances to your home or the location

you would like him to guard.

- 3. Post images on front and back doors so that Michael can stand guard for you.
- 4. A variation on this spell substitutes an image of Saint Peter, another famed gate guardian, to be placed on the front door, while an image of Michael is used for the back.

Michael makes frequent personal public appearances. Apparitions of him have been recorded in Mexico, Italy, and France. In 1995 and 1996, Egyptian Christians and Muslims witnessed numerous apparitions of Michael in the Church of Saint Michael in the village of Kafr Yusuf Samri. He appeared in various forms, both with and without wings. Miracles recorded there include exorcisms, healings, and multiplication of oil.

Michael is also the subject of various miracle-working icons. The churches in which they are housed have evolved into pilgrimage sites for those seeking Michael's help, as well as those seeking to give thanks for his protection. The most famous is the Byzantine Monastery of the Archangel Michael in Mantamados on the Greek isle of Lesbos.

In the 10th century, Saracen pirates attacked the island and the monastery. The villagers hid and the pirates threatened to kill the monks unless they revealed their location. The monks refused and the pirates slaughtered them all except one young novice who escaped and hid. When all was quiet, this novice climbed to the roof to check whether the coast was clear, but the pirates hadn't yet departed. Catching sight of him, the pirates rushed toward him to complete their massacre but were suddenly intercepted by Archangel Michael, who had come to the young man's defense with his flaming sword. The pirates retreated in terror—according to one version of the legend, all the pirates drowned—leaving the novice to bury his brethren. The surviving monk then sculpted a statue of Michael from the blood-soaked clay of the monastery floor. This became part of the icon now housed in the church. It is the only icon that defies Orthodox laws of iconography, as the upper torso is three-dimensional.

The icon has a disproportionately large head. Its facial expression reputedly visibly shifts from gentle to severe, which is interpreted as indicating Michael's current mood or his opinion on the state of your soul. Miracles are attributed to the icon. Local legend claims that Michael emerges at night and patrols village streets to protect residents from harm. In gratitude, the icon is given a new pair of golden shoes annually to replace those Michael has worn out.

FAVORED PEOPLE: Theoretically, Michael, as humanity's defender, is everyone's

guardian, but he is also specifically the patron of firefighters, warriors, paratroopers, radiologists, fencers, fencing masters, swordsmiths, knights, knife and stiletto fighters, ambulance drivers, artists, bakers, bankers, mariners, and law-enforcement officers. He protects *stregas* and other Italian magical practitioners, those who practice candle magic, fire diviners, healers, psychic counselors, and those who are dying. Judaism and the Coptic and Roman Catholic Churches all claim him as their special patron. He is the sponsor of professionals who utilize scales, including chemists, pharmacists, bakers, and grocers, possibly also drug dealers and weight watchers.

**MANIFESTATION:** Michael takes many forms, ranging from a classical winged angel to a brilliant blinding light, to a head of garlic. Garlic contains his essence. Thus garlic is more than just a protective amulet; it is an actual manifestation of Michael.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Michael is frequently portrayed as a winged Roman soldier. He stands atop a dragon, traditionally interpreted as his victory over Lucifer. Sometimes a devil figure is substituted for the dragon. Byzantine icons may portray him holding a baby, symbolizing a human soul—a reminder of Michael's function as a psychopomp.

ATTRIBUTES: shield; scales; flaming sword.

METAL: iron.

PLANETS: sun, Mercury.

**BOTANICALS**: Angelica archangelica; garlic; Michaelmas daisy (Aster tradesconti).

ELEMENTS: fire; water.

**DIRECTION**: various directions are attributed to him, usually south or east. The Kabbalah places Michael on the *right* side. Gabriel, his compatriot, is on the left.

COLORS: red; silver.

**SPIRITUAL ALLIES:** Michael leads a host of warrior angels. Gabriel is his most constant companion. Michael is among the saints most closely associated with

Black Madonnas.

### FEASTS:

- 6 September, 8 November (Orthodox Church)
- 29 September, the feast of Michaelmas (Western Church)
- Coptic and Ethiopian traditions honor Michael on the twelfth day of each month and recommend this date as the ideal time to request protection and help from him
- Michael is celebrated in Cornwall on 8 May.
- Other local feasts include 9 June, 18 June, 27 October, and 10 December.

## SACRED SITES:

- Mont-Saint-Michel in Normandy was dedicated to Michael in 708 ce, after he appeared to Aubert, bishop of Avranches, in a series of dreams ordering him to dedicate a shrine to him there. A pilgrimage to Mont-Saint-Michel allegedly guarantees smooth passage to the next life. Mont-Saint-Michel bears a mystical reputation sometimes associated with the Grail.
- Saint Michael's Mount is a granite rock near Marazion, Cornwall. A castle and a church stand at its summit. In 495 ce, fishermen witnessed an apparition of Michael here and the site was dedicated to him. It is considered the Cornish counterpart to Mont-Saint-Michel.
- Rome's Castel Sant'Angelo, now a national museum, was originally commissioned by Emperor Hadrian to serve as a mausoleum for himself and his successors. Its name commemorates a miracle. In 590 ce, Rome suffered a devastating epidemic that ended abruptly when an apparition of Michael sheathing his sword was witnessed atop the castle. The castle was renamed in his honor and a statue of the archangel placed on top.
- The sanctuary of Monte Sant'Angelo in Apulia, Italy, is the oldest shrine dedicated to Michael in western Europe and the site of numerous miracles attributed to him.
- San Michele, Venice's cemetery island, honors Michael's function as a psychopomp.
- The Church of Saint Michael in the Egyptian village of Kafr Yusuf Samri is the site of numerous apparitions of Michael.
- The city of San Miguel de Allende in Mexico honors its patron saint with an annual weeklong festival known as the Alborada, featuring music, processionals, and elaborate fireworks.
- The Russian city of Archangel, named in honor of Michael, is the home of a

tamous icon of the archangel.

- The Basilica of Saint Michael Archangel in Quezon, the Philippines, is built in the shape of a key.
- Archangel Michael's Church in Znojmo in the Czech Republic is reputedly built over an ancient pre-Christian sacred site.
- The Chapel of Saint Michel in Rocamadour, France, is the home of a renowned miraculous Black Madonna.
- Michael has powerful associations with Glastonbury, England, where numerous churches are dedicated to him.

**OFFERINGS**: red candles; frankincense; myrrh; angelica; garlic; renditions of "Michael Row the Boat Ashore," a song inspired by the archangel. In Sicily, Michael is given sugar and sweet liqueurs; in Greece's Dodecanese Islands, he is traditionally given brooms as a symbolic request that he sweep evil from the world.

It is considered imperative to fulfill all vows made to Michael. He is a spirit of justice who expects people to live up to his high standards. He will not harm shirkers but will appear in dreams to remind them and may inconvenience them until all debts are paid in full.

SEE ALSO Amadour, Saint; Archangel Saints; Elijah the Prophet; Gabriel Archangel, Saint; George, Saint; James the Greater, Saint; Joan of Arc; Joseph of Arimathea; Mary; Peter, Saint; Raphael Archangel, Saint; Seven African Powers and Glossary: Black Madonna; Icon; Syncretism.

# ∾ Miguel Ángel

Also known as Miguelito; El Angelito Milagro (The Miraculous Angel).

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

Miguel Ángel Gaitán (9 July 1966–24 June 1967) died of meningitis shortly before his first birthday. In 1973, his coffin was accidentally unearthed during a violent storm and his body was found to be amazingly intact. Attempts made to return him to his coffin and grave consistently failed.

- An initial makeshift tomb collapsed.
- The original stone tomb was rebuilt, only for its walls to collapse, too.

- The coffin lid was continuously and mysteriously removed.
- Stones and heavy objects were placed on top of the coffin every evening, but by the next morning, the objects had been removed and the lid was off the casket.

Finally, Miguelito's parents, deciding that he didn't wish to be locked away, placed him in a glass-topped casket, where he has remained for over thirty years. His body still has not decomposed.

Miguelito is credited with all kinds of miracles, especially healing, prosperity, and success. If he helps you, bring a testimonial to his Argentinean shrine. People have brought copies of winning lottery tickets and copies of winning exams or papers. If they can't be brought in person, mail a copy, accompanied by a testimonial thank-you note.

Reputedly still a restless soul, Miguelito gets up at night to play with his toys.

SACRED SITE: his shrine in Villa Union in La Rioja province, Argentina.

**OFFERINGS**: flowers; candles; candy; baby clothes; toys; stuffed animals; images of angels.

SEE Glossary: Incorrupt; Saint, Unofficial.

# 👡 Milagrosa, La

**EPITHET:** The Miraculous Woman.

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

Amelia Goyri de Adot, now known as La Milagrosa, died in childbirth with her infant son on 3 May 1901 in Havana, Cuba. Mother and child were buried together in the same coffin. Her husband was so griefstricken that he visited the grave multiple times each day, leaving flowers and knocking on the burial vault three times to alert his loved ones of his presence. When departing, he always backed away so that he never turned his back on Amelia and their child.

Thirteen years later, he had Amelia exhumed in order to transfer her bones to an ossuary. Her body was found to be incorrupt, perceived by Roman Catholics as a mark of sanctity. Moreover, the baby, buried at his mother's feet, had somehow gravitated into her arms. Eduardo Adot y Lopez had the grave resealed and commissioned a marble statue to commemorate his wife and son, and this miracle.

The story spread throughout Cuba. Amelia became known as La Milagrosa, the miraculous woman. People began approaching her grave, seeking her intercession for miracles of their own. Now among Havana's most popular folk saints, La Milagrosa is invoked for virtually every need and desire, but especially for assistance with conception, pregnancy, better housing, and the ability to travel wherever and whenever you want.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Amelia's statue depicts her leaning on a cross and holding her baby in her arms.

**RITUAL**: When seeking the assistance of La Milagrosa, it is traditional to circle her grave slowly, never turning your back on it. Knock three times on the grave and make your appeal.

SACRED SITE: her tomb in the Necrópolis Cristóbal Colón in downtown Havana.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; flowers; pilgrimage; offerings on behalf of the poor.

SEE Glossary: Incorrupt; Intercessor.

## ∾ Mirabai

NAMES: Also known as Meera Bai.

CLASSIFICATION: Hindu saint.

Mirabai may be India's most popular and famous saint. Her life story serves as inspiration for much popular entertainment. She is the subject of at least ten movies, a documentary film, comic books, and a musical.

Born in approximately 1500 to a noble and wealthy Rajput Kshatriya family, her birthplace is generally given as Merata or Merta, which may be the source of her name. (It's now unclear whether Mirabai is a personal name or a title.) Her grandfather was intensely devoted to the Hindu deity Vishnu and, beginning very early in her childhood, Mirabai was involved in his religious activities; she lit incense and candles, chanted, offered food to the deities, and dressed and cared for their statues.

When Mirabai was very small, a wandering yogi carrying a statue of Lord Krishna, among Vishnu's avatars, visited their home. Mirabai longed for the statue, but the yogi did not give it to her, taking it with him when he left. The yogi soon returned, however, gave the statue to Mirabai, and immediately left again, claiming that a divine voice had ordered him to give the statue to the little girl. She became very attached to her statue, keeping it near her always.

Later, still a very young girl, Mirabai, entranced by the sight of a festive, glamorous wedding procession, asked her mother to explain what was happening. Her mother proceeded to give her a play-by-play, eventually pointing out the most bejeweled youth as the groom. Mirabai wished to know the whereabouts of *her* groom, and her mother handed her the nearby statue of handsome Krishna, saying "Here is your groom." Her mother may have meant it teasingly, but Mirabai took it literally and very seriously.

At age sixteen, Mirabai received a flesh-and-blood bridegroom. She married into the Sisodia clan, among the earliest ruling dynasties of Rajputana, now part of modern India. His family was perplexed by her piety. There may have been tension when Mirabai refused to serve the family deities or did not do so wholeheartedly, insisting that her true devotion was to Krishna alone. Her sister-in-law reputedly spread slanderous gossip about her. However, her troubles only truly began when her husband died in 1523.

As his widow, Mirabai was expected to join him in death, but she refused, insisting that she was wed to Krishna and no one else. It was then customary for Hindu widows to be immolated on their husbands' funeral pyres, an act known as *sati*. As Krishna was immortal, she would insult him by committing sati and besides, because of her relationship with Krishna, she was not, in fact, a widow. Her entire family—on both her side and her husband's—was outraged. Mirabai was subjected to abuse and to attempts on her life by family members.

- She was given a cup of poison, but although she drank it, through the intervention of Krishna, it caused her no harm
- A wicker basket secretly containing a deadly cobra was delivered to her. When she opened it, the cobra had been transformed into a saligrama, a type of sacred black stone considered emblematic of Vishnu

Following further abuse and attempts on her life, Mirabai left the palace. Her first stop was her birthplace. Her uncle and a cousin were kind to her, but in 1538. Merata became a subject of the kingdom of Jodhpur. Her uncle was then

ordered either to banish Mirabai or to subjugate her. Instead, she left Merata to devote her life fully to Krishna.

She went to live with *sadhus* (wandering ascetics), dancing and singing in temples. She became a wanderer with a *veena*—a type of stringed musical instrument—and an embarrassment to her elegant family. Mirabai may have perceived herself as an avatar of the Hindu goddess Lalita, foremost of the *gopis*, the sacred cowherdesses in thrall to Krishna.

There are different versions of the end of Mirabai's life. Her cousin wrested control of Merata back from Jodhpur. Messengers were sent to retrieve Mirabai. She did not want to go, but they insisted that they would not leave without her. She asked them to wait for one night. Mirabai entered a forest or a temple in Dwarika, sang two songs, and then merged body and soul with Krishna. A different version suggests that while praying before an image of Krishna, Mirabai requested that she never be forced to part from him. Krishna emerged from his image and entered Mirabai through her eyes. Her body fell and was discarded.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Mirabai sits close to Krishna's feet while she plays the lyre for him.

COLOR: blue (Krishna's color).

SACRED SITES: A number of temples are dedicated to her, including the Mira Mandir in Rajasthan; the Mira Mandir at Chittor, built in the late 16th century; and the Mira Mandir at Vrindavana, which claims to possess the transformed cobra saligrama. There is also a Meera Museum in Merta City.

SEE ALSO Manikkavachakar and Glossary: Holy Fool.

# ∾ Miriam the Prophetess

Also known as Maria the Prophetess; Maria Prophetissa.

CLASSIFICATION: Jewish saint.

The name Miriam may mean "mistress of the sea," "drop of the sea," or even possibly "myrrh of the sea." The biblical Miriam is described as a prophetess

who foretold the birth of her baby brother, Moses, divine child and savior. Miriam is among the stars of the biblical book Exodus, which recounts how she saved baby Moses from certain death and, by extension, rescued the entire Jewish people. Their brother, Aaron, became the progenitor of Judaism's priestly clan, the *Cohanim*, but it is Miriam who became a beloved folk hero, so popular that virtually all the women in the New Testament are named in her honor. Mary, the English form of the Hebrew Miriam, was a resoundingly popular girl's name long before the birth of Mary, Mother of Christ.

Miriam is the subject of much Jewish folklore. For example, how exactly did the Children of Israel survive in the desert for forty years? No need to ponder logistics: according to legend, in honor of Miriam, God gave the Israelites a magical mobile well of pure water that traveled with them. In addition to providing drinking water, it had healing and purifying powers. Miriam's well followed the Israelites during forty years of wandering in the desert before finally coming to rest within the Sea of Galilee.

Miriam is sometimes credited as the author of at least part of the Hebrew prayer *Mi Chamocha*, also known as the Song of the Sea or Miriam's Song. Miriam reputedly composed this song on the banks of the Red Sea, following the escape from Egypt. Scholars consider this passage to be among the oldest writings in the Bible.

Miriam, like her brother Moses, is among those who entered Heaven alive. The Angel of Death held no power over her. Instead, the Shekhina—the feminine aspect of God—transported her to Heaven with a kiss. However, Miriam reputedly maintains an accessible presence on earth: she makes her home on the shores of the Red Sea, the scene of the biblical miracle and also the home-turf of the demon-goddess Lilith, a prominent heroine/villainess of Jewish folklore. If you want to locate Miriam, that's reputedly the place to start looking.

Just as her brother, Moses, is identified with the great alchemical master Hermes Trismegistus, Miriam is identified with the influential alchemist Maria Prophetissa, or Maria the Jewess, who lived in Alexandria, Egypt, during the first century ce and is credited with inventing the bain marie. Alternatively, the otherwise anonymous author and foremother of modern chemistry deliberately named herself after Miriam.

MANIFESTATION: Miriam usually manifests as a beautiful young woman seated

on a rock by the seashore playing her tambourine, while fish dance in the water and dolphins turn cartwheels. Sometimes, she manifests as an unbelievably elderly woman.

**ATTRIBUTES**: well; chalice; a frame drum or tambourine that banishes evil beings but causes pure souls to feel joy and ecstasy. Her tambourine possesses an entrancing effect, compelling listeners to dance with joy. In a modern tradition that first emerged in the late 20th century, a Cup of Miriam, a chalice filled with water, is placed beside the traditional wine-filled Cup of Elijah on the ritual table during the Passover seder.

SEE ALSO Elijah the Prophet; Maid of Ludomir; Mary; Mary Magdalen; Marys of the Sea; Moses; Myrrh Bearers, Holy; Serah bat Asher.

### 👡 Monica, Saint

Also known as Monika; Monique; Monnica.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Monica, of Berber descent, was born a Christian in 322 ce in Tagaste, Numidia —now Souk Ahrus, Algeria— but was given in marriage to a wealthy, foultempered, adulterous Pagan. He was authoritarian and abusive. Monica invested much effort in attempts to avoid physical abuse by being incredibly attentive to his moods, as well as by demonstrating as much obedience to him as possible. It is no wonder that she eventually developed a drinking problem. Saint Monica is now the matron of abuse victims and may be petitioned to escape abuse, but also to alleviate situations in which you are forced to stay.

Everything for which Monica is now petitioned is something she herself suffered. Not only was she oppressed by her husband, her mother-in-law, who essentially ruled her, was also abusive, treating Monica with tremendous disrespect. Monica had three children, including a son, Aurelius Augustinus, now better known as Saint Augustine of Hippo, long considered to be among the most significant figures in the history of Western Christianity.

She raised Augustine as a Christian, but he initially disappointed her, going off to live with a Carthaginian woman at age fifteen, having a child out of wedlock, and engaging in spiritual quests that took him far from Christianity.

She waited eighteen years for Augustine to return to the Christian faith she had taught him as a child, but finally her dream was fulfilled. Much of what is now known of Monica derives from her son's extensive writings. Monica died in Ostia, near Rome, in 387. To some extent, as a saint, Monica absorbed functions associated with the preeminent Italian goddess Juno. Monica is matron of women, protecting and advising them through the entire life cycle, as Juno also does.

Petition Monica for protection from relationship abuse of all kinds: emotional, financial, and verbal, as well as physical. She is the matron of those trapped in unhappy marriages—theoretically men as well as women, although in her time, men were less easily trapped.

Now most renowned as the matron saint of those whose children disappoint them, the key word regarding Monica is persistence. She may have despaired, but she never gave up, converting her husband to Christianity on his deathbed and living long enough to see Augustine become the man that she hoped he'd be. Petition Monica for the endurance to withstand all situations, regardless how painful.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: abuse victims; alcoholics; widows; unhappily married women; those whose children disappoint them; victims of adultery; caregivers.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Saint Monica is usually depicted in the garb of a barefoot nun. She holds a shepherd's staff and may have an open book bearing the image of eyes.

**ATTRIBUTES**: tears; a cincture—often called a girdle (the cincture is a belt tied around the waist as a symbol of chastity).

FEASTS: 4 May (Eastern Church and American Episcopalians and Lutherans); 27 August (Western Church).

SACRED SITE: Her tomb is in the Church of Sant'Agostino in Rome, which is named after her son.

**OFFERING**: Keep them simple; she was a modest woman. Do not give her alcohol; she is a reformed alcoholic. Offerings on behalf of *others*—help for abuse victims or women's shelters, for instance—are most likely to please her.

### new Moses

Also known as Moshe (pronounced: mo-sheh); Moises (pronounced: mo-eez); Moyshe (pronounced: moy-sheh); Musa (pronounced: moo-sah).

Conventional religion venerates Moses as the lawgiver and founder of a religion. But there is another, less-heralded side to Moses, too. He is envisioned as the world's greatest, most powerful magician.

Moses' very name is a mystery. It is Egyptian, not Hebrew. Whatever name his mother initially gave him is now secret. (The names of Aaron and Miriam, Moses' older siblings, are Hebrew.) Moses may mean Son of Water, possibly a reference to his rescue from the Nile. He was closely identified with water throughout his life (his discovery in the Nile; turning the Nile to blood; parting the Red Sea; causing water to emerge from a rock), as is his sister, Miriam.

Alternatively, Moses may just mean "son of." His name may once have been attached to a deity's name. The beginning of his name may have been chopped off.

- Rameses means Son of Ra
- Thutmose means Son of Thoth

Moses himself may have abbreviated his name or it may have been edited afterward by those dismayed at such an explicit reference to Egyptian religion.

Moses is the prototype of the Divine Child—the promised savior who must be hidden until it is safe to reveal himself and fulfill his destiny. Baby Moses was placed in a reed basket and entrusted to the Nile River, where he was discovered and rescued by Batya, the Pharaoh's daughter. According to legend, Batya suffered from a painful skin disorder, possibly even leprosy, hence her need to bathe in the river (possibly for relief; possibly as part of a curative ritual). She was miraculously healed the moment baby Moses touched her. Batya recognized him as a magical child and vowed to save him.

Living at Pharaoh's court, Moses learned all the magical secrets of the Egyptians. When he escaped into the wilderness, his magical education continued. He learned the shamanic secrets of the desert tribes, too. Allegedly, Moses was so well versed in magic that when he returned to Egypt on a mission from God, Pharaoh was forced to import magicians from as far away as what is now Mali to battle with him, as Moses outshone all local magicians and had mastered their techniques.

Moses was in direct communication with the Creator, serving as his scribe. According to legend, when Moses received the Torah on Mount Sinai (or Mount Horeb, as an alternative legend suggests), he simultaneously received secret, mystic information that was not written down but transmitted orally. These teachings, or at least some of them, allegedly later emerged as the Kabbalah. Various grimoires (mystic books of magic spells and rituals) also claim to be based on these secret teachings.

The Angel of Death held no power over Moses, who was transported to Heaven by the Shekhina, who is, according to Jewish tradition, the mystical, female aspect of God. Jewish angelology suggests that Moses became an angel, or even something more powerful than an angel. Various humans are described as ascending to Heaven to be of service—the angelic names and identities of Enoch (Metatron) and Elijah (Sandalphon) are known. Miriam and Serah bat Asher also allegedly ascended to Heaven without dying first and their whereabouts are also allegedly known. Moses' whereabouts, function, and possible new angelic name are, however, a mystery.

Moses is venerated in various spiritual traditions.

- He is a beloved Jewish prophet.
- Moses in his guise as the world's most powerful magician is incorporated into the Vodou pantheon as Saint Moïse or Sen Moyiz. His image holding the Ten Commandments appears on altars and may indicate biblical Moses or the magician snake spirit Simbi, with whom he is identified.
- Moses is considered a saint by the Spiritual Churches of New Orleans.
- Sidi Musa is the Blue Melk, Lord of Water, and Djinn Master in Gnawa traditions.
- Moses is counted among the Gnostic saints.
- The Orthodox Church venerates him as Moses the Prophet and Godseer.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Moses is usually envisioned as a stern, bearded man carrying the Ten Commandments. The image of baby Moses hidden in the basket is popular in Ethiopian Jewish folk art. In classical art, as well as in some later Christian imagery, Moses is portrayed with horns on his head—a prime example is found in Michelangelo's statue of Moses.

The addition of horns derives from an error in Saint Jerome's Latin translation of the Jewish Old Testament. Exodus 34: 29–35 describes Moses' descent from Mount Sinai with the Ten Commandments. Having been in the direct presence of Cod, he has experienced some cort of physical transformation that exuses him to forever after veil his face, except when alone in the presence of God. Something has happened to his face that makes him either frightening or dangerous to others. Modern theorists speculate that Moses may have experienced excessive radiation exposure.

The Hebrew word used to describe Moses—*Keren* or *Karan*—literally means "radiant," "radiating," or "light." An earlier Greek translation uses the word "shining." Jerome, however, apparently understood something radiating from Moses' face as synonymous with "protruding," and interpreted this to mean he had sprouted horns. The anti-Semitic belief that Jews have horns is believed to stem from this mistranslation.

ATTRIBUTES: two tablets of the Ten Commandments; almond-wood staff.

SACRED ANIMAL: snake.

FEASTS:

- Moses was born on the seventh day of the Hebrew lunar month Adar and left this world on the same day 120 years later.
- The Orthodox Church honors Moses with a feast on 4 September.

SACRED SITE: Michelangelo's statue of Moses is housed in Rome's Church of Saint Peter in Chains. Although the statue is in a church, author Giorgio Vasari (1511–1574) reported that Rome's Jews "flocked like starlings" to see the statue of Moses.

SEE ALSO Gnostic Saints; Miriam; Serah bat Asher; Wazana, Jacob and Glossary: Djinn.

# ∾ Moses the Black, Saint

Also known as Moses the Ethiopian.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Moses (c. 330–28 August 405) was an Ethiopian slave forced to serve in the home of an Egyptian government official. For one reason or another, possibly because Moses was caught stealing, he was driven into the desert and left there. Perhaps he was expected to die or to come crawling back begging for

forgiveness. Instead, Moses, a huge powerful man, became the leader of a band of seventy-five outlaws who terrorized the desert, robbing and sometimes killing travelers.

Moses and his cohorts repeatedly trounced troops assigned by the governor to capture or kill them. Finally, the governor sent out a force so huge that Moses and his band were forced to take a different approach: they scattered and disappeared into the desert they knew so well. Moses sought refuge at the Petra monastery in Skete, whose seventy-five monks were hermits and anchorites. (Yes, the same number as the outlaws.)

Moses presented himself as a pilgrim. Although the monks were not fooled, they sheltered him, giving him a cell and asking no questions. While residing in the monastery, Moses experienced a spiritual epiphany and decided to begin a new life as a monk. He spent the rest of his life struggling with his sexual impulses and violent temper.

Moses vowed never again to harm another human being. Four brigands once attacked him in the desert. In the old days, Moses would have killed them. Instead, he overcame them. Tying up the brigands, he slung them all over his shoulder and dumped them on the floor of the church, telling the other monks to decide what to do with them.

Eventually becoming a priest, Moses founded a new monastery consisting of seventy-five monks. He foresaw his own death when the monastery was attacked by brigands. Moses refused to take up arms against the attackers. He sent many of his monks into hiding and greeted his attackers at the door. He perceived that he was fulfilling the prophecy of Matthew 26:52: "All who live by the sword will perish by the sword." Indeed, he was killed with a sword on 28 August 405. He was seventy-five years old.

Sometimes described as the "apostle of non-violence," Saint Moses is invoked to make peace in violent social and domestic situations.

Ordered to attend a meeting intended to pronounce judgment on another monk who was accused of infractions, Moses arrived carrying a leaky bag filled with sand on his back. Asked what he was doing, Moses explained that he carried his sins, which spilled out behind him so that they were not visible to him, although they were to others. The metaphor was taken; no judgment was passed on the erring monk, who was forgiven. **FAVORED PEOPLE**: pacifists; those who repent of formerly violent lives; those in need of second, or third, or fourth, or even more chances.

**ATTRIBUTE:** a bag or basket leaking sand.

NUMBER: 75.

SACRED SITE: Monastery of al-Baramus (Deir al-Baramus) in Wadi al-Natrun, Egypt.

**FEASTS:** 28 August; the twenty-fourth day of Paoni, the tenth month of the Coptic calendar.

# ∾ Muerte, San La

Also known as Saint Skeleton, Saint Death.

**PRONOUNCED**: mwair-tay or mwair-teh.

**EPITHET:** Saint Death.

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

When God appointed him Lord of Death, San La Muerte complained that no one would love him if his only function was ending lives. In response, God blessed Saint Death with expanded powers so that he can enhance and improve lives, too. Many consider San La Muerte, Saint Death, to be the most powerful of Argentina's numerous folk saints. Death is invoked to protect life.

San La Muerte's origins derive from shamanic Guarani traditions. (The Guarani are an indigenous South American people.) Although he is invoked to curse and even to kill, he is more usually petitioned for miracles involving family, finances, health, employment, and love. He implements justice. Devotees are cautioned to ask him only for what is just.

San La Muerte developed a notorious reputation because of his associations with outlaws and criminals, who adore him for his ability to render a body invulnerable to harm. Over the years, his devotee base has broadened as he has become increasingly popular, but San La Muerte still bears something of an unsavory reputation, especially among those who are *not* his devotees. In addition to the nature of some of his devotees, San La Muerte's skeletal imagery and occult background, not to mention his associations with death, make some people very nervous.

Devotees consider him an aggressively benevolent, protective saint. In the context of predominately Roman Catholic Argentina, San La Muerte is called a saint, but clearly he does not have the Vatican stamp of approval, nor is he expected ever to become an official saint. San La Muerte is also sometimes described as a protecting angel.

The name San La Muerte refers to both a magical object—a talisman—and the folk saint. The talisman is the older form—the most ancient method of accessing this great power that is San La Muerte. It was initially a magical device used to injure, obstruct, or kill an enemy. The power was concentrated into a tiny figure, then ritually released and focused on its targeted victim. The talisman eventually evolved into a personified spirit, now the more popular form. Myths explaining the origins of the saint refer to encounters between the Guarani and the Franciscans and Jesuits who came to convert them. There are different versions of San La Muerte's true identity, but the consistent theme is that he starved to death and was reduced to a skeleton.

- He may have been a wonderful, just king who protected the poor, but was overthrown by outsiders who chained him to his throne until he starved. When he went to Heaven, God awarded him a throne in a room filled with candles, one for each soul on earth. San La Muerte is responsible for protecting the candles so they aren't prematurely extinguished and for collecting souls associated with candles that have gone out.
- He may have been a shaman who liked to squat in meditation. Arrested by Roman Catholic priests who imprisoned him with lepers, the shaman refused to eat. He just stood, leaning on his L-shaped staff until he was a skeleton and died. The staff evolved into a scythe.
- He may have been a shaman who fasted and squatted in such a lengthy vision quest that he became a skeleton and his soul entered the spirit realm.

San La Muerte is envisioned as a squatting or standing skeleton. Traditional Guarani religion venerates bones, considering them magically and spiritually potent, especially the bones of famous magicians, sorcerers, healers, and shamans. Shrines were once constructed from human remains.

San La Muerte amulets are carved from bone, bullets, or wood from a cemetery or road-side shrine cross. The most nowerful are believed to be those

carved from human bone or from a bullet extracted from a corpse. The most prized San La Muerte amulets are carved by prisoners, because San La Muerte died while imprisoned on a Good Friday, the day Christ died.

According to devotees, San La Muerte can render someone invulnerable to bullets, knives, or any lethal weapon. His amulets are favored by lawenforcement officers, criminals, and those who perceive their lives to be at risk from violent death.

San La Muerte amulets are carried but are also inserted under the skin for constant protection and also as a form of devotion. By inserting the amulets, devotees literally become a shrine for San La Muerte. The painful procedure is also done as an offering or as fulfillment of a vow. Some wear the image of San La Muerte as a tattoo.

When people are ready to die, their San La Muerte amulets should be removed and then buried with them. The purpose of these amulets is to prolong life and obstruct death, so if amulets worn beneath the skin are not removed before death, they may prolong the process agonizingly and indefinitely.

San La Muerte is venerated by all kinds of people, but he has a strong following among criminals and prisoners. He is invoked for protection, safety, success, and victory, and for pardons and leniency. San La Muerte also bestows gambling luck, performs miraculous healings, cures infertility, and locates lost and stolen objects.

## San La Muerte Retrieval Service

- 1. Hang a San La Muerte amulet upside down from a cord like a pendulum.
- 2. Twist the cord tightly and then release it.
- 3. Once he stops spinning, San La Muerte will allegedly face the direction where the missing object is located.
- 4. When the item is recovered, burn an upside-down red or black candle in thanks and respect. It is believed that if the item isn't returned, the thief will die.

San La Muerte is also called San Justo (Saint Justice), Señor de la Muerte (Lord of Death), Señor de la Buena Muerte (Lord of Good Death), and Skinny (Flaquito in Spanish and Pirucho in Guarani).

Rituals for San La Muerte are traditionally performed secretly and discreetly, but his fiestas are very public and well attended. San La Muerte is syncretized with Jesus Christ, or specifically with Christ's skeleton. He is also identified with the Fourth Horseman of the Apocalypse. ("And behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death . . ." (Revelation 6: 8). His methods are described as akin to the Mafia. Do not ask for favors unless you are sure that you can and will pay your debt. If not properly thanked, San La Muerte revokes miracles.

**FAVORED PEOPLE:** San La Muerte is patron of those who care for the contagious. He protects those who have contact with infection from getting sick. According to legend, in his own life, San La Muerte cared for lepers but did not get sick. Those who consider bad luck and poverty to be contagious may also be under San La Muerte's patronage.

MANIFESTATION: San La Muerte manifests as a naked skeleton or wears a black cape.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: There are two traditional images of San La Muerte: one squatting and the other standing with a scythe. The squatting image is reminiscent of traditional Guarani burial positions; the standing image recalls the Grim Reaper. His images are traditionally kept private and are not left exposed for casual public viewing. As his popularity grows, however, San La Muerte's image becomes more public and openly displayed.

ATTRIBUTE: scythe.

COLORS: black; red.

SACRED DAY: Monday.

ALTAR: San La Muerte requires his very own altar. Do not place other saints or spirits on his altar.

**FEAST:** The date of his feast varies, but it's always in August. Festivities last a week. Possible start dates include 13, 15, or 20 August. Historically, it has not always been easy to receive legal permits for fiestas honoring San La Muerte.

**SACRED SITES:** San La Muerte has a shrine in Posadas, Argentina. His annual fiesta is celebrated in Empedrado, Argentina.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; flowers; aguardiente or other hard liquor; bread; candy; fruit; popcorn; pumpkins.

SEE ALSO Gaucho Gil; López, Francisco; Muerte, La Santissima; Pascual, El Rey; Pascualito, Saint and Glossary: Saint, Unofficial, Syncretism.

∾ Muerte, La Santissima

Also known as Santa Muerte (Saint Death); La Madrina (The Godmother); La Comadre (The Other Mother); Querida Muerte (Beloved Death); La Muerte (Death).

EPITHETS: Most Holy Death; The White Girl; Skinny; Saint Death.

**CLASSIFICATION:** unofficial saint.

La Santissima Muerte, Blessed Death, is an increasingly popular unofficial saint. Once venerated exclusively in Mexico, she now has devotees worldwide. She is a spirit of death, but she is also Death itself—the ultimate femme fatale.

Santissima Muerte literally means the most holy or the most sacred death. She is also commonly called Santa Muerte—Saint Death—indicating that people perceive her to be a saint, although the Roman Catholic Church adamantly does not. Others consider her a goddess or an archangel, the equivalent of Michael or Raphael, essentially a supreme angel of death. Santissima Muerte is also sometimes described as the Mexican Kali, a reference to India's fierce mother goddess. Another close relative may be Russia's formidable witch goddess Baba Yaga, who lives in a hut surrounded by a fence made of human bones and skulls.

Santa Muerte's emergence as a popular unofficial saint is comparatively recent. She emerged in her currently recognizable modern form during the latter 20th century, in approximately the 1950s or early 1960s, although she may have been venerated discreetly long before and her roots may lie very deep. She falls

squarely into an ancient indigenous Central and South American tradition of venerating sacred bones.

Who is La Santissima Muerte?

- She may be a modern manifestation of the Aztec deity Mictlancihuatl, Lady of Death.
- She may be the survival of a now otherwise unknown Mexican goddess.
- She may be a Mexican manifestation of the European Grim Reaper—essentially a *mestiza* spirit that blends indigenous and Spanish traditions.
- She may be a spirit who appeared in a dream to a 19th-century *brujo* (shaman; sorcerer) in Veracruz, identifying herself and demanding veneration.
- Some devotees perceive her as the shadow side of the Lady of Guadalupe.
- She may be all or any combination of the above.

As Death, Santissima Muerte is fearless and all conquering. Nothing is beyond her capacity to remedy, control, or eliminate. Many adore her precisely because they feel comfortable asking her for *anything*, including requests that other saints will automatically reject, either because they are not in harmony with Church doctrine or because they are clearly not ethical or legal. Santissima Muerte must never be petitioned lightly or casually; after all, you are literally conjuring death. She is a dangerous saint to invoke, but she can do everything. La Santissima Muerte is loved *and* feared.

Because Santissima Muerte is considered a dangerous, volatile being who must be handled with care, it's traditional to invoke her simultaneously with powerful but benevolent spirits like Saints Anthony of Padua, Helena, or Michael Archangel, so that they can keep her in line if necessary. Santisima Muerte allows these three saints to share her altar, but she is not compatible with all saints.

Santissima Muerte is petitioned for matters of life and death.

- She protects those in life-threatening situations or occupations, including those who work with scary, dangerous, lethal people or who must come into proximity to them.
- She protects those who work or live in dangerous neighborhoods, as well as those traveling through those places.
- She is invoked for anything involving death—for instance, mercy killings or suicides. She may be petitioned for a quick and painless death.

- She may be petitioned for assistance with the dead and with the ancestral realm. She can obtain information from beyond and she can banish ghosts or summon them. If something scary has emerged from a Ouija board, Santissima Muerte can contain it and send it away.
- She is traditionally petitioned by women seeking the return of errant husbands or lovers.

Although she is now entering the mainstream, veneration of Santa Muerté was discouraged by local Church authorities for decades and even outlawed. Strong attempts were made to sensationalize her. The rumor that if Santissima Muerte grants your request, she'll take the life of a loved one in exchange is blatantly untrue—just a scare tactic intended to discourage veneration. Many magic spells exist to invoke her protection, like this one:

- 1. Blend white rice, red rose petals, and rosemary in a bowl.
- 2. Place it before an image of Santissima Muerte.
- 3. Place a white candle in the bowl and burn it, while praying and invoking Santa Muerte.
- 4. Once the candle has burned out, bury most of the remnants, but reserve a little, especially any candle wax that has formed auspicious-seeming shapes like hearts or flowers.
- 5. Place this reserve in a small red flannel, silk, velvet, or satin drawstring bag.
- 6. Keep it under your pillow or mattress, or carry it with you for spiritual protection.

An alternative spell to invoke her protection:

- 1. Place six white roses, carnations, lilies, or other fresh flowers in a vase filled with water and also containing a handful of coins.
- 2. Leave this vase at the gates or threshold of a cemetery.
- 3. Alternatively, leave the vase at the very first grave you see upon entering a cemetery.

Santa Muerte accepts mail. Write her a nice letter explaining your request very clearly. Then choose a mode of delivery.

- Place this paper beneath a candle dedicated to Santissima Muerte.
- Tie the paper to her statue's scythe.

• Give the paper to Santa Muerte directly—stuff small slips of paper into her eye sockets or mouth, or wherever there is room on her statue.

In August 2007, a new statue of the saint was unveiled in Mexico City displaying a brand-new look for Saint Death. Rather than skeletal, this image depicts her as a more conventional saint with a porcelain face and long, flowing brown hair, dressed in a beautiful gown and veil. Her extreme pallor is the only clue to her true identity. Reputedly Santissima Muerte appeared to a woman in December 2006 requesting this image, but many long-term devotees responded cynically, perceiving that her image was being softened. However, there are historical reports of Santa Muerte manifesting in this form.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: Death does not discriminate and neither does Santissima Muerte. She accepts you no matter who you are or what you have done. This is one of the reasons for her popularity. However, she is also considered the special matron of prostitutes, witches, magical practitioners, fortunetellers, necromancers, and those in any profession, legal or otherwise, that brings them close to death, including grave diggers and undertakers.

**MANIFESTATION:** Santissima Muerte visits devotees in dreams and as an apparition, offering advice and information. She typically manifests as a robed skeleton but also as a lifelike apparition. Some describe her as appearing in the guise of a tall beautiful woman with flesh as white as bone.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Santissima Muerte is traditionally represented by a very distinctive image—a glamorous Grim Reaper—but she is also easily represented by a miniature coffin or grave-digger's tools. Some use a skull to represent her or even a skull-and-crossbones flag. Images of Santa Muerte and Guadalupe are sometimes blended, with Santa Muerte appearing posed as Guadalupe and dressed in her distinctive clothes. Santissima Muerte's image appears on all standard trappings of sainthood—holy cards, medallion, votive candles, and especially statues.

Statues of La Santisima Muerte are traditionally color coded.

- Dressed in black, she is petitioned for protection and revenge.
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- Dressed in red, petitions are incorporated into love spens.
- Dressed in white, she is petitioned for good fortune, for breaking bad luck, and for healing.

Black, red, and white are her original colors; however, as she has achieved greater popularity, new colors have also evolved.

- Dressed in yellow or gold, she is invoked for economic success.
- Santissima Muerte dressed in a robe of seven colors indicates that she works alongside the Seven African Powers or possesses all their powers.

Statues are sometimes sold in sets, thus you can maintain multiple images of Santa Muerte on an altar. Statues are often entirely made of resin—in other words, the clothing is resin too, not fabric, and so not changeable. Some prefer a naked skeleton statue that they can literally dress, sometimes making the saint's garments as part of an offering, spell, or repayment.

Light color-coordinated candles to reinforce requests and spells. For complete protection, burn twelve candles—three red, three black, and three white—in a circle around a statue of Santissima Muerte, or donate twelve candles to one of her shrines.

Two-dimensional images of Santissima Muerte, such as murals or prints, are also popular.

ATTRIBUTES: scythe; scales; crystal ball; hourglass.

SACRED ANIMAL: owl.

**SACRED SITES:** Santissima Muerte has at least one dozen shrines in Mexico City, the epicenter of her veneration, plus innumerable public and private shrines elsewhere. A traditional offering involves vowing to light a pair of candles at a set number of her shrines.

FEAST: every day, but especially the first day of each month; 2 November, All Souls' Day, also known as the Day of the Dead.

## NUMBER: 7.

**fragrance:** musk. *Siete Machos*, a commercially available perfumed lotion sold in botanicas and other spiritual supply stores, is frequently incorporated into

offerings or spells directed to Santissima Muerte. Some practitioners rub their hands with it before approaching Santissima. Alternatively, it may be blended in a bowl or dish with Holy Water or with other colognes possessing magical associations, like Florida Water or 4711, and given to her as an offering.

**OFFERINGS**: bread; water; incense; candles; prayers and veneration; a tattoo of her image; candy; fruit, especially shiny red apples; flowers, usually white roses (her flowers must *always* be fresh, not withered); rum; sherry; tequila; whisky; chocolate; sugar skulls; rosaries. Cigars and cigarettes are traditionally lit and the smoke blown over her image. Dedicate a mural to her.

SEE ALSO Anthony of Padua, Saint; Archangel Saints; Guadalupe; Helena, Saint; Martha the Dominator; Mary; Michael Archangel, Saint; Muerte, San La; Mundita, Saint; Pascual El Rey; Pascualito, Saint; Raphael Archangel, Saint; Seven African Powers and Glossary: Apparitions; Holy Water; Rosary.

### ∾ Mundita, Saint

Also known as Munditia.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

In 1675, a skeleton identified as belonging to Saint Mundita left the Catacomb of Cyriaca in Rome and traveled to Munich, now in modern Germany. Records indicated that this female Christian martyr died in 310, but nothing else is known about her. In 1804, her relics were concealed behind a wall in the Church of Saint Peter, but the wall was removed in 1883 and she was brought into the light.

Saint Mundita's macabre appearance has made her a tremendous tourist attraction. Mundita's relics resemble something from a fairy-tale or a Gothic novel. She lies, in Snow White fashion, in a beautiful glass casket adorned with images of angels; her gilded skeleton, covered with massive gems, is completely exposed to view. Saint Mundita is positioned to face her viewers—glass eyes fill her skull's empty sockets. Jewels cover her rotting teeth. She is the subject of much morbid fascination, as well as substantial veneration.

Saint Mundita is the guardian saint of unmarried women. As the Trinidadian poet and author Vahni Capildeo writes in her poem "Saint Munditia," she is the "patron saint of single women, those who live alone, bachelor queens, spinsters,

solteras...."

FAVORED PEOPLE: unmarried women; single ladies.

SACRED SITE: Saint Peter's Church in Munich.

FEAST: 17 November—celebrated with a candle-light processional in Munich.

**SEE** Glossary: *Relics*.

# ∾ Murgan, Saint

Also known as Liban; Murgen; Morgan; Murgan la Sirène; Murgan the Mermaid.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Murgan is the saint of self-transformation. In her earliest incarnation, her name was Liban. She may have been a mortal-born woman or she may have been supernatural from the start—a *sidhe* (pronounced: shee), an Irish fairy woman. She then became a mermaid and finally a Christian saint.

Different versions of Liban's myth exist, and different genealogies are attributed to her.

- She may be a member of the Tuatha Dé Danaan, the Children of Danu who inhabited Ireland before the Gaels and who, having been defeated, retreated to the fairy mounds, where they live in a parallel universe, only sometimes interacting with people.
- The Irish sea goddess Fand has a sister named Liban, who may or may not be the same being as the saint.
- Liban may be the daughter of the Irish moon goddess Aynia, who may be responsible for—or is at least blamed for—causing the great flood that destroyed their entire family.

The story of the flood is reminiscent of other Irish myths, especially the one that recounts the birth of the Boyne River. Someone breaks a taboo at a sacred healing well and the result is a sudden, explosive, deadly flood. In this case, only Liban and her little dog survive. They were swept into a subterranean cave,

where they dwelled for a year. Liban eventually became a mermaid, sprouting the tail of a salmon, a fish that Irish mythology associates with great wisdom. Depending on the version of her story, her dog transformed into an otter or a sea lion. For hundreds of years, the pair swam and frolicked, until in 558 ce, fishermen, attracted by her magical voice, trapped Liban in their nets.

She was baptized and renamed Murgan, meaning "born of the sea," but also a traditional word for Celtic mermaids, as in the sea fairy, Morgan le Fay. The fishermen carted her around Ireland in a tank of water like a carnival freak. Crowds flocked to see her; miracles were attributed to her. Although it is not explicitly stated, the implication in her myth is that Murgan was miserable.

Eventually, the sixth-century Irish saint Comgall, founder of Bangor Abbey, intervened. Comgall asked Murgan if she'd rather die immediately and be guaranteed admission to Heaven or live longer but take her chances on her future destination. She chose immediate death. A more sanitized version of her legend suggests that Saint Comgall himself first encountered Liban at sea and that she asked to be baptized. In either version, her pet does not survive their transition to land but is killed by a "hero," who later apologizes to Liban-Murgan.

Murgan was buried in Ireland's Church of Saint Beoc (Tec-da-Beoc), which features a holy well. Miracles were soon attributed to her. Murgan had been baptized and was apparently an unusually chaste mermaid—her hagiography emphasizes her virginity—and so she became Saint Murgan. She is described as "canonized," but the procedure in her day was not the same as it is today popular acclaim was more or less sufficient. Saint Murgan was eventually absorbed into the official Roman Catholic calendar roll of saints along with other Celtic saints, but a mermaid saint is an embarrassment and she does not receive much official attention. Saint Murgan is invoked for blessings of transformation and adaptability, not to mention safety at sea.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Saint Murgan is a mermaid.

SACRED ANIMALS: otters; seals; sea lions.

SEE ALSO Expedite, Saint; Guinefort, Saint; Margaret of Antioch; Well Saints and Glossary: Saint, Official.

∾ Mychal Judge, Father

#### **EPITHET:** The Saint of 9/11.

#### **CLASSIFICATION:** unofficial saint.

Father Mychal Judge died on September 11, 2001, the first recorded victim of the terrorist attack on New York City's Twin Towers at the World Trade Center. Although Judge was not the first to die, his was the first body identified and so his body bag was labeled "Victim 0001."

Born 11 May 1933 in Brooklyn, the son of Irish immigrants, his birth name was Robert Emmet Judge. Mychal was the religious name he adopted following his 1961 ordination as a Roman Catholic priest. His deep spiritual affinities and wells of compassion manifested very early in his life. As a young child growing up during the Great Depression, he often gave his only quarter to beggars. He never lost this self-less generosity; later in life, as a priest, he literally gave the coat off his back to a homeless woman saying: "She needs it more than me."

In 1992, Judge was appointed Chaplain of the Fire Department of New York City. His duties included counseling firefighters and their families; however, he consistently went above and beyond the call of duty. Father Mychal appeared at the fires themselves, as well as at hospitals and funerals. It was in that capacity that Mychal Judge was at the World Trade Center on the fateful morning of 11 September 2001.

The sixty-eight-year-old Judge rushed to the site as one of the first responders. As he ran into the building, New York's Mayor Rudy Giuliani called out to him: "Father Mike, pray for us!" Father Mychal responded: "I always do! I always pray for you!" This vow to continually pray for us were Father Mike's last publicly recorded words.

That morning, he administered last rites to people lying in the street before entering the North Tower. Although he was not the only priest present, he was the only one to actually enter the building, where he proceeded to offer prayers, absolution, and assistance as needed. When commanders gave the order to evacuate the building, Father Mike refused to abandon the firefighters still within, saying: "My work here is not finished."

At approximately 9:50 that morning, Father Mychal, attempting to reach some injured firefighters, climbed up to the mezzanine. As he witnessed the dozens of people who had jumped from the building's upper levels crashing to their deaths, he began fervently and repeatedly praying: "Jesus, please end this right now! God, please end this!" He died praying.

At 9:59, the South Tower collapsed, sending concrete and debris hurtling into

the lobby of the North Tower at speeds of over 100 mph and killing many within, including Father Mychal. The official cause of his death was blunt-force trauma to the head. A photograph of his body being carried by five men has become one of the iconic images of that tragic day.

Long before his death, Father Mychal Judge was already a hero to many. In addition to being a tireless priest, he was a quintessential New Yorker: gregarious, assertive, and plainspoken. In 1974, he climbed up a fire ladder and talked an armed hostage-taker into surrendering peacefully.

But Father Mike was also controversial. In the early 1970s, he suffered from alcoholism, although it never interfered with his duties. In 1978, with the help of Alcoholics Anonymous, he attained sobriety, sharing his story in order to help others. He once told President Bill Clinton that, in his opinion, the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous had done more good for humanity than Mother Teresa.

In the early 1980s, Father Mychal was among the first to counsel those suffering from AIDS, presiding over their funeral Masses and providing comfort for their families. A man of tremendous compassion and bravery, he counseled gays and lesbians, as well as many who were otherwise estranged from the Church. He turned no one away. When church officials urged a boycott of the first gay-inclusive Saint Patrick's Day parade in the New York City borough of Queens, Father Mychal showed up in his friar's habit, making sure to be photographed and interviewed by the media.

Father Mike held Mass in unlikely places, including firehouses—much to the displeasure of more formal Church authorities. Father Mychal once told a disapproving monsignor who frequently called to admonish him: "If I've ever done anything to embarrass or hurt the Church I love so much, you can burn me at the stake in front of St. Patrick's."

Even while alive, many considered him a living saint. Since his death, there have been calls for his canonization; however, at the time of the writing of this book, the process is still in its earliest stages. Many consider him already a saint by popular acclaim. Holy cards and icons featuring his image are readily available. A documentary of his life is entitled *Saint of* 9/11: *The True Story of Father Mychal Judge*.

On 27 July 2002, Father Mychal was declared a saint by the Orthodox-Catholic Church of America, established in the United States in 1892. He is also recognized as a saint by the Old Catholic Church, which is not affiliated with the Vatican. An Old Catholic Church in Dallas is named in his honor.

During his lifetime, Father Mychal Judge was credited with at least one

heating miracle: doctors had advised a firefighter and his wife that their baby would be born with hydrocephaly. After Father Mike prayed intensively with the family for weeks, laying his hands on the mother's belly, she gave birth to a perfectly healthy baby girl. Following his death, numerous miraculous healings have been credited to him. Father Mike is credited with healing children whose parents sought his intercession. In one case, a baby born with holes in his heart was spontaneously healed. He has also been credited with healing autism.

"If no one told you today that they love you, let me tell you: I love you, and no matter what mess you're in, you're always held and loved by God." —Father Mychal Judge

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: In life, Father Mychal turned no one away, but among those considered his primary constituents are firefighters and their families, police officers, first responders, the abandoned, poor, homeless, and needy, those with personal links to the Twin Towers, survivors of 9/11 and the families and loved ones of those who did not survive, Franciscans preparing to make their vows, recovering alcoholics or those who would like to recover, those with AIDS or HIV, immigrants, those who feel estranged from the Church, gays, lesbians, and the transgendered.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Many images of Father Mychal exist. While alive, he was frequently photographed. Since his death, he has served as inspiration for many artists. For instance, an icon created by Father William Hart McNichols depicts him in the company of Saint Francis of Assisi, the two floating in the skies over the burning Twin Towers.

**SPIRITUAL ALLIES:** Saint Francis. Judge had great devotion for Mary and to Saint Claire, on whose feast he took his vows.

#### SACRED SITES:

- Saint Francis of Assisi Church on 31st Street in New York City is where Mychal prayed in his youth, where he received the spiritual calling to join the Franciscans and also the site of his funeral.
- A portion of West 31st Street has been renamed Father Mychal F. Judge Street. Those who do not wish to enter a church, even one as welcoming as Saint Francis of Assisi, may invoke Father Mike by the street sign honoring him.

- New York City's Ground Zero, where he met his death
- his gravesite in Holy Sepulchre Church in Totowa, New Jersey

FEASTS: 11 September, the anniversary of his death; 11 May, his birthday.

NUMBER: 11.

**OFFERINGS**: good deeds and donations on behalf of firefighters or the poor and ailing; candles; images of firefighters. In life, Father Mychal enjoyed the whimsical. Do not offer alcohol: it's disrespectful.

SEE ALSO Claire, Saint; Francis of Assisi; Mary; Patrick, Saint and Glossary: Saint, Official; Saint, Unofficial.

# ∾ Myrrh Bearers, Holy

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as saints by most branches of Christianity.

The Holy Myrrh Bearers are the women who, as described in the Gospel of Matthew 28:5–6, brought myrrh and other materials to the Garden of Gethsemane with the intention of anointing the dead body of Jesus. When they arrived, an angel told them the tomb was empty. The Myrrh Bearers are the subject of miraculous icons. Although each is also venerated separately, they are invoked as a group for blessings, protection, and spiritual guidance.

Although the Gospel of Matthew identifies the Myrrh Bearers only as Mary Magdalen and "the other Mary," the group is usually envisioned as larger. The seven women traditionally considered Holy Myrrh Bearers include:

- Mary Magdalen
- Mary Jacobe
- Mary Salomé
- Mary of Bethany
- Martha of Bethany
- Saint Susanna
- Saint Joanna
- Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus are also sometimes considered Myrrh Bearers.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Three or more Myrrh Bearers walk or stand closely together. At least one carries an unguent pot. Sometimes Mary Magdalen is portrayed alone as *the* Myrrh Bearer.

FEASTS: 11 May. In the Eastern Orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches, the second Sunday after Easter is the Sunday of the Myrrh Bearers. Each Myrrh Bearer may also be venerated alone on her individual feast.

SACRED SITES: Cathedral of the Holy Myrrh Bearers in Baku, Azerbaijan, but many other churches are also dedicated to them.

**OFFERINGS**: myrrh; essential oil of myrrh; charitable donations to burial societies or on behalf of those who cannot afford funerals. Observe all their individual feasts, as well as their shared Sunday.

SEE ALSO Fourteen Holy Helpers; Joseph of Arimathea; Martha, Saint; Mary Magdalen; Marys of the Sea; Susanna, Saint.

# Ν

## ∾ Nachman of Bratslav

Also known as Reb Nokhmen Broslever or Breslover; the Bratslaver Rebbe.

**PRONOUNCED**: The "ch" in Nachman is the guttural sound that appears in the German *ach*, not in the English *Rachel* or *change*.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Jewish saint.

Nachman of Bratslav (4 April 1772–16 October 1810) was the great-grandson of the Baal Shem Tov, the founder of modern Hasidism. Nachman is the founder of the Bratslaver Hassidic Dynasty. Renowned as a storyteller—he told religious allegories *and* fairy tales—he was a brilliant scholar, mystic, diviner, and Kabbalist, and a prolific author. He was a miracle worker in life and remains one in death.

Nachman died of tuberculosis at age thirty-eight. On his deathbed, he told his followers not to appoint a successor, because he would always be their rebbe. The Bratslaver Hasidim still function without a living master: Reb Nachman guides and protects them from beyond. Reb Nachman asked to be buried in Uman, now in modern Ukraine, the site of the 1768 massacre of at least 20,000 Jews and Poles by Cossack forces. (As many as 50,000 are estimated to have died.) Nachman sensed the hovering souls of the murdered, still waiting to be guided to their next realm, and felt that he could assist them.

The annual pilgrimage to his grave is called the Rosh Hashanah Kibbutz and coincides with the festival of the Jewish New Year. During his lifetime, he always encouraged his devotees to celebrate the New Year with him. Hundreds convened at his home for meals, prayers, and Nachman's lessons and stories. After his death, followers continued to celebrate the New Year with him, but at his gravesite instead.

Reb Nachman recommended what he called the General Remedy, or Tikkun K'lali, to heal all sorts of problems and fulfill various needs. This involves reciting ten specific psalms in this specific order: Psalms 16, 32, 41, 42, 59, 77, 90, 105, 137, and 150. Read from one to the next with no interruptions or stopping. Reb Nachman made a deathbed vow to rescue anyone from the Jewish hell realm, Gehenna, who recited the General Remedy at his grave and gave as little as a penny in charity to the poor

A Communist ban on public prayer meetings in 1917 put a damper on religious pilgrimages. Clandestine pilgrimages to Uman continued during the 1920s and early 1930s, until sixteen pilgrims were murdered in Uman and twelve more exiled to Siberia, eight fatally. As a result, substitute pilgrimages were organized for him in Lublin, Jerusalem, and at the grave of Simon bar Yochai in Meron, Israel. These continue still, as do pilgrimages in New York City and Manchester, England.

The pilgrimage to Uman was revived in 1948, when eleven people spontaneously appeared and subsequently continued, sometimes legally, sometimes not. After glasnost, the government loosened restrictions. Over 20,000 now gather annually at Nachman's grave, which is among Uman's major tourist attractions.

FEASTS: the anniversary of his death on the eighteenth day of the Hebrew lunar month Tishrei; the Jewish New Year (Rosh Hashanah).

SACRED SITE: His grave in Uman, Ukraine, may be visited year-round.

**MANTRA:** NA-NACH-NACHMA-NACHMAN-ME'UMAN is a mantra used by some, although not all, of Nachman's followers. The first four components play upon Nachman's name. The last—*Me'Uman*—is a pun that refers to Nachman's gravesite but also means "beloved." The mantra is chanted but also appears on bumper stickers, as graffiti, incorporated into jewelry, and, especially, as ornamentation on large, white, crocheted yarmulkes (skullcaps).

SEE ALSO Loewe, Rabbi Judah; Simon bar Yohai.

# 👡 Natalia, Saint

## CLASSIFICATION: venerated by most branches of Christianity.

Saint Natalia was the wife of Saint Adrian of Nicomedia, who was a member of the Roman emperor's Herculean Guard. Adrian's sudden conversion to Christianity occurred while he was literally in the process of actively persecuting Christians. Ironically, Natalia was already a Christian, albeit secretly.

Adrian's declaration of faith was followed immediately by his arrest. Natalia dressed up as a boy and sneaked into prison to bid her husband farewell and request that he bless her from Heaven. She spent the night in jail, comforting and caring for her husband and other prisoners. She was present at his torture and beheading.

When attempts were made to burn her husband's body, Natalia had to be restrained from throwing herself on the pyre. Christians were able to remove his body and give him a proper burial near Byzantium, except for one hand, which Natalia kept as a relic. An alternative legend suggests that although a sudden and miraculous thunderstorm extinguished the flames of the pyre, it was too late. Adrian's body was entirely consumed except for that hand, which Natalia was able to rescue.

Natalia spent the rest of her life living near Adrian's grave. She died on 1 December 311 of natural causes and was buried with her husband.

FAVORED PEOPLE: those who witness the torture or death of loved ones.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: a woman holding a severed hand. She also often appears on icons with Saint Adrian.

**SPIRITUAL ALLY:** Adrian and Natalia, partners in life, are invoked together as saints.

FEASTS: 8 September; 1 December; 26 August.

SEE ALSO Adrian of Nicomedia, Saint and Glossary: Relics.

👡 Nectan, Saint

#### **CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Inspired by Saint Anthony of the Desert, Saint Nectan (c. 423–17 June 510 ce), a Welsh prince of Irish descent, became a hermit. He lived in Devon's Hartland Forest or above what is now called Saint Nectan's Waterfall, near Tintagel, Cornwall—King Arthur country. Both sites claim him; he is associated with sacred waters at each site. He lived to be an old man and may have lived at both locations.

Little is known of Nectan's life, but his death was dramatic. He helped a swineherd locate two prized breeding sows who had gone missing. He was rewarded with a pair of exceptionally fine cattle. Cattle rustlers soon absconded with his cows. Nectan tracked the thieves for miles through the woods, finally confronting them. They cut off his head.

Nectan stood up from where he had fallen, picked up his head, and carried it home. Foxglove flowers sprang up wherever his blood dripped. He placed his head on a stone beside the well; then he collapsed and died. One thief was instantly struck blind; another dropped dead on the spot. A witness, who may or may not have been among the thieves, followed Nectan home, buried his body, and then presumably spread the tale.

Locations with which Saint Nectan is closely identified are particularly beautiful and were considered sacred long before Christianity, associated with pixies and fairies. Many of Nectan's sites are now associated with tremendous psychic phenomena, including ghostly apparitions. Spectral monks have been witnessed, as have Nectan's sisters, who are allegedly buried nearby. His well, waterfall, and kieve are all associated with miracles.

**ATTRIBUTE**: silver bell, which he rang during turbulent weather to save ships at sea. Allegedly, in a moment of frustration, he threw the bell into what is now Saint Nectan's Waterfall. Local rumor has it that hearing his bell ring is a harbinger of doom.

**SACRED FLOWER**: foxgloves. People bring foxgloves to his well, especially on his feast day.

#### SACRED SITES:

- Saint Nectan's Well in Stoke, Devon
- Saint Nectan's Church, built near his well
- Saint Nectan's Glen, near Tintagel
- Caint Mastan's Mataufall (his call above the eventerfall more he once to the

- Same rectan's vvaterian (ins cen above me waterian may be open to me public)
- Saint Nectan's Kieve, a plunge pool fed by the waterfall

FEAST: 17 June.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; water; donations and efforts on behalf of environmental groups working to preserve Saint Nectan's Glen.

SEE ALSO Anthony of the Desert, Saint; Denis, Saint; Winifride, Saint.

# 👡 Nguyen Trung Truc

CLASSIFICATION: folk saint.

Nguyen Trung Truc (1837–27 October 1868), the leader of Vietnamese resistance against French colonialism in the 1860s, led the raid resulting in the attack on the French warship, *L'Espérance*. Enraged French authorities repeatedly tried to capture him but failed. Finally surrendering after authorities took his mother and other civilians hostage, he was publicly executed by firing squad in the marketplace.

During the era of French rule, Nguyen Trung Truc was venerated secretly, his identity concealed behind that of the Vietnamese whale deity Ca Ong (Sir Fish). Only after the French abandoned Vietnam was it legally possible to venerate an enemy of their rule openly.

Nguyen Trung Truc is considered an especially responsive spirit, petitioned for virtually everything. His shrine flourished under the government of South Vietnam. After the Communist victory, magical and spiritual practices at his shrine were forbidden, including making offerings and requesting his help and intervention. The shamans and fortune tellers who proliferated at his shrine were banished. Instead, Nguyen Trung Truc was honored as an important Vietnamese resistance hero—no more, no less. In recent years, however, veneration has become more open and widespread.

**SACRED SITE:** his primary temple/mausoleum in the southern Vietnamese port, Rach Gia.

FESTIVAL: An annual festival is held in conjunction with the commemoration of

his death on the eighteenth and nineteenth days of the tenth lunar month of the Vietnamese calendar.

**OFFERINGS**: incense; red candles; good deeds on behalf of the needy in his honor, especially offering vegetarian meals to the poor; pilgrimage to his shrine.

# 👡 Nicholas, Saint

Also known as Nicholas of Myra; Nicholas of Bari; Nicholas the Wonder Worker; Nicolas; Nicolo; Nicola; Nikola; Mikula; Mikulás; Miklós; Mykolae; Miklavž; Claes; Claus; Nicholaus; Nicolau; Nikolae; Nikolozi; Nikolal.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

These are the facts about Good Saint Nick, among the most beloved of all saints.

- He was the bishop of Myra, now known as Demre in modern Turkey.
- He lived in the early fourth century and died in approximately 350.
- He was buried in his own cathedral.
- Nicholas developed a reputation as a wonder worker and his shrine was, for centuries, a significant and important Christian pilgrimage site.
- With the rise of Islam in the region, his relics were removed, reputedly for safekeeping—in the process passing from the Eastern to the Western Church.
- In 1087, these relics were enshrined in a new church built especially to receive them in the Italian seaport city, Bari, where they remain.

That's it. Everything else about Saint Nick is speculation, legend, and lore.

According to myth, Nicholas was exceptionally devout even as a baby, refusing his mother's breast on Wednesdays and Fridays so that he could fast. An only child, his parents died when he was young, leaving him a fortune, which he spent on good deeds, typically in the form of anonymous, secret gifts to those in need.

In the most famous legend, a poor man could not afford dowries for his three daughters. They were so poor that the girls considered prostitution. (An alternative version suggests that the father insisted that the girls sell themselves to raise money for the family.) Before they were forced to do so, Nicholas secretly provided dowries for the girls, throwing three bags filled with gold into

their window at night, one for each daughter.

Another legend describes how, during a famine, when meat was scarce and hence expensive, a butcher lured three young boys, possibly brothers, to his house, where he slaughtered and then butchered them, placing their body parts in a barrel of brine to cure. He intended to pass the boys off as pork and make a tidy profit. Nicholas clairvoyantly knew what had happened and resurrected the boys from the barrel, healing them entirely.

Saint Nicholas is beloved as a conventional saint, but he is also among the foremost magical saints. Because he is so popular and so widely venerated over huge territories, different forbidden Pagan spirits masquerade under his name.

In the Mediterranean, bearded Poseidon, King of the Sea, may sometimes lie beneath the mask of bearded Saint Nick.

- Saint Nicholas is a patron of mariners and has many associations with the sea.
- Mediterranean temples dedicated to Poseidon were rededicated as churches honoring Saint Nicholas.
- Sailors in the eastern Mediterranean once wished each other bon voyage with the words: "May Saint Nicholas hold the tiller!"

After Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire and Paganism was banished, Nicholas of Myra assumed many of the functions previously fulfilled by the goddess Artemis of Ephesus and the sea deity Poseidon.

On his feast day, Nicholas' votive image is carried from his church in Bari to the sea to bless the waters. It is returned to the church at night amid a torch-lit procession. According to legend, sailors caught in a terrible storm off the coast of what is now Turkey—once prime Poseidon territory—invoked Saint Nicholas' assistance. He suddenly manifested to them on their deck and told the men to have faith and the water to be still. He then guided the boat to safety and disappeared.

• In Albania, pre-Christian rituals honoring the dead are incorporated into Saint Nick's feast day. A feast is prepared, a candle placed in the window, and a door left open at night, inviting the saint and the souls of the dead to enter and dine. The longer the candle stays lit, the more blessings of prosperity and abundance fall upon the house and family.

- It is turditional in Albania to abstain from most on the downwise to his fast

- It is traditional in Albania to abstain from meat on the day prior to his reast. Roast meat is served at a feast after midnight on Saint Nicholas' Eve.
- A Bulgarian legend describes how Saint Nicholas once saved a ship from sinking by plugging the hole in its hull with a live carp. Carp is thus traditionally eaten on Saint Nick's feast day. The cross-shaped crown bone in the carp's head is preserved. It may be buried near a house to provide protection or sewn into a child's clothing to avert the Evil Eye.
- Russian lore suggests that Peter isn't the only saint possessing keys to the kingdom—Saint Nicholas, widely perceived as a kinder, more generous saint than Peter, has a set of keys that open Heaven's gates as well. It was once traditional to place letters directed to Saint Nicholas in the hands of the deceased before they were buried, requesting that the saint be merciful. Perhaps by extension, Nicholas is considered the patron of border guards. He protects them but may also be invoked to encourage guards to be generous or, at least, to look the other way at the right moment.
- Saint Nicholas is the guardian of animals. On his feast day, beasts of burden are traditionally given a respite from their labors.

Saint Nicholas has reputedly promised to assist anyone who remembers and honors his parents, Nonna and Theophanes.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: children; unwed mothers; pawnbrokers; captives; bankers; beggars; lawyers; butchers; schoolboys; women who wish to marry; single women; sailors; mariners; merchants; pirates; those who draw their living from the sea; prostitutes; distillers.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Nicholas is the saint most frequently represented on Orthodox icons. His icon is carried onto boats and ships to ensure safety at sea. Wives of Bulgarian sailors dip icons of Saint Nicholas into the sea while praying for the safe return of their spouses. Icons of Saint Nicholas are also traditional wedding gifts, believed to bring good luck to the marriage. The Russian icon known as Holy Hierarch Nicholas of Mozhaisk is a full-length portrayal of Nicholas holding a sword in his right hand and a city in his left, commemorating the miracle of Nicholas saving the city of Mozhaisk from enemy attack.

In the United States, Saint Nicholas has evolved into the bearded, red-suited Santa Claus who drives a sleigh pulled by reindeer and comes down the chimney on Christmas Eve with toys for good girls and boys. In much of the rest of the

world, however, Saint Nicholas retains his bishop's garb and is a sterner, more dignified figure. In either guise, Saint Nicholas is a favorite subject of early 20th-century Christmas-themed postcards.

**ATTRIBUTES**: bishop's mitre; a book; three golden balls or three small golden bags, the prototype for pawnbroker's balls.

#### SPIRITUAL ALLIES:

- In the context of icons and religious legends, Nicholas is often accompanied by angels, especially Gabriel and Michael.
- In the context of ritualized feast-day making, Nicholas is frequently accompanied by a helper spirit, typically a Pagan or demonic figure like Krampus, Ruprecht, or Black Pete. While Nicholas—or someone dressed as him—rewards well-behaved children, the helper spirit—or someone dressed in that guise—punishes the unruly, under the direction of Saint Nick.

SACRED ANIMAL: In Bulgarian lore, a magical carp is Saint Nicholas' servant.

**RITUAL**: Saint Nicholas is a gift-giver, but he does not dress like Santa Claus. He appears dressed as a bishop and there is nothing secular about him. Saint Nicholas does not visit homes at midnight. Instead, men impersonating him knock on the door in broad daylight accompanied by assistants and attendants. These representatives ask children to account for their behavior and may ask religious questions and make religious speeches.

SACRED SITES: Nicholas was first buried in his own cathedral in Myra, which became a tremendous pilgrimage destination, especially as more and more miracles were attributed to him. A scented oil known as the Manna of Saint Nicholas flowed from his tomb and allegedly possessed powers of healing.

In the 11th century, in the wake of Islam's ascendance in the region, Saint Nick's relics were removed from his grave and brought to Bari, Italy, arriving on 9 May 1087. The Basilica di San Nicola in Bari is now his foremost shrine—there are two churches at the shrine, one Orthodox and one Roman Catholic. Secretion of healing oil continues and vials of the oil may be obtained at Bari. Many other churches claim to have at least some of the relics of Saint Nicholas; however, an investigation in the 1950s confirmed that an almost intact skeleton is housed in Bari.

That said, according to an alternative legend, French Crusaders removed Nick's body from his tomb in Myra and brought him to Jerpoint Abbev in

Ireland, where a tomb is believed to be his. Another legend suggests that three pilgrims brought at least some of Nicholas' relics to Nicholausberg in Lower Saxony, in what is now Germany. The town is reputedly named for the saint, as is the church built to house the relics, which is also a pilgrimage site. Nicholas may also lie in the Church of Saint Nicholas on the Lido in Venice. A scientific study indicates that the relics in Bari and Venice come from the same skeleton.

Saint Nick's old hometown, Myra, is now called Demre-Kale. A few relics, as well as his original gravesite, are contained at the Noel Baba Kilisesi (Church of Saint Nicholas), which remains a pilgrimage site.

When Nicholas made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, he lived in a cave in Beit Jala near Bethlehem from 312 to 315, or at least so goes local legend. Saint Nicholas Orthodox Church is built on the site of Nick's cave.

Other sites dedicated to him include:

- the Saint Nicholas Cathedral in Washington, D.C.
- the Church of Saint Nicholas of the Beggars in Venice
- the Church of Saint Nicholas in Lezha, Albania
- the Mar Nicholas Cathedral in Beirut
- the Saint Nicholas Garden, a public garden across from Beirut's Nicholas Cathedral, founded in 1964 and dedicated to the saint

SACRED TREE: pine (also sacred to Poseidon).

SACRED PLANTS: *Sanicula* spp.; damiana (*Turnera diffusa*), a potent aphrodisiac known as Saint Nicholas' herb in Mexico; Saint Nicholas root (*Stevia serrata*).

**FEASTS:** 6 December, his primary feast; 19 December, celebrated as an additional feast by some Orthodox churches; 9 May, the translation of his relics to Bari; 29 July, his birthday, celebrated by some Orthodox churches.

**OFFERINGS**: donations and good deeds on behalf of the poor and needy; gifts for children; pilgrimage to one of his holy sites; a basket filled with apples, nuts, candy, and sweets; a stiff drink; candles; incense; ship-shaped tamatas, a type of Greek ex-voto; St. Nicolaus-brand Slovakian slivovitz.

SEE ALSO Gabriel Archangel, Saint, Saint; Mary; Michael Archangel, Saint, Saint; Peter, Saint and Glossary: Ex-Voto; Icon; Milagro; Myth; Relics; Syncretism.

## 🔊 Nikbanou, Princess

Also known as Nikhbanou; Nikbanoo; Nekh Banu; Hayat Banu.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Zoroastrian saint.

Nikbanou was the second daughter of Yazdgird III, the twenty-ninth and last of the Sassanid kings to reign prior to the Islamic conquest of Iran, also known as Persia. Yazdgird was defeated in 649 ce.

Female members of the royal family fled into the mountains before the Arab conquerors. Although initially fleeing together, when capture seemed imminent, they split up, hoping to increase their chances of escape. Princess Nikbanou, finding herself trapped, prayed desperately to the Zoroastrian deity Ahura Mazda for rescue.

Suddenly, a door in the mountain opened up and she entered. The portal closed behind her, much to the amazement of pursuing soldiers. A bit of her garment caught in the rock cleft was allegedly visible until recently. A freshwater spring emerged at the spot, resulting in a small patch of green in the desert.

Eventually, a shepherd searching for his lost sheep came upon the spring, drank some of the water, and then went to sleep. In his dream, a beautiful maiden who identified herself as Princess Nikbanou appeared to him. She recounted her history and ordered him to build and maintain a cave shrine of remembrance for her. To convince him of the reality of this dream visitation, she told him that, when he awoke, his sheep would be waiting for him. The shepherd awoke to find his sheep gathered around, looking at him.

The pilgrimage sites situated in Yazd, the center of Zoroastrian culture in Iran, are known as *pirs*, deriving from a word meaning "ancient place" or "ancient wisdom." The shrine of Princess Nikbanou, known as Pir-e Sabzu, is the most famous of the Zoroastrian shrines, visited by Zoroastrians and non-Zoroastrians alike. In addition to its religious significance, it is considered a tourist site. The annual pilgrimage to the fire shrine here is attended by thousands, many traveling from overseas for the occasion.

The pilgrimage route to Nikbanou's mountain shrine is a dirt road. The pilgrimage is traditionally made on foot. As soon as approaching pilgrims catch sight of the shrine, they leave their vehicles behind and begin walking.

Princess Nikbanou is invoked for blessings of protection, healing, and fertility.

**FEAST:** The annual pilgrimage is from 14 to 18 June; however, the shrine is visited year-round.

SACRED PLANT: maidenhair fern, symbolic of her hair.

**SACRED SITE**: Pir-e Sabzu, near Yazd, lies beneath a desert cliff in central Iran; the shrine is also known as Chak-Chak, or "drip, drip," which refers to the dripping spring, as well as to the mountain's tears, shed for the princess. The shrine may be seen in the DVD *Mystic Iran*.

SEE ALSO Odile, Saint; Shahbanu Hastbadan; Sharh Banu; Well Saints.

## ∾ Nino, Saint

Also known as Saint Nina; Saint Nune.

EPITHETS: The Illuminatrix; Equal to the Apostles.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Saint Nino (c. 296–c. 340) traveled to the nation of Georgia, which was then called Iberia, and converted the Georgian royal family to Christianity. Upon her arrival in Georgia, she immediately garnered notice as a miracle healer. Nana, the Georgian queen, was the first to convert to Christianity. King Mirian III, her husband, was initially more resistant, although he tolerated Nana's conversion.

After he was struck blind on a hunting trip, King Mirian's sight was miraculously restored when he prayed to what he described as "Nino's God." He then converted, too. Christianity was declared the official state religion in 337 ce. Following their conversion, Nino retired to a mountain gorge to live a hermit's life. After she died, a monastery was built over the site of her grave.

Legends differ on Nino's reason for traveling to Georgia.

- According to the Roman Catholic Church, Nino, a Christian slave, was forcibly transported to Georgia. She may have been of Armenian, Italian, or Jewish ancestry.
- According to the Eastern Church, Nino, a woman of illustrious background, came voluntarily. Born in either Cappadocia or Jerusalem. she was a relative

of Saint George, for whom Georgia may be named.

Nino may have been searching for Christian relics, specifically Christ's robe, then rumored to be in Georgia. According to legend, Mary the Mother of Christ herself blessed this mission, giving the young woman grapevine branches, which Nino then bound with her own hair to form a cross. The grapevines may have pointed her toward Georgia, an early wine-producing nation where Dionysus was venerated.

Nino remains an incredibly popular saint, petitioned for virtually everything, especially healing and protection. Nino remains the most popular name for girls in Georgia. In the 19th century, a Russian bishop who publicly doubted that Nino was really buried at Bodbe threatened to dig up her grave. As he approached her grave, he suffered a heart attack and died.

ATTRIBUTE: grapevine cross, also known as a Saint Nino's cross.

SACRED SITES:

- The Monastery of Saint George in Bodbe, Georgia, built over the site where Nino died and was buried. The Soviet government closed the monastery in 1924, but it was reopened in 1991.
- Saint Nino's Spring, also called her Holy Well, situated down the hill from the monastery, allegedly cleanses away sins and possesses therapeutic powers. Pilgrims submerge in the cold spring three times to avail themselves of the blessings of the waters.
- Nino's grapevine cross is now housed in Sioni Cathedral in Tbilisi, Georgia, considered the Mother Church of Georgia.
- Saint Nino traveled the riverside road from Lake Paravani to Mtskheta in Georgia. This is now considered a holy route that is reproduced by pilgrims.

FEASTS: 14 January (Western Church); 27 January (Eastern Church).

SEE ALSO George, Saint; Mary; Well Saints.

## ∾ Non, Saint

Also known as Nun; Nonna; Ninnie; Nonnita; Nonne; Nonn; Melaria (Brittany).

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Saint Non (born c. 475), the daughter of King Arthur's foster-father, grew up with Arthur. She was seduced or raped as a teenager, allegedly by a local prince whom she may or may not then have been forced to marry. Another version suggests that a local holy man who had taken a vow of celibacy experienced a vision so profound that he felt compelled to obey it. He was directed to a place where he would find a woman with whom he must have sex, because the child she would conceive would be a great wonder worker. The woman he encountered was Non.

Non's son, the future Saint David, demonstrated signs of holiness while still in the womb. She gave birth to him outside on a clifftop, while caught in a violent storm. Her labor pains were so severe that the marks of her fingers were imprinted in the stone she grasped as if it were wax. At David's birth, a bolt of lightning split that rock in half. The two pieces later became the foundation stones for Saint Non's Chapel and Saint David's Cathedral. After David's birth, Non assumed a religious vocation in convents in Wales, Cornwall, and finally Brittany, where she died of natural causes.

### Non's story is reminiscent of the Welsh princess who bore Merlin.

Non may not actually be her name but may mean "nun." Her powerful association with holy wells is reminiscent of Pagan traditions, and some believe a now-unnamed goddess hides behind a nun's mask, possibly the Welsh goddess, Rhian*non*. Information regarding Non and David is based on oral traditions and was not written down until the 11th century. Her sacred well near Saint David's Cathedral is believed to predate Christianity.

In 1811, a shrine to the Virgin Mary was placed near the well. Veneration of Mary rather than Non is now emphasized at the cathedral. Wells dedicated to Saint Anne may also originally have been dedicated to Non.

Non's well is associated with all sorts of cures, but especially of blindness and mental disorders. Children were immersed in the wells to obtain Non's blessings.

**MANIFESTATION:** Traditional hagiographies describe Non as so beautiful that her rapist could not suppress his lust for her.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Non is envisioned as a young nun or holy woman.

#### SACRED SITES:

- Saint Non's Well and the ruins of Saint Non's Chapel, overlooking Saint Non's Bay in Pembrokeshire, Wales, near the Cathedral of Saint David. The altar of the chapel is reputedly situated over the spot where Non gave birth to David.
- Saint Non's Holy Well in Pelynt, Cornwall, once and still sometimes called the Pixies' Well. Traditionally, pins are thrown into the well as offerings and petitions in the same way that coins are thrown into a wishing well.
- Her chapel in Dirinon, Finistère, Brittany, contains her tomb and a healing well. A mystery play depicting her life was performed here for years. Numerous other Breton shrines and wells are also dedicated to Saint Non.

FEASTS: 2 March; 3 March.

SEE ALSO Anne, Saint; Arthurian Saints; David, Saint; Mary; Well Saints and Glossary: Syncretism.

## 🔊 Nunilo, Saint

Also known as Saint Nunilona.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Saint Nunilo is the sister of Saint Alodia. Daughters of a Christian mother and Muslim father in ninth-century Spain, they were raised as Christians. When their father died, their mother remarried another Muslim man. He was a different man and it was a different time; tensions between Christians and Muslims were higher. Under Muslim rule, regardless of how the girls had been raised or how they perceived themselves, as daughters of a Muslim they were also technically Muslim, so espousing another faith was apostasy, a criminal offense.

The sisters did not get along with their stepfather and were sent to live with a Christian maternal aunt, but they were not discreet. Instead, the girls became well known locally, possibly even notorious, for their pious Christianity. Someone identified as an "enemy of the family" reported them to authorities. The sisters were arrested and imprisoned.

Authorities did not particularly want to kill two young girls. The Muslim

prefect promised rewards and advantageous marriages if only Nunilo and Alodia would deny the Christian faith, but the girls refused. They were tortured and then beheaded on 22 October 851. Although executed in Bosca, they are considered among the Forty-eight Martyrs of Cordoba. Alodia and Nunilo are traditionally venerated together.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: run-aways; child-abuse victims; those ridiculed for piety, faith, and acts of devotion.

FEAST: 22 October.

SEE ALSO Alodia, Saint; Lalla Solica.

# 0

## 👡 Odile, Saint

Also known as Odilia; Ottilia; Ottilie.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Saint Odile (c. 660–13 December 720) was the daughter of Eticho, the first duke of Alsace and leader of the Alemanni, a Germanic people who lived in the Vosges Mountains. For years, he and his wife lacked children. They prayed intensely and sought miracle cures. When their prayers were finally answered and his wife conceived, Eticho assumed that he would be blessed with a son. His joy turned to rage when she gave birth to a blind daughter.

Eticho rejected baby Odile and publicly proclaimed her stillborn. He was ready to kill the baby, but her mother rescued her. Odile's early years are a mystery.

- Her mother's old nanny may have raised her.
- She may have been entrusted to a peasant family.
- She may have been placed in a basket that floated down the river, where she was rescued.

When she was twelve, an angel guided the miracle worker Saint Erhard of Regensburg to Odile, whose vision he miraculously restored. Erhard attempted to reconcile Odile with her family. A younger brother brought her home, intending to arrange a marriage for her that would be politically advantageous for *him*. He argued with their father, who then killed him.

Odile miraculously resurrected her brother and fled across the Rhine River with her father in hot pursuit. When capture was imminent, a cave in a mountain suddenly and magically opened for her. Odile escaped into the cave, but when her father attempted to follow her, he was hit by a shower of falling rocks. Despite the drama, father and daughter eventually reconciled.

Duke Eticho founded a convent for Odile atop the holy mountain now called Mount Saint Odile. The mountain, sacred long before the seventh century, contains the remains of an Iron Age hillfort named the Pagan Wall. It's possible that an earlier mountain goddess hides behind the mask of the saint. Because Mount Saint Odile is so steep that few climb to the top, Odile had a second convent built at the foot near a holy spring credited with healing powers. Reputedly, John the Baptist pointed out the site to her.

Lucy and Odile, both saints associated with eyes and vision, share the same feast day. Both are also depicted carrying eyes—Lucy's eyes are on a dish, while Odile's are on a book. In addition to their conventional identities, both saints are powerfully associated with subversive magical traditions.

Saint Odile is invoked to heal all vision problems and disorders of the eyes, but she is associated with different kinds of vision, too. Saint Odile protects those demonstrating psychic or clairvoyant skills, possibly because she also possessed those skills. A medieval document attributed to Odile allegedly predicted World War II. Perhaps coincidentally, popular culture's most famous Odile is the sorcerer's masquerading daughter in the ballet *Swan Lake*. Odile is invoked to provide prophetic ability. Requests for enhanced prophetic ability are traditionally accompanied by a three-day fast.

Saint Odile is also requested to protect individual soldiers. Tell her exactly who needs protecting and dedicate white candles to her, one candle per soldier you want her to guard.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: soldiers; knights; questers; prophets; clairvoyants; diviners; fortunetellers; eye doctors. Odile is the matron saint of Alsace. She is the guardian and matron of the Grail knights and all who seek the Grail.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** A beautiful woman who may or may not be dressed as an abbess holds a book on which are two eyes.

COLOR: white.

FLOWER: larkspur.

SACRED SITES: Mount Saint Odile (Odilienberg). A well near the base of the mountain by the second convent, Niedermunster, is associated with healing miracles.

FEAST: 13 December.

**OFFERINGS**: flowers; candles; milagros or ex-votos in the form of eyes.

SEE ALSO John the Baptist; Lucy, Saint; Margaret of Castello; Nikbanou, Princess; Well Saints.

#### 🔊 Omar, Saint

**CLASSIFICATION:** Sufi saint.

Omar, a dervish, was a renowned healer. In addition to methods like herbalism, Omar was able to cure using the power of prayer. When the Yemenite port city of Mocha was ravaged by plague, Omar prayed for the sick and many recovered. He became known as a holy man and a following developed around him.

According to a legend preserved in the Abd-al-Kadir manuscript written in 1587 and preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, Omar and his followers were exiled from Mocha in approximately 1258 for reasons now unknown. It is suggested that when asked what he desired as a reward for curing the king of Mocha's beautiful daughter, Omar asked for her hand in marriage. This angered the king, who sent Omar packing.

Omar and his followers moved into a cave near Ousab in the harsh Arabian Desert. Starving, they searched for food but could find nothing but some bitter berries. Hoping to improve their flavor, Omar roasted them, but the berries became extremely hard. Hoping to soften them, he boiled them. Finally, only a viscous brown liquid remained, but it smelled good and Omar was famished, so he drank it and was instantly revitalized. This potion—coffee—sustained Omar and his followers for days.

Patients seeking Omar's medical expertise began trickling to his cave. He served them his drink as medicine. All were healed. Rumors of Omar's miracle drug spread through Mocha. He was invited to return and a monastery was built for him and his followers. After his death, miracles of healing continued and he was deemed a saint, not the least for his discovery of coffee.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: coffee growers; coffee servers; coffee lovers; anyone working with coffee in any capacity, especially researchers into coffee's healing properties.

SEE ALSO Drogo, Saint; Gabriel Archangel, Saint.

# 👡 Onofrio, Saint

Also known as Humphrey; Onouphrios; Onofre; Onuphre; Nopher the Anchorite; Abu Nufar.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Taking John the Baptist as his role model, miracle saint Saint Onofrio (died c. 400) lived as a hermit for seventy years in the deserts of Upper Egypt. He ate only the fruit of the date palm that grew near the cave he called home. Onofrio wore no clothes, but his hair and beard grew so long that he was always modestly covered. A beard that grew long enough to cover the genitals was then perceived as a sign of sanctity and a gift of God. Abundant hair growth, on the head or otherwise, is also perceived as a mark indicating spiritual power among many different cultural traditions.

Just before he died, Onofrio vowed to respond to all pure prayers addressed to him. He was buried in his cave, which immediately collapsed and disappeared. He was initially venerated by other monks, but his legend and reputation as a wonder worker spread and Onofrio became an extremely popular saint. His vow, combined with his reputation as a mystical miracle worker, led to his increased association with magic spells and practical, rather than purely spiritual, requests.

- Saint Onofrio is invoked to find and safeguard work, employment, and money.
- He is a miracle healer but is most renowned for healing burns.
- He is invoked for hair growth and to avoid baldness.

Saint Onofrio is extremely popular in Iberian folk magic, where he is invoked in love spells and usually referred to as Glorious Saint. The following—a standard example of this type of spell—beseeches Onofrio to deliver the person you desire as a lover.

First state your petition and then chant:

*Glorious Saint, Please fulfill my request and bring me (name your desire).* 

An alternative, more forceful version suggests a substitute chant:

*Glorious Saint, You will do what I ask of you and bring me (name your desire).* 

FAVORED PEOPLE: weavers; travelers.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Onofrio is portrayed as an elderly naked man, very modestly covered by his hair and beard, which grew long enough to cover his body, including his genitals. Sometimes he wears a loincloth of leaves or a single strategically placed fig leaf. He may also be depicted as an archetypal wild man. Onofrio may be portrayed in the company of angels.

**ATTRIBUTES**: a crown positioned near his feet; a book.

FEAST: 12 June is his traditional feast, although he died on 11 June.

SACRED SITES:

- The Church of San'Onofrio al Gianicolo in Trastevere, Rome, built in the 15th century.
- A famous fresco of Saint Onofrio is found near the entrance of the Snake Church (Yilanli Kilise), a carved soft-rock church in Göreme, Turkey, sonamed because of the frescoes of Saints George and Theodore spearing big snake-dragons.

**OFFERINGS**: Onofrio requested that incense be burned for him after his death.

SEE ALSO John the Baptist; Margaret of Antioch; Mary of Egypt, Saint and Glossary: Anchorite.

# Ρ

### ∾ Pancho Sierra

EPITHETS: The Blessed Gaucho; The Holy Gaucho.

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

Francisco "Pancho" Sierra (21 April 1831–4 December 1891) was a wealthy Argentinean rancher, a Spiritist, and a *curandero* renowned as a miracle healer. Crowds flocked to be healed by his touch and charismatic voice. Pancho Sierra is called the Medico del Agua Fria ("the healer who uses cold water"), as his typical mode of healing involved giving patients water to drink that was magnetized and infused with the power of spirits. Clairvoyant and clairsentient, he could identify a patient's complaints and maladies even before being given any information.

Pancho Sierra was a medical student in Buenos Aires before returning to the family ranch when his mother died. He became depressed and reclusive, possibly at least partially the result of a failed romance. He emerged from this dark night of the soul in possession of amazing healing powers. His fame as a folk healer led to accusations of practicing medicine without a license. Pancho Sierra vowed to serve those who need him. He still heals via spirit mediums who channel him. He may also be invoked directly by those in need.

**MANIFESTATION:** Pancho Sierra had a long white beard and hair and was often draped in a vicuña blanket.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Pancho Sierra's votive images resemble Old Testament prophets. His image appears on religious medals similar to those of official saints; sometimes it appears on one side, with Madre María Salomé on the other. SPIRITUAL ALLY: Pancho Sierra is venerated with Madre María Salomé.

SACRED SITES: his mausoleum in the Salto cemetery in Buenos Aires province, Argentina. A cistern of water blessed by Pancho Sierra is located near the cemetery.

FEAST: 4 December.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; flowers; retablos; ex-votos.

SEE ALSO Fidencio, El Niño; Gaucho Saints; Irma of Maresco; Jaramillo, Pedro; María Salomé, Madre and Glossary: Curanderismo; Ex-Voto; Retablo.

# ∾ Pancho Villa

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

Doroteo Arango, better known as General Francisco "Pancho" Villa (5 June 1878–20 July 1923), evokes powerful reactions. People idolize him or loathe him; there is little middle ground.

- Some consider him a modern Robin Hood and savior.
- Others call him a stone-cold killer.

Born to a poor sharecropping family in Durango, he left home at seventeen and went into hiding after killing the young local landowner who raped his sister. Changing his name, he became an outlaw, cattle rustler, bank robber, and all-around bandit. A lady's man and polygamist, he allegedly had as many as twenty-four wives.

In 1910, Pancho joined the Mexican Revolution, becoming an officer in Francisco Madero's army, and eventually becoming a general and the governor of Chihuahua. He had higher political ambitions and entertained hopes of becoming Mexico's president.

Many are surprised to learn that Pancho Villa is now venerated as a folk saint. He was not a conventionally religious man nor did he display fear of God—or of anyone else, for that matter. In 1916, his troops were retreating from Sonora after a defeat when some men from a village shot at them, allegedly mistaking them for an ordinary bunch of bandits. In response Villa had all the village's men rounded up and shot, including the local priest, whom he personally executed.

Pancho Villa was assassinated on 20 July 1923. In 1926, his body was taken out of his grave in Parral, Chihuahua, by persons unknown. His head was stolen. A United States citizen was briefly arrested but mysteriously released days later. No one has ever been charged, nor has Pancho's head ever been found, although allegations have been levied against Yale's Skull and Bones Society.

The Mexican government eventually sought to exhume Pancho Villa again, this time in order to rebury him in Mexico City's Monument of the Revolution. Local people in Parral resisted. Although he is now officially buried in Mexico City, rumors have long circulated that another headless body was substituted and that Pancho remains in Parral.

Even those who despised Pancho Villa acknowledged his daring. He feared *no one*, daring to raid the United States and becoming a hero in Mexico in the process. At 2:30 in the morning on 9 March 1916, Pancho Villa, leading 500 *Villistas*, attacked the 13th U.S. Cavalry stationed near Columbus, New Mexico. The cavalry fought them off but, while retreating, Villa and company attacked Columbus. Fourteen United States soldiers and ten civilians were killed, as were between seventy-five and 100 *Villistas*.

Now a very popular unofficial saint, Pancho Villa is venerated by unaffiliated, independent practitioners, as well as practitioners of Espiritismo, Curanderismo, and Brujeria. He frequently communicates via spirit mediums and Fidencista mediums.

Pancho Villa is invoked to gird your loins—to provide daring, courage, and stamina to defeat inner demons and accomplish goals. He is invoked for prosperity and especially for protection. He is requested to help the needy and downtrodden survive and combat oppression and poverty. Invoke him to help defeat enemies and to triumph over the rich, smug, powerful, and wellconnected.

The standard prayer associated with Pancho reminds him that he helped the needy and conquered the powerful. Pancho Villa is petitioned for help by those seeking to enter the United States illegally. An offering is traditionally made before beginning the journey; after the journey has proved successful, his image is then kept in the home to keep immigration and other hostile authorities at bay.

*Give Pancho Villa cheap cigars, cigarettes, and tequila. The general despised the pretentious, overpriced, or refined. This doesn't mean* 

that he didn't have good taste. If you can offer him something cheap and good, all the better!

**MANIFESTATION:** Pancho Villa was a womanizer in life. He remains a womanizer in death. He may make his presence known by invisibly groping or pinching women. Spirit mediums possessed by him, male or female, tend to do the same.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** His image is iconic. He is a cultural icon. You can buy Pancho Villa tee shirts, mouse pads, and belt buckles. *Countless* photographs exist; the selection is seemingly endless. Holy cards bearing his image identify him as a "martyr spirit." Traditional votive statues, similar in style to those of any saint, are commercially available.

**SPIRITUAL ALLIES:** Pancho Villa is frequently accompanied by one or more of his wives, some of whom seem to be developing their own following.

SACRED SITES: Pancho Villa may rest in Mexico City or in the Parral graveyard.

#### SACRED DAYS:

- 20 July, the anniversary of his death
- 4 October, the feast of Francis of Assisi, his name saint

**OFFERINGS**: flowers; candles; cigarettes; tequila; retablos; find his head.

SEE Glossary: Holy Card; Name Saint; Retablo.

## 🔊 Pancras, Saint

Also known as Pancracio; Pancrazio; Pancratius.

**EPITHET:** The One Who Holds Everything.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Saint Pancras is the patron of the impossible. If you need to accomplish or obtain the impossible, Saint Pancras is the go-to saint. Pancratius (c. 290–c. 304), commonly known in English as Pancras, was born in Phrygia to Roman citizen parents but was orphaned young. His uncle brought him to Rome, where

Pancratius converted to Christianity and was beheaded at age fourteen.

Saint Pancras is invoked against headaches, cramps, seizure disorders, and pancreatic cancer. He protects against false witness and perjury. False oaths sworn before him are allegedly *always* punished. Perhaps because of his associations with the impossible, Pancras is invoked to find parking spaces. A simple "Please Saint Pancras, find me a parking space" will reputedly suffice. In Spain, the Philippines, and Latin America, Pancras is considered the saint of employment.

# Saint Pancras Employment Spell

- 1. Place the image of Saint Pancras atop a bookshelf, refrigerator, or other high vantage point.
- 2. Put a bunch of parsley in a glass of water and place it before his image.
- 3. Light a candle and ask Pancras to help you find the right job *fast!*

FAVORED PEOPLE: children; orphans.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Pancras is envisioned as a young boy holding the martyr's palm branch, or as a boy soldier.

ATTRIBUTE: Pancras holds an inverted (downward-pointing) sword.

COLOR: white.

SACRED SITES:

- His skull is kept as a relic in Rome's Basilica of San Pancrazio.
- Saint Pancras Old Church, situated on London's Pancras Road, is among the oldest Christian sites in England (some believe it to be the oldest).
- Saint Pancras New Church in London, also known as Saint Pancras Parish Church, was built in the 19th century.
- Saint Pancras train station in London is named in his honor.

FEAST: 12 May.

**OFFERINGS:** candles; lilies.

SEE ALSO Joseph of Arimathea and Glossary: Relics.

## 🔊 Panteleimon, Saint

Also known as Saint Pantaleone; Panteleone; Pantaleon; Pantaleo; Pantalon.

**EPITHETS**: The All Merciful; The Wonder Worker.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Pantaleimon (c. 275–27 July 304) was born in Nicomedia to a Christian mother and Pagan father. He became a successful, renowned physician whose clients included Roman emperor Maximian. In the manner of a modern faith-healer, Pantaleimon began incorporating Christianity into his healing practice. He may have believed that as a prominent and valued physician, he could be openly Christian during an era when Christianity was not in favor. Instead, he became suspect. It was strongly suggested that he make public offerings to Rome's state deities. He refused, which was considered treason, and was arrested.

The birth name of this saint was Pantaleon. By adding a letter or two, the name is transformed into Pantaleimon, meaning "all compassionate," a play on words enjoyed by his devotees. The Eastern Church typically refers to him as Saint Pantaleimon, but the Western Church favors his original name.

Pantaleimon was stretched on a rack, burned by candles, thrown into a cauldron of molten lead, cast into a fiery pit, and then into a den of starving animals. He survived all tortures. Christians perceive this as a miracle, but Roman authorities became convinced that he was a powerful sorcerer. The practice of magic was illegal and punishable by death. Pantaleimon was tied to a big rock and thrown into the river. The rock proved buoyant and Pantaleimon floated to shore.

Undeterred, his persecutors nailed or bound Pantaleimon to an olive tree and beheaded him. According to legend, milk, not blood, flowed from his severed head. A church was soon dedicated to him in Constantinople. His relics are located in Cologne, Germany, throughout Italy, and possibly in the 13th-century Armenian Monastery of Ganzasar in Nagorno-Karabakh. Vials of his blood preserved in churches in Rome, Naples, and Ravelli, Italy, allegedly liquefy annually on his feast day.

Before Pantaleimon died, he forgave his killers. In the after-life, he's not quite

so forgiving. If angered, Panteleimon's signature punishment is boils. He is invoked to heal them, too. Pantaleimon is lord of miracles.

- Pantaleone is invoked to soothe colicky babies.
- He patronizes those who play the lottery and those who run numbers games.
- He delivers winning numbers in dreams.
- He is one of the Fourteen Holy Helpers and counted among the Silverless (Unmercenary) Physicians, as he reputedly never charged for his services.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: physicians; midwives; wet nurses; lactating women; healers; bachelors.

ATTRIBUTES: doctor's bag or tools.

SACRED SITES: Numerous churches are named in his honor, including:

- Saint Pantaleimon Monastery on Mount Athos in Greece
- Saint Pantaleimon in Saint Petersburg, Russia
- San Pantalon, Venice
- San Panteleone, Rome

FEAST: 27 July.

**OFFERINGS**: Devotees in Italy's Abruzzo once sought favors and fulfilled vows by crawling from the entrance of his church to Panteleimon's votive image, dragging their tongues on the floor until they bled and then placing a bloody kiss on his image as testament of devotion. This tradition was suppressed by the Fascist government in the 1930s. Pantaleimon accepts less dramatic offerings of candles, incense, espresso, pastry, and donations on behalf of the poor.

SEE ALSO Adrian of Nicomedia; Fourteen Holy Helpers; Gennaro, San; Silverless physicians and Glossary: Relics.

# ∾ Paraskeva, Saint

Also known as Saint Paraskeyva; Saint Piatnitsa; Saint Prascovia; Paraskeva Griaznaia (Muddy Paraskeva); Paraskeva L'nianitsa (Flaxen Paraskeva).

EPITHETS: Saint Friday; The Flaxen One; The Dirty One; The Muddy One.

CLASSIFICATION: Orthodox Christian saint.

Saint Paraskeva, an unorthodox Orthodox saint, is venerated in Russia, Greece, and the Balkans. She is the matron saint of traditional "women's work" and everything having to do with fabric, including spinning, sewing, needlework, and laundry.

Saint Paraskeva literally means *Saint Friday* and Friday is her holy day. Twelve Fridays spread throughout the year are designated feast days when her devotees are forbidden to work. Each Friday spent *not* working provides protection from a specified danger—fire, floods, and other hazards. Those honoring her twelve-day fast from work are allegedly guaranteed happiness, prosperity, and abundance.

What does Paraskeva consider work? Working the soil or any agricultural activities are forbidden. Earth gets the day off, too. Cooking, laundry, spinning, hunting, fishing, and gathering berries are all forbidden activities on Paraskeva's Fridays.

So what's permitted? Dancing, singing, and sex! You can eat and drink; you just can't cook or clean up afterward. What else can be done on Paraskeva's Fridays? *Women* may perform acts of healing. Getting married or giving birth on one of Paraskeva's Fridays is considered extremely lucky and auspicious.

In 1589, the Patriarch of Constantinople banned Saint Friday traditions, but Paraskeva was venerated in rustic, mountain areas, so that ban was hard to enforce. Scholars consider Paraskeva to be a Pagan deity of such tremendous importance and popularity that the Church was obliged to incorporate her as a saint. The Slavic goddess Mokosh may lie beneath Paraskeva's mask or possibly another ancient guardian of women and their traditional sacred arts whose original name is now forgotten.

The sixteenth Stoglav Council of Russian bishops condemned Paraskeva's festivals. They complained that men and women, young and old, took off their clothes and unbound their hair to engage in what they described as jumping and shaking. The Stoglav Document denounced Paraskeva as a forbidden "goddess of fate."

Paraskeva demands that her holy days be honored with dancing. Her list of what constitutes sin includes abortion and removing ergot spurs from rve. (Ergot

has historically been used as an abortifacient.) She presides over needlework, sewing, and weaving, once considered sacred ritual tasks, not chores.

**MANIFESTATION**: Paraskeva takes various forms. She manifests as a young woman with long, loose, unbound hair who roams the countryside making sure women observe her Friday fasts. She may manifest as an elderly woman spinning. Paraskeva is described as being as black as fertile earth, possibly a reference to Mokosh, Moist Mother Earth. Her distinctive identifying physical characteristic tends to be long, loose hair, unusual in a culture where mature women have traditionally braided or otherwise bound their hair.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Paraskeva is portrayed as a tall, thin woman with long, flowing hair standing in traditional icon pose or spinning beside a well. Her icons are placed at crossroads, springs, and near wells. Her icons may be double sided, with an image of Mary the Blessed Mother on the other side.

ATTRIBUTES: spindle; Tree of Life.

**SPIRITUAL ALLIES:** Saint Paraskeva has twelve handmaidens, her apostles. She is sometimes associated with two other saints, Sreda (Saint Wednesday) and Nedelia (Saint Saturday). The three form a triad of spinning goddesses.

SACRED DAY: Friday.

**ELEMENT**: water. In Greece, her chapels are built over springs so that water gushes into the church or into a subterranean crypt.

NUMBER: 12.

COLORS: red; black.

SACRED PLANT: flax.

**SACRED SITES**: wells; crossroads. A chapel dedicated to her once stood in Moscow's Red Square; only women were allowed entry.

FEASTS: 26 July (Greece); 20 October (Russia; Balkans).

OFFERINGS: Don't buy things for Saint Paraskeva. Make them yourself. She is

the saint of the homemade. Traditional offerings include needlework, especially embroidered ritual napkins and tea towels; handmade cloth dolls; tapestries; textiles; flax; spinning wheels; wool thread, especially if handspun. Offerings are placed on domestic altars, brought to crossroads, or deposited in wells.

SEE ALSO Apostles; Brigid, Saint; Margaret of Antioch; Mary; Paraskeva the New; Quiteria, Saint; Well Saints and Glossary: Icon.

### 🔊 Paraskeva the New, Saint

Also known as Saint Petka.

**EPITHETS:** Paraskeva the Young; Paraskeva of the Balkans; Righteous Paraskeva of Serbia.

CLASSIFICATION: Orthodox Christian saint.

There are at least three female saints called Saint Paraskeva, in addition to the one whose traditional practices are condemned by the Church. The earliest, called Martyr Paraskeva, was killed during Diocletian's persecution of Christians. Her name, meaning Friday, allegedly indicates her devotion to the day of Christ's Passion, but the most famous is called Paraskeva the New (c. 1000–c. 1027) to distinguish her from other Paraskevas or perhaps to indicate that she is the replacement for the old, disreputable one.

Saint Paraskeva the New was a devoutly religious child, the daughter of Christians who lived beside the Sea of Marmara, now in modern Turkey. At age ten, she experienced an epiphany and began giving away all her possessions to the poor. Her parents objected and Paraskeva ran away to the big city, Constantinople, where she spent her time praying and visiting saint's shrines.

The little run-away stayed on the move, going from city to city, always eluding her parents, who sought to bring her home. She lived as a hermit by the Black Sea for five years, until an apparition of Mary sent her to Jerusalem. There she lived in a convent in the neighboring desert, until an angel told her to return to Anatolia, where she died at age twenty-seven.

Paraskeva rested anonymously for several years in a church graveyard, until a rotting sailor's corpse found on the shore was accidentally buried above her. Paraskeva then appeared in simultaneous dreams to a local woman and a monk, Identifying herself and her gravesite, and complaining that an old sinner was buried over her. She told the monk that she could not bear to be near such a foul stench, describing herself as being "of light and sun." When, as directed in his dream, the monk dug up Paraskeva, her dead body emitted the sweet perfumed aroma of sanctity and she was recognized as a saint.

As befitting her restless life, her relics have been moved repeatedly—from Turkey, to Bulgaria, to Serbia, and back to Turkey. Since 1641, she has rested in what is now modern Romania. Her gravesite and relics are associated with many miracles. So many miracles were attributed to her in Serbia that she is venerated there by Muslims as well as Christians.

- Saint Paraskeva may be invoked to protect run-aways and travelers.
- She is invoked to heal headaches and migraines.
- She is the spiritual guardian of Serbia and Moldavia.

**MANIFESTATION:** In the pivotal dream that resulted in her recognition, she appeared in the guise of a beautiful, enthroned queen surrounded by soldiers.

FEAST: 14 October.

**SACRED SITE**: Paraskeva lies in a silver coffin in the Church of the Three Hierarchs, Iasi, Romania, the site of a large annual pilgrimage.

SEE ALSO Mary; Paraskeva, Saint and Glossary: Incorrupt; Pilgrimage; Relics.

## 👡 Paschal Baylon, Saint

Also known as Pascual Baylon.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Until he was twenty-four, Paschal Baylon (1540–17 May 1592) worked as a shepherd, but in 1564, having taught himself to read and write, he was accepted as a Franciscan lay brother. He spent the next twenty-eight years serving as porter and servant in Franciscan friaries throughout Spain. He was renowned for his kindness toward the poor and sick.

In 1690, when Paschal Baylon was canonized, it was said that never before had anyone performed so many miracles. He was just getting started.

- Officially, he is the patron of shepherds.
- Unofficially, he is patron of the kitchen.

According to legend, an angel performed Paschal's kitchen tasks so that the saint could spend more time praying. Paschal now pays that favor forward: he teaches people to cook and provides rescue from every possible kind of kitchen disaster, large and small. Anything happening in the kitchen or that involves food is under his domain.

- He is invoked against epidemics and infectious disease.
- He allegedly gives devotees three days' notice of impending death so that they can get their affairs in order and obtain desired spiritual rites.

Paschal Baylon is associated with several Mayan skeleton deities who have adopted his name. In Spanish, Paschal is Pascual, which closely resembles the name of an ancient and sacred Mayan ritual dance, the Pascuar. The dancing skeleton spirits thus adopt an official saint's name, while giving clues to their true origins and orientation.

MANIFESTATION: Paschal Baylon traditionally appears in Franciscan robes.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Retablos celebrate his assistance with cooking special, significant meals, bestowing culinary skills, and preventing injury. A remorseful devotee dedicated a retablo thanking the saint for her husband not being injured after she smashed him on the head with a pan during a kitchen altercation.

ATTRIBUTE: monstrance.

COLORS: blue; brown.

FEAST: 17 May.

ALTAR: Paschal Baylon is happiest in the kitchen. Decorate his altar with cooking tools and images of angels.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; homemade food; wine. Place his image in your kitchen.

SEE ALSO Claire, Saint; Francis of Assisi, Saint; Pascual, El Rey; Pascualito, San and Glossary: Retablo; Saint, Official.

# ∾ Pascual, El Rey

Also known as San Pascualito; San Pascual Bailar (Dancing Saint Paschal); El Rey Paschal.

**EPITHET:** The King Pascual.

4 0 0 0

**CLASSIFICATION:** unofficial saint.

A powerful Mayan shaman king possessed the ability to make himself as tall or as small as he wished. When the Spanish conquistadors arrived with their superior military force, he thought a nonconfrontational policy was safest. Making himself tiny, he went to hide in a cave until they left. They never left. The king (in Spanish: *el rey*) died sitting in that cave. The result was that instead of merely ruling his own kingdom, he now has dominion over life and death.

El Rey Pascual is a psychopomp in the guise of a royal skeleton. (A psychopomp is a spiritual entity who provides escort service to the after-life.) He rules the living and the dead, as well as the frontier between life and death. He is the guardian of the cemetery. He protects the bones of ancestors and of everyone buried in the graveyard. El Rey Pascual facilitates communication with the dead. Ask him for permission to contact the realm of death. If previous efforts at communication have failed, request his help making the connection. He can also banish ghosts who haunt nightmares, or who otherwise make nuisances of themselves.

El Rey Pascual gives warning when death approaches. He appears in dreams, leaves clues via the sound of knocking, or gives devotees other signs of impending death so that they have time to prepare their souls and get their affairs in order.

*El Rey Pascual can prevent death, too. He is an acclaimed healer who returns devotees and their loved ones from death's door.* 

In 1630, an apparition dressed in Franciscan robes and identifying himself as Paschal Baylon (who was not yet canonized) appeared to an indigenous man in Guatemala, then wracked with plague. The apparition said that in exchange for the indigenous people's conversion to Catholicism, he would end the epidemic, but also regretfully informed the man witnessing his apparition that, in nine days time, he would die. The man told the local priest, who said a Mass in honor of Paschal Baylon. The plague ended. The man died on schedule. Not surprisingly, Saint Paschal (Pascual in Spanish) emerged as an exceptionally popular saint in the region, associated with the kitchen and healing as elsewhere, but also especially with death.

Virtually simultaneously, an ancient pre-Christian skeleton deity was brought out of hiding and christened Pascual. His distinctive image began to appear in churches, where local people assured concerned priests that the saint they venerated was San Pascual Baylon. Eventually, it became clear to the Inquisition that the saint being venerated was *not* the official one. Skeleton statues were confiscated and burned in auto-da-fés held in public plazas, but it was too late. El Rey Pascual was loose.

#### FAVORED PEOPLE: spirit mediums.

**MANIFESTATION:** El Rey Pascual is a crowned skeleton usually, but not always, dressed in royal robes. Sometimes he is just a naked skeleton, but even then he wears his crown.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: He is usually portrayed standing with one foot resting atop a sphere, representing the earth. Modern, more literal portrayals may actually feature a globe. The sphere may be topped with a cross, which may be interpreted as an emblem of Christianity or an indication that El Rey Pascual's power radiates in all four directions.

SPIRITUAL ALLY: Maximón is his friend, companion, and frequent altar-mate.

#### **ATTRIBUTES:**

knife, with which to severe a soul's ties to life

- scythe, with which to harvest souls
- scepter or banner indicating his royal rank

SACRED SITE: The Chapel of El Rey San Pascual in Olintepeque, Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, is his primary public shrine, but he is also venerated on countless

home altars.

FEAST: 17 May.

**OFFERINGS**: beautiful fabrics or clothing; ritual objects; objects of spiritual or mystic value; religious medals; amulets; gifts fit for a king.

SEE ALSO Maximón; Paschal Baylon, Saint; Pascualito, San; Muerte, San La; Muerte, La Santissima and Glossary: Apparition; Saint, Official.

A Mayan skeleton saint is venerated throughout Guatemala. There is also a Mayan skeleton saint in Chiapas, Mexico. Whether or not they are the same saint, they manifest somewhat differently. Slight differences in tradition and veneration also exist, so they have separate entries in this book. Both saints are interchangeably known as El Rey Pascual (King Pascual) and San Pascualito (Little Saint Pascual, acknowledging that Paschal Baylon is the "big" or official saint).

∾ Pascualito, San

Also known as San Pascualito Rey (King Saint Pascualito).

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

*Pascualito* literally means "Little Pascual"—it is an affectionate diminutive for the name Pascual. The official saint Paschal Baylon—or, as he is known in Spanish, San Pascual—has his own associations with death, so the unofficial and controversial saint Pascualito is sometimes described as an "Indian misinterpretation" of the official saint, but this assertion is false.

- Pascual Baylon's name is knowingly borrowed.
- Deities in the form of skeletons were venerated throughout what is now Mexico and Central America long before Christianity arrived there.

Pascualito, the skeleton saint of Chiapas, Mexico's southernmost state, is an example of these traditions. The earliest documentation of San Pascualito

derives from descriptions by Spanish observers in 1601 of a painted, ornamented skeleton worshipped by the Zoques people of Chiapas. Now considered a saint, he remains passionately venerated, although historically the Church has persecuted his devotees.

San Pascualito is a saint of death. He drives a cart, an old-fashioned deathmobile, in which he collects the souls of the deceased. He may be petitioned for more time, but allegedly, once the sound of his cartwheels approaching the building where someone is dying is audible, death is guaranteed and there is no point in arguing.

Pascualito is not a killer; he is a psychopomp—an escort to the next realm. He travels back and forth between the lands of the living and dead. As Lord of Borders, he helps shamans communicate with the dead and devotees slip across forbidden human borders, like those between nations. San Pascualito is invoked to provide access to places otherwise forbidden or off-limits.

Pascualito prefers to sleep in the daytime and come out at night to collect the souls of the recently deceased. His presence is signaled by the creaky wheels of his cart. If you can hear them, it's considered best to get out of his way. Pascualito raises the dead as he passes cemeteries and may be accompanied by a parade of ghosts.

- San Pascualito is invoked for miracles, especially healing miracles, and to forestall death—if only temporarily or until an awaited person can arrive.
- Knock three times on an image of his cart to communicate with him.

**MANIFESTATION:** San Pascualito is a crowned skeleton, but you are more likely to hear than see him. When he approaches a dying person, he gives three dry gasps to indicate his presence and warn of impending death.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: His cart is an integral part of Pascualito's iconography and distinguishes him from many other skeleton deities. He is depicted lying in a casket in his cart, seated in it, or driving it.

#### NUMBER: 3.

SEE ALSO Paschal Baylon, Saint; Pascual, El Ray; Muerte, San La; Muerte, La Santissima.

# ∾ Patricia of Naples

Also known as Patricia of Constantinople; Santa Patrizia.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Patricia may be a descendent of Roman emperor Constantine the Great. Patricia may not actually be her name but may indicate her noble patrician background. According to legend, Byzantine emperor Constans II wished to arrange a strategic marriage for her, but Patricia desired a spiritual life and fled to Rome, where she received the veil from Pope Liberius, becoming a nun.

When her father died, Patricia returned to Constantinople, where she distributed her wealth to the poor. She traveled to Jerusalem on pilgrimage but was shipwrecked in Naples, where she died of disease in approximately 665 ce. After she was already dead, a man pulled out one of her teeth, resulting in hemorrhagic bleeding. This was perceived as miraculous. Devotees collected the blood in vials, preserving it. Her blood allegedly liquefies every Tuesday and annually on her feast day. The image of Patricia of Naples is carried in San Gennaro's annual procession through Naples. She is invoked for financial prosperity.

ATTRIBUTE: a money bag like those she distributed to the poor.

SACRED SITE: Saint Patricia's relics are contained in a golden, jewel-bedecked urn in the Church of Saint Gregory of Armenia in Naples.

FEAST: 25 August.

SEE ALSO Gennaro, San.

# ∾ Patrick, Saint

Also known as Pádraig; Patrice; Patricius; Phadraic.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Even people who know nothing about saints know that Saint Patrick expelled the snakes from Ireland. Many like to point out smugly that Ireland has no native

snakes, implying that the myth is wrong, but they're the ones who are mistaken.

Snakes symbolize Ireland's pre-Christian religious traditions. Many Celtic deities, in Ireland and elsewhere, were closely affiliated with snakes. Just because tigers aren't indigenous to the United States doesn't mean people there don't know about them or that tigers lack symbolic significance. When Patrick banished the snakes, he was banishing the snake-people, those for whom snakes symbolized healing, not temptation to sin.

Among the many Celtic female deities associated with snakes are Damona, the Mothers, Rosmerta, Sirona, Verbeia, and Ireland's own Morrigan, whose dead son was discovered to have three snakes in his heart.

Patrick was a fifth-century Roman whose family lived in Britain. When he was about sixteen, he was kidnapped by Irish raiders and sold into slavery. He escaped from Ireland six years later, returned to his family, and entered the Church. He eventually returned to the scene of his enslavement in the guise of a missionary. Patrick is credited with converting Ireland to Christianity and is the nation's official patron saint. Patrick is so intensely associated with the Emerald Isle that his feast day is now celebrated around the world with secular activities (parades, drinking) honoring Ireland, not the saint.

Saint Patrick may have banished the snakes, but he is now forever associated with them. His votive image is a literal depiction of what was once a metaphor—Saint Patrick accompanied by snakes. He is venerated both conventionally and unconventionally.

Conventional veneration follows Church guidelines. He is honored as a great Christian and a powerful intercessor. Unconventionally, Patrick's image is easily mistaken for that of a wizard or snake-master. His ability to banish snakes could be interpreted as a snake charmer's gift. Snake lovers sometimes collect his image just for the snakes with which he is virtually always portrayed. Ironically, Patrick's votive image is used to represent the Vodou snake spirit Damballah, specifically because of the snakes inevitably portrayed.

Snakes can represent Paganism, but they can also symbolize enemies, treachery, and "snakes in the grass." In the traditions of the Spiritual Churches of New Orleans, Patrick is invoked to subdue and banish enemies. His strong associations with the color green officially refer to his patronage of Ireland, the Emerald Isle, but green is also the color most associated with cash and prosperity. Patrick is invoked for blockings of prosperity. luck, and abundance prosperity. Faurick is invoked for pressings of prosperity, fack, and abundance, and sometimes for quick cash infusions as needed.

Invoke Saint Patrick to drive your enemies away. Visualize him trampling your enemies underfoot.

**MANIFESTATION:** He is traditionally described as a white-bearded, blue-robed man.

SPIRITUAL ALLY: Saint Brigid.

**COLOR:** Although now almost universally associated with green, Patrick was originally so associated with a shade of dark blue that it was named for him: Saint Patrick's Blue.

SACRED ANIMAL: snake.

SACRED PLANTS: clover; shamrock.

FEAST: 17 March.

**FESTIVALS**: Major celebrations are held on his feast day throughout the world, including New York City, Chicago, Boston, Seattle, and Savannah.

SACRED SITES:

- Saint Patrick's Purgatory in Lough Derg, County Donegal, is an ancient pilgrimage.
- Saint Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin is built beside a sacred well.
- Patrick is linked with various Irish holy wells that are also associated with druids and fairies. For instance, Saint Patrick's Well in Dromard, County Sligo, is the site of numerous miraculous healings involving vision.
- According to legend, Saint Patrick defeated the druids at the Hill of Tara, Ireland's ancient ceremonial capital and the seat of its high kings. Patrick continues to exert his presence there—a sacred well and a church are named in his honor and there is a prominent statue of the saint.
- Saint Patrick's Cathedral in New York City, where, in 1942, a reliquary said to contain bone fragments from the saint was sealed inside the high altar.
- Dublin's National Museum houses several artifacts associated with Patrick, including the Shrine of Saint Patrick's Bell, a gold-and-silver filigree

reliquary crafted in approximately 1100. The reliquary contains an iron bell rumored to have belonged to the saint, although historians disagree.

• The Shrine of Saint Patrick's hand, a Gothic arm-reliquary, is now in Belfast's Ulster Museum.

ALTARS: Decorate his altar with the color green, living green plants, and emblems of prosperity.

**OFFERINGS:** Saint Patrick allegedly introduced the still to Ireland. Offer him Irish whiskey; Irish ale and beer are not likely to be rejected either. Other appropriate offerings include green candles, cross-shaped candles, images of snakes (especially green snakes), and cabbage leaves separated so that they resemble cash. Wear green in his honor.

SEE ALSO Brigid, Saint; Hilda, Saint; Well Saints.

## ∾ Patton, Charley

Also known as Charlie Patton.

**EPITHETS:** Father of the Delta Blues; The Voice of the Delta.

**CLASSIFICATION:** unofficial saint.

Charley Patton (c. 1891–28 April 1934), bluesman extraordinaire, singer, guitarist, and songwriter, is among the architects of blues music. It is impossible to overemphasize his influence. He personally inspired virtually every Delta bluesman. He is not only the father of technique; he epitomizes the soul, essence, and magic of the blues.

The blues is the threshold between traditional African music and later jazz, rock and roll, hip-hop, and too many genres to mention. But it is more than just a musical genre. At its finest expression, blues is a vehicle of healing and empowerment. And Charley is its best.

For years, blues was considered disreputable—the musical equivalent of folk magic and folk religion. It was labeled the "devil's music" and not only because it is gospel music's secular cousin. The best blues taps into a primal, primordial human energy that defies boundaries and restrictions.

Charley Patton is a magical, revolutionary musician whose recordings resist

successful transcription. For those for whom blues is not just a musical genre but a sacred code and conduit to the divine, Charley Patton is a special kind of hero —a messiah of the blues. He played other music, too—ragtime, ballads—but he is the foundation of modern blues, albeit transmitted via his disciples Son House, John Lee Hooker, Robert Johnson, and Howlin' Wolf.

Patton learned to play guitar on the Dockery Plantation outside Ruleville, Mississippi, his home for most of his life, although he was a traveling man. The great Chicago blues man Howlin' Wolf, who lived nearby, took guitar lessons from Charley in his youth. During the 1920s, Patton played juke joints, dances, and logging camps, and busked on the streets. He first recorded on 14 June 1929, leaving a legacy of approximately sixty tracks. The exact number is unknown, as some masters disappeared when the recording company went out of business. They were sold as scrap metal and allegedly used to line chicken coops.

In a cut-throat world, he was generous with other musicians, providing Son House and Willie Brown with their first opportunities to record. He died of a heart ailment aggravated by hard living. Charley Patton's blessings are sought by those who wish to follow in his giant footsteps and walk the trail he blazed.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: One image of Charley Patton exists. He poses for the camera holding his guitar, looking suave in a bow tie and spats.

**SACRED SITE:** Charley Patton's grave in Holly Ridge, Mississippi, is Marker Number One on the official Mississippi Blues Trail.

**OFFERINGS**: Mr. Patton had a massive appetite for food and drink—especially drink. Light some candles for him, too.

SEE ALSO Coltrane, Saint John and Glossary: Saint, Unofficial.

## ∾ Paul, Saint

Also known as the Apostle Paul; Paul of Tarsus; Saul of Tarsus.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint in most branches of Christianity.

Saint Paul (died c. 67) is the architect of the Christian Church. He is considered the founder of Christianity as a distinct, independent religion and its single

greatest influence. Paul never met Jesus, or at least not in the flesh. By the time Paul became a Christian, the Crucifixion had already occurred.

Paul was on the road to Damascus when he experienced a blinding spiritual vision that led to his conversion. He considered himself apart from the original disciples and superior to them, because his experience was of the spirit and not of the flesh. He eventually feuded with the Jerusalem Church, which was under the direction of James the Just. Paul was an inveterate traveler. Unlike Jesus or his twelve disciples, Paul was a Roman citizen and it was under his influence that Rome became the center of Christianity—not Jerusalem or Egypt's Alexandria, both earlier centers.

Paul's own accounts of his early years are contradictory. Paul's contemporaries, the Ebionites—a divergent Christian tradition based in Jerusalem whose writings were suppressed by the Church, but whose views were preserved by their opponents, who quoted them in order to refute them—claimed that Paul was of gentile ancestry. According to the Ebionites, he converted to Judaism in Tarsus, the city of his birth, arriving in Jerusalem as an adult. Paul worked for the High Priest of Jerusalem—his biographer, Hyam Maccoby, describes Paul as a "henchman"—but when advancement was not forthcoming, Paul founded his own religion.

Paul ran afoul of Roman authorities and was allegedly martyred in 67 at Tre Fontane on Rome's Laurentian Way. Because he was a Roman citizen, Paul was allowed a noble death by beheading with a sword. His severed head bounced three times. Where it touched the earth, the springs of Tre Fontane (Three Fountains) rose up, or so the legend goes. The springs, previously known as Aquae Salviae, existed in pre-Christian times. Another more subversive legend suggests that Paul was not executed by the Romans but instead killed by Jewish Zealots as payback for his alleged role in the death of his rival, James the Just.

Paul, like so many powerful saints, is venerated in official and unofficial ways. Officially, he is among the most revered of all saints; he exemplifies Church doctrine, much of it based on his teachings and influence. He is a great healer and exorcist.

Unofficially, in Italian folk tradition, Paul is a snake-charming, spidercommanding witch doctor, in which guise he is sometimes called Saint Paul Taranta, perhaps to distinguish him from his more conventional paths.

FAVORED PEOPLE: authors; journalists; publishers; travel writers.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Carry Paul's image to protect against shipwreck.

ATTRIBUTE: sword; book.

**SPIRITUAL ALLY:** Saint Paul is frequently venerated with Saint Peter.

SACRED PLANT: winter hellebore (*Helleborus hyemalis*).

GEMSTONE: sapphire.

**CONSTELLATION:** Opiusuchus, the constellation also known as the Serpent Bearer, has been interpreted as portraying Saint Paul with the Maltese viper.

FEASTS:

- 25 January celebrates Paul's conversion
- 10 February, the anniversary of his shipwreck
- 29 June, the feast of Peter and Paul

SACRED SITES:

- Rome's Church of Saint Paul at the Three Fountains, reputedly the site of his martyrdom.
- Rome's Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls, founded by Emperor Constantine over what is believed to be his grave.
- The Catacombs of Saint Paul and the Grotto of Saint Paul in Rabat, Malta. The grotto marks where Paul spent several weeks after being shipwrecked.
- Saint Paul's Cathedral in London is built atop the highest point in the City of London.

COLORS: blue; red.

SEE ALSO Agatha, Saint; Apostles; James the Just; Paul Taranta; Peter, Saint; Well Saints and Glossary: Path.

# 👡 Paul Taranta, Saint

Also known as Taranta-Saint Paul.

Saint Paul Taranta, a controversial and unofficial path of Saint Paul, is closely identified with Tarantism, which, depending on perspective, may be a vestige of Italian Paganism or a compulsive dance mania similar to Saint Vitus' dance. The

dance associated with Tarantism is the tarantella, or the spider dance. Once again depending on perspective, Tarantism may be perceived as a form of demonic possession, or as a spirit-channeling dance tradition similar to modern East African *Zar*.

Saint Paul is closely identified with venomous creatures. In his official hagiography, he is invoked against snakes. *Acts of the Apostles* chapter 28 describes how Paul, shipwrecked on Malta, was bitten by a poisonous snake, yet suffered no ill effects. In verse 6, local people observing that he neither died nor became sick and swollen presume that Paul is a god.

An ancient metaphysical tradition suggests that those who survive animal attacks receive the power of the animal. Paul Taranta is the snake-and-spider saint. It is not clear whether Saint Paul Taranta is the stolid saint behaving unconventionally, or whether some old god has borrowed Paul's name and persona.

The Tarantella dance phenomenon was the response to a condition called tarantism, which was blamed on a spider's bite. Those bitten were allegedly forced to dance compulsively; otherwise it was feared they would die. Rather than dancing to death, they danced to stay alive. The first documented case of tarantism was recorded in 1370 near the southern Italian coastal town, Taranto. The dance, the condition, this saint, and eventually the name of a class of arachnids—tarantulas—were named after this town.

Dancers sometimes speak and behave obscenely, in a manner completely out of character. Although tarantism was initially blamed on the spider's bite, the condition was contagious, spreading from person to person. There is a theory that tarantism is a vestigial survival of Dionysian rites once popular in the area, or of another ritual-possession tradition.

In the late 18th century, Saint Paul became associated with Tarantism. He was credited with being able to heal and release the dancers, provided they first danced for him. Release from the mania occurred when the saint spoke to the dancing victim during the dance. Saint Paul also developed a concurrent reputation as the spirit who sent and directed the spider. He can inflict tarantism and he can remove it. He communicates with people while they are dancing, not only to release them from their mania, but also to impart messages and information.

Back in the early days of Christianity, Saint Paul visited Galatina, now in

modern nary, where he received an extremely warm, gracious welcome. In gratitude and appreciation, Paul produced a miraculous healing spring in his host's home, which was credited with curing all those bitten, stung, or harmed by venomous creatures. The home with the well became known as the House of Saint Paul.

Paul also transmitted the healing power he personally possessed to his host and his future descendents. Healing was accomplished by making the sign of the cross over injuries from venomous creatures (including scorpions, snakes, and spiders), followed by a drink of water from the well. Paul and his own descendents also claimed this power, except that they didn't need access to the well; they could heal without it.

Wandering shamanic healers and snake charmers throughout southern Italy boasted of descent from Saint Paul, calling themselves the *San Paolari* or *Sanpaolari*. (Paul was married and reputedly had children, so at least theoretically could be an ancestor.) Proof of ancestry was allegedly established by the existence of serpentine-shaped birthmarks beneath tongues, behind knees, or elsewhere on the body.

Some San Paolari were genuine healers; others were charlatans. Eventually, the two traditions, tarantism and Sanpaolari, merged, linked by Saint Paul's well. By the early 18th century, Tarantists sought healing in Galatina. After being blessed and drinking the water, many claimed to be cured. So many Tarantists arrived that, in 1752, a chapel dedicated to Saint Paul was built over the well. The chapel still exists; the well doesn't.

Saint Paul is the protector of Tarantella practitioners. He protects them and guards against the condition but also inflicts and activates it. Tarantism is sometimes called Saint Paul's disease. The Tarantella possession trance-dance may incorporate dialogue with a spirit who identifies himself as Saint Paul, or the entranced dancer may hear this spirit's voice.

- Saint Paul Taranta can reputedly heal any kind of spider bite or its effects.
- If you are scared of spiders, ask Saint Paul Taranta to keep them away from you.

ATTRIBUTE: chalice with a snake.

SACRED ANIMAL: spider.

COLORS: green; red.

**SACRED SITE:** In June 1959, the Galatina sanitation authority declared Saint Paul's well water to be contaminated and dangerous. It was bricked up.

SEE ALSO Paul, Saint; Vitus, Saint; Well Saints.

#### 🔊 Pelagia, Saint

EPITHET: The Beardless Hermit.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Pelagia was a brilliant, gorgeous, charismatic, glamorous actress—the reigning star of the theater in the city of Antioch sometime during the early centuries of the Common Era. She wasn't just an actress; she was a woman of scandalous repute. Her theatrical presentations were lasciviously erotic. According to the early Church leader Saint John Chrysostom, not a fan of erotica: "Nothing was more vile than she was when she was on the stage."

Pelagia took lovers as she pleased. Men abandoned wives and families for her. The wealthy squandered their fortunes to please her. She allegedly seduced the empress' brother. One evening, Pelagia, exquisitely made up, perfumed, and dressed to the nines, sashayed down an Antioch street with an entourage of glamorous men and women. Unlike most local women, she went unveiled and scantily, but very carefully, dressed.

Eight bishops happened to be standing on that street. Seven averted their eyes from her. The eighth, Bishop Nonnus, watched her closely and then asked the others whether her beauty had delighted them. The seven were shocked and offended at the question, but Nonnus pointed out how many hours and how much care she had spent on her appearance. He suggested that such time and effort should be spent on the soul instead. He resolved to pray for Pelagia. The next Sunday, Pelagia, walking past the church where Nonnus was preaching, began weeping uncontrollably. She waited humbly until he was alone and then begged him to make her a Christian.

Nonnus heard her lengthy, detailed confession, tutored her in the faith, and baptized her. Pelagia was his trophy convert. He invited the seven bishops to a banquet celebrating her baptism. Pelagia, who was wealthy, gave her entire fortune to Nonnus. She cropped her hair short, put on a ragged monk's cloak, and walked from Antioch to Jerusalem disguised as a male hermit. She spent the rest of her life engaged in self-mortification in a grotto on the Mount of Olives. As she had no beard, people assumed that she was a eunuch.

No historical documentation exists regarding Pelagia, nor is there accurate information as to when she lived or died. She was venerated as a saint by the early fourth century. Her myth derives from two primary sources:

- John Chrysostom's Sermon 67, which never mentions her by name
- James the Deacon's elaboration

James claimed to be Nonnus' deacon. (Some scholars doubt his identity.) He went to visit the hermits on the Mount of Olives. One hermit surprised him by greeting him by name, but James attributed it to psychic ability. Days later, that hermit died. James joined other monks in preparing the body for burial and recognized Pelagia.

Pelagia is often confused with Margaret of Antioch, because the Eastern Church calls Margaret by the name Marina, and Marina and Pelagia both mean "sea." Scholars speculate that her legend, if not just lascivious fantasy, may be a veiled attack on Aphrodite, the ultimate glamour girl.

- Pelagia is invoked to heal those suffering from humiliation, self-loathing, or any sense of defilement.
- She heals those who are obsessed with appearance or the corporal body, including those suffering from eating disorders.

Pelagia heals via salt water. Ideally, petition her at the sea. Create an altar by digging a small pit in the sand. Dedicate seven small white candles to her and request that she cleanse you. Then immerse yourself completely seven times. (If access to the sea is impossible, this ritual may be performed by adding lots of sea salt to a bath, but it is more effective at the shore.)

FAVORED PEOPLE: actresses.

FEAST: 8 October.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; incense; hand mirrors; hair ornaments; cosmetics;

perfumes; roses; scourges and other tools of self-mortification.

SEE ALSO Margaret of Antioch; Margaret of Cortona; Marina the Monk and Glossary: Myth.

## 👡 Peregrine, Saint

Also known as San Pellegrino.

**EPITHET:** The Cancer Saint.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Peregrine Laziosi (c.1260–1 May 1345) came from a wealthy, politically active family in Forli, Italy. He initially joined an antipapal political party but experienced a religious epiphany and entered the priesthood. As an act of penance, he stood all day, every day, without sitting for thirty years. Cancerous lesions developed on his legs. Physicians prepared to amputate.

The evening before surgery, Peregrine knelt in prayer before a crucifix. Falling into a trance, he had a vision of Jesus reaching out from the cross and touching his legs. In the morning, he was healed. Saint Peregrine is the patron of cancer patients but is now also invoked to heal AIDS and other dangerous diseases.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** His cancerous leg may be emphasized.

**ATTRIBUTE**: shepherd's crook with a purse tied to it.

SACRED DAY: Sunday.

FEAST: 1 May.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; San Pellegrino water.

## ∾ Peter, Saint

Also known as Saint Simon Peter; Pyotr; Pedro; Pierre; Cephas; Simon bar

Jonan.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Simon (died c. 65) was a Jewish fisherman from Galilee, one of the original twelve disciples. Presumably he was a big guy. Jesus nicknamed him Cephas, which in the Aramaic language means "rock," the equivalent of being called Rocky or The Rock. Cephas was later translated into Greek and so became Peter, which has the same meaning. Peter served as Jesus' bodyguard.

Now he's a celestial bouncer. Peter is the keeper of the keys. He is envisioned standing before the pearly gates of Heaven. Peter determines who enters and who doesn't. Peter's blessings include happy death and entrance to Heaven.

- Saint Peter is invoked for longevity.
- He liberates prisoners.
- Peter heals fevers and any health ailments that involve feet—from bunions to diabetes.
- He offers protection from wolves.

Peter came into conflict with Mary Magdalen. He may or may not have gotten along with Saint Paul, with whom he now shares his feast day. Peter is considered the first pope. He is the rock on which Jesus built his church. Imprisoned in Jerusalem after the death of Jesus, angels freed Peter, who then traveled to Rome, where he was reputedly crucified by Emperor Nero sometime between 65 and 67 ce. A small shrine was built over his tomb. Veneration of Saint Peter began immediately upon his death.

- Dedicate and burn white candles to Peter before séances and any necromantic rituals—including Ouija and spirit boards—so that he'll be a vigilant gatekeeper, ushering in good souls, but obstructing malicious ones.
- In African Diaspora traditions, Saint Peter may be syncretized to the West African spirit Eshu-Elegbara (also known as Elegba, Elegua, or Papa Legba), a crossroads spirit who controls doors, roads, destiny, and opportunities. He is identified with Peter because of the keys Peter holds. Votive images of Saint Peter may sometimes be intended to represent Eshu-Elegbara.

From a magical standpoint, the evening of 31 July, known as the Vigil of Saint Peter in Chains, is considered the optimal time to remove or break anything that oppresses, binds, or enchants you. This includes nexes, curses, bad habits, addictions, the Evil Eye, and what is known in Hoodoo terminology as "crossed conditions," meaning obstructions that prevent success and happiness.

## Saint Peter Uncrossing Spell

Ask Peter to break the chains that bind you. Request that he remove the cross that is so heavy for you to bear:

- 1. Dedicate a white candle in the shape of a cross to Saint Peter.
- 2. Using the edge of a key, carve your name, your birthday, and your desires into the candle wax and then burn it.

## Saint Peter Crossing Spell

Peter is sometimes invoked in malevolent magic. He is asked to use his crossed keys to cross (curse, obstruct, hex, or otherwise chain down) the spell caster's opponents:

- 1. On a plain piece of white paper or brown butcher's paper, write your request as clearly and concisely as possible.
- 2. Draw an X over the paper, symbolizing crossed keys. (If you're an artist and can draw crossed keys, go ahead.)
- 3. At midnight, burn the paper, together with incense or a candle in the shape of a black cross dedicated to Saint Peter.

The Shadow of Saint Peter (*La Sombra de San Pedro*) is a lengthy Mexican *curanderismo* prayer that beseeches the saint's protection. It concludes:

Whoever doesn't like me, let them flee from me Adverse persons, depart! Peter, bless my path And do not leave me in penance.

In some spiritual communities, Saint Peter has a reputation of being a rough saint. New Orleans legends suggest that if Peter is not promptly paid whatever

has been promised to him, he causes fires, specifically house fires. On the other hand, in Europe as well as in New Orleans, it's traditional to get tough with Peter if he doesn't deliver requests fast enough. In rural Italy, if Peter was invoked to end a drought and the drought did not end, his statue was dumped into a river or other big body of water, so that he could *feel* the water people so desperately needed. Likewise in New Orleans, if Saint Peter failed to produce, his image might be battered with a broom. Some think the saint likes it rough, so they batter him from the start as part of the petition process, but this is controversial. Other ritual methods of petition exist, too:

- 1. Scratch or poke your finger with a pin until it bleeds—traditionally either the ring finger or the pinky finger on the left hand is used.
- 2. Write your petition to Saint Peter using your blood as ink. It is traditional to use vellum or a square of brown butcher's paper, but any type of paper may be used.
- 3. Take your written petition to a crossroads and leave it there for Saint Peter. Walk away without looking back.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: boatbuilders; fishermen; net makers; clock makers; masons; stone workers; gatekeepers; locksmiths; watchmakers.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: He is usually portrayed as a robust bearded man in robes standing outside the pearly gates. An unusual portrait of Saint Peter, housed at Saint Mary's Catholic Church in Charleston, depicts him with six toes on his right foot. The toe and front of the sandal of the right foot of the ancient statue known as Saint Peter Enthroned in Saint Peter's Basilica has been eroded by centuries of pilgrims kissing and caressing it.

**ATTRIBUTES**: book; a pair of crossed keys or a set of three keys, one each for Heaven, Hell, and earth.

**SPIRITUAL ALLIES:** Peter and Paul are traditionally venerated together—they share a feast and many churches are dedicated to both of them—however, Peter may get along better with Saint Andrew, his brother. He reputedly also had an excellent working relationship with James the Just.

**COLORS**: white and red are most popular, but some traditions suggest blue.

#### SACRED DAY: Tuesday.

#### GEMSTONE: jasper.

**SACRED ANIMAL**: Saint Peter's fish, now more commonly known as tilapia; also a rooster.

FEASTS: His main feast, shared with Saint Paul, is on 29 June. After sunset on 28 June is Saint Peter's Eve, when many European towns traditionally reenacted Midsummer's Eve festivities, sort of like an instant replay or encore. Other days dedicated to Saint Peter include 18 January, 22 February, and 1 August.

SACRED SITES:

- the House of Saint Peter, allegedly once his home, in Capernaum, Israel
- Saint Peter's Basilica in Vatican City.
- Rome's Basilica of Saint Peter in Chains, built in the mid-fifth century to house chains allegedly worn by Peter.
- The Church of Saint Peter in Gallicantu (Saint Peter at the Crowing of the Cock) is on Mount Zion, just outside Jerusalem.

**OFFERINGS**: water; keys; arak; candles.

SEE ALSO Agatha, Saint; Aldegund, Saint; Andrew, Saint; Apostles; James the Just; Joseph, Saint; Mary Magdalen; Nicholas, Saint; Paul, Saint; Seven African Powers; Simon Magus.

## ∾ Phan Thanh Gian

CLASSIFICATION: Folk saint.

Is Phan Thanh Gian (1796–1867) a tragic hero worthy of veneration, or the man who ceded Vietnam to the French? As Vietnamese prime minister, mandarin, and distinguished scholar, he was the diplomat involved in events leading to French domination of Vietnam.

On 31 August 1858, French naval forces attacked the Vietnamese port city of Da Nang, claiming as justification that Roman Catholic missionaries were being persecuted. After several years of military conflict, to avoid further bloodshed, Phan Thanh Gian advised surrender, not because he wished to do so, but because he perceived the Vietnamese cause as hopeless. He described attempts to battle the militarily superior French as like a fawn attacking a tiger. The Treaty of Saigon, which Phan Thanh Gian signed on 5 June 1862, formally ceded three rich, rice-growing, southern provinces as well as the city of Saigon to France.

A year later, Phan Thanh Gian traveled to Paris, the first Vietnamese ambassador in Europe, in an attempt to redress the situation and reclaim the territory. The effort failed and by 1867, France had taken over the rest of the country. Blaming himself for the shame and loss, Phan Thanh Gian committed suicide in 1867 by drinking poison. He was enshrined in Vinh Long, his hometown. Miracles attributed to him attracted devotees. His temple was refurbished by the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam), but following Communist victory, Phan Thanh Gian officially fell from favor. The Communist Party despised him as the one who signed away Vietnam.

Phan Thanh Gian's temple was closed for years but reopened in the 1990s, albeit on a very limited schedule. His identity as a scholar is emphasized, not his political career. He is reputedly an extremely responsive spirit who fulfills petitioners' requests quickly.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** His votive image depicts a distinguished mandarin dressed in red robes and flanked by storks.

SACRED SITES:

- Phan Thanh Gian Temple, a Confucionist temple in Vinh Long, is his primary shrine.
- He is also enshrined in Le Van Duyet's mausoleum.

**OFFERINGS:** red candles; incense.

SEE ALSO Confucius; Ho Chi Minh; Le Van Duyet; Trung Sisters.

## ∾ Philomena, Saint

Also known as Saint Philomène; Filomena.

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

In 1802, archaeologists excavating Rome's Catacombs of Saint Priscilla discovered a sealed shelf tomb containing the bones of an approximately twelve-

year-old girl and a broken vial of dried blood presumed to be hers. Her skull was fractured.

The tomb had been sealed with three terra-cotta tiles in a style typically indicating martyrs of noble birth. The tablets were inscribed with a mysterious funerary inscription reading LUMENA PAXTE CUMFI, which was incomprehensible. *If* the tiles were rearranged to read PAXTE CUMFI LUMENA, they could be interpreted as "Peace with you, Philomena," so the skeleton was identified as a noble young martyr named Philomena.

- The tiles were ornamented with images of three arrows, a scourge, a palm branch, and a lily, interpreted as symbols of martyrdom and virginity.
- The image of an anchor inscribed on the slab was interpreted as symbolizing hope.

These bones were kept in storage until 1805, when Father Francisco de Lucia traveled to the Vatican seeking a virgin's relics for his chapel in Mugnano, near Naples, to serve as a role model for young girls. Passing Philomena's urn, he was overcome with a sense of joy. He officially requested Philomena's relics and also asked Philomena for her help if she wished to go to Mugnano. Permission was granted. The relics were encased in a statue. The very day Philomena arrived in Mugnano, a lengthy drought abruptly ended. The miracle was credited to Philomena, just the first of many. Wonders, miracles, and devotion expanded exponentially.

Philomena developed a reputation as a wonder worker. On 10 August 1823, her statue began exuding miraculous oil, as it still does. By the 1830s, she was well known throughout Italy, France, and the Americas.

But who was Philomena? In 1824, Father de Lucia published a book giving an account of her life based on inferences from frescoes found near her urn. He described her as a young Greek princess who converted to Christianity. She met Emperor Diocletian when she visited Rome with her family. He wished to marry her and she was martyred for her resistance. Further editions of his book published in 1827 and 1829 elaborated on this legend.

In 1833, the mystic Italian nun Mother Maria Luisa di Gesu confirmed Father de Lucia's description, based on conversations she had with Philomena during visionary experiences. Philomena allegedly explained that having vowed herself to God, when Diocletian sought to marry her, she refused. She was tortured, whipped until her entire body was one open wound, and thrown into the Tiber River with an anchor around her neck. Two angels cut the rope and carried her to shore. This was allegedly witnessed by many people who converted to Christianity on the spot; however, Roman authorities now perceived her as a sorceress. Diocletian ordered Philomena dragged through the streets and shot with flaming arrows. The arrows reversed in midair, killing the archers instead. Philomena was finally executed by beheading.

No documented evidence of a martyr named Philomena or her legend is known to exist, but the same could be said of many other saints. A beautiful young princess martyred so dramatically should be recalled along with Agnes, Lucy, Barbara, Agatha, and other virgin martyrs—or so many thought. Thus, in 1834, the canonization process for Philomena began. In 1837, only thirty-five years after the discovery of her bones, Pope Gregory XVI proclaimed her a saint, Patroness of the Living Rosary, and the Wonder Worker of the 19th Century. By comparison, in 1837, neither Joan of Arc nor Margaret of Hungary—miracle workers venerated for centuries—had yet been canonized. Hildegard of Bingen remains an unofficial saint.

"Pray to Saint Philomena. Whatever you ask from her, she will obtain for you," said Pope Gregory XVI. Sister Maria Luisa di Gesu reported that the Blessed Mother told her that "nothing is denied to Philomena."

Philomena became a superstar among saints.

- Father Damien, who cared for Hawaiian lepers in Molokai, named his church in her honor.
- Queen of New Orleans Voodoo Marie Laveau named one of her daughters Philomène.

However, over the years, veneration of Philomena grew intensely associated with folk religion and the Church became nervous. The Philomena phenomenon was out of control. The Congregation of Rites in Rome decided that there was no historical basis for veneration of Philomena. On 14 February 1961, she was withdrawn from the official calendar of saints. The cult of Philomena was officially suppressed. Some, but not all, of her shrines were shuttered. The Church tolerates her sanctuary at Mugnano. Although devotees are free to honor her, she is no longer officially recognized by the Church. Many of her devotees are devout Roman Catholics who actively lobby for Philomena to be officially recognized by the Vatican once again.

- Philomena is matron saint of desperate, lost, impossible, hopeless, and forgotten causes.
- She is credited with miracles including healing cancer, heart conditions, infertility, and festering wounds. She is responsible for many miracles involving children.
- Philomena is venerated in several African Diaspora spiritual traditions. She is not necessarily syncretized to African spirits but is recognized as a miracle worker and venerated as herself.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: babies; children; young people; orphans; pregnant women; destitute mothers.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Philomena is usually portrayed as a very pretty young girl with long brown hair and soulful eyes.

ATTRIBUTES: arrows; anchor.

COLORS: red; white.

**AMULET:** The Cord of Saint Philomena invokes the protection and blessings of the saint, especially for healing. The cord is red and white, made from cotton, linen, or woolen thread, and knotted twice at one end. It is usually worn under clothing as a girdle or cincture. No particular ritual is required, but it must be blessed in order to be activated.

SACRED SITE: her sanctuary in Mugnano, Italy.

SACRED DAY: Saturday.

FEAST: 11 August.

**OFFERINGS**: flowers; candles; things a twelve-year-old girl would like.

SEE ALSO Agatha, Saint; Agnes, Saint; Anastacia; Andresito, Fray; Damien, Saint; Laveau, Marie; Lucy, Saint; Maria Goretti, Saint and Glossary: Saint, Official; Saint, Unofficial; Syncretism.

## 👡 Philothea, Saint

Also known as Filofteea.

**EPITHET:** Protectress of Romania.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Orthodox saint.

Philothea was born c. 1206 in Turnovo, the ancient capital of Bulgaria. Her mother died when she was young and her father, a farmer, married the proverbial wicked stepmother. Her stepmother accused Philothea of disobedience and also of giving their possessions to the poor without permission—which, in fact, was true. Philothea's daily tasks included bringing meals to her father while he labored in the fields. On her way to him, Philothea passed poor, hungry children begging in the streets and inevitably shared his food with them.

Eventually, her father complained to his wife that the meals she sent him were insufficient; he was still hungry. His wife retorted that what she sent was suitable, but that he should ask his daughter what she did with the food. The father decided to spy on Philothea. When he observed her giving away food, he lost his temper and impulsively threw his axe at her, killing her.

Her father attempted to lift the small corpse but could not; she was too heavy. He sought assistance from the local archbishop, who was also unable to move her body. Recognizing that Philothea was unhappy with her father's plans for interment and did not wish to remain at home, the archbishop began listing churches, monasteries, and potential burial spots. When he named the Monastery of Curtea de Arges (pronounced: *ar-gesh*) in what is now modern Romania, her body instantly became light. Philothea was transported in a sacred procession and immediately began performing miracles.

Every year on her feast day, Philothea's relics are carried in processional around the monastery courtyard. She performs miracles of healing and ends droughts.

#### ATTRIBUTE: an axe.

**SACRED SITE**: Philothea is buried in a small chapel in the bell tower behind the Curtea de Arges Monastery Church, approximately 150 kilometers from Bucharest.

FEAST: 7 December.

SEE ALSO Sava, Saint.

## 👡 Phinehas ben Yair

Also known as Phinehas ben Jair; Pinchas ben Yair.

**PRONOUNCED**: pin-hahs ben yah-eer.

CLASSIFICATION: Jewish saint.

Phinehas ben Yair, second-century sage and holy man, is famous for never having accepted an invitation to dine in anyone's house—out of principle, not misanthropy—including from his own father, under whose roof he never ate after attaining adulthood. Phinehas was considered an exceptionally pious, if unusual, man.

He is now considered the saint of the good divorce. Invoke his blessings for a peaceful parting of ways by visiting his grave in the Old Safed Cemetery in Safed, Israel. Light a candle in his memory and walk around the grave seven times counterclockwise requesting his assistance.

- According to the Talmud, Phinehas ben Yair was the son-in-law of the miracle worker, Simon bar Yohai.
- According to the Zohar, however, Phinehas was Simon's father-in-law.

SEE ALSO Simon bar Yohai.

## ∾ Photina, Saint

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Little is known of Photina's early life. She was a young woman, possibly a teenager, when she boarded a ship destined to crash somewhere off the Turkish coast. Where she was going and who she was traveling with are now unknown. Photina survived the wreck by clinging to pieces of floating wood. She eventually landed on what is charitably called an island but was essentially a big

rock sticking out of the sea, inhabited by one lone Christian hermit, the future Saint Martinian.

Martinian had come to this rock to devote himself solely to God and escape temptation, specifically in the form of women. He was dismayed at Photina's sudden appearance, but was kind to her. Telling Photina that a ship would rescue her in two months' time, he gave her his entire supply of bread and fresh water, sufficient for her survival, and advised her to stay calm. Then he walked into the waves, refusing to stay alone with this beautiful young woman. (Not to worry: dolphins rescued Martinian and brought him safely to shore.)

Photina was so impressed by Martinian's actions that she spent the rest of her life in prayer and contemplation and is now Saint Photina. She shares Martinian's feast day and may be venerated along with him.

FEAST: 13 February.

SEE ALSO Martinian, Saint; Zoë, Saint.

#### 🔊 Pinto the Elder, Rabbi Chaim

Also known as Hayyim Pinto.

**PRONOUNCED**: hi-im or hi-eem.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Jewish saint.

Rabbi Chaim Pinto (1758–1845), scholar, Kabbalist, healer, and wonder worker, was born in Agadir, Morocco. He was renowned for his piety, as well as for the miracles performed during his lifetime, which he reputedly continues to produce. Considered the most illustrious member of the Pinto family—renowned for its many saints, including his father, son, and grandson—he is called Rabbi Pinto the Elder to distinguish him from his grandson who is also called Rabbi Chaim Pinto. Rabbi Pinto the Elder served as chief rabbi of Mogador, Morocco, where he is buried.

Many candles are lit at his grave. Soot that falls from these candles onto the tomb is rubbed onto children's foreheads to invoke Rabbi Pinto's blessings and protection. Water poured onto the tomb and then collected allegedly manifests healing powers and may be drunk as needed.

SACRED SITE: his grave in Mogador.

**FEAST:** His *hillulah*, or commemoration, is celebrated on the twenty-sixth day of the Hebrew month of Elul, corresponding in time approximately to the zodiac sign Virgo.

## 👡 Pio, Saint

Also known as Padre Pio; Pio of Pietrelcina; Saint Padre Pio.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Padre Pio (25 May 1887–23 September 1968) is among the most famous, beloved, and controversial of all saints. In terms of numbers of pilgrims, his Italian shrine is the second-largest Roman Catholic pilgrimage. Only Guadalupe draws larger numbers.

Born Francisco Forgione, he was named after Francis of Assisi. At age fifteen, he became a Capuchin novice and was ordained on 10 August 1910. Padre Pio suffered from tuberculosis. Because of his fragile health, he lived in his hometown of Pietrelcina, not in the monastery, which he visited. He was drafted during World War I but sent home because of his health. Padre Pio eventually entered the monastery of San Giovanni Rotondo, where he spent the rest of his life and where he is now enshrined.

Padre Pio's life was characterized by mystical experiences, In September 1910, he developed mysterious bloodless wounds in the center of his palms that came and went for the next eight years. On 5 August 1918, he experienced a vision of an angel who thrust a flaming sword into his soul. He felt as if he were dying, as if his internal organs were pierced. He felt this open wound for the rest of his life.

Following this experience, Padre Pio began manifesting incredible healing, prophetic, and clairvoyant powers. He was reputedly able to bilocate (be in two places at once), especially in order to heal those who invoked his intercession. He credited his guardian angel, with whom he was in *constant* communication, for his ability to understand foreign languages and for his psychic powers. He advised people to get in touch with him by having their guardian angels contact his guardian angel.

Padre Pio is credited with dramatic acts of healing. He caused the blind to see, the deaf to hear, and the mentally unbalanced to recover. Considered a saint during his lifetime, many made pilgrimages to see him, to receive his blessings and spiritual guidance, and to be healed. His fame spread internationally, especially after World War II, when returning American solders spread his reputation in the United States.

On 20 September 1918, Pio was kneeling in church when he began exhibiting bleeding stigmata. Physicians examining him discovered that all traces of his tuberculosis were gone. Padre Pio bore the stigmata for the rest of his life.

- He bled continuously and was unable to close his hands.
- Padre Pio always wore gloves except at Mass.
- He had to wear special shoes to accommodate the bleeding wounds in his feet.

Pio's blood was perfumed with the scent of flowers—violets and roses. He accurately foretold that the wounds would heal when he died. Crowds flocked to see him. While many considered him a holy man and living saint, rumors persisted that he had somehow faked the stigmata, possibly with carbolic acid. (These rumors continue.) Physicians appointed by the Vatican carried out two investigations, but no explanation was found. Some physicians became devotees, but many in official positions found the devotion shown to Padre Pio to be excessive and embarrassing.

In 1923, Pio was silenced, forbidden to preach, teach, or write letters. He was only permitted to say Mass and hear confessions. At one point, he was banned from saying Mass, but pilgrims continued to flock. In 1956, he opened a hospital, House for the Relief of Suffering, funded by donations. Crowds at the Capuchin monastery became so huge that an armed guard was necessary to maintain peace.

Padre Pio repeatedly said that his real mission would begin after his death, when he would be able to accomplish even more. His requiem Mass was attended by over 100,000 mourners. He was venerated as an unofficial saint from the moment he died. Padre Pio allegedly told a young Polish priest, Karol Wojtyla, that one day he would be pope. Wojtyla, as Pope John Paul II, declared Padre Pio a saint on 16 June 2002.

Saint Pio is the subject of many books. Composer Gian Carlo Menotti may

have been inspired to write his opera *The Saint of Bleecker Street* after meeting him.

**MANIFESTATION**: Those who have witnessed apparitions describe him as an elderly white-bearded man dressed in a brown Capuchin habit. He is described as radiating an aroma reminiscent of a bouquet of fresh flowers, with the scent of violets predominating. Many claim to smell this fragrance when invoking his aid.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Many photographs of Saint Pio are available from virtually all stages of his life.

COLOR: brown.

**SACRED SITE:** San Giovanni Rotondo, in Apulia, Italy, where he lived and is buried, draws eight million pilgrims annually.

FEAST: 23 September.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; flowers; good deeds on behalf of the poor or needy; donations to his hospital; pilgrimage.

SEE ALSO Francis of Assisi, Saint; Guadalupe; Guardian Angels; John Paul II; Mary Frances of the Five Wounds and Glossary: Stigmata.

# Q

## 👡 Quentin, Saint

Also known as Quintinus; Quintin.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Saint Quentin was a Christian martyr who died in approximately 287. No other documented evidence for him exists; however, there are legends. His father was a Roman senator and his name indicates that he may have been a fifth son. Quentin secretly converted to Christianity and traveled to Gaul—now modern France—to proselytize. He settled in Amiens and developed a reputation as a worker of wonders and miracles.

This drew the attention of authorities. Quentin was arrested. He refused to abjure his faith despite being tortured. Chained and manacled, Quentin was transported to Reims for final judgment, but en route, Quentin gave his captors the slip. He miraculously escaped, but rather than lying low, he began preaching publicly again. And again, he was arrested. Perhaps not sure they could hold him indefinitely or ensure his arrival, authorities decided not to bother with transportation to the official court—instead Quentin was executed then and there. After being tortured, he was beheaded. His body and head were thrown into the marshes in the Somme River Valley.

Fifty-five years later, a blind Roman woman named Eusebia, who was also from a senatorial family, experienced a dream vision so profound that she left home and traveled to Gaul. She followed the directions offered to her in her vision. When she reached the marshes, Quentin's head and body emerged from the waters, still intact and emitting the sweet odor of sanctity.

Quentin's remains were placed in a chariot and transported. When they reached the top of a mountain, the chariot refused to go farther. Quentin was buried at the spot and Eusebia had a chapel built over his grave. Her sight was then miraculously restored.

Saint Quentin gained popularity centuries later through the efforts of Saint Eligius, who expanded and rebuilt the shrine now known as the Basilica of Saint Quentin. Eligius, a skilled goldsmith, also encased some of Quentin's relics—teeth, hair, and the nails with which he was tortured—in gold.

Ironically perhaps, the name of this saint may be most familiar because of the prison that shares it. San Quentin State Prison, founded in 1852, is the oldest prison in the state of California. It is, however, not named after the saint, but after a California Indian, a Miwok warrior named Quentin who was incarcerated there. Saint Quentin was a renowned escape artist and may perhaps be of assistance to those wishing to avoid prison, whether San Quentin or any other—or, if it's already too late, to obtain release.

Saint Quentin is invoked against influenza, the common cold, and any ailment that involves coughing, sneezing, or hacking.

FAVORED PEOPLE: escape artists; locksmiths; prisoners; surgeons; bombardiers.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Quentin is portrayed in the process of being tortured and together with the instruments of his torture. His decapitated body may also be shown, with a white dove emerging from his severed head.

**SACRED SITE:** The Basilica of Saint Quentin in the town of Saint Quentin (named for him) in Picardy, France.

FEASTS: 31 October, the primary feast; also 3 January and 24 June.

SEE ALSO Eligius, Saint.

## 👡 Quiteria, Saint

Also known as Saint Quiterie.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Saint Quiteria was once widely venerated throughout France, Spain, and Portugal. The city of Santa Quiteria, Brazil, is named after her. No documented information about Quiteria exists beyond her name and the fact that she is venerated and beloved. Who is she? At least three legends and a theory offer solutions to that mystery. She may be the eldest of nine sisters, known as the Nine Holy Twins, born in Minho, now in modern Portugal in the second century ce: Quiteria, Euphemia, Liberata, Marina, Genebra, Germana, Basilissa, Marica, and Victoria.

Details of the sisters' early lives are found in the entry for Saint Liberata. Basically, their mother gave them up at birth, expecting them to be killed. Instead, they were hidden and secretly brought up as Christians. When they became young women, they were reunited with their parents but came into conflict with them. The girls were arrested, but they escaped from jail, liberating other prisoners as well. The escapees split up into small groups to lead guerrilla warfare against the Romans. Quiteria is described as their leader.

All the sisters were eventually caught and martyred, but at different times and places. Several are now saints. After Quiteria was caught and beheaded, she stood up, picked up her head, and carried it up a mountain, stopping when she reached the place she had chosen as her shrine.

A second legend says that Quiteria came from Baiona in Galicia, Spain. After she was decapitated, her corpse was thrown into the sea. She emerged from the water, carrying her head in her hands. Another legend, this one from France, says that she ran away after her father, a fifth-century Galician prince, arranged a marriage for her. She was captured at Aire-sur-l'Adour in Aquitaine and beheaded.

Saint Quiteria once kept two lunging rabid dogs at bay with only the sound of her voice. She is invoked against rabies and protects against dog attacks.

Quiteria, or Kuteria, means "the red one" in Phoenician. It was a title given to the goddess Astarte. It also sounds very similar to the name of the goddess Aphrodite Cythera, or Kythera. Astarte and Aphrodite may or may not be the Phoenician and Greek names for the same goddess. Both were widely venerated in the regions associated with Quiteria's legends. Although both are now most famous as love goddesses, Aphrodite and Astarte also possess a fierce military aspect and associations with dogs.

- Saint Quiteria may have been named after the goddess.
- She may be the goddess in disguise.
- Her myth, especially the part about leading guerrilla warfare, may recall

armed resistance by Phoenicians or Celts against the Romans.

FAVORED PEOPLE: dog trainers.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Saint Quiteria climbs a mountain or emerges from the sea, carrying her head in her hands. When her head is intact, she is usually portrayed with a dog.

#### SACRED SITES:

- The Church of Sainte-Quiterie in Aire-Sur-l'Adour, France, where her relics were housed before being scattered by Huguenots, is on the pilgrimage route to Compostela.
- Zubiri, a Basque town, is on the Compostela pilgrimage route as well. *Zubiri* means Town of the Bridge, referring to the Gothic stone bridge over the River Arga leading into Zubiri. The bridge is named the *Puente de la Rabia*, or the Bridge of Rabies. Reputedly, Quiteria's relics are contained within the bridge's central pier. Local legend suggests that walking an animal over or around this central pier bestows immunity to rabies or heals the disease.

COLORS: red; pink.

SACRED ANIMAL: dog.

ELEMENT: water.

FEAST: 22 May.

**OFFERINGS**: flowers; images of dogs; small vessels of ocean or salt water; seashells; pilgrimage to one of her churches.

SEE ALSO Denis, Saint; James the Gentle; Liberata, Saint; Marina of the Holy Waters; Winifride of Wales.

# R

### 👡 Rachel

Also known as Rochel; Rachelle; Roquel; Raquel; Rahel.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Jewish saint.

Rachel is the most beloved matriarch in Jewish folk religion. She is the motherdefender of the Jewish people, envisioned weeping in grief for their travails. Although Rachel may be petitioned and invoked for any protection or blessing, she is considered especially sympathetic to pleas for fertility and safe childbirth.

The best loved of the wives of the biblical patriarch Jacob, Rachel makes her first appearance in the Bible in Genesis 29, when Jacob comes upon her as she is watering her flocks. Rachel's own name means "the lamb of the Lord." She is the younger sister of Leah, Jacob's other wife. The lives of the two sisters are characterized by fierce, bitter competition with each other.

- Jacob loves Rachel more than Leah and spends more time with her.
- Rachel is unable to bear children, while Leah is exceedingly fertile.

Ironically, although it is Rachel who, for millennia, has been revered as the compassionate Mother of Israel, Leah is the primary ancestress. The biblical Israel was divided into twelve tribes, each one the descendent of one of Jacob's sons. Rachel is the ancestress of only two. After the destruction of Solomon's Jerusalem Temple and the subsequent disappearance of Israel's Ten Lost Tribes, only two tribes remained:

- The tribe of Judah, the descendents of Leah
- The tribe of Benjamin, the descendents of Rachel

Despite their sometimes unseemly competition, the two sisters are perceived as attaining such a state of holiness that they serve as vehicles for the Shekhina, the in-dwelling feminine presence of the Creator. Although beloved, Rachel is not without controversy. When Jacob's clan travels to Canaan, leaving her brother Laban's home, it's Rachel who secretly absconds with the mysterious *teraphim*, much to her brother's dismay and displeasure—so much so that the act may have drawn down his curse. (The identity of the teraphim remains mysterious. They may be divination devices, idols, fetishes containing ancestral spirits, or some or all of the above.)

Rachel died approximately 3000 years ago, still a young woman. Some have blamed her death on her brother's curse. Having suffered from infertility for years, she died in childbirth with her second son. She was buried in Efrat, near Bethlehem. Her gravesite immediately became a shrine, as it continues to be. (Because of urban sprawl, the tomb is now considered to be in Bethlehem.) Traditionally visited by Christian and Muslim women as well as Jews, the location of Rachel's tomb has attracted violence. Attacks on the shrine occurred in 1996 and 2000. In response, the Rachel's Tomb Institute, founded in 2003, offers bullet-proof bus service to the shrine daily.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: exiles; women seeking to conceive; infertile women; women in trouble; motherless children.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** A 16th-century French card game identifies the Queen of Diamonds as Rachel. The playing card may be used to represent her.

SACRED ANIMAL: sheep.

**SACRED SITE**: Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem is visited by tens of thousands annually. It is estimated that 4000 people visit each month. In the Byzantine era, a small domed building was constructed at the traditional gravesite. This was renovated by Sir Moses Montefiore in 1841. Further renovations were made in 1996, enlarging the shrine and enhancing security.

The midnight *Kollel*, a midnight prayer service held nightly at the shrine comprises two parts, one dedicated to each of Jacob's wives. The Tikkun Rachel, traditionally recited while sitting on the floor, mourns the destruction of the Second Temple and the exile of the Shekhina, the feminine divine presence.

RITUAL: The red Rachel Cord, a *segulah* or amulet, is traditionally created at her

tomb:

- 1. Wind a red cotton string around Rachel's tomb while simultaneously praying, petitioning, invoking her blessings, and chanting psalms.
- 2. Wrap it around your left wrist to receive Rachel's blessings of protection and fertility.

Once created, this thread will retain its power and may be given to another.

- Tie it around sick-beds to transmit healing.
- Tie it around the belly to ensure marriage or fertility.
- If pregnant, wrap it around your wrist.

In the wake of popular Kabbalah, red cord bracelets are commercially available, but their provenance is not always known. In other words, are you purchasing a genuine Rachel's Cord or just an overpriced red string? For those unable to travel to her grave, a traditional method of creating your own Rachel's Cord exists. It is most powerful if created on her *yahrzeit* (feast day).

# Rachel's Red Cord Bracelet

- 1. Dedicate a candle to Rachel and light it.
- 2. Invoke her blessings. Tell her what you need.
- 3. Wrap a red cotton string around your left wrist seven times, tying it with a knot.
- 4. Repeat the 33rd Psalm, followed by the second-century mystical Kabbalistic poem, *Ana B'Koach*.

**FEASTS:** Personal invocations of Rachel or pilgrimages to her tomb are made at any time, but especially during new moons, the Hebrew month of Elul (the last month of the Jewish year), and the anniversary of her death, the eleventh day of Heshvan (corresponding in time to the zodiac sign Scorpio).

### COLOR: red.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; oil lamps; kind deeds and charitable donations; donations toward upkeep of her shrine or the yeshiva (school) now situated there;

pilgrimage.

SEE ALSO Maid of Ludomir; Mary Magdalen.

👡 Rafqa Rayess, Saint

Also known as Rebecca; Rafka; Rafqa Ar-Rayès; Rafca.

**EPITHETS:** The Purple Rose; The Little Flower of Lebanon.

CLASSIFICATION: Maronite and Roman Catholic saint.

The saint canonized as Rafqa Rayess has borne several names. Born an only child in the town of Hemlaya in what is now modern Lebanon on 29 June 1833, her birth name was Boutrosiya Shabaq al-Rayess. She was born on the Feast Day of Saint Peter, so she was also called by French feminine variants of his name: Pierina, Petronia, Pietra, and Pierrette. Her mother, whose name was Rafqa, a variant of Rebecca, died when Boutrosiya was six.

From 1843 to 1847, beginning at age ten, the future saint worked as a maid in the home of her father's friend in Syria. When she was fourteen, Boutrosiya's future emerged as a source of family conflict.

- Her stepmother perceived her as a good match for her own (the step-mother's) brother.
- Her aunt wanted Boutrosiya to wed her son.

The women's impassioned arguments distressed Boutrosiya, who already felt a spiritual calling and desired a religious vocation rather than marriage. On her own volition, she entered the Convent of Our Lady of Liberation.

Her father and stepmother tried to bring her home, but from the moment Boutrosiya entered the convent doors, she felt a sense of joy and tranquility. She did not wish to leave. Boutrosiya asked that the Mistress of Novices excuse her from seeing her relatives. Her request was granted; her father and stepmother were turned away. Boutrosiya never saw them again. In the convent, she went by the French name Pierina until 9 February 1855—the feast of Saint Maron when she commenced her novitiate and adopted Anissa, a variant of Agnes, as her spiritual name.

In 1071 when her order united with another the sisters were sizer entions

They could join the new order, join another existing order, or resume lay status. The decision did not come easily for Sister Anissa. She prayed on it intensely, until one night, having fallen asleep, she received a vision of Saint Anthony of the Desert. Manifesting to her in the form of a man with a long white beard carrying a tau-cross-shaped staff, he told her twice to become a nun in the Baladiya Order, the Lebanese Maronite Order. She obeyed and on 12 July 1871, at age thirty-nine, became a Maronite nun, assuming the name Rafqa, her mother's name and the name under which she is now canonized.

In 1885, Sister Rafqa, noting that she was in perfect health and had never been sick a day in her life, prayed to Jesus, begging to be allowed to share in his suffering and to have direct, personal experience of the Passion. Her prayers were answered. Her health *immediately* began to deteriorate. She eventually became blind, suffering daily optic hemorrhage for almost thirty years, often accompanied by nose bleeds. Witnesses described her condition as resembling a red-hot needle piercing her head.

She suffered intensely. Physicians who were consulted could find no medical cause and were unable to relieve her suffering—not that Sister Rafqa necessarily sought relief. When physicians suggested surgical removal of one of her eyes, Rafqa refused anesthesia. Although she continued to spin, knit, and sing in the choir, by 1907 she was totally paralyzed. A medical report prepared in 1981 as part of her canonization process suggested tuberculosis with ocular localization and multiple bony excrescences as her most likely diagnosis. Rafqa died in 1914.

The first of the many miracles attributed to Rafqa occurred just days after her death. For eighty years, Sister Ursula, a fellow nun, had suffered from a lump in her throat that made swallowing painful and virtually impossible. On the fourth night after Rafqa's death, Sister Ursula was resting in her cell when there was a knock at her door and she heard a voice say: "Take sand from Rafqa's grave. Swab your throat with it and you will be healed." She dismissed this as being one of her fellow nuns and returned to sleep, but the experience repeated itself. This time, Sister Ursula responded, saying: "I'll get the sand in the morning." The following morning, all the other nuns denied knocking on her door. Sister Ursula gathered some sand from the grave, mixed it with water, and used the paste to swab her throat over the lump, which *instantly* disappeared.

Many other miracles have since been attributed to Rafqa, especially the healing of children. Rafqa is invoked against illness and to prevent the loss of parents. She appears to devotees in dreams to impart information and to provide miracle cures. Beatified on 17 November 1985 by Pope John Paul II, Sister

Rafqa was canonized on 10 June 2001.

ATTRIBUTES: lily; purple rose.

SACRED SITE: her tomb shrine at the Monastery of Saint Joseph at Jrabta, Lebanon.

FEAST: 23 March.

SEE ALSO Agnes, Saint; Anthony of the Desert; John Paul II; Maron, Saint; Peter, Saint; Thérèse of Lisieux.

# ∾ Rahman Baba

**EPITHET:** The Nightingale of Peshawar.

CLASSIFICATION: Sufi saint.

Rahman Baba (1663–c.1707), the beloved Sufi mystic, remains the most widely read poet in the Pashto-speaking regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan. His work has been translated into English. The grave-shrine of Rahman Baba at the foot of the Khyber Pass is a popular destination visited year-round by fans and devotees alike.

According to Rahman Baba, the paths to approach God and unlock the gates of Paradise include music, poetry, and dance. This philosophy attracted many adherents but also aroused the ire of fundamentalist Wahhabi Islamists. At the dawn of the 21st century, a Saudi-funded Wahhabi *madrasa* (religious school) was built on the track leading to Rahman Baba's shrine. Students soon took it upon themselves to correct what they perceived as heretical behavior. Pilgrims and tenders of the shrine were harassed. The local Taliban warned that they would bomb the shrine if women continued to visit. Fulfilling their warning, on 5 March 2009, local Taliban militants in northwest Pakistan blew up the shrine.

• The shrine was badly damaged.

• The grave itself was destroyed.

No one was physically injured. Transcending the stress this caused devotees, the

bombing was particularly shocking because Rahman Baba has traditionally been a symbol of peace in the Pashto region. The incident received international attention. Author William Dalrymple, writing in *The Observer* on 8 March 2009 in an article entitled "Wahhabi Radicals Are Determined to Destroy a Gentler, Kinder Islam," compared Rahman Baba to Julian of Norwich.

These are widely considered to be Rahman Baba's most famous verses:
Plant flowers where you live, so that your region is a flower garden
Don't plant thorns that will stick in your feet
Don't dig a pit in someone else's path
Your own path might sooner or later lead into that pit.

Rahman Baba's capacity to communicate with animals is attributed to his gentle nature. Birds, pets or otherwise, suffering from any ailment are traditionally brought to Rahman Baba's shrine to be healed. An aviary, situated among the grove of trees near his grave, is intended as a place for injured birds to recuperate.

FAVORED PEOPLE: poets; musicians; mystics.

**SACRED SITE:** his shrine, located in Hazar Khwani village near Peshawar in Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province bordering Afghanistan.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; prayers; pilgrimage; distribute his writings.

SEE ALSO Julian of Norwich.

# 👡 Raphael Archangel, Saint

Also known as Rafael; Raphaelle; Israfel; Afarol; Afarof; Afriel; Rufa'el; Rafal.

EPITHET: The Lord's Healer.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Raphael, Regent of the Sun, is the archangel of healing. His name may be

translated as Healer of the Lord, The Lord's Remedy, or The Lord Heals. Like his compatriots the archangels Michael and Gabriel, Raphael is considered a saint by all branches of Christianity that acknowledge saints. He is beloved as an angel by Jews, Muslims, and angel devotees following every spiritual path.

Raphael is not named in either the Old or New Testaments, but he is the star of the Book of Tobit, which is canonical to some Christians but apocryphal to Jews. Here, he performs miraculous cures and explains how to vanquish powerful demons. In the apocryphal Book of Enoch, he binds the fallen angel Azazel. Raphael also appears in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, in which God sends him to deliver warnings to Adam.

Raphael can reputedly heal any illness, ailment, or condition, but his specialties have historically included blindness and vision problems, whether literal or metaphoric. He relieves and heals mental illness and banishes nightmares. In addition to healing, Raphael is the angel of joy, love, and compassion. He supervises personal guardian angels.

- Raphael is among the seven angels who surround the heavenly Throne of Glory.
- He guards the Tree of Life.
- He may be the angel with the flaming sword who guards the gates of Eden.
- He may be the Guardian of the Holy Grail.

Raphael is an acclaimed demon-queller as well. In possession of the power of the Creator's Ineffable Name, he commands, compels, and banishes even the most formidable spirits. In the Book of Tobit, it's Raphael who ultimately terminates the demon Asmodeus' reign of terror. Raphael Archangel is invoked to banish wicked spirits and break curses and malignant spells.

**FAVORED PEOPLE:** Raphael will reputedly protect anyone who calls upon him and invokes his name, but he is specifically the guardian of those born under astrological air signs (Gemini, Libra, Aquarius). He protects lovers, matchmakers, pharmacists, physicians, nurses, healers, health inspectors, travelers (especially young people leaving home for the first time), young people in general, the blind, and the ailing.

**MANIFESTATION:** Raphael may manifest as a being of blinding light, but in the Book of Tobit, he makes himself appear so innocuous that, despite close contact,

Tobias, the central character, is unaware that he is an angel.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Raphael may be portrayed as a winged angel or as a handsome young androgynous man. Scenes from the Book of Tobit are popular, especially images of Raphael traveling with Tobit's young son, Tobias. According to a Coptic legend, Raphael once rescued an Egyptian church from a beached whale's thrashing tail; he is portrayed spearing this whale in icons from Ethiopia. In his warrior aspect, Raphael may be depicted with a lance and shield.

ATTRIBUTES: fish; traveler's staff; flask; chalice.

ELEMENTS: usually identified with air; sometimes with water.

**DIRECTION:** east or west, depending on opinion and tradition.

**COLORS**: usually blue and gold. Some southern Italian traditions recommend pink and purple; some Orthodox traditions associate Raphael with the color emerald green.

JEWEL: emerald

DAY: Tuesday, in Yezidi tradition.

FEASTS:

- Originally 24 October; but in 1969, Vatican reforms reassigned feast days so that archangels Gabriel and Raphael now share Michael's feast on 29 September.
- The Ethiopian Church honors Raphael on the thirteenth day of each month.

SACRED SITE: Church of the Archangel Raphael in Venice.

**OFFERINGS**: frankincense and myrrh; fish-shaped amulets; fish made of silver; red or blue candles.

SEE ALSO Archangel Saints; Gabriel Archangel, Saint; Guardian Angels; Michael Archangel, Saint.

#### **EPITHET:** The Demon Saint.

#### **CLASSIFICATION:** unofficial saint.

Grigori Rasputin (22 January 1869–29 December 1916), Russian healer and clairvoyant, is infamous as the "mad monk" who bewitched Nicholas and Alexandra, the last Russian tsar and tsarina, and also for the dramatic nature of his death. He evoked powerful reactions from people while he was alive. Some considered him holy; others fervently believed that he was an evil charlatan and a fraud.

Rasputin still evokes these reactions long after his death. While some venerate him as a saint who continues to heal from the after-life, others despise him. A figure based on him or using his name is a staple of entertainment, horror or otherwise, although these rarely have any basis in fact. For example, the 1997 animated film *Anastasia* taught children that Rasputin was a grotesque sorcerer whose vengeful curse caused the Russian Revolution.

Rasputin first came to Tsarina Alexandra's attention because she sought a miracle for her son, the heir to Russia's throne, Tsarevitch Alexis, who suffered from hemophilia. Physicians were unable to help and told her to anticipate her son's death. Rasputin, however, proved able to stop the internal bleeding that characterizes this deadly disease. There is much speculation from those who despise Rasputin or those who dispute the possibility of faith healing as to exactly *how* he treated Alexis. The general consensus is hypnosis, although on at least one occasion, Rasputin stopped Alexis's bleeding from a considerable distance—the equivalent of what, in modern terms, would be called "distance healing." However, the undeniable point is that Rasputin *did* relieve and allay Alexis's hemophilia when no one else could, hence his value to the imperial family.

Rasputin, whose nickname was Grisha, was a Siberian peasant. He began manifesting clairvoyant powers in childhood. For the first twenty-eight years of his life, he was a dissolute drunken brawler who occasionally worked as a coachman, but he already demonstrated spiritual inclinations. He spent three months at the monastery of Simeon Verkhoturye at age eighteen, possibly as penance for thievery. He had several pivotal spiritual experiences, culminating in an encounter with the Black Madonna of Kazan. He went to sleep in a room containing her icon and woke to discover the icon weeping. Kazanskaya, as the icon is familiarly known, told him: "Grigori, I am weeping for humanity's sins. Go wander and cleanse people of their sins."

Rasputin spent the next years as a wandering holy fool, walking thousands of miles across Russia, from Kiev to Moscow and St. Petersburg. He visited churches and monasteries. When people didn't volunteer to feed him, he begged. Always an unpretentious peasant, he found God in nature, rather than in books—his literacy level was never high. As Rasputin wrote (or rather dictated): "Nature taught me to love God and converse with Him."

Despite his nickname, the Mad Monk, Rasputin was never a monk nor was he ordained. He was a staretz, a wandering pilgrim, essentially an independent, unaffiliated Man of God.

Rumors of illicit relationships with women dogged him all his life. He may have spent time among the Khlysty, a banned, secret Russian spiritual tradition. The ascetic Khlysty renounced veneration of holy books and saints in favor of direct communication with the Holy Spirit, which they believed was embodied in living people. They practiced flagellation and were accused of having orgies. Rasputin's daughter and biographer, Maria Rasputin, acknowledged his time spent with them but said he ultimately rejected them.

When Rasputin arrived in St. Petersburg, his skills as a clairvoyant and healer quickly made him the toast of the town. Reputedly very charismatic, society ladies adored him. Tsarina Alexandra was searching desperately to allay her son's hemophilia when a society lady introduced her to Rasputin.

Able to soothe young Tsarevitch Alexis, Rasputin became Alexandra's spiritual advisor and, through her, also the tsar's—although, contrary to rumor, Nicholas did *not* always take Rasputin's advice. Rasputin was bitterly opposed to warfare and warned Nicholas that World War I would lead to disaster and should be avoided. Pro-war factions branded Rasputin a traitor. When the tsar left for the battle front, Rasputin's influence over the tsarina grew and many believed that he was effectively Russia's ruler.

Rasputin developed intimate access to the imperial family. Rumors suggested that this was literally true and that he was the tsarina's lover. Some of her recently published letters hint that this may be true. Simultaneously, others in the imperial circle hated him.

Rasputin was not a polite, tidy priest, but a larger-than-life, almost medieval figure with huge appetites for wine, women, and song. He was not overly concerned with hygiene. He performed political favors for women in exchange for convert favors. Many thought that he was too mustical, too much a percent

and too influential. Rasputin was perceived as behaving too far above his rank.

- Some perceived him as a bad influence on the imperial family.
- Some resented losing their own influence as his ascended.
- Others perceived that he offered supernatural protection to the tsar's family, which did not please everyone. Rumored to be among the conspirators who killed Rasputin was a grand duke in direct line of succession to the throne *if* the tsar were deposed.

Rasputin's death is the stuff of legend, reminiscent of tales of saints like Agatha, Pantaleimon, or Margaret of Antioch, who supernaturally resisted repeated attempts to kill them. A previous, unrelated murder attempt in 1914 failed. The woman who stabbed Rasputin, an ex-disciple, initially thought she had succeeded, proclaiming that she had killed the Antichrist.

Rasputin was lured to the palace of Prince Felix Yusupov and served cyanidelaced cakes and wine. He showed no ill effects. (His daughter, Maria, was convinced that he did not eat the cakes, as this was against his stringent diet, but she acknowledged that he drank the wine.) Rasputin was then shot in the heart. Appearing mortally wounded, he was left alone to die. When Yusupov returned an hour later, Rasputin opened his eyes. Rasputin struck Yusupov and fled into the courtyard, where he was shot in the back while trying to escape. He was still not dead and so the conspirators clubbed him into submission, wrapped him in a sheet, and dumped him, still alive, into the Neva River, where he drowned.

His body was recovered three days later. An autopsy found bullets and enough poison in his system to kill him, as well as evidence that he died by drowning. Alexandra had him buried at Tsarskoye Selo, the tsar's personal residence. Following the February Revolution, Rasputin's body was unearthed and burned, in the process spooking onlookers. Witnesses claim that his corpse was seen to levitate while being incinerated.

Rasputin was a legendary lover who had open affairs with many Russian noblewomen, something that annoyed many Russian noblemen. His murderers allegedly castrated him, flinging his member across the courtyard, where it was recovered and preserved by a household maid who may have been one of Rasputin's many lovers. This relic allegedly passed into the hands of some Russian noblewomen in exile in Paris, who used it as a fertility charm. Rasputin predicted his own death, settling his financial affairs weeks before and making sure his family was provided for. He told people he would not see the New Year, which turned out to be true. He left a letter stating that if he was killed by his fellow peasants, Russia would be blessed for 100 years, but that if he was killed by nobles, Russian blood would flow for the next twenty-five years. He also predicted that in the latter case, there would be no Russian nobility for the next twenty-five years, a foreshadowing of the revolution—a prophecy, not a curse.

It has been suggested that British Intelligence was involved in the plot to assassinate Rasputin. Reports sent between London and St. Petersburg indicate that there was great concern regarding Rasputin's insistence that Russian troops be withdrawn from World War I, which would have left British troops more vulnerable. Two officers in the British Secret Intelligence Service were present in St. Petersburg at the time of Rasputin's death, one possessing close family ties to Prince Yusupov.

For many devotees, Rasputin's death exponentially increased his mystic powers, because he passed through all the elements.

- He died in water.
- He was buried in earth.
- Gasoline was poured over his exhumed corpse and lit, setting him on fire.
- Finally, his ashes were scattered to the winds (air).

Rasputin is credited with recent miracles of healing. He also reputedly offers protection from potentially fatal traffic accidents. Mystics are content to venerate him as a folk saint, but others want to see him officially canonized. He remains divisive. There is even controversy between those who agree that he is a saint. Among those pushing for official canonization is a Russian nationalist faction that prefers to think that Rasputin was killed by a "Jewish conspiracy," not Russian nobles.

**MANIFESTATION**: a man with long black hair and beard, and an intensely powerful gaze. Rasputin communicates audibly.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Rasputin's very recognizable image is preserved in numerous photographs, which appear on holy cards and serve as the basis for his portrayal on icons. He appears on icons alone, or in the company of the imperial family,

where he may be placed behind the Tsarevitch Alexis, whom he appears to be blessing. (His appearance on icons is controversial; those who despise him complain that it is sacrilegious.) Icons that wish to proclaim Rasputin a saint frequently portray a sanitized version of him—his gaze is softened, his beard is trimmed, and he is dressed in spotless white.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; strong Russian tea; Madeira wine; Mad Monk brand vodka (if given with affection and respect, but he is unlikely to reject any alcoholic beverage—wine, champagne, vodka, brandy, even a beer). Feed him traditional Russian food. According to his daughter, Maria, his favorite dish was cod soup. Rasputin stopped smoking when he became a wandering holy man but never abandoned alcohol. He maintained a strict diet, which he considered crucial to his success as a healer. He ate fish, but no meat, and nothing with sugar. Do not offer pastry, cake, cookies, or candy, especially if you seek his healing skills. He collected icons; give him icons of himself or of the saints he loved.

SEE ALSO Ksenya, Saint; Mary; Seraphim the Wonder Worker; Simon of Verkhoturye, Saint and Glossary: Black Madonna; Holy Fool; Icon; Saint, Official; Saint, Unofficial.

# 👡 Raymond Nonnatus, Saint

Also known as Ramon Nonato; Ramon Nonat; Raimundo Nonato.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

*Nonnatus* means "not born." Raymond Nonnatus (1204–31 August 1246), from Catalonia, Spain, was removed from his mother's womb via Caesarian section when she died during childbirth. He joined the Mercedarian Order, who sent him to Algiers to ransom Christian slaves.

When Raymond ran out of funds, he exchanged himself for a slave, using himself as collateral until more funds arrived. He was an eloquent man; while imprisoned, he converted several Muslim jailers to Christianity. Initially condemned to death, Raymond was denied the glory of being a martyr. His sentence was commuted. Instead, he was forced to run a gauntlet. A hole was bored through his lips using a hot iron poker; then a padlock was inserted. Freed eight months later, he returned to Spain. He died at age thirty-six en route to Rome, where he was to be made a cardinal.

Raymond Nonnatus is invoked for protection and assistance during difficult childbirths. This magic spell requests Raymond's aid in preventing miscarriage. You will need a red candle, a lock, and a key.

- 1. Dedicate the candle to Saint Raymond and light it.
- 2. Lock the lock and, without removing the key, place it before the candle.
- 3. Leave the locked lock before the candle until the candle completely burns out; then preserve it in a safe and secret place.
- 4. Do not unlock and remove the key until you are ready to give birth.

Saint Raymond defends those who are falsely accused. He is invoked against false witnesses and false testimony, and to terminate slander, gossip, and dangerous speech. He is the subject of many magic spells asking him to shut people's mouths and make them keep quiet.

# Stop Gossip Spell

This spell requires a red candle, chewing gum, a coin, and an image of Raymond Nonnatus. A statue is best, as it demonstrates commitment to him, but if you don't have one, even an image copied from the Internet is sufficient.

- 1. Light a red candle before an image of Saint Raymond Nonnatus. Speak to him. Explain your situation and request that he terminate slander and gossip injuring you. Gossip may derive from individuals or groups; let him know.
- 2. Chew some gum while you're speaking to him. When you're finished, place the coin over Raymond's mouth and seal it there with the gum from your mouth.
- 3. Leave his mouth sealed until you are sure that the spell is successful, but then remove the gum, releasing the coin. Raymond has earned that coin and it belongs to him. Leave it by his statue or donate to charity in his name. Further gifts and offerings may also be made.

**FAVORED PEOPLE:** midwives; obstetricians; the falsely accused; slaves.

ATTRIBUTES: padlock and keys.

FEAST: 31 August.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; wine; locks and keys.

SEE ALSO Marron, Saint.

### 👡 Rita, Saint

Also known as Rita of Cascia.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Saint Rita (c.1381–22 May 1457) is the matron saint of impossible, lost, hopeless, and desperate causes. Born in the village of Rocca Porrena near Cascia in Umbria, Italy, Rita was her parents' only child and they looked upon her as a gift from God, as they were not young and had given up hope of ever having a child. Rita was a devout and spiritual child whose ambition was to become a nun. Her parents, however, wanted her to marry. She obeyed and, at age twelve, married the man her parents picked for her.

Rita spent the next eighteen years in marital hell. Her husband, Paolo Mancini, a minor government official, was physically and verbally abusive toward her. He drank and was unfaithful. The neighbors were terrified of him. No one helped Rita.

Five days after Rita's birth, her parents noticed a swarm of bees hovering over her as she slept. Alighting on her lips, they passed in and out of her open mouth without harming or awakening her. Bees remain among Rita's primary symbols. They hover near a fissure in the wall between Rita's convent cell and her sepulcher. They leave during Holy Week but return annually on the Feast of Saint Rita.

When her husband was killed in a vendetta, Rita's two sons, who were very much like their father, vowed revenge. She feared for their souls and prayed that they would die rather than become murderers. Her prayers were answered; both sons became terminally ill. Rita nursed them until they died.

Without husband or sons, Rita, a woman alone, was finally free to fulfill her dreams of joining the local Augustinian convent. Instead, she was rejected three

times because she wasn't a virgin. Eventually, the rule was relaxed for her.

Although the decision may simply have been reconsidered, different legends explain this change of heart. One suggests that the true reason that the convent refused Rita was for fear of becoming embroiled in a vendetta. Rita was eventually accepted when her husband's family forgave his killers. A more mystical explanation suggests that after Rita's third rejection, she appealed to her personal patron, John the Baptist, who then took matters into his own hands. Along with Saints Augustine and Nicholas of Tolentino, John miraculously transported Rita inside the securely fortified convent where she had been refused admittance. Discovering Rita already within the walls, the convent acquiesced and accepted her.

Rita is the saint of impossible causes because of the miracles associated with her during her lifetime. Her convent's Mother Superior directed Rita to plant and water a stick, solely as an exercise in obedience. Rita obeyed, watering the stick daily for a year; it bloomed into the most beautiful grape vine in the convent garden. Six centuries later, Saint Rita's miraculous grape vine still thrives outside her cell. The grapes are harvested annually.

- Some of the grapes are sent to the pope.
- Leaves from the vine are pulverized, packaged, and distributed to the ailing. Many miracles of healing are attributed to Rita's grape leaves.

In 1441, Rita, profoundly moved by a sermon about the suffering the crown of thorns caused Christ, prayed to share his suffering. *Instantly*, she felt a thorn penetrate her forehead and a corresponding wound appeared. Was she then considered a holy woman? Quite the contrary. Rita's deep wound, right in the middle of her forehead, never healed. It festered, suppurated, and stank. Small worms fed on the wound; Rita called them her "little angels" and treated them gently. The other nuns were so repulsed that Rita spent most of the last fifteen years of her life as a recluse in her cell. During the last few years, she was bedridden.

Several months before her death, Rita asked a visitor—her cousin—to bring her a rose from the garden of her childhood home. It was January and roses were out of season, but to humor Rita, the visitor went to the garden, where an entire blooming rosebush was discovered. (An alternative version of this legend says that the cousin found one blooming red rose on an otherwise dead rosebush.) Bringing Rita the flower, the cousin asked whether there was anything else she could do. Rita requested that she return to the garden and fetch two figs. The cousin returned and—lo and behold—there were precisely two ripe figs hanging from an otherwise barren tree.

Miracles occurred immediately upon Rita's death.

- At the moment she died, bells in surrounding villages spontaneously began ringing.
- Her body began to glow with radiant light and emit perfume.
- Her wound, no long festering, instead resembled a sparkling jewel.

Rita immediately began displaying miraculous healing powers.

- A cousin whose arm had been hopelessly paralyzed for years was mysteriously and completed cured at Rita's gravesite.
- When Rita's fellow nuns sought out a local carpenter to make her coffin, he was discovered to be frail and sick—too weak to work. He told the nuns, perhaps joking, that he'd craft the coffin if only Rita would heal him. Healed instantly, he fashioned the casket in which Rita still lies.

Rita was never buried but was eviscerated and filled with tow soaked in perfume. She was placed inside a glass reliquary like the Brothers Grimm fairytale heroine, Snow White. Over the centuries, onlookers claim to have seen her corpse levitate. Rita's eyes open sometimes and she turns her head to look at people. Rita was canonized on 24 May 1900.

Do not ask Rita to bless you with patience. Legend has it that her response is to bless you with an abusive spouse who will teach you that virtue the hard way.

Rita is an exceptionally generous and responsive saint, renowned for fulfilling requests from devotees from all spiritual backgrounds. She is a favorite saint among the Spiritual Churches of New Orleans. Although as matron of impossible causes, she may be requested for anything; she has certain specialties for which she is famed.

- Rita protects women from husbands, ex-husbands, boyfriends, and exboyfriends.
- She heals infertility, tumors, hemorrhaging, and "women's problems" in general

### Saint Rita Ex-Husband Spell

This spell allegedly invokes Saint Rita's help against abusive ex-husbands. You will need baking soda, a bouquet of roses purchased or picked especially for Rita, a vase filled with water, and some sort of documentation of your relationship. The document will be destroyed during the spell. If this is a problem, use a copy, not the original.

- 1. Place a bouquet of roses dedicated to Rita in a vase.
- 2. Sprinkle a circle of baking soda around the vase.
- 3. Burn your marriage certificate or some other document of your union. Wedding photographs may work, too.
- 4. While it burns, invoke Rita's aid.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: widows; divorced women; single mothers; abused women the abuse may be verbal, emotional, or economic, as well as physical or sexual.

**MANIFESTATIONS:** Saint Rita reputedly signals her presence via the scent of flowers when no flowers are actually present, and also by the unexpected appearance of pink roses, especially in winter or when they are out of season.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Rita is usually portrayed wearing the habit of an Augustinian nun. The wound on her forehead may be indicated by a red mark. She has evolved into the matron saint of baseball and her medals sometimes display a baseball player on the reverse side.

ATTRIBUTES: roses; bees; figs.

**SPIRITUAL ALLIES:** Rita is the diminutive form of Margarita. Saint Rita may be venerated along with Margaret of Antioch and Margaret of Cortona—also with John the Baptist, whom Rita loved.

SACRED DAY: Sunday.

**FEAST:** 22 May, on which day roses are brought to her shrines and blessed. When the rose petals dry, they are packaged and distributed to devotees and those in

need. Roses may also be dedicated to Rita on home altars.

#### SACRED SITES:

- the Basilica of Saint Rita in Cascia, Italy, where she may be visited and viewed. Miracles are attributed to oil from a lamp at her tomb.
- The house in Rocca Porrena where Rita was born and raised is now a church and shrine.
- National Shrine of Saint Rita of Cascia in Philadelphia.

### **RITUALS:**

- The Little Breads of Saint Rita are made by nuns. After they are baked, they are touched to her body, packaged, and distributed to be eaten in times of illness or when facing frightening weather.
- Rita is the focus of a ritual known as the Fifteen Thursday Devotion, which begins fifteen weeks before her 22 May feast day. For fifteen consecutive Thursdays, prayers and petitions are directed toward Rita. This is a formalized ritual and different books offer suggested opening and closing prayers, as well as meditations based on episodes of Rita's life.

**OFFERINGS**: bouquet of roses; basket of figs; candles.

SEE ALSO Antonietta Meo; John the Baptist; Jude, Saint; Margaret of Antioch; Margaret of Cortona; Monica, Saint; Rafqa Rayess, Saint; Sidi Ali Sanhaji; Thérèse of Lisieux and Glossary: Novena.

# 👡 Robert, Saint

Also known as Rupert; Hrodibert; Ruprecht; Hruodperaht; Hrodperht.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Robert (died 27 March c. 718), a member of the Merovingian royal family, was a bishop and missionary who proselytized along the Danube River. Offered the Bishopric of Bavaria, he took over the old city of Juvavum, which had been in ruins since the collapse of the Roman Empire. He perceived it as the ideal place for his basilica, because, being in the mountains, it would be removed from the corruption and tumult of crowds. Robert renamed the city Salzburg (Salt Mountain) and reopened the salt mines. The Germanic deity Woden, also worshipped on these mountain peaks, possesses many names, some of which closely resemble the name Robert. It's theorized that some early devotees of Saint Robert may have been disguising forbidden veneration of the old Pagan god. The Yoruba orisha (spirit) Obaloke, King of the Mountain, is syncretized to Saint Robert.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Saint Robert is portrayed as a bishop.

ATTRIBUTE: He holds a box of salt.

**SPIRITUAL ALLY:** his niece, Saint Erendruda, also known as Saint Erentrude.

BOTANICAL: Herb Robert (Geranium robertianum).

SACRED SITE: Salzburg Cathedral, known in German as the Salzburger Dom, is dedicated to Saint Robert and houses his relics

**FEASTS:** 27 March is his official feast; however, 24 September is also celebrated in Austria.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; charitable donations; salt sculptures; salt lamps. Place a box on his altar and fill it with salt.

SEE Glossary: Syncretism.

# ∾ Roch, Saint

Also known as Saint Rock; Rocco; Roche; Roque.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Saint Roch (1293–16 August 1327) of Montpellier, France, was born with a conspicuous birthmark—a red cross on his chest, reminiscent of the uniform of the Knights Templar. Roch's father was Montpellier's governor. His parents died when he was twenty and Roch began a pilgrimage, ostensibly to Rome, although he never arrived there.

Roch traveled through northern Italy, then a center of Catharism. Passing through the town of Aquapendante, he discovered people suffering from plague.

and ritual. Roch was able to cure by making the sign of the cross over the ailing.

Roch continued to heal as he traveled through Mantua, Modena, and Parma. When he reached Piacenza, Italy, he discovered he was sick, too. He had caught the plague. Roch didn't go to a healer or hospital. He entered the forest, expecting to die. A dog followed him, returning daily with scraps from his master's table for Roch. The master, curious as to where his hound was taking the scraps, followed the dog one day, discovered Roch, and nursed him back to health.

Roch returned home to Montpellier. No one recognized the gaunt, weathered pilgrim as the young rich governor's son. Accused of being a spy, he was imprisoned by his own uncle, the new governor. Roch did not identify himself and spent his last five years in a miserable jail cell. When he died and his body was prepared for burial, his unusual red-cross birthmark was discovered and finally Roch was recognized.

After his death, miracles were attributed to Roch, as they continue to be. Saint Roch is invoked to heal and prevent rabies, cholera, infectious diseases, epidemics, skin ailments, and knee injuries. He is also invoked to free prisoners or prevent incarceration, especially long-term imprisonment. Legend has it that the saint would prefer that no one else die while imprisoned in the way that he did.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: grave diggers; cemetery workers; prisoners; stone workers; masons; dealers in second-hand goods; invalids; those falsely accused; those unable to defend themselves; dogs and those who love them.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Roch is traditionally depicted wearing a traveler's cloak, hat, and boots, carrying a staff, and always accompanied by a faithful dog. Reminiscent of the Grail legend's Fisher King, Roch points to the terrible wound on his left upper thigh.

**SPIRITUAL ALLIES:** Saint Roch is among the saints most frequently enshrined with Black Madonnas. In Meymac, home of a Black Madonna, his image is accompanied by a lady in black, not his usual dog. Roch is also frequently venerated alongside Saint Sebastian and Saint Hubert.

**ATTRIBUTES**: cross; traveler's staff. But he is usually identified by his accompanying dog.

COLOR: yellow.

SACRED PLANT: grapevine.

**SPIRITUAL ALLY:** Saint Hubert.

AMULET: His medals often serve as dog tags.

**RITUAL**: In Calabria, his feast day is celebrated with *panpepati*, which are essentially gingerbread ex-votos cut into the shape of the body part requiring Roch's healing.

SACRED SITES:

- The Church of Saint Roch in Venice houses his relics.
- The Shrine of Saint Roch in the Saint Roch cemetery in New Orleans, dedicated in 1876, was built as fulfillment of Father Peter Thevis' vow to the saint if his congregation were spared by the 1868 yellow-fever epidemic.

FEAST: 16 August.

**OFFERINGS**: wine; offerings on behalf of dogs.

SEE ALSO Hubert, Saint; Marina the Monk; Marron, Saint; Pelagia, Saint; Sebastian, Saint and Glossary: Black Madonna; Ex-Voto; Milagro.

# ∾ Romoualdito

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

In 1930, Romoualdito Ibáñez was attacked and left to die near the train station in Santiago, Chile. A shrine was erected where he died. Miracles were soon attributed to him and the shrine expanded, so that it now runs the length of the train station wall, which is actually a series of shrines dedicated to this folk saint. This extensive shrine is called by his name, Romoualdito. Romoualdito thus names both saint and shrine. The wall is now covered with plaques offering testimony to miracles received. It is blackened with soot from myriad candles lit as appeals for Romoualdito's assistance. Romaoualdito is invoked for any sort of neip or needed miracie.

SACRED SITE: near the central train station in Santiago, Chile.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; public testimonials; pilgrimage; expand his shrine.

**SEE** Glossary: *Retablo*.

#### 🔊 Rosalia, Saint

Also known as La Santuzza or the Little Saint.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

The island of Sicily, now part of Italy, was conquered by the Normans in the 11th century. In 1130, the Norman Kingdom of Sicily was founded. In that same year, a daughter named Rosalia was born to a noble Norman family in Sicily. Her mother's side of the family claimed descent from Charlemagne.

Rosalia grew up a pampered, wealthy girl at the Norman court, but what she desired was a religious vocation. It is unknown whether she ever joined a religious community. She apparently ran away to live as a hermit on Mount Pellegrino overlooking the Sicilian city of Palermo. Her family sought her return. Men were sent to bring Rosalia home forcibly, but two angels guided her from cave to cave so that she managed always to elude her pursuers. Finally, the angels led her to a cave where she wrote on the wall: "I, Rosalia, daughter of Sinibald, Lord of Roses, and Quisquina, resolve to live in this cave for the love of my Lord, Jesus Christ." Rosalia died in that cave in approximately 1166.

Churches were dedicated to Rosalia as early as 1237. However, the second part of her legend really begins in 1624, when Palermo was besieged by bubonic plague, which had killed one-third of the city's inhabitants. Rosalia manifested herself in visions, first to an ailing woman and then to a hunter. Advising where her body was located in her cave, she ordered him to bring her skeleton to Palermo and carry it in a procession through the city.

The hunter climbed Mount Pellegrino and discovered the skeleton of a woman in a cave, exactly where the vision had described. Near the skeleton was a rock with the name "Rosalia" carved on it. The hunter followed the directions given by Rosalia. A procession was arranged for her. When the procession ended, so did the plague. Saint Rosalia is the matron saint of Palermo. A sanctuary was built for her in the cave where her bones were found and where presumably she died. It is a steep climb to reach her small sanctuary. Saint Rosalia is considered a great miracle worker. Many devotees insist that whatever is asked from her is granted.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Saint Rosalia wears a crown of roses.

ATTRIBUTES: book; cross; skull; hermit's staff.

SACRED SITE: Sanctuary of Santa Rosalia in Palermo, Sicily, built in 1625

FESTIVALS:

- Rosalia's processional is reproduced annually on 15 July.
- On 4 September, it is traditional for people to walk barefoot from Palermo up Mount Pellegrino.
- The Santa Rosalia Fisherman's Festival in Monterey, California, is held annually in September.

FEASTS: 4 September is her primary feast; a second feast on 15 July commemorates Rosalia's arrival in Palermo.

COLORS: blue; white.

**OFFERINGS**: roses; pilgrimage to her Sicilian sanctuary.

**SEE** Glossary: *Relics*.

# ∾ Rose of Lima, Saint

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

In 1535, Spanish conquistador Francisco Pizarro founded the city of Lima, declaring it the capital of the Spanish territory, the Vice-royalty of Peru. In August 1536, Inca rebels besieged the city, only to be defeated decisively by the Spanish. A little less than fifty years later, Isabel Flores de Oliva (20 April 1586–30 August 1617) was born in Lima. Nicknamed Rose as a baby because of her beauty, she would become the first person born in the Americas to be canonized as a Roman Catholic saint.

An extremely devout child, Rose prayed for hours on end. When she was a little girl, Jesus spoke to her in a vision and told her to consecrate all her love to him. From that moment, she determined to live only for love of Jesus.

Rose's mother sought to show off her beautiful daughter, hoping that she would marry well. Indeed, Rose received many offers of marriage but rejected them all, wishing only to be the bride of Christ. Her mother perceived Rose's beauty as an asset; Rose considered it a spiritual burden.

- When her mother gave her a wreath of flowers to wear, Rose fastened it by driving a pin so deeply into her head that they had trouble removing it.
- Told that she had beautiful hair, Rose chopped it off.
- Told that her face was beautiful, she disfigured it with pepper and lye.
- She rubbed quicklime into her hands.

Rose sought to join an Augustinian convent; however, as she approached the convent, her feet became increasingly heavy; she interpreted this as a sign that she should live outside its walls. She requested that the Blessed Mother send her a sign, signaling her spiritual path. A black-and-white butterfly began visiting Rose daily. She associated the butterfly with the uniform of the Third Order of Dominican nuns, which she joined at age twenty.

Third Order Dominican nuns were permitted to live at home. Rose moved into an adobe hut in the family garden and devoted herself exclusively to her austerities, leaving only to attend Mass or perform good deeds on behalf of those in need. Had she lived within the convent, she would never have been permitted the austerities she performed.

Rose took Catherine of Siena as a role model.

- Rose wore a silver crown with ninety-nine spike thorns around her head, concealing the crown and the damage it inflicted with roses.
- She wore a hair shirt, an iron chain around her waist, and gloves stuffed with stinging nettles.
- She fasted for days, refusing to drink at the height of summer heat in order to reproduce Christ's thirst on Golgotha.
- She flogged herself three times daily.
- She used shards of glass to gouge out chunks of her own flesh.
- She stood for as long as possible and then reclined on a makeshift bed she had constructed of broken glass, thorns, potsherds, and stones.

Needless to say, she suffered frequent ill-health. She lived like this for fourteen years before dying at age thirty-one. Rose experienced intense visionary experiences and spiritual ecstasy. She also experienced periods of extreme self-doubt and loathing toward all religious expression, but her last years were spent in virtually constant ecstasy. In 1614, as the Feast of Saint Bartholomew approached, Rose, filled with joy, announced that she would die on Saint Bart's Day, which she did.

Miracles were attributed to her while she was alive. Rose taught mosquitoes to stop humming and buzz hymns instead. She tossed roses into the air, which then formed the shape of a floating cross. She announced one day that she had saved Lima from a devastating earthquake with her prayers—many give this assertion credence. Crowds lined the streets to watch her funeral procession and immediately began to invoke Rose's intercession. Although she is invoked for virtually everything, her specialty is healing.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: florists; gardeners; those who work with needles; those ridiculed for spiritual devotions.

ATTRIBUTES: anchor; crown of roses.

**RITUAL:** On 30 April, pilgrims cast letters detailing their petitions to Rose into the well where she dropped the key from her cilice.

SACRED SITE: She is enshrined in the Church of Santo Domingo, Lima. Her adobe hut and its surrounding garden is now a shrine. Pilgrims throw flowers and notes into Rose's well.

FEASTS: 23 August; 30 August.

**OFFERINGS**: roses; candles; silver crown; pilgrimage; handmade embroideries.

SEE ALSO Bartholomew, Saint; Catherine of Siena; Martin de Porres; Peregrine, Saint.

# ∾ Roseline of Villeneuve

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint (canonization pending).

Roseline (1267–17 January 1329) grew up in Villeneuve Castle in Provence, the daughter of Sibylle de Sabrant and Arnaud Villeneuve, also known as Arnold of Villanova, a renowned Catalan alchemist, mystic, and physician.

Roseline wished to enter a convent, but her parents refused permission. She secretly slipped away from home to bring food to the poor, although her father forbade her to go. He caught her once and demanded to know what she was hiding in her apron, knowing full well that Roseline carried bread. She reluctantly opened her apron, but the bread had miraculously vanished and instead roses spilled out. Her parents then allowed thirteen-year-old Roseline to join the Carthusian Abbey, where she was assigned to the kitchen.

Roseline prayed so intensely that she lost track of time and forgot all about cooking, until she was roused by the bell summoning the nuns to the dining hall. Angels miraculously appeared to make dinner and set the table. In 1300, her parents built her an abbey at Celle-Rouboud, where she served as prioress until she died.

Asked for advice regarding the best route to Heaven, Roseline quoted Apollo: "Know thyself."

Miracles accompanied Roseline throughout her entire life and did not cease after her death. Her brother, Helios, a Crusader captured and imprisoned in Rhodes, invoked the aid of his dead sister. His Saracen captors abruptly fled, leaving Helios to return home. Rosaline is credited with many miraculous healings, including recovery of sight and mobility.

Roseline's tomb at Celle-Rouboud became a popular pilgrimage. Her body remained so incorrupt and her eyes so bright that she appeared alive. Louis XIV, upon viewing her, ordered his physician to stick a needle into her left eye. The mark of that needle is still visible. Although the canonization process was begun, it has not been completed.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Rosaline is portrayed as a young woman bearing roses or with roses at her feet.

SACRED SITE: Roseline's body lies in the chapel near the family castle in Les Arcs, Provence. After the French Revolution, it was deconsecrated and has had various owners. It is now at the center of a large vineyard, Château Sainte Roseline. The chapel has been restored. Artists commissioned to honor her include Marc Chagall, who created a mosaic, *The Angel's Dinner*, and Alberto Giacometti who produced a bronze, *The Miracle of the Roses*.

FEASTS: 17 January; 6 July.

**OFFERINGS**: roses, especially white ones.

SEE ALSO Elizabeth of Hungary, Saint; Guadalupe; Isabel of Portugal; Paschal Baylon, Saint.

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## 👡 Santiago Matamoros

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

When remains discovered in a field at Compostela in Spain were identified as those of Saint James the Greater, King Alfonso II of Asturias (759–842) declared him the patron saint of Spain and made him the sacred leader of the war against the Moors, perceived by Spain's Christians as a divine mission. In Spanish, Saint James is known as San Diego, which evolved into Santiago. *Santiago Matamoros* literally means Saint James, Killer of Moors.

In 834, at the Battle of Clavijo in La Rioja, Spain, Christians were badly outnumbered by Moors when suddenly, Saint James the Greater appeared on the battlefield dressed in armor and riding a white horse to spur the Christians to victory.

Apparitions of Santiago were also recorded in South America as Spanish conquistadors battled indigenous forces. In general, Santiago assisted the Spanish; however, there are later reports of him fighting on the Mexican side against Spain during Mexico's battle for independence.

Santiago is invoked to battle on your behalf in any situation. There is no problem for which he is not invoked. He is also petitioned on behalf of the fertility of mares. The image of Santiago on his white horse is syncretized to the West African deity Ogun and the Andean spirit Illapa.

**SEE ALSO** James the Greater, Saint; Senjak; Seven African Powers and Glossary: Syncretism.

Also known as Saint Sara; Sarah Kali; Sara La Kali; Sarah the Egyptian; Sarah the Black.

EPITHET: The Black Queen.

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

A mysterious saint named Sarah is the subject of the largest annual Romani (Gypsy) pilgrimage. In recent years, she has also developed a following among Western goddess lovers and is the subject of great fascination for conspiracy theorists. Who is she?

Although she's called Saint Sarah, she's not a canonized saint. She is venerated along with the Marys of the Sea, official saints with whom she shares an annual festival. In Roman Catholic belief, Sarah is subordinate to the two Saint Marys. For the Romani, however, it is Sarah who is the holiest and most significant of the three. In their belief, the Marys are subordinate to *her*. In fact, although they technically share a shrine, Sarah's remains are in the crypt; not in the church itself. For centuries, the Romani were the only ones officially permitted to venerate Saint Sarah.

Saint Sarah's true identity is subject to exceptionally bitter debate.

- She may be an Egyptian servant who accompanied the three Marys (Magdalen, Jacobe, and Salomé) on the boat to France.
- Sarah may be a Romani priestess who greeted them upon their arrival in Provence. Although there is no historical documentation of a Romani presence in first-century Europe, many still perceive Sarah as a holy ancestor and a forerunner of later Gypsy migrations.
- Sarah may have been a priestess of Ishtar who greeted the Marys of the Sea upon their arrival in France.
- She may be the daughter of Mary Magdalen and Jesus Christ.
- Devotion to Sarah may camouflage continued secret veneration of the goddess Isis, once among the primary goddesses in this region.
- Sarah may be the goddess Kali, who accompanied the Romani on their journey from India.
- Author Isabel Fonseca describes Sarah as the Romani goddess of fate.

Saint Sarah is also known as Sara la Kali. Kali means "black" in

Romani and so she is Sarah the Black. This may indicate Sarah's identification with the goddess Kali, whose Hindu iconography often depicts her with raven-black skin, or it may indicate Sarah's associations with Black Madonnas. Sarah's own statue is a deep dark brown.

According to local legend, the Marys of the Sea escaped the fall of Judea and traveled to Rome in a small boat with no oars or sails. Their party may also have included Mary Magdalen, Mary of Bethany, Lazarus, Martha, and Joseph of Arimathea. Depending on her identity, Sarah may have been on the boat or she may have met them upon their landing in France. Those who consider Sarah to be the Divine Child—the *sang real* who is the true Holy Grail—believe that smuggling her to safety may have been the purpose of the journey. An alternative legend suggests that Mary Magdalen was pregnant when she boarded the boat and that Sarah was born in France. Needless to say, many are incredibly offended by these legends and bitterly refute them.

King René of Provence (1409–1480) was, however, fascinated by legends regarding the presence of these saints in his territory. He decided to investigate and ordered excavations in the region. Human remains discovered beneath the choir of a primitive church in a town then called Ratis were identified as being Mary Jacobe and Mary Salomé. The town was renamed Les-Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer in their honor. Human remains were also found in a bronze chest within the church and these were identified as Sarah.

It is now unclear exactly how, why, or even precisely when Romani devotion to Sarah began. Major pilgrimages to Les-Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer apparently began in the 15th century, coinciding with Romani migrations through western Europe.

Saint Sarah may be petitioned for anything, but her specialties are healing and fertility.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Sarah's statue is carved from dark brown wood. Crowned with long black hair and powerfully expressive eyes, she resembles a Black Madonna. Replicas of her votive image are not readily available; a black-queen chess piece may be used to represent her on home altars. In some Romani fortunetelling systems, the Justice tarot card indicates Sarah's presence, influence, or intervention, and may also be used to represent her.

**SPIRITUAL ALLIES:** Sarah is traditionally venerated and invoked along with the Marys of the Sea. She may also be venerated with Mary Magdalen, whether or not you consider them mother and daughter, or with any of the saints associated with the esoteric traditions of southern France, like Saints Martha and Lazarus.

SACRED SITE: her shrine in the French town of Les-Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer.

**FEASTS:** Her own personal feast is on 13 July; she also shares the pilgrimage days of 24 and 25 May with Mary Salomé and Mary Jacobe.

FESTIVAL: Masses of Romani from around the world as well as other devotees converge on the town of Les-Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer annually during May. Plan early if you wish to attend. Although the pilgrimage dates are 24 and 25 May, crowds begin to gather earlier. During the festival, Saint Sarah's statue is carried in procession to the sea where it is immersed and bathed, then brought back to her shrine and dressed in finery. Some believe that touching her clothing or the statue can potentially lead to miracles of healing. Pilgrims bring items of clothing from loved ones too sick or frail to attend and touch these to Sarah's statue in the hope that healing can thus be transmitted long-distance. It is said that as the fabric absorbs Sarah's power, healing is transmitted to any petitioner, whether attending the festival or far away. This can be done at any time, not only during the festival.

**OFFERINGS:** Sarah is offered milagros as well as valuable gifts, but it is traditional for those suffering from illness or in need of healing to bring some of their own clothing to place on her statue. This can also be done on someone else's behalf.

SEE ALSO Joan of Arc; Joseph of Arimathea; Martha, Saint; Mary Magdalen; Marys of the Sea and Glossary: Black Madonna, Milagro, Syncretism.

# ∾ Sava, Saint

Also known as Sabas; Sabba; Sava Nemanjic.

CLASSIFICATION: Orthodox saint.

Saint Sava (c. 1175–14 January 1235) is the hero and patron saint of Serbia. An

exceptionally beloved saint, he founded the Serbian Orthodox Church and was the first archbishop of the Serbs. Described as "the sun of the Serbian heaven," Saint Sava is also a native Serbian son. He was born Prince Rastko, the third son of Serbian king Stefan Nemanja, the ruler of Raska, a forerunner to the Serbian state, and the founder of a dynasty. His parents wanted Rastko to become a ruler, too, but he had different plans.

Seeking a spiritual life, he ran away to Greece, where he joined a monastery on Mount Athos. There, he was given the name Sava. Although other Serbians were also monks at Mount Athos, there was no Serbian monastery and so Sava founded one. His father eventually relinquished his throne to Sava's brother and joined Sava in the religious life, becoming a monk.

In 1208, Sava returned to Serbia where his brothers were feuding in order to reconcile them. Fervently devoted to the Serbian people, Sava served as a diplomat and as a legislator responsible for writing Serbia's first constitution. Folktales that describe how Sava taught the Serbs to plough underscore his importance. An avid traveler, he made frequent pilgrimages to Jerusalem and elsewhere. He died of pneumonia while traveling and was buried in the Cathedral of the Forty Martyrs in Turnovo, now known as Veliko Tarnovo in Bulgaria.

In his lifetime, Sava was a miracle worker credited with producing therapeutic springs and commanding wolves. In death, he continues to perform miracles. On 6 May 1237, his relics were returned to Serbia, brought by processional to the Mileshevo Monastery where he was interred. When the Serbs rebelled against Ottoman rule, they did so carrying banners depicting Saint Sava. As punishment, in 1594, the Ottoman ruler Sinan Pasha had Sava's remains dragged from their resting place and brought to the highest point in Belgrade, where they were burned. This is controversial; although generally perceived as a national tragedy, some insist that the relics were never burned, either because they were hidden and other remains substituted, or because they could not be burned. A related legend explains that his relics would not burn on a wood pyre, only on one made from grape vines, an otherworldly plant in Serbian folklore.

Saint Sava is the subject of many folktales. He is a fierce saint who both blesses and curses. It is theorized that the more magical aspects of the historical Sava may be the ancient Slavic deity Dabog in disguise.

FAVORED PEOPLE: Serbians; students; educators.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Saint Sava is the subject of many traditional icons. The burning of his relics was a devastating experience for the Serbs and the moment is captured in many paintings.

ATTRIBUTE: crutch.

SPIRITUAL ALLY: his father, now known as Saint Simeon Nemanja.

SACRED ANIMALS: dogs; wolves.

FEASTS: 14 January; 27 January.

SACRED SITES: The Cathedral of Saint Sava in Belgrade, the largest Orthodox Church building in the world, is built on the site where Sava's relics were burned. Serbian Orthodox churches are frequently dedicated to Saint Sava. Other sacred sites include:

- The Church of Saint Sava in Split, Croatia
- Saint Sava Orthodox Cathedral in Cleveland, Ohio

**OFFERINGS**: candles; good deeds done in his honor; Serbian handicrafts; Serbian Slivovitz plum brandy.

SEE ALSO Nino, Saint; Philothea, Saint.

# ∾ Schneerson, Rabbi Menachem Mendel

**CLASSIFICATION:** Jewish saint.

Rabbi Mendel Menachem Schneerson (18 April 1902–12 June 1994), the seventh and potentially last Lubavitcher Rebbe, was the son-in-law of the sixth. Hasidic dynasties are frequently headed by charismatic spiritual leaders, as epitomized by Rabbi Schneerson, often known as *the* rebbe. Rebbe is essentially the same word as rabbi, but with added implications of leadership and extraordinary spiritual power. Rebbes are rabbis, but not every rabbi is a rebbe.

Born in what is now Ukraine, Rabbi Schneerson demonstrated spiritual gifts early, but he was also a Sorbonne-trained electrical engineer and mathematician. A devoutly and traditionally religious man, he was also a strong proponent of solar energy. He and his wife escaped from Nazi-occupied France in 1941, joining his father-in-law in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. He reluctantly assumed the mantle of his father-in-law after his death in 1950.

Under his leadership, the Chabad-Lubavitcher movement expanded into a massive, worldwide organization. The rebbe developed a following of hundreds of thousands of people worldwide. People stood in line for hours to receive his blessings. By the end of his life, many were convinced that he was the Messiah. After he died, it was perceived that no one could succeed him. All suggested candidates declined his mantle. Instead, Rabbi Schneerson continues to guide his followers from beyond. Many are convinced that he is not really dead but will ultimately reemerge.

Rabbi Schneerson still offers blessings and assistance. His blessing is invoked for every conceivable circumstance, but especially healing, fertility, marital issues, and success. He also offers spiritual guidance. He responds to queries via bibliomancy, the art of divination using books as the medium. To be effective, this must be done with a volume of Rabbi Schneerson's own writings:

- 1. Formulate the question while holding the book in both hands.
- 2. Invoke his blessings and intercession.
- 3. When you're ready, randomly flip the book open and, with eyes closed, point to a passage. There's your answer. It may be straightforward, or meditation and interpretation may be required.

**SACRED DAY:** His death is commemorated on the third day of the Hebrew month of Tammuz.

SACRED SITE: Jews and non-Jews alike journey to the rebbe's grave, known as the Ohel, in Montefiore Cemetery in Queens, New York, to invoke his blessings. It is traditional to leave little notes to him explaining your situation and needs. Those unable to visit his grave may make requests via fax, e-mail, or postal service through the Chabad organization.

**OFFERINGS**: memorial candles; prayers; charitable deeds and donations; visit his grave.

SEE ALSO Maid of Ludomir; Nachman of Bratslav.

∾ Scholastica, Saint

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Scholastica (c. 480–10 February 547) is the twin sister of Saint Benedict. Their mother died giving birth to them. Like her brother, Scholastica felt a religious vocation, becoming a nun. The siblings met once a year, outside a monastery. At what would be their final meeting, Scholastica asked her brother to prolong the visit and spend the night. Benedict refused, saying it was not allowed.

Scholastica bowed her head and joined her hands together. As she raised her head, the skies opened up with the sudden, unexpected appearance of torrential rain, thunder, and lightning. Benedict, aghast, demanded to know what Scholastica had done. She responded by saying that God had given her what Benedict had refused. The siblings spent the night together deep in conversation.

Three days later, Benedict had a vision of a dove flying toward Heaven and realized that Scholastica had died. He sent for her body and had it placed in the grave he had intended for himself. Shortly after, Benedict had a vision of his own death. He had his tomb reopened and ready six days prior to his own death.

Saint Scholastica, unsurprisingly, is invoked for protection from storms and rain.

FAVORED PEOPLE: nuns; children prone to convulsions.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Scholastica is portrayed in a nun's habit—sometimes a white dove flies from her mouth.

**ATTRIBUTES:** crozier and crucifix.

SACRED ANIMAL: white dove.

FEAST: 10 February.

**SACRED SITE:** Scholastica and Benedict rest together for eternity beneath the altar of the church at Montecassino.

SEE ALSO Benedict, Saint; Margaret of Hungary, Saint.

### 👡 Sebastian, Saint

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Sebastian (died c. 288) joined the Roman army and quickly rose through the ranks. It is unclear when he converted to Christianity; in some versions of his tale, he specifically enlisted so that he would be able to comfort Christians. Regardless of ulterior motivation, he proved to be an excellent soldier. He was a great favorite of Emperor Diocletian, who promoted him to captain of the guard.

While in the army, Sebastian visited the ailing and imprisoned, comforting and healing them. He restored a blind girl's sight, performed miracles of healing, and actively converted many to Christianity. Inevitably, his secret was revealed. Diocletian felt betrayed and personally ordered Sebastian's execution by archers.

Sebastian was bound and shot full of arrows, but amazingly he survived. The future Saint Irene rescued him, nursed him back to health, and begged him to leave Rome. As he was presumed dead, he had the chance to make a real getaway. Instead, Sebastian stayed and began preaching. For whatever reason, he deliberately sought out Diocletian and denounced him, with predictable results. He was clubbed to death; his body was thrown onto a dung heap. Shortly afterward, an apparition of Sebastian appeared to a Christian widow, advising her of his body's location and requesting that she arrange his burial near the catacombs.

Sebastian quickly became a very important saint. He is among the most beloved of the military saints and among the most widely depicted by artists. Saint Sebastian has long fascinated artists of all kinds and continues to do so.

- He is the subject of paintings by Sandro Botticelli, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Albrecht Dürer, the Master of the Playing Cards, Pieter Paul Rubens, Odilon Redon, and Keith Haring just to name a few.
- He inspired self-portraits by Egon Schiele and more obliquely Frida Kahlo (*The Wounded Deer*). Oscar Wilde used Sebastian's name as an alias when he was down on his luck in Paris near the end of his life.
- Tennessee Williams' 1948 poem "San Sebastiano de Sodoma" explores the traditional religious and homoerotic aspects of Sebastian's legend.
- Jacques Tourneur's 1943 film *I Walked with a Zombie* takes place on the fictional Caribbean island of Saint Sebastian but features an actual statue of the saint.
- The 1976 film *Sebastiane*, Derek Jarman's directorial debut, is considered very controversial because of its homoerotic content. Its dialogue is entirely in Latin.
- The Unemployed Philosophers Guild markets a pincushion made in the saint's

image.

Saint Sebastian offers protection from epidemics and plagues. He was identified as a savior during the Black Death era and is now invoked to provide healing miracles for those suffering from AIDS. He is invoked for luck and good fortune. He is syncretized to the orisha/orixa Ochossi, because they share associations with arrows, trees, and imprisonment.

Although very much not part of his official Church hagiography, Saint Sebastian is an important patron of gay people. Rumor has it that Sebastian was Diocletian's lover, hence the Roman emperor's wrath at his betrayal. He is invoked for protection, healing, and matters of romance. He serves as a matchmaker for same-sex couples. Modern retablos from Mexico City thank Sebastian for protection and for providing lesbian and gay lovers.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: archers; athletes; soldiers. Since the 19th century, Sebastian has been the unofficial patron saint of gay artists, writers, and poets in particular, and of gays and lesbians in general.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: The earliest depictions of Sebastian show him as a mature, bearded man in court dress. During the Renaissance, he began to be depicted as a young, handsome, sometimes androgynous naked or virtually naked youth tied to a tree and pierced by arrows.

ATTRIBUTE: arrows.

**SPIRITUAL ALLY:** Sebastian and Saint Roch are often venerated together, especially to prevent or halt outbreaks of infectious disease.

SACRED SITES:

- the Church of Saint Sebastian in Venice
- the San Sebastian Church in Manila, the Philippines, the only all-steel church in Asia

FEASTS: 20 January (Western Church); 18 December (Eastern Church).

SEE ALSO Roch, Saint and Glossary: Syncretism.

## 👡 Senjak

Also known as Sen Jak; Sen Jak Majé (Kreyol for Saint Jacques Majeur).

**PRONOUNCED:** sen-zhahk.

The language of Haiti is Kreyol. Senjak is the Kreyol variation of Saint Jacques, French for Saint James. The traditional chromolithograph of Saint James the Greater is used to represent Senjak, but Senjak may or may not actually be Saint James.

Although Africans imported to Haiti to serve as slaves were forbidden to venerate their own spirits, they did so secretly by identifying the African spirits with chromolithographs of saints. Saint James the Greater is a warrior spirit of justice—a knight in shining armor—a dead ringer for Ogou, the West African warrior spirit of justice and iron.

- The traditional image of Saint James on Horseback may represent the official saint.
- The same image may really be intended to portray Ogou.
- Some perceive the two—Saint James and Ogou—as one and inseparable.
- The image of Saint James identified with Senjak is also identified with Santiago Matamoros.

By papal decree, Saint James the Greater was appointed patron of Hispaniola, the island that encompasses the modern nations of Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Several of their earliest churches were named in his honor. Documents indicate that slaves embraced his cult with great enthusiasm. Many were surreptitiously venerating Ogou in the name of the saint.

Senjak is considered the best possible ally when you need to engage in battle, literal or metaphoric. He is invoked for victory and courage.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: The traditional chromolithograph depicts Saint James triumphant in battle, riding a white horse, accompanied by a knight in armor. The image of Senjak appears frequently on Haitian sequined flags.

ATTRIBUTES: sword and shield.

SPIRITUAL ALLY: the great Vodou matriarch spirit Ezili Dantor.

COLOR: red.

**OFFERINGS**: overproof rum; cigars; weapons; candles; dragon's-blood incense; red candles.

SEE ALSO James the Greater, Saint; Santiago Matamoros; Seven African Powers and Glossary: Iconography; Syncretism.

#### ∾ Serah Bat Asher

Also known as Serach.

**PRONOUNCED**: ser-akh, with a hard guttural concluding "h," similar to the German ach.

CLASSIFICATION: Jewish saint.

After the biblical Joseph was reunited with the brothers who sold him into slavery in Egypt, he sent them to fetch Jacob, their elderly father. The brothers faced a dilemma: how were they going to explain to Jacob that Joseph was still alive? Many questions would be raised; none of the brothers wanted to be the messenger. Their solution was to delegate the message to brother Asher's small daughter, Serah. Her father and uncles had two-year-old Serah tell Jacob that Joseph was still alive. In response, Jacob blessed her, saying: "May death never rule over you for you brought my spirit back to life."

Jacob's blessing was powerful: Serah lived longer than Methuselah. She lived on earth until at least the ninth century and is among the few who, according to Jewish folklore, never died but entered Heaven alive. (Other members of that elite club include Enoch, Miriam, Moses, and Elijah.)

In Heaven, Serah presides over the Hall of Caregivers, a beautiful palace where she hosts the souls of women who, while alive, cared for the old and infirm.

Three biblical references listing Asher's sons explicitly mention Serah as their sister; she is the only female included in that genealogical chart. The references to Serah are unusual, as virtually all other biblical sisters and daughters remain

anonymous. The references—found in Genesis 40.17, Numbers 20.40, and 1 Chronicles 7:30—indicate Serah's unique, special nature.

Serah, long venerated as a saint, is a staple of Jewish folklore. She was among those who accompanied Jacob to Egypt to be reunited with Joseph, and also among those who crossed the Red Sea on their way back. In between, she worked as a midwife, and was enslaved with the children of Israel and forced to labor in a mill. Serah is a Zelig-like figure.

- Having been a witness to the hiding of her Uncle Joseph's coffin, she was later able to reveal the hiding place to Moses.
- According to legend, when the Creator personally parted the Red Sea, Serah, along with Moses, was among the very few to gaze upon the Creator and live.
- She revealed Jerusalem's Foundation Stone to King David.
- Serah helped Jeremiah hide the temple vessels after the fall of the first Jerusalem temple.
- When the Tribes of Israel were then dispersed, Serah went into exile with the tribe of Asher.

Serah's last known address was Isfahan, Persia, where she was a renowned miracle worker and healer. There are two versions of her departure from the earthly plane, one more fabulous than the other—although, considering her age, everything about her legend is amazing.

- In the ninth century, Serah was inside Isfahan's synagogue when a fiery chariot descended from Heaven to retrieve her. Witnesses saw the synagogue wreathed in flames. The flames disappeared, and incredibly there was no damage. Only Serah was missing. The synagogue was renamed in her honor.
- The Jews of Isfahan claimed that Serah died in a 12th-century fire. Until the end of the 19th century, her mausoleum was a popular pilgrimage site.

#### FAVORED PEOPLE: caregivers.

SACRED SITE: Serah's grave is believed to be in the Serah bat Asher cemetery in the Iranian town of Kukuli, between the cities of Isfahan and Shiraz.

SEE ALSO Elijah the Prophet; Miriam; Moses.

## 👡 Seraphim the Wonder Worker

Also known as Seraphim of Sarov; Serafim Sarovsky; Staretz Seraphim.

CLASSIFICATION: Orthodox Christian saint.

Saint Seraphim (19 July 1759–2 January 1833), perhaps the most beloved saint of the Russian Church as well as all the Orthodox branches, is acclaimed for his miracles of healing and especially his powers as an exorcist. These same powers made him controversial during life; the Church hesitated to canonize him. He only became an official saint when the Russian imperial family became passionate devotees.

From childhood, the saint's life incorporated a series of miracles. He continues to perform them from beyond the grave. He adopted the name Seraphim when he took monastic vows but was born Prokhor Moshnin, son of a builder who died when he was a baby. His mother took over the business, but the future Seraphim was already showing spiritual inclinations and displaying miraculous powers.

- As a child, he saw angels and, at age ten, experienced his first of many visions of Mary.
- A serious childhood illness, which refused to respond to medical treatment, was cured when his mother appealed to a miraculous Marian icon.
- A fall from a high scaffold that should have resulted in his death or at least serious injury didn't result in as much as a scratch. His mother said it was as if his fall had been cushioned by invisible angels. The local holy fool announced that the boy was obviously blessed by God.

At age nineteen, Seraphim left home to wander, study, and worship at various monasteries, beginning his lifelong practice of the Jesus Prayer, constantly chanting: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." He was ordained a priest in 1793.

The Jesus Prayer, possibly best known to the secular for its appearance in J. D. Salinger's 1961 novella, Franny and Zooey, is believed to have originated among the early Christian desert hermits. It is, in some ways, the equivalent of a Christian mantra. Also known as the Prayer of the Heart, the repetitive chant is synchronized to the chanter's heartbeat.

Although now played down in his official hagiographies, Seraphim had a controversial reputation. He served as religious advisor to female spiritual seekers and was surrounded by a female entourage called the Brides of Christ. Rumors of unconventional spiritual rites (or plain old debauchery) circulated. He was the subject of a police investigation; however, these rumors were never verified.

Following the investigation, Seraphim abandoned human civilization to become a forest hermit, living alone, praying, studying, and tending a small garden. His sole companions were wild animals whom he befriended using gifts of food. A bear who sometimes lay at his feet was a constant visitor and is often depicted on Seraphim's icons.

Seraphim was nearly beaten to death by robbers, who believed that he had treasure hidden in his cabin. He walked bent over for the rest of his life as a result of his injuries, but pleaded for mercy on behalf of his attackers in court. After his recovery, Seraphim spent 1000 days and nights kneeling in prayer on a large rock in the forest with his arms outstretched, until in 1815, on the advice of Mary, Mother of God, he began admitting people to his hermitage. They flocked to him, visiting by the hundreds daily. Seraphim demonstrated clairvoyance, often answering questions before they were asked. He was acclaimed for his ascetism and for his gentleness toward others.

Seraphim gained special renown as an exorcist, a reputation that continues after death. He cast out demons and expelled evil spirits. The archives of the Sarovskala Uspenskala Hermitage contain testimony regarding exorcisms attributed posthumously to him. However, this, too, was controversial. In the 19th century, the days of demon-expelling holy men were, at least officially, over. The crowds loved Seraphim; the Church was embarrassed.

Seraphim died in his cell kneeling before an icon of Mary. He was considered a holy man (a *staretz*) while alive; devotees immediately began calling for his official canonization. The Church balked, perceiving exorcisms, clairvoyance, and miracles to be backward and primitive. Testimony regarding exorcisms was dismissed as impossible to verify. Seraphim, however, had the last word.

• In 1879, he foretold the names of the future Tsar Nicholas and his wife, Alexandra.

• He predicted that his canonization would occur during their reign

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Because an admirer wrote these predictions down when he made them, they are verified. (Seraphim simultaneously prophesied that "rivers of Russian blood" would flow during their reign.) After Alexandra gave birth to four daughters, she desperately desired a son. Advised to investigate Seraphim the Wonder Worker, renowned for fertility miracles, she learned of his prophesy. The imperial family declared Seraphim their spiritual patron and Nicholas pushed for his canonization. After repeatedly delaying his canonization, in July 1902 the Holy Synod finally bowed to Nicholas' appeal and made Seraphim an official saint. Alexandra petitioned Seraphim for a son; Tsarevitch Alexis was born 30 July 1904.

MANIFESTATION: Seraphim always wore white robes. He walks bent over.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Seraphim permitted devotees to make several portraits of him. The most famous, called the Novo Diveyevo Icon, is now in the Russian Orthodox Convent Novo Diveyevo in Nanuet, New York. He may be depicted in the garb of a Russian peasant and is frequently depicted as a hermit feeding a bear.

COLOR: white.

**SACRED SITE:** Saint Seraphim-Diveyevo Monastery near Sarov, site of his relics. A spring at his shrine is associated with miraculous healings.

FEASTS: 2 January; 15 January; 1 August.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; prayers; good deeds and charitable donations in his name; pilgrimage; offerings on behalf of animals.

SEE ALSO Meinrad, Saint; Peregrine, Saint; Rasputin; Simeon of Verkhoturye, Saint and Glossary: Icon; Saint, Official; Saint, Unofficial.

### ∾ Seraphina, Saint

Also known as Saint Serafina; Saint Fina.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Seraphina (1238–12 March 1253), from Tuscany, was born to a once-wealthy family who had fallen on hard times. Her father died when she was very little. Seraphina, a sweet, devout, lovely child who wished to become a nun, became incurably ill at age ten. She took a vow of chastity anyway.

Confined to bed, Seraphina spent her time sewing garments for the poor but was eventually totally paralyzed. Although already suffering because of her illness, Seraphina mortified her flesh to be closer to Jesus, choosing to sleep on a wooden board on the floor. Her paralysis worsened and she was eventually unable to move. Seraphina spent six years lying on that plank in one position. When her mother went out, leaving Seraphina alone, rats would attack her. She was physically unable to fight them off.

When her mother died, Seraphina was left utterly destitute and alone. People shrank from her sores and foul odor. Only one friend, also desperately poor, still cared for the young girl. Seraphina prayed to Saint Gregory the Great, requesting that he intercede with God for release or for greater stores of patience.

Gregory appeared to her in a vision eight days before her death, assuring her that she would find rest on his feast day. She died on his feast and thus now shares it. The two may be venerated together. After Seraphina's death, her plank was discovered miraculously covered in fragrant white violets, now locally called Saint Seraphina's Flowers. Saint Seraphina performs healing miracles, including restoring eyesight to the blind.

FAVORED PEOPLE: the ailing, disabled, and paralyzed.

**ATTRIBUTE:** white violets.

FEAST: 12 March.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; incense; violets; clothe the poor.

#### Sergius and Bacchus, Saints

Also known as Serge; Serga; Sarkis; Bakhos.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as saints by most branches of Christianity.

Sergius and Bacchus, young Roman nobles, were high-ranking legionnaires in the Roman army during the late third and early fourth centuries. Secret Christians, they refused to make offerings at the Temple of Jupiter, a treasonous offense. They were punished, humiliated, and tortured.

Stripped of their military gear, they were paraded through the streets dressed in women's clothing and wearing heavy chains. In prison, Sergius and Bacchus sang, prayed, and claimed to be visited by angels. The two were brutally tortured, scourged so severely that Bacchus died in the process. He appeared after his death to Sergius in the guise of an angel wearing military garb to encourage his friend and senior officer to be strong.

Sergius' feet were nailed to boards and he was forced to walk. Then he was beheaded. Following his death, numerous miracles were attributed to him. His tomb became a shrine and popular pilgrimage site. Sergius, a particularly popular saint, especially in Mediterranean and Slavic regions, is venerated both independently and with Bacchus. The town in which he was killed, now known as Rasafa in modern Syria, was once known as Sergiopolis in his honor. Saint Sergius is the patron of those who work professionally with anise in any capacity, whether as growers, distillers of anisette, creators of food products, or otherwise. Saint Sergius is also the patron of desert nomads and hermits.

The official patron saints of the Byzantine army, Sergius and Bacchus remain patrons of soldiers. They are closely associated with wandering warriors like Crusaders, French legionnaires, and mercenaries. They are also widely considered patrons of gays and lesbians, although this is controversial.

Sergius and Bacchus called themselves "brothers." They claimed that, in their union, they had become one with Christ as well as with each other. In the medieval era, their relationship was understood, at least officially, as the highest expression of "brotherly love" or *agapé*, although many others disagree.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: soldiers; gay people in the military; Christians living in Muslim lands; Arabic Christians.

FEAST: 7 October.

#### SACRED SITES:

- The Basilica of Saint Sergius, a ruined fifth-century Byzantine church in Rasafa, now an isolated archaeological site, is where Saint Sergius died. The basilica was built over his grave site and was once a major pilgrimage site.
- The Church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus in Istanbul, formerly

Constantinople, is now a mosque known as the Ayasotya Camii or the Little Hagia Sophia because of its resemblance to the famous Hagia Sophia.

• The Coptic Orthodox Church of Abu Serga in Cairo is built over a cave traditionally believed to have served as a refuge for the Holy Family during their flight to Egypt.

**OFFERINGS:** candles; anisette; star anise.

SEE ALSO Cosmos and Damian.

#### Seven African Powers

Also known as Siete Potencias Africanas; All Saints.

*Santeria* means "the religion of the saints," but the precise identity of those saints is subject to fierce debate. The saints for whom this African Diaspora spiritual tradition is named may be:

- Orishas, West African spirits imported to the Western Hemisphere along with the slave trade
- Canonized Roman Catholic saints
- A merger of both these sacred beings

Transported to the West, enslaved Africans were forbidden to practice their ancestral religions. Instead, they were baptized and given chromolithograph images of saints to venerate. Although many became sincere Catholics, others used the chromolithographs as stand-ins for the orishas, enabling continued veneration. Thus because images of Saint Barbara consistently feature lightning, her votive imagery—and name—was used to represent Shango, the orisha of lightning. Saint James the Warrior is traditionally portrayed as a knight in shining armor, a perfect image for surreptitious veneration of Ogun, the spirit of iron and a divine armorer.

Santeria is a monotheistic religion. There is one divine creator, Oludamare. Along with creating the world, Oludamare invented the concept of delegation. The orishas, in the manner of angels or saints, each have a dominion or area of interest. Orishas, like saints, have patronages. Although an infinite number of orishas exist, only about forty are concerned with human affairs. Similar to Catholicism's Fourteen Holy Helpers, there are seven orishas that are perceived to be among the most powerful, benevolent, and generous. These are invoked together as a group called the Seven African Powers. These six are consistently included in the ranks of the Seven African Powers:

- 1. Eshu-Elegbara—depending on locale, he may also be known as Elegba, Elegua, Legba, or Exu (pronounced: eh-shoo). He is the trickster spirit of the crossroads and the guardian of all gates, whether literal or metaphoric.
- 2. Ogun—the spirit of iron and anything formed from iron, whether surgeon's tools, swords, trains, or automobiles. He is the spirit of warfare and civilization and is renowned as a great healer. His name may also be spelled Ogou.
- 3. Obatala—the spirit of wisdom, compassion, and purity. He epitomizes the righteous, yet merciful, judge.
- 4. Yemaya—Queen of the Sea and the matriarch of the pantheon.
- 5. Oshun—the spirit of sweet, fresh water, love, feminine beauty, and resilience. She epitomizes and provides joie de vivre.
- 6. Shango—the spirit of thunder, lightning, masculine beauty, and virility.

These six—and the saints that represent them—were for centuries the most beloved of the orishas, the ones subject to the greatest devotion and veneration. In recent years, however, other orishas have also gained in popularity. Because the magical number 7 cannot be changed, in order to add an orisha to the pantheon, another must be removed.

The traditional seventh African Power is Orunmila, a spirit of wisdom who is renowned as the guardian of the sacred Ifa Oracle. Orunmila is a remote orisha who is respected rather than loved by the general population. Thus he is sometimes removed to make room for either Oya or Ochossi, who were not part of the original grouping but have achieved tremendous popularity in the 21st century. Either Oya, Ochossi, or Orunmila may be the Seventh African Power.

- Oya is the spirit of tempests, storms, winds, and the marketplace.
- Ochossi is the sacred hunter, the divine archer who never misses his mark.

Each of these orishas may be invoked individually, but by petitioning them together as a group, they are able to provide for every possible human need—from love, to healing, to housing and wealth. The Seven African Powers provide all of earth's potential blessings and protections.

For many devotees, although not all, the only thing African about this group of benevolent spiritual helpers is the word "African" in their name. Instead, the Seven African Powers are perceived as a grouping of Roman Catholic saints. (Those who wish to minimize or eliminate the African connection may refer to this grouping as "All Saints" rather than the Seven African Powers. However, despite the name, in this context, All Saints does not refer to "all" saints, only those corresponding to the Seven Powers.) Indeed, each of the Seven African Powers is identified with at least one canonized Roman Catholic saint or with Jesus Christ. This identification is reflected in their traditional mass-produced votive imagery.

- Some devotees perceive the orishas and saints to be one being: thus Shango *is* Saint Barbara and vice-versa.
- Some bitterly resent the inference that the Seven African Powers are anything but Catholic saints.
- Some now prefer to use the names and African images of the Seven Powers, dismissing all Catholic associations as subterfuge that is no longer necessary.
- All devotees are in agreement, however, regarding the potency and generosity of the Seven African Powers.

The orishas associated with the Seven African Powers are also venerated by other African Diaspora faiths like Vodou or Candomblé, which may identify them with different saints. As devotees of these traditions migrate to new regions and intermingle, associations of African spirits and saints evolve and expand. The following list includes traditional Santeria associations, as well as associations from other spiritual traditions:

- Eshu-Elegbara is identified with the Holy Child of Atocha and the Anima Sola, as well as Saints Peter, Anthony of Padua, and Benito de Palma.
- Ogun is identified with Saints James Major, Michael Archangel, Peter, George, Paul, and Anthony of Padua.
- Yemaya is identified with aspects of Mary, including the Black Madonna of Regla and the Stella Maris.
- Oshun is identified with Our Lady of Charity and with Mary Magdalen.
- Shango is identified with Saints Barbara, Anthony of the Desert, John the Baptist, and Jerome.
- Obatala is identified with Jesus Christ and Our Ladv of Mercy.

Orunmila, also spelled Orunla, is identified with Saint Francis of Assisi. Oya, called Iansa or Yansan in Brazil, is identified with the Black Madonna of Candelaria and Saints Barbara and Barbara Africana. Ochossi is identified with Saints Sebastian, Norbert, and Hubert.

#### Seven African Powers Oil

This magical formula oil is made by adding one botanical ingredient associated with each of the Seven African Powers to an oil base. Palm oil is the traditional base, but others may be substituted. Thus, there should be a total of seven ingredients, in addition to the base oil. Traditional ingredients include real coconut extract; real almond extract; black pepper; mugwort; cinnamon; seaweed, and either mimosa, jasmine, or a pinch of tobacco. Each orisha is identified with many specific botanicals and so substitutions are easily made.

This oil is used to invoke the blessings and protection of the Seven African Powers. One method is to apply it to a seven-knob candle (a single candle formed into seven distinct joints available from magical supply stores). Carve the name of one orisha or saint on each knob, beginning with Eshu-Elegbara or a saint associated with him. Apply the oil and burn. Focus intensely on goals and desires during the entire process.

A similar formula oil, used in similar fashion, is known as All Saints Oil. Like Seven African Powers Oil, seven ingredients must be incorporated, each one corresponding to one of the Seven Powers:

- 1. Grind and powder the following seven botanicals: cinnamon, tonka beans, patchouli, vetiver, lavender, gardenia, and mugwort.
- 2. Cover with sweet almond and jojoba oils.
- 3. Bottle the blend.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Commercially produced Seven African Powers products (incense, candles, soap, etc.) frequently depict them in the guise of the Catholic saints to which they are syncretized.

**FEASTS:** Each orisha shares the feast day of the saint to whom they are syncretized. The Seven African Powers as a group are honored on All Saints' Day.

**OFFERINGS:** Each of the Seven African Powers may be given the same type of offering that would be given to their syncretized saint. To honor them as a group, light candles or otherwise celebrate seven feast days, honoring each of the seven members of this group.

for detailed information on each orisha, see Judika Illes, *The Encyclopedia of Spirits* (HarperOne, 2009). see also Anastacia; Anima Sola; Anthony of the Desert; Anthony of Padua; Barbara, Saint; Barbara Africana, Saint; Benito de Palma; Fourteen Holy Helpers; Francis of Assisi; James Major, Saint; Jerome, Saint; John the Baptist; John the Conqueror; Lazarus, Saint; Mary; Mary Magdalen; Michael Archangel, Saint; Paul, Saint; Peter, Saint; Santiago Matamoros; Sebastian, Saint; Senjak; Seven Saints of Marrakesh and Glossary: All Saints' Day; Black Madonna; Santeria; Syncretism.

## ∼ Seven Saints of Marrakesh

Also known as Sabatou Rijal (literally, Seven Men).

**CLASSIFICATION:** Sufi saints.

The city of Marrakesh, once Morocco's capital city, hosts the tombs of approximately 200 holy people. In the 17th century, by request of Sultan Moulay Ismail, an official pilgrimage to the grave of seven of these saints was instituted. In addition to spiritual motivation, the goal was to stimulate pilgrimages in order to boost the economy with tourism revenues.

There is an annual official pilgrimage in March, but the circuit of the seven saints' graves may be made at any time. The pilgrimage lasts a week. Each saint has a tomb-shrine included in this pilgrimage circuit. Pilgrimage to the Seven Saints begins on Tuesdays. Each day, a saint's shrine is visited in a specific order; the route is counterclockwise like the one around the Kaaba in Mecca. The complete pilgrimage to all seven saints is considered the equivalent of the pilgrimage to Mecca. The saints are visited in this order:

Tuesday: The pilgrimage begins at the shrine of Sidi Youssef ben Ali, a leper who spent most of his life in a leper colony just outside the city walls. He was a Koranic scholar who dedicated his life to prayer and study. He epitomizes faith in God. He died in 1196 or 1197 and was buried in the cavern in which he lived. He is petitioned for relief from leprosy.

- Wednesday: Caid Ayad (1083–1149) lived in Andalusia before moving to Marrakesh. He was a scholar and author.
- Thursday: Sidi Bel Abbes is the most prominent of the Seven Saints. He is the patron saint of Marrakesh.
- Friday: Sidi Mohammed ben Slimane el Jazali, a descendent of the Prophet Muhammad, was expelled from the Moroccan city of Safi because the governor perceived him as a potential political rival. He did not live or die in Marrakesh, but after his death, his body was moved to several locations. He was finally laid to rest in a mausoleum near Sidi Bel Abbes in 1524.
- Saturday: Sidi Abdel Aziz el Harrar (died 1508) was a disciple of Friday's saint. During his lifetime, he was a physician, renowned for his cures of syphilis. He possessed two huge terra-cotta basins covered with magical inscriptions in which he dipped patients, healing them. The two basins were buried with him and allegedly still protect Marrakesh from venereal diseases. He is known as The Doctor without Fees because he did not charge for his services. Although venerated by the population at large, prostitutes venerate him as their special protector.
- Sunday: Sidi Moulay el Ksour (died 1528) was a Berber from the mountains. He studied in Fez and Granada before moving to Marrakesh to become a disciple of Saturday's saint. He led popular resistance against the Portuguese.
- Monday: Sidi es Souheili was a great Islamic scholar from Malaga who came to Marrakesh in approximately 1182 and died there three years later. His name is also spelled Sidi es Soheyhi

Although some were acquainted with each other other, in general the Seven Saints of Marrakesh are only linked by their status as holy men and their burial in Marrakesh. Each is also venerated independently and has special areas of expertise. Entry to the shrines is forbidden for those who are not Muslim, but many shrines are situated so that you can have a view from outside.

A row of seven small tombstones near the shrine of Thursday's saint, Sidi Bel Abbes, marks the graves of the Seven Little Saints. Allegedly, they were seven brothers born to the same mother on the same day. According to tradition, if you are unable to spend the entire week required to complete the Pilgrimage of the Seven Saints of Marrakesh, a visit to the Seven Little Saints serves as a substitute.

SEE ALSO Sidi; Sidi Bel Abbes; Silverless Physicians.

## ∾ Shabazi, Mori Shalem

Also known as Salem Al-Shebzi; Rabbi Shabazi.

CLASSIFICATION: Jewish saint.

Mori Shalem Shabazi (1619–1680) was a great Kabalist, healer, miracle worker, astrologer, spiritual leader, and mystic poet. He is venerated by both Jews and Muslims and is invoked for blessings of healing and happiness. Considered the greatest of the Yemenite Jewish poets, he wrote in Arabic, Aramaic, and Hebrew. He composed nearly 1500 poems (*diwan* in Arabic), of which only approximately 300 survive. His name always appears as an acrostic somewhere in his poems. *Im Nin'alu*, his most famous poem, became a hit song for Israeli singer Ofra Haza in the 1980s. Mori Shabazi appears in people's dreams to offer healing, warnings, and messages.

SACRED SITES: Mori Shabazi was buried near Taiz, Yemen. Pilgrimages are also made to the Shabazi Synagogue in Netanya, Israel.

Mori is an Aramaic word meaning "my teacher" or "my master." It is the Yemenite equivalent of rabbi.

SEE ALSO Rahman Baba.

## ∾ Shahbanu Hastbadan

CLASSIFICATION: Zoroastrian saint.

Shahbanu Hastbadan was the last Zoroastrian queen of Iran. the wife of

Yazdgird III and the mother of their children. The royal family fled the Islamic conquest but became separated during their flight. The shrine now associated with her, known as the Seti Pir, marks the spot where her pursuers caught up with her. With nowhere to hide, the exhausted queen lay down on a rock to pray. Then either one of two things happened:

- The earth itself offered her sanctuary as the rock opened up to swallow Shahbanu Hastbadan and her two ladies-in-waiting.
- With no place to run and in order to preserve their honor, the queen and her attendants jumped into a well. If she died, it was in the year 651.

Years later, a Zoroastrian pilgrim slipped into the shrine of Shahvir, the revered shah of Khorasan, near the city of Mashhad, then off-limits to non-Muslims. He was caught, arrested, and sentenced to be hung the next morning. Falling asleep in his prison cell, he dreamed the scenario of Shahbanu Hastbadan's desperate flight. In his dream, he was advised to build a shrine for her in the place where he awoke. The next morning, he awoke to discover himself miraculously miles away in Yazd; he immediately began construction of her shrine. (Prison records from Mashhad apparently attest to an escaped Zoroastrian.)

*Pir* refers to sacred Zoroastrian shrines. A famous pilgrimage route links six pirs associated with the Sassanid royal family. Because Shahbanu Hastbadan was the queen and mother, it is customary to begin with her shrine first. Seti Pir, the shrine or pir dedicated to her, is known as the Mother of All Pirs. Some scholars suggest that the shrine may predate Shahbanu Hastbadan and may be significantly older.

SACRED SITE: Seti Pir, also known as Pir-e Mah Seti, her shrine in Maryamabad, near Yazd City in Iran.

FEAST: 14 June.

NUMBER: 3.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; incense.

SEE ALSO Nikbanou, Princess; Shahr Banu.

#### 👡 Shahr Banu

Also known as Sharhbanu.

EPITHET: Lady of the Land.

CLASSIFICATION: Zoroastrian saint.

Shahr Banu was the eldest of the daughters of Yazdgird III, the last emperor of Persia before the Islamic Conquest. Taken captive by Arabic forces, she was brought to Medina, where she married Hussein ibn Ali, grandson of the Prophet Muhammad and third Shia imam. Legend says that she recognized him when she met him because she had already seen him in a dream. In 658, Sharh Banu gave birth to one son, Ali Zayn al Abidin, the fourth Shia imam. She died shortly thereafter from complications of childbirth. Shahr Banu is venerated by Zoroastrians and Muslims alike.

SACRED SITE: Shahr Banu has a shrine in Ray, now a suburb of Tehran. The mountain named after her, which contains her shrine, may originally have been dedicated to the ancient Iranian goddess Anahita, who is considered an angel by Zoroastrians.

SEE ALSO Nikbanou, Princess; Shahbanu Hastbadan.

👡 Shatzer Rebbe, The

Also known as the Shotzer Rebbe.

CLASSIFICATION: Jewish saint.

Rabbi Sholom Moskowitz (died 1958), better known as the Shatzer Rebbe, was born in the Romanian city of Suceava, known in Yiddish as Shatz. He was a member of the Shatzer Hassidic dynasty and a renowned Torah scholar and Kabbalist. He was considered a holy man in his lifetime. He moved to England before World War II, where he was buried when he died.

In his will, the Shatzer Rebbe stated that while alive, he had always tried to help people. He intended to continue doing so after death and thus offered his services to those in need of an intercessor. Rabbi Moskowitz advised that those who needed his assistance, especially concerning recovery from illness, should visit his grave, ideally on a Friday before noon. You can make the pilgrimage for yourself or on behalf of another.

The Shatzer Rebbe promised to request God's mercy and kindness on behalf of those who make requests at his grave, but he does impose one condition. Whoever makes a request of him must promise "to better his way of Yiddishkeit in at least one point." In accord with his will, this condition was written on his grave in English, Hebrew, and Yiddish. (And if this condition is meaningless to you, then he may not be the right saint for you.) The Shatzer Rebbe assists women as well as men; the same condition applies for both. The condition is theoretically rather minor and easily accomplished, but he does stipulate that he will be very angry with anyone who deceives him.

Many miracles are attributed to the Shatzer Rebbe, including fertility, marital happiness, legal success, and healing. People travel from around the world to burn candles and leave notes at his grave in England's Enfield Adass Yisroel Cemetery, also spelled Adath Yisroel. There is a traditional graveside ritual for requesting his assistance.

- 1. On arriving at the grave, light one candle for the soul who will go to announce that someone is praying at the grave and summon the Shatzer Rebbe.
- 2. Light two more candles for the Shatzer Rebbe's soul.
- 3. Make your request. You must identify yourself to the Shatzer Rebbe by stating your own name and that of your mother. (If praying on behalf of another, the same information should be given for the other party.)

**SACRED DAY:** His *yahrzeit* (anniversary of death) is commemorated on the twenty-second day of the Hebrew month Tevet.

#### ∾ Shin Thiwali

Also known as Shin Thi Wa Li Thera; Maha Sivali Thera; Phra Sivali.

CLASSIFICATION: Buddhist saint.

Shin Thiwali is an arhat venerated as a Burmese Buddhist saint. He is associated with Ananda, among the historical Buddha's early disciples. Shin Thiwali is a

monk and magical adept who lives in the forest. That sentence, written in the present tense, is not a mistake. According to Burmese folk belief, Shin Thiwali still lives, so he is not written about in the past tense.

The Arhats, the disciples of the historical Buddha Siddhartha Gautama, are comparable to Apostles.

Shin Thiwali was born to a king and queen who lived at the same time as Siddhartha Gautama, the historical Buddha, estimated to be between the sixth and fourth centuries bce. From the time his mother conceived her son, their kingdom and its inhabitants were showered with blessings. Crops grew exceptionally abundantly, for example. Her pregnancy was a happy time for the kingdom.

However, nine months passed, then ten, then eleven—and still the child was not born. The queen remained pregnant for seven years. Labor finally began and continued for seven days with no sign of the baby's emergence. Finally, near death, the queen, a devout Buddhist, asked for the Buddha to be summoned so that she could see him and be blessed before she died. The Buddha arrived and blessed her. Following his departure, she gave birth to a healthy baby boy. Both queen and prince were, to everyone's amazement, fine.

Good fortune is the hallmark of Shin Thiwali's presence. The prince—named Sivali, the future Shin Thiwali—was devout from virtually his first breath. By the age of seven, he was a mendicant monk. It was observed that wherever he went, luck and good fortune followed. Those in his company—he soon had a following of 500 monks—also shared in this bounty. No matter where they were, no matter how deserted or remote the place, those with Shin Thiwali always had food, even if fairies had to bring it to them.

Shin Thiwali's luck is contagious, so travelers carry tiny images of him so he travels with them. Shin Thiwali brings good fortune to those who honor him, especially before embarking on a journey. He is considered the patron saint of travel. His image is worn or carried in the same manner as that of Saint Christopher.

Shin Thiwali's image is also maintained in Buddhist temples and in household shrines. Images of him kept in the home allegedly protect against fires and theft. Reputedly, those who revere him never lack food, prosperity, happiness, and success.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: a serene traveling monk with a gentle expression and half-smile, and a monk's shaved head. He carries prayer beads and a begging bowl and leans on a walking staff. As a traveler's amulet, the favored image of Shin Thiwali is one in which he carries his fan in one hand and his staff in the other, as if he were ready to begin traveling.

ATTRIBUTES: walking staff; fan; Buddhist rosary beads; begging bowl.

**SEE ALSO** *Christopher*, *Saint*; *Elen of the Roads*.

## ∾ Shlomo Ben Lhans, Rabbi

Also known as Mul Asguine; Salomon Bel Lahnech; Shelomoh Belhans.

**EPITHET:** Son of the Snake.

CLASSIFICATION: Jewish saint.

Rabbi Shlomo Ben Lhans is one of the most widely revered Moroccan Jewish saints. Also venerated by Muslims, he reputedly came to Morocco from Jerusalem in ancient times, although he is identified as an Ashkenazi (European) Jew.

*Lhans* means "snake," so his name is the equivalent of Solomon, Son of the Snake. Many of the legends about this celebrated miracle worker involve snakes, including explanations of how he received his name.

- His mother gave birth to a snake.
- At night before he began his studies, he'd shed his skin like a snake.
- Snakes congregate near his grave.
- He rescues people from snakes.
- He had and continues to have control over snakes.

If and when you petition him, wherever you petition him, keep an eye out for snakes, who serve as his messengers.

MANIFESTATION: Rabbi Shlomo may manifest as a man or as a snake.

SACRED SITES: his grave at Aghbalou, in Morocco's Ourika Valley, as well as a synagogue named in his honor in Ashdod, Israel.

#### ∾ Siddi Saints

Also known as Sidi; Siddhi; Sheedi; Shidi; Szidi; Habshi.

The word *Siddi* derives from the Arabic, *Sayid* (also sometimes transliterated as *Sayeed* or *Seyidi*), meaning "Lord" or "Master" and is thus a respectful honorific. On the Asian subcontinent, however, *Siddi* possesses the additional meaning of "African" and specifically refers to the African diasporic communities of India and Pakistan. The Siddi saints derive from these communities. An alternative name for these saints, *Habshi*, makes this African connection even more explicit, as it derives from the Arabic word for Abyssinian (Ethiopian): *Habash*.

Siddi saints may be considered a subdivision of Sufi saints. Their veneration reflects the distinct synthesis of Muslim, Hindu, and East African spiritual traditions characteristic of Siddi folk religion. The origins of the Siddi community are disputed, but the various origin stories are not mutually exclusive. The modern Siddi community may derive from multiple migrations, involuntary and otherwise.

Historically, inhabitants of coastal East Africa—from Ethiopia to Mozambique—were kidnapped by Arab traders, converted to Islam, and sent to labor throughout the Muslim world, including in what is now modern India and Pakistan. Enslaved Africans were brought to the Asian subcontinent as recently as the 19th century. Relatively few were imported for the purpose of providing cheap labor. Instead, they were mainly employed by rulers as soldiers, bodyguards, domestic servants, healers, and herbalists.

The most beloved Siddi saints are the siblings Baba Ghor, Baba Habash, and Mai Mishra. Their mythos suggests a different origin for at least some of the Siddi community. According to Siddi legend, Baba Ghor and his family arrived in India of their own free will.

Baba Ghor was a military commander in Abyssinia when he experienced a profound spiritual directive instructing him to go to India in order to defeat a "dangerous female demon." In response, he immediately assembled an entourage to accompany him. The traditional legend suggests that Baba Ghor's traveling party consisted of his eleven brothers and either three or seven sisters, plus their extended families. An additional group of soldiers, with their wives, may have accompanied them. It has also been suggested that only Baba Ghor, Mai Mishra, and Baba Habash were actual blood kin, and that the other members of their entourage were *spiritual* siblings. The Siddi community claims descent from this entourage, many of whom are now venerated as saints. Thus many Siddi saints are simultaneously ancestral spirits.

Seven female Siddi saints are traditionally acknowledged: Mai Mishra, Mai Miriam, Mai Goma, Mai Ratani, Mai Dukhri, Mai Kheini, and Mai Ghumli.

Siddi saints are also venerated by Hindus, Muslims, and Zoroastrians. Many shrines in various locations are associated with them. Siddi rituals may include dance and drumming. Women play significant roles in Siddi saint veneration, not only as supplicants, but as respected ritual specialists. This is not unusual in indigenous African spiritual traditions, but it is *exceedingly* rare in Islam.

- The shrines of female Siddi saints are cared for by women.
- Mai Mishra is served by female ritual specialists.
- Baba Ghor and Mai Mishra communicate through male and female spirit mediums.

**SACRED SITE:** The shrine complex in Ratanpur, Gujarat, which contains the tombs of Baba Ghor, Mai Mishra, and Baba Habash, is famed for miracles of exorcism.

**OFFERINGS**: incense; oil lamps; candles; musical performances. Female Siddi saints favor candy and sweets.

SEE ALSO Baba Ghor; Baba Habash; Mai Mishra; Sidi.

## 🔊 Sidi

Sidi is a North African honorific that literally means "Sir" or "Lord." The word is used in secular situations, but it is also the traditional North African term of respect for male saints, Jewish as well as Muslim, and also for high-ranking djinn. The honorific is *always* used and essentially becomes part of the saint's name.

FOR INFORMATION regarding saints of the South Asian Sidi community, see Siddi Saints. See also Lalla; Seven Saints of Marrakesh; Sidi Abdallah ben Hassoun; Sidi Abderrahmane; Sidi Ahmed Dghughi; Sidi Ali ben Hamdush; Sidi Ali ben Harazem; Sidi Ali Sanhaji; Sidi Bel Abbes; Sidi Belyout; Sidi Ali Bou Ghaleb; Sidi Allal El Kairouani; Sidi Ben Achir; Sidi Bou Said; Sidi Bou Said El Beji; Sidi Boujida; Sidi Brahim; Sidi Mehrez; Sidi Merri; Sidi Messaoud; Sidi Mohammed Ben Aïssa; Sidi Mohammed Ben L'Aarif; Sidi Rahal.

## ∾ Sidi Abdallah ben Hassoun

#### CLASSIFICATION: Sufi saint.

Sidi Abdallah ben Hassoun lived in Salé, Morocco, in the 16th century and is now considered that city's patron saint. He plays a role similar to that of Saint Christopher for Muslim travelers and is also the patron saint of boatmen. His *moussem* (feast, commemoration of death) takes place annually on the eve of the Mouloud, the festival honoring the birth of the Prophet. What was once a simple religious processional has evolved into Salé's Festival of Candles. Boatmen place elaborate flaming candelabrum on his tomb. A processional featuring huge intricately carved wax lanterns mounted on giant poles travels to his shrine accompanied by the sounds of flutes and drums.

SACRED SITE: His shrine is at the end of the rue de la Grande Mosquée in Salé.

SEE ALSO Christopher, Saint; Shina Thiwali; Sidi.

### ∾ Sidi Abderrahmane

#### CLASSIFICATION: Sufi saint.

Sidi Abderrahmane, a Sufi from Baghdad who traveled to Morocco, is a saint whose specialty is healing mental disorders and breaking evil spells. A high percentage of the pilgrims to his shrine are the mentally ill seeking cures, as well as their families, typically seeking cures on their behalf. ao aren rammeo, cypreany occimiz careo on aren ocman.

SACRED SITE: His grave-shrine is on a tiny outcropping of rock at the western end of the Corniche d'Ain Diab, near Casablanca, less than fifty meters from shore. Devotees walk to the island at low tide, the only time it is accessible. The shrine is closed to non-Muslims.

SEE ALSO Sidi.

#### 👡 Sidi Ahmed Dghughi

**CLASSIFICATION:** Sufi saint.

Sidi Ahmed Dghughi was either the servant or slave of Sidi Ali Ben Hamdush but was also his student and friend. He cared for him in life and cleansed Sid Ali's body after death. The two saints are now venerated together as well as independently.

In addition to being venerated by the Hamadsha Brotherhood along with Sidi Ali, Sidi Ahmed is the patron of the Dghughiyya Brotherhood, named in his honor. Although both saints are associated with the djinn goddess Aisha Qandisha, it was Sidi Ahmed Dghughi who went to fetch her from the Sudan. In this context, "Sudan" does not refer to the modern East African nation, but to the entire region south of the Sahara Desert. In one version of this legend, Sidi Ahmed found Aisha in what was then the northern Spanish Sahara.

Sidi Ali died just as Sidi Ahmed was returning with Aisha, so it was Sidi Ahmed who actually developed the relationship with her. According to some legends, Sidi Ahmed and Aisha married, although many devotees of the saint are offended by this suggestion.

Learned scholars in Fez once asked Sidi Ahmed to expound on prayer and religion. He replied: "All that is necessary is a silo of wheat and a silo of barley." The scholars didn't understand, so Sidi Ahmed invited them to his home, where he proceeded to lock them in. There was no food in the house. The ascetic men discoursed learnedly for three or four days; then they asked for food. Sidi Ahmed told them to keep discussing. Finally, when they were so hungry that not only could they not discuss, they couldn't even pray, the scholars got Sidi Ahmed's point. A proverb attributed to him states: "Without bread, there is neither prayer nor devotion."

Sidi Ahmed died a few years after Sidi Ali and was buried in the village of

Beni Ourad about a mile from Sidi Ali's mausoleum. Pilgrimages are made to both saints' graves. It is traditional to visit Sidi Ahmed on a Thursday, followed by a visit to Sidi Ali the next day, with another stop at the nearby grotto of Aisha Qandisha.

Sidi Ahmed has a reputation as a djinn master, commanding them on his own behalf, on behalf of Sidi Ali, and on behalf of powerful djinn like Lalla Mira. Like Sidi Ali, Sidi Ahmed is a healer, exorcist, and miracle worker.

SACRED DAY: Thursday.

**FEAST:** His feast (*moussem*) occurs on the sixth day after the birthday of the Prophet, the day before Sidi Ali's moussem.

SEE ALSO Lalla; Sidi Ali Ben Hamdush and Glossary: Djinn.

## 👡 Sidi Ali ben Hamdush

Also known as Hamdouche; Hamduj.

**EPITHET:** Conductor of the Sun.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Sufi saint.

Sidi Ali ben Hamdush, among the most renowned of Moroccan saints, is the patron of the Hamadsha Brotherhood, named in his honor. He is a miracle worker so powerful that it is believed that he has the power to command the sun.

An 18th-century ascetic and scholar, Sidi Ali spent ten years in a corner of Qarwiyyin University in Fez praying all night and fasting all day. He never moved. He never spoke to anyone. He repeated the Islamic profession of faith 18,000 times a day.

The Hamadsha are a mystical, healing spiritual brotherhood famed for bringing relief to those possessed by djinn or suffering from illness. They maintain close associations with the djinn Aisha Qandisha and Aisha Sudaniyya. Their rituals are considered extreme by most other Muslim groups, mystical or otherwise. Hamadsha rites include drinking boiling water, eating spiny cactus, slashing their own heads with knives or razors during trance dances, and handling and charming enormous snakes.

Sidi Ali moved to the village of Beni Rachid on the southern face of Mount Zerhoun, the gateway to the Rif Mountains, where he developed a reputation as a miracle worker. Pilgrims traveled from all over North Africa to see him. A protocol was followed. Pilgrims kept a respectful distance from Sidi Ali. No one sat next to him or spoke directly to him; they just stayed nearby. Sidi Ali liked to listen to men discuss the Prophet. Eventually, the spirit would move him and he would rise and begin to dance the *hadra*, a healing, ecstatic dance, a prelude to his miracle-working.

Sidi Ali directed his servant, Sidi Ahmed Dghughi, to fetch the powerful djinn Aisha Qandisha from the Sudan, telling him that he would find a bundle of branches tied together with rope. Sidi Ahmed closed his eyes; when he opened them, he was in the Sudan in front of that bundle of branches. He tugged it and Lalla Aisha appeared.

Sidi Ahmed advised her that he was in a hurry because "his brother" (Sidi Ali) was dying. Lalla Aisha told him to climb on her back. He did and instantly they were back on Mount Zerhoun. Just as they were climbing the steps to his cave, Sidi Ali died. Sidi Ahmed prepared his body for burial and buried him. Mourners and devotees founded lodges dedicated to him throughout North Africa—in Algeria and Tunisia, as well as Morocco.

Sultan Moulay Ismail (reigned 1672–1727), nicknamed "the bloodthirsty," threatened to behead his barren wife if she didn't conceive the very next day. That night, Sidi Ali appeared in her dreams. She decided to visit his shrine and requested permission from her husband. The sultan gave his permission for the pilgrimage, but only until sunset: he'd have her head if she hadn't returned by then. Sidi Ali performed two miracles for the queen. She conceived and he stopped the sun from going down until she reached home.

#### SACRED DAY: Friday.

**FEAST:** His *moussem* (feast day) is celebrated exactly one week after the holiday commemorating the birthday of the Prophet.

**SACRED SITE**: Sidi Ali is buried on Mount Zerhoun sixteen miles from Meknes; his mausoleum is among the largest in Morocco. A spring flowing from the cliffs just below his tomb allegedly has curative powers. Pilgrims drink it, apply the water to their bodies, and bring a little home.

SEE ALSO Lalla Sidi; Sidi Ahmed Dghughi; Sidi Ali Sanhaji; Sidi Mohammed ben Aïssa and Glossary: Djinn.

## ∾ Sidi Ali Ben Harazem

CLASSIFICATION: Sufi saint.

Sidi Ali ben Harazem was a 12th-century mystic scholar so wise and eloquent that djinn attended his lectures. His grave-shrine (*koubba*) in Fez, established in the 17th century, is located in an area that was once a leper colony, in the quarter traditionally populated by saints, sorcerers, thieves, and lunatics. A therapeutic spring associated with him that is located near his shrine is now a modern spa resort. The mineral springs, rich in calcium, sodium, and magnesia, reputedly heal arthritis, kidney conditions, and high cholesterol. (Sidi Harazem is also a brand of Moroccan mineral water.)

Sidi Ali ben Harazem is the protector of those tormented by evil spirits, mental illness, and especially those unable to distinguish between the two.

FAVORED PEOPLE: students; the mentally ill.

**FEAST**: His *moussem* (commemoration of his death) occurs in the spring, usually around March or April, and is among the largest in Fez.

SEE ALSO Sidi and Glossary: Djinn.

## 👡 Sidi Ali Sanhaji

**EPITHET:** Father of Acquittals.

CLASSIFICATION: Sufi saint.

A young girl refused the advances of a man who vowed to have her dead or

alive. As it happened, she died and was buried. The man approached her tomb late one night, opened it, removed her body, tore off her shroud, and attempted to possess her corpse. He thought he was unobserved but, in fact, Sidi Ali Sanhaji was watching.

Sidi Ali Sanhaji, not yet a saint, was secretly lurking in the cemetery, out on some nefarious business. He was a criminal and murderer responsible for ninetynine deaths. That night, Sidi Ali Sanhaji witnessed a miracle. The dead girl raised an arm to block her attacker. The rapist cut off her arm. When she resisted with the other arm, he cut that one off, too. The cadaver squeezed her legs tightly together and the rapist cut them off. Sidi Ali had seen enough. He decided that there was no more perfect candidate for his hundredth victim than this monstrous man. Sidi Ali vowed that, with this last murder, he would redeem himself for the previous ninety-nine and never kill again.

A voice cried out three times: "Acquit yourself, Father of Acquittals!" And he did. Sidi Ali Sanhaji killed the man. Then he put the girl back together, got her a fresh shroud, and buried her again. He placed an olive branch at the head of the tomb, saying aloud that if the branch was green the next day, he would know that God had accepted his vow and pardoned him. Voilà! When Sidi Ali returned the next morning, the small cut branch had transformed into a magnificent olive tree covered with leaves.

Sidi Ali became a wandering holy man, preaching the divine word and performing miracles. He was a disciple of Sidi Ali ben Hamdush. When he died, his own disciples built him a mausoleum, which collapsed, as did its replacement. Sidi Ali appeared to the caretaker of his shrine in a dream, advising that he did not wish the traditional *koubba* (traditional Moroccan mausoleum) built over his grave. The sanctuary dedicated to him is the annual meeting place for the Hamadsha Brotherhood en route to Sidi Ali ben Hamdush's grave.

SACRED SITE: Sidi Ali Sanhaji is buried in Lekhous, near Larache, Morocco.

SEE ALSO Joseph of Arimathea; Rita, Saint; Sidi; Sidi Ali ben Hamdush.

#### 👡 Sidi Bel Abbes

**CLASSIFICATION:** Sufi saint.

Sidi Bel Abbes (born 1130) is among the most prominent and beloved Moroccan

saints. Not only is he one of the Seven Saints of Marrakesh, he is the patron saint of that city. He is also the patron saint of merchants, farmers, the blind, and the visually impaired.

Born in Ceuta, now an autonomous city of Spain located on the coast of North Africa, Sidi Bel Abbes came to Marrakesh at age twenty and preached there for forty years. He lived in a hermitage until summoned by Sultan Yacoub El Mansour to teach publicly in the heart of the city. Sidi Bel Abbes was a miracle worker; his specialty was restoring eyesight to the blind. No blind person went hungry in Marrakesh when Sidi Bel Abbes was in residence there.

His *zawiya* (sanctuary) near the Bab El Khemis, one of the fourteen gates leading into Marrakesh's medina (old city), remains a refuge for the blind and handicapped, as it has been for centuries. They are supported by visitors' donations, as well as by Morocco's royal family. Sidi Bel Abbes also reputedly cures leprosy. The afflicted traditionally come to live in his sanctuary until they are healed.

There are at least three distinct Moroccan saints known as Sidi Bel Abbes:

- The Muslim patron saint of Marrakesh
- A Jewish saint also called Rabbi Yehuda, who is buried in Ksar el-Kabir in northern Morocco
- Lalla Rivka of the Bene-Moshe. (See also Sons of Moses.)

**SACRED DAY:** Thursday.

**OFFERINGS**: gifts of food, clothing, and money. These are first dedicated to Sidi Bel Abbes and then *immediately* distributed to the poor. (This can be done from anywhere; no special pilgrimage required.)

SEE ALSO Seven Saints of Marrakesh; Sidi.

### 👡 Sidi Belyout

Also known as Abou Louyout; Sidi Beliout; Sidi Belyat.

**EPITHET:** Father of Lions.

Sidi Belyout was so disgusted with the ways of mankind that he blinded himself and spent the rest of his life as a hermit in the forest. Wild animals cared for him. When he died, animals guarded his body until it was found and buried.

Sidi Belyout is the patron saint and guardian of the city of Casablanca. A district southeast of the seaport is named after him. Both Jews and Muslims venerate him as a saint and both religious groups claim him as one of their own. His *koubba* (traditional Moroccan mausoleum) was built at the end of the 19th century. Allegedly, if you drink the water from the miraculous fountain near his grave, you are guaranteed to return to Casablanca.

SEE ALSO Lalla Beida.

## 👡 Sidi Ali Bou Ghaleb

Sidi Ali Bou Ghaleb, a native of Andalusia, taught in Fez in the early 12th century. He now has a shrine near Fez, where he performs healings. He is often considered the saint of last resort; the terminally ill or those for whom no conventional medical solutions exist travel to his grave shrine. It is traditional to spend Tuesday and Wednesday nights in his mausoleum, although some stay until their cure is complete. You'll know the cure is accomplished if you dream of the saint. There is an area reserved for men and another for women.

SACRED DAY: Wednesday.

SEE ALSO Sidi.

### 👡 Sidi Allal El Kairouani

In approximately 1340, Sidi Allal El Kairouani left Kairouan, Tunisia, by boat en route to Senegal but was shipwrecked near what is now Casablanca. Fishermen rescued him and brought him ashore. When his wife died, Sidi Allal sent for his daughter, Lalla Beida. She, too, was shipwrecked in the same place, but Lalla Beida drowned. Sidi Allal buried her near the sea and was later buried beside her. Lalla Beida is Casablanca's presiding saint. The two saints, father and daughter, may be venerated together. Sidi Allal is the patron of fishermen and is invoked for protection and safety at sea. SEE ALSO Lalla Beida; Sidi.

## ∾ Sidi Ben Achir

**EPITHET:** The Doctor.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Sufi saint.

Sidi Ben Achir was a holy man and ascetic from Andalusia, credited with the power to calm waves so that vessels could safely enter the harbor at Salé, Morocco, once the abode of the Barbary pirates. He continues to quiet storms from beyond the grave.

Sidi Ben Achir has the power to raise and quell winds, waves, and storms. Once upon a time, he was invoked so that shipwrecks—if they were destined to occur—would come ashore nearby, enabling local residents to benefit from whatever treasures were onboard. He also reputedly heals blindness, paralysis, and mental illness.

SACRED SITE: His mausoleum, located in the Seamen's Cemetery in Salé, is offlimits to non-Muslims.

**FEAST:** He is honored annually on the eve of the Mouloud, the holiday celebrating the birth of the Prophet.

SEE ALSO Sidi.

## 👡 Sidi Bou Said

According to a North African legend, the crusader King Louis IX of France came to Tunis to wage war but fell in love with a Berber princess.

- He changed his mind about fighting.
- He changed his name to Sidi Bou Said.
- He converted to Islam and lived happily ever after in the village now named in his honor twenty kilometers northeast of Tunis. The village is named Sidi Bou Said, *not* Louis Capet.

The other side of the story is that Louis Capet, the Crusader King of France, died of dysentery in Tunis, where he had hoped to convert the sultan to Christianity. The Roman Catholic Church has canonized him as Saint Louis. Some of his relics were left in Tunis and these became associated with miracles. Legends sprang up that he had converted to Islam and he is simultaneously considered a Muslim saint. He is conflated with Sidi Bou Said El Beji and it can be difficult to distinguish between them.

SACRED SITES: Louis Capet has two tombs on two neighboring hills in Tunisia. He is venerated as the Catholic Saint Louis at the Tomb of Saint Louis in Carthage and as Sidi Bou Said, Muslim saint, in a nearby village.

SEE ALSO Louis, Saint; Sidi; Sidi Bou Said El Beji.

## 👡 Sidi Bou Said El Beji

Also known as Sidi Abbou Said.

EPITHET: Lord of the Sea.

CLASSIFICATION: Sufi saint.

Sidi Bou Said El Beji (1156–1231), a prominent Sufi teacher and scholar, taught religion and science at the Zitouna Mosque, the largest mosque in Tunisia. He retired to live a devotional life as a *marabout* (Muslim holy man). In order to facilitate this, he moved to a seaside village to meditate; here he emerged as an acclaimed faith healer. His tomb became a pilgrimage site and a village named in his honor grew around it. In the 16th century, Muslim refugees from Andalusia settled in the area of his tomb. Some took to the sea as pirates and adopted Sidi Bou Said as their patron saint, naming him Lord of the Sea.

SEE ALSO Sidi; Sidi Ben Achir'; Sidi Bou Said; El Beji.

# 👡 Sidi Boujida

The specialty of Sidi Boujida, 10th-century holy man and modern Moroccan saint, is reconciling women with their husbands, especially women who have

committed what are perceived as sexual transgressions. Sidi Boujida is renowned for his ability to soothe, appease, and calm angry husbands.

**SACRED SITE:** his sanctuary in Fez, Morocco.

SEE ALSO Sidi.

### 👡 Sidi Brahim

Also known as Mwalin Dad.

CLASSIFICATION: Jewish saint.

Rabbi Abraham Awriwer, scholar and healer—a.k.a. Sidi Brahim—came to Morocco from Jerusalem. Now a saint venerated by Jews and Muslims, he is credited with performing many miracles, especially those involving fertility. *Mwalin* means "owner," so his nickname Mwalin Dad means Owner of Dad, the mountain on which he is buried (near Settat in central Morocco). He is reputedly buried with his six brothers and 150 of his disciples.

**FEAST:** Sidi Brahim's feast day coincides with the Jewish holiday of Lag B'Omer, the eighteenth day of the Hebrew lunar month of Iyar.

SEE ALSO Sidi; Simon bar Yohai.

#### 👡 Sidi Mehrez

Also known as Sidi Mahraz; Mahraz Ibn Khalif.

CLASSIFICATION: Sufi saint.

Sidi Mehrez (c. 950–1022) is the patron saint of the city of Tunis and protector of its medina. Although he was a scholar and a brilliant man, he was primarily a civic leader, not a religious one. Cadhi Abou Mohammed Mehrez Ibn El Khalaf, now more familiarly known as Sidi Mehrez, lived during a very tempestuous era in North Africa. In 943, an uprising left the great city of Tunis, successor to Carthage, looted and in shambles. Sidi Mehrez was responsible for uniting inhabitants to work together and reconstruct the city. He gave permission for Jews to live within Tunis' city walls despite opposition, assigning them a special quarter. (According to legend, he sought easy access to talented Jewish goldsmiths.)

Sidi Mehrez has an illustrious lineage. On his paternal side, he was a direct descendent of Abu Bakr (c. 573–634), among the Prophet Muhammad's closest advisors and reputedly the first male convert to Islam. His mother's family was Berber nobility. His shrine, rebuilt in 1862–1863, is frequented by women seeking the saint's blessings of happiness, health, and fertility. He is also very popular among local black brotherhoods and is considered the patron saint of sailors.

**SACRED SITE**: his mausoleum on rue Sidi Mehrez in Tunis. The mosque nearby is also named in his honor. The two buildings are considered among the finest examples of Ottoman architecture in Tunisia.

SEE ALSO Sidi.

## ∾ Sidi Merri

Sidi Merri, a saint of the Glaoui Berber (Amazigh) tribe of the Atlas Mountains, is a particularly magical saint. A master healer with power over smallpox, he is allegedly able to remove or terminate the illness. He is particularly sympathetic to children afflicted with the disease. A magical ritual invokes his aid:

- 1. When the smallpox pustules form, but before they pop, roast wheat or coarsegrain couscous.
- 2. Place half beneath the child's pillow to absorb the illness magically.
- 3. Cook the other half as if making very simple, plain couscous.
- 4. Place this cooked half in a dish and hold it above the child's head.
- 5. Invoke Sidi Merri and pray.
- 6. Take the cooked dish along with the grain from beneath the child's pillow to Sidi Merri's shrine and pray and petition some more.

Sidi Merri protects devotees and provides for his descendents, some of whom became mendicant holy men. They traditionally wandered, begging for alms in the name of Sidi Merri. It is traditional to promise Sidi Merri an offering and consider it a debt to be paid directly to one of his descendents, if and when encountered.

Sidi Merri can control rain. Travelers request that he stop or at least minimize storms or inclement weather via a magical petition:

- 1. Take out some money and announce: "Here is your offering, Sidi Merri!"
- 2. If the request is answered, reserve that sum for the saint. Add it to your tab. If you hear a request for alms on behalf of the saint, you must pay your debts and settle your tab immediately or incur the saint's wrath.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: travelers; pilgrims; nomads.

SEE ALSO Sidi.

# 👡 Sidi Messaoud

Moroccan folk tradition suggests that women who are unable to find husbands may be cursed. If so, Sidi Messaoud can break the spell at his shrine in the Riad Larouss district of Marrakesh:

- 1. Bring a comb and some henna to his shrine.
- 2. Comb your hair and apply the henna to it.
- 3. At the moment when the muezzin calls the faithful to prayer, remove all clothing and bathe with water from the shrine's holy well.
- 4. When it's time to depart, leave the comb at the shrine, together with any hair that was combed out and some offerings to the saint. This will banish your bad fortune.

SEE ALSO Lalla Izza Hamad; Sidi.

# 👡 Sidi Mohammed ben Aïssa

Also known as Mohammed ben 'Isa.

EPITHETS: The Perfect Sheikh; The Perfect Sufi Master.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Sufi saint.

Sidi Mohammed ben Aïssa (1465–1526), among Morocco's most renowned saints, allegedly made a pact with the animal and spiritual worlds that gave him incredible magical powers. Sidi ben Aïssa could transfigure leaves off trees into silver and gold coins. No longer only a local Moroccan saint, he is now venerated along the entire length of North Africa, from Morocco to Egypt and all points between. Veneration has also spread to Europe and North America.

Sidi ben Aïssa is the founder and patron saint of the Aïssawa Brotherhood, also spelled Issawa, an extremely complex spiritual confraternity. There are two versions of the Brotherhood's origins.

According to the first version, Sidi ben Aïssa was the spiritual patron of the 50,000 men enslaved by Sultan Moulay Ismail and forced to labor. When the starving men complained of hunger to Sidi ben Aïssa, he blessed them and told them to eat anything they could find. They ate scorpions, poisonous plants, even glass, and survived. Until recently, members of the Aïssawa Brotherhood reproduced these feats as proof of the saint's grace.

According to the second version, Sidi Mohammed ben Aïssa and his followers fled to the desert when they were expelled from the city of Meknes by Sultan Moulay Ismail. Starving, they ate whatever they could find, mainly cacti, scorpions, and snakes.

Sidi ben Aïssa repeatedly bestows the power to eat anything safely with no ill effects, even ground glass and poison.

The Aïssa Brotherhood combines traditional Sufi rituals with trance healing and spiritual possession. It developed something of an infamous reputation because of possession and prayer-induced trance rituals that include singing, dancing, drumming, and the invocation and banishing of djinn. Until prohibited by the French during their occupation of Morocco (1904–1956), 50,000 people attended rituals commemorating Sidi Aïssa's death. Entranced devotees pierced their cheeks and tongues with daggers and ate glass and scorpions. The Moroccan government has since curtailed what are perceived as more extreme signs of devotion.

Sidi Aïssa breaks malevolent spells and heals physical, mental, and spiritual illnesses. He protects women who invoke his blessings for travel safety, especially when traveling alone.

**SACRED ANIMALS:** cobras and other snakes. Cobras are involved in Aïssa spiritual rituals and members of the brotherhood refrain from killing them. Some members are snake charmers and caretakers of snakes and may be called on by others to remove them, like a wildlife patrol.

**FEAST:** His *moussem* is celebrated on the eve of the Mouloud, the movable feast honoring the birth of the Prophet. Devotees gather at his sanctuary and a procession including snake charmers parades through Meknes.

**SACRED SITE:** his mausoleum in Meknes. A sanctuary honoring Sidi Aïssa was built in 1776.

SEE ALSO Sidi; Sidi Ali ben Hamdush and Glossary: Djinn.

# 👡 Sidi Mohammed ben L'aarif

CLASSIFICATION: Sufi saint.

According to unauthorized folk traditions, Sidi Mohammed, patron saint of the butchers of Marrakesh, is invoked to kill or incapacitate enemies. He may be requested to cause illness. You must be extremely specific when making requests of him, lest he target the wrong person.

Invocations are made at his shrine. An offering of raw meat and roasted corn is thrown onto his tomb and then a verbal appeal is made. The traditional invocation states: "I beg of you vengeance against (enemy's name). If you do not grant me this, you will never hear me utter your name." The petitioner must specify the enemy's name and *exactly* what they wish—in other words, detailed descriptions of death or illness. If Sidi Mohammed grants your request, return with an offering of salt and vegetables.

SEE ALSO Sidi.

# 👡 Sidi Rahal

Sidi Rahal is the master of thunder and mosquitoes, and hence of malaria and other diseases transmitted by insects. He is a wonder worker who tamed lions in life. He now cures infertility, deafness, lameness, and throat disorders from the after-life.

Sidi Rahal is the patron of the spiritual brotherhood known as the Oulad Sidi Rahal (Sons of Sidi Rahal or Clan of Sidi Rahal), whose rituals involve snake handling. While voluntarily, ritually possessed, members gulp boiling water. When they spit it out, the water is icy cold. They heal illness, cast out spirits from the involuntarily possessed, expel demons, and break curses and spells. Sidi Rahal is venerated by both Muslims and Jews, both of whom claim him as their own. Historically, Jews have visited his shrine secretly, because Muslim authorities forbade them from entering.

According to legend, there may be two Sidi Rahals: one Muslim and one Jewish. They are the Master of Fire and the Master of Water, respectively. The two men were rivals and their feud became a magical battle of the elements. Absolute disaster ensued. One blocked fire; one blocked water. Local residents began to die from thirst *and* fires. The saints were holy men; it was not their intent or desire to cause suffering. They rose above their rivalry, made peace, and restored fire and water.

According to legend, the Oued R'dat River in Morocco's High Atlas Mountains is one of the seven rivers of Hades. It was once violent and dangerous to ford, until the waters were tamed by Sidi Rahal.

**SACRED SITE:** Sidi Rahal's sanctuary is in Marrakesh. A small hill near his shrine is known as the Hill of Healers. Allegedly, the saint will heal those who spend the night there.

SEE ALSO Sidi Ali ben Hamdush; Sidi Mohammed ben Aïssa.

## ∾ Silverless Physicians

Also known as the Holy Unmercenaries.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Coptic saints.

These healing saints correspond in nature to the Roman Catholic Fourteen Holy Helpers. In the context of these saints, "silver" indicates money. These saints are known as "silverless" because, in life, they were physicians who treated patients for free. They refused payment in accordance with the Gospel of Matthew 10:8, which instructs: "Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment, give without payment." In death as in life, the Silverless Physicians are invoked for healing.

The Byzantine Church recognized twelve Silverless Physicians. The most prominent five are still venerated by the Coptic Church:

- Saints Cyrus and John
- Saints Cosmos and Damian
- Saint Colluthus

SEE ALSO Cosmos and Damian, Saints; Cyrus and John, Saints; Fourteen Holy Helpers; Seven Saints of Marrakesh.

# 🔊 Simeon of Verkhoturye, Saint

Also known as Simeon the Righteous; Simeon of Merkushino.

CLASSIFICATION: Russian Orthodox saint.

Simeon of Verkhoturye (died 1642), the wonder worker of Siberia and Rasputin's own patron saint, performed a miracle healing for that controversial monk. Rasputin suffered from devastating insomnia. From age fifteen until his cure at age thirty-eight, he reacted to the arrival of spring by being unable to sleep for forty days. Rasputin credited Simeon with healing him. Until his death, Rasputin visited the monastery where Simeon's relics were housed, bringing others with him and spreading the word about this miraculous healer.

Rasputin requested that Saint Simeon help him make contact with Russia's imperial family. When he did, the first gift that Rasputin ever gave the tsar and tsarina was an icon of Saint Simeon of Verkhoturye. Tsar Nicholas eventually had a magnificent pavilion erected near Saint Simeon's shrine.

Simeon, a holy wanderer, lived in the village of Merkushino on the banks of the Tura River. His days were spent fishing, praying, and sewing winter coats for the residents of bitterly cold Siberia. He accepted no payment, only food and shelter. His early death at approximately age thirty-five was the result of extraordinary fasting and abstinences. He was buried beside the Church of Michael Archangel in Merkushino.

Fifty years after his death, a miraculous spring appeared beside his grave and it was noticed that his coffin was beginning to rise up through the earth. Simeon's uncorrupted remains were visible through its splintered boards.

Miraculous healings began to occur. People who drank from the healing spring or who rubbed their bodies with dirt taken from the coffin were cured of afflictions. Simeon's fame as a healer grew until, on 24 September 1704, his relics were transferred to the more accessible Nikolaev Monastery in Verkhoturye, the gateway to Siberia. (The main toll road to Siberia passed through Verkhoturye; it wasn't easy getting in or out of Siberia without a trip to Verkhoturye.)

Simeon's relics and icons were credited with many healing miracles; but in 1917, the Bolshevik government closed the monastery, ejected the monks, and turned the building into a correctional facility for juvenile delinquents. However, it has since been restored and pilgrims are once again welcomed.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Simeon, cloaked in blue, stands beside a river and receives the Holy Spirit.

SACRED SITES:

- A pilgrimage route connects various sites associated with Simeon and the transfer of his relics. The pilgrimage, which begins in Merkushino, makes stops at the rock where he liked to fish and various churches he visited, and then concludes in Verkhoturye.
- Priests hear confessions in Simeon's grave beneath the altar at Merkushino Cathedral.

FEASTS: 12 September; 18 December.

SEE ALSO Ksenya, Saint; Michael Archangel, Saint; Rasputin; Well Saints and Glossary: Icon; Incorrupt.

References to Saint Simon may also indicate the Guatemalan folk saint, Maximón.

## 👡 Simon, Saint

Also known as Simon the Apostle; Simon the Zealot; Simon Zelotes; Simon Kananaios; Saint Zealot; Simeon; Shimon; Vechio Simeone ("Old Simon").

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Just as there were two apostles named Judas—Judas Iscariot and Judas Thaddeus —so Jesus had two apostles named Simon, hence the need to distinguish between them:

- Simon Peter now ranks among the most famous of all saints.
- Simon Kananaios is the most mysterious of the Apostles and possibly the most obscure.

Kananaios, Saint Simon's distinguishing epithet, derives from a Hebrew word that is usually transliterated as CANA or QANA and means "zealous." Thus this Apostle is known as Simon the Zealot. He is also known as Simon the Canaanite, but that is the result of a deliberate or accidental mistranslation.

"Zealous" may have the conventional meaning of religious fervency, but in the context of first-century Judea, the time of Jesus Christ and his Apostles, it bears the additional implication of participation in the Jewish insurgency against Roman rule. The Zealots were a guerrilla organization that encouraged the overthrow of the Romans by any means possible.

When Saint Jerome translated the Bible into Latin, however, he interpreted CANA as referring to the biblical land of Canaan or to the town of Cana. As a result, some believe that Simon was the bridegroom at the famous wedding at Cana, where Jesus transformed water into wine. Jerome's mistranslation may be a genuine accident—it is not the only flub he committed when translating Hebrew to Latin. Alternatively, Jerome may have intentionally sought to minimize or obfuscate Simon's associations with anti-Roman forces. He significantly does not include Saint Simon in his book *On Illustrious Men*, a collection of 130 brief biographies, although several other Apostles, including Simon Peter and Saint Jude, are included.

- Simon the Zealot may or may not be identical to the Simon who, according to folklore, circumcized Jesus as an infant.
- He may or may not be identical to Simon of Jerusalem, the second bishop of

Jerusalem following the death of James the Just, the first bishop.

Simon of Jerusalem has been identified as the son of Cleophas, who may have been the brother of Saint Joseph, which would make Simon and Jesus cousins, at least by marriage. Some, however, believe Simon was the brother or half-brother of Jesus. The Gospel of Mark 6:3 identifies men named James, Judas, and Simon as brothers of Jesus; they are also sometimes identified as Saints James the Just, Judas Thaddeus, and Simon the Zealot.

Following the Crucifixion (if he wasn't the second bishop of Jerusalem), Simon may have traveled the world preaching the gospel with either Saints Jude or Andrew. He may have been crucified as well, or he may have died by being sawed into bits or in half. He may have died by stoning, or he may have been martyred in Jerusalem, Armenia, England, Iran, or near Colchis in Georgia on the Black Sea. An alternative legend suggests that he was not martyred as a Christian but died during a Jewish revolt against Rome.

Centuries after his death, Simon reemerged in the context of Italian folk religion, where he plays the part of a miracle-working, witch-doctor saint. Simon is invoked for miracles of health and wealth, especially winning lottery numbers. Although identified as Saint Simon, he may be confused with yet another firstcentury Simon, Simon Magus. He is traditionally invoked just before going to bed—Saint Simon makes dream visitations. Folklorist Charles Godfrey Leland (1824–1903) suggests that in addition to Simon Magus, Saint Simon may be conflated with Somnos, the old Roman god of sleep. Scholars suggest that Simon's associations with magic may derive from the proximity of his Western feast day to Hallowe'en.

In his book *Etruscan Roman Remains in Popular Tradition*, Leland describes a ritual intended to invoke Saint Simon. Rather than the traditional nine-week method of reciting novenas, prayers to Simon are chanted for three nights in a row at the stroke of midnight. Reputedly, the saint then arrives to ask the petitioner what he or she seeks. He may appear in varying guises, including a priest or friar, and he may transform into other guises during his manifestation. He may be stern, frightening, or sullen. If the petitioner recites the novena perfectly without missing a syllable and then answers the saint promptly and utterly without fear, then the old zealot or magician may fulfill any request. Alternatively, if he is not pleased with the petitioner, he may respond with a resounding slap to the face before vanishing into thin air.

Leland offers an example of the traditional Italian novena prayer:

O gloriossissimo S. Vecchio Simeone che meritaste ed aveste la bella sorte di ricevere e portare nella vostre fortunate braccie il Divin Pargoletto Gesù—E le annunziaste e profetiziaste e le vostre Profezie furono sante verità—Oh Santo concedetomi la grazia che vi addomando. Amen.

This particular novena assumes that Saint Simon was the man who circumcised the baby Jesus and also references his great prophetic abilities. Extremely roughly and briefly translated, it means: "Oh glorious Old Saint Simon, who merited the good fortune to receive and hold in your arms the divine baby Jesus, please grant me the favor that I ask."

FAVORED PEOPLE: tanners; those who work with leather.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Simon is sometimes portrayed as a man being sawn in half.

ATTRIBUTES: saw; lance; fish; oar; book.

SPIRITUAL ALLIES:

- The Western Church venerates Saint Simon along with his traveling partner, Jude. Their relics are reputedly entombed together within an altar in Saint Peter's Basilica.
- The Eastern Church suggests that Simon traveled and preached with Saint Andrew instead.

FEASTS: 10 May (Eastern Churches); 28 October (Western Church).

SACRED SITES:

- Orthodox legend suggests that the New Athos Monastery in Abkhazia is built over the site where Simon was martyred by stoning and then buried.
- The monastery is a complex that now incorporates the older Saint Simon the Canaanite Church, reputedly built directly over Simon's grave. Thousands visit annually on his feast day.
- Nearby is the Saint Simon the Canaanite Cave where, according to legend, the apostle lived. The cave was sanctified in 1884 and now contains icons of Saints Simon and Andrew. Devotees leave notes in the cave seeking miracles of healing.

According to the Western Church, relics identified as those of Saint Simon are housed in Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome and in France's Cathedral of Toulouse. Local legend suggests that Simon was buried in England, near Saint Simon's Well in East Scrafton, Yorkshire. A chapel dedicated to Simon was once located nearby.

SEE ALSO Apostles; James Cut to Pieces, Saint; James the Just, Saint; Jerome, Saint; Jude Saint; Maximón; Peter, Saint; Simon Magus and Glossary: Icon.

#### ∾ Simon bar Yohai

Also called Shimon Bar Yohai; Simeon Bar Yohai (Yohai may be spelled Yochai).

**CLASSIFICATION:** Jewish saint.

Simon bar Yohai, the great second-century Talmudic sage, is the archetypal Jewish mystic. A student of the renowned Rabbi Akiba, Simon was a miracle worker, healer, and exorcist. Reputedly the author of the Zohar, also known as the Book of Splendor and considered the greatest and most significant Kabbalistic text, Simon bar Yohai is widely considered the Father of Kabbalah.

An outspoken and sometimes cantankerous man, Simon bar Yohai publicly criticized the Roman occupation of Judea. The swift Roman response was to order his execution and place a bounty on his head. To evade this death sentence, Simon bar Yohai and his son, also a great scholar, hid in a cave in Galilee for thirteen years. Miracles enabled them to survive.

- A fresh-water well appeared in their cave on their first night in hiding.
- A large carob tree suddenly appeared at the mouth of the cave, providing them with food and camouflaging the cave entrance.
- Elijah the Prophet sometimes came to visit and study with the men. He revealed mysteries known only in Heaven and encouraged Simon to write them down.

The thirteen years that Simon spent in hiding were devoted to authoring the Zohar, a sacred text written in the form of a mystical novel centering on discussions between Simon bar Yohai and his disciples. The Zohar presents basic Kabbalistic teachings regarding the ten *Sephirot* (emanations of the Godhead), the Tree of Life, and the exile of the Shekhina.

Although reputedly written in the second century, the Zohar was unknown for centuries and was first published in 13th-century Spain by the Kabbalist Rabbi Moses de León (c. 1240–1305) of Guadalajara, now in modern Spain. De Leon claimed to have found a hidden manuscript written by Simon bar Yohai who, even before anyone knew about the Zohar, bore a reputation as a brilliant scholar and wonder worker. De Leon's publication of the Zohar stimulated the Kabbalah renaissance centered in Spain and Safed, Israel. It remains the central text of Kabbalah.

Who actually wrote the Zohar has been the subject of centuries of bitter debate. Academics and secular scholars usually attribute it to Moses de León, suggesting that he attributed it to Bar Yohai for safety's sake in a politically tenuous time and also as a selling point. Traditionalists consider Bar Yohai the author. Still others acknowledge multiple authors. Some of the Zohar's language corresponds to that of second-century Judea, so it is possible that some, if not all, of the extensive text, was authored then. However, they conclude, Moses de León compiled the final version and readied it for publication.

According to legend, by the time birds told him that it was safe to leave his cave, Simon bar Yohai was in such a tempestuous mood that after returning to society, he gave the Evil Eye to everyone who aggravated him. He caused such havoc that God essentially gave him a time-out, sending him back to the cave for a year. When he emerged for good, he settled in Tiberias, now in modern Israel, where he continued to teach and perform miracles. He now holds classes in Paradise, but his soul returns to earth to assist living students of the Kabbalah.

Following his death, many claim to have witnessed Simon bar Yohai, either actually seeing him or receiving dream visitations. (For example, Simon appeared in dreams to various individuals in Morocco, advising that he was protecting them and that, in lieu of visits to his grave, they should approach him on a mountain in Sefrou, Morocco.) He is a miracle worker petitioned for all sorts of needs and desires, but especially for healing. Often the saint of last resort, he is petitioned for healing potentially fatal illnesses when medical treatment has failed or if no medical solution exists. It is traditional to leave notes and written entreaties at his grave requesting assistance.

The pilgrimage to his grave in Meron on the anniversary of his death (his

*hillulah*), corresponding with the Jewish holiday Lag B'Omer, is the largest pilgrimage site in Israel, drawing over 200,000 annually.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: Simon bar Yohai is patron saint of Jewish burial societies and funeral workers.

FEAST: On the day he died, Simon bar Yohai instructed his disciples to mark the date as "the day of my joy." He died on the eighteenth day of the Hebrew month of Iyar, corresponding in time to the astrological sign Taurus. This day is also known as Lag B'Omer, a Jewish holiday commemorating either the end of a plague or some facet of the Bar Kochba rebellion against Roman rule over Judea, either victory or defeat. His hillulah is celebrated with bonfires. (At home, burn lots of candles in his memory.) Funeral workers in some communities celebrate his feast with rituals incorporating drinking games.

**SACRED SITES:** Simon Bar Yohai's grave is in Meron, Israel. He is buried beside his son and cave-mate, Rabbi Eliezer. Their cave is near the village of Peki'in in the Upper Galilee.

SEE ALSO Ben Temalion; Beruriah; Elijah the Prophet; John the Baptist; Loewe, Rabbi Judah; Moses; Phinehas ben Yair.

## 👡 Simon Magus

Also known as Simon the Magician.

CLASSIFICATION: Gnostic saint.

Simon Magus was a magician and spiritual leader from Samaria. It is unknown whether he was an ethnic Samaritan or a Jew originally from Caesarea. A magician named Simon who is sometimes identified as Simon Magus is known to have lived in Caesarea in approximately 40 ce. The theologian Justin Martyr (103–165), however, claims Simon was born in Gitta, a Samaritan village. Simon Magus was a contemporary of Jesus and the Apostles.

Magus is not Simon's last name, but his title. Simon Magus literally means Simon the Magician.

Simon was baptized a Christian by the Apostle Philip and is described by Bishop Irenaeus of Lyons as the man "from whom all the heresies take their origin." Simon Magus became the Christian symbol of arrogance and pride. His name is recalled in the word "simony," the practice of buying positions of power within the Church.

In the Book of Acts, Simon is portrayed as a wandering magician who has converted to Christianity. Observing the future Saint Peter healing by the laying on of hands, Simon wished to acquire this skill. He offered Peter money to teach him and was sharply rebuked for assuming that these powers could be bought. Peter is Simon's primary competitor and nemesis.

Simon may have been a disciple of John the Baptist. He achieved tremendous success as a magician and spiritual leader in Samaria and also in Rome. Simon is credited as the founder of the school of Simonian Gnosticism, whose doctrine suggests that the world was created by a female power who then became lost in her own creation. God exists; but the Cosmos was not created directly by God, but by a female emanation of God, the Ennoia (Thought). She created the angels, who then rebelled against her. The battle was so vicious that Ennoia lost herself in her creation and forgot her identity. She wandered through various incarnations, one after another, becoming ever more confused.

In the meantime, the angels tried to rule the world but fought among themselves. The world filled with suffering, which was not God's original intention. God finally decided to rescue Ennoia and, in the process, save people, so he came to earth in the form of Simon Magus. God, in the form of Simon Magus, found Ennoia in the form of a prostitute named Helena in the Phoenician city of Tyre. Thanks to Simon, Helena regained her memory.

Some perceive that Simon paired himself with Helena, the former prostitute she retired from her profession after meeting Simon—in order to echo the relationship of Jesus and Mary Magdalen, who many also believe to be a former prostitute. In traditional Mediterranean cultures, distinctions were made between common prostitutes and sacred temple prostitutes. It is now unclear which type of prostitution Helena and Mary Magdalen were suspected of practicing. Some theorize that the pairings may indicate that both couples were involved in forbidden, esoteric spiritual practices.

Simon taught that anyone who recognized him as God was saved. Once saved, there was no need for conventional rules of morality, because those were originally created by the angels in order to enslave people.

Surviving knowledge of Simon comes from Christians who opposed him and

perceived initias a competitor of Jesus Christ. It was said by people who perceived these as dreadful things that Simon Magus conjured spirits, concocted potions, and encouraged free sex. Simon was identified as the Antichrist. He was worshipped in Rome, however. A community of devotees built temples dedicated to him that featured statues of Simon and Helena.

Some early Christians accused Simon Magus of accomplishing his miracles by using necromantic rituals to control the spirit of a murdered boy. Simon, himself, allegedly died when he flew off the top of the Roman Forum during a magical duel with Saint Peter. Alternatively, he buried himself for three days, promising to resurrect, but he did not. After his death, he was buried in Aricia, near Rome.

Simon's leadership of his sect was assumed by his disciple Menander. Simonian Gnosticism survived in the Roman Empire for over 150 years. However, by the early third century, Origen claimed there were fewer than thirty Simonians left. All writings of Simon's school were destroyed. Simon Magus is classified among the Gnostic saints.

FAVORED PEOPLE: magicians; diviners; mystics; occultists.

SEE ALSO Apostles; Gnostic Saints; Helena, Saint; John the Baptist; Magi; Mary Magdalen; Peter, Saint; Simon, Saint.

#### ∾ Solange, Saint

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Solange belonged to a family of French peasants who labored on the estate of the Count of Poitiers. She became a shepherdess in childhood and simultaneously began demonstrating spiritual powers. Her presence alone was reputedly sufficient to exorcise demons. Legends suggest that she vowed herself to Christ at age seven.

Solange was a beautiful, charismatic young girl and she caught the eye of Bernard, the count's son. In approximately 880, he attempted to rape her. She resisted and, in the process, was murdered. Bernard, as the son of her landlord, may have presumed that he had rights to the bodies of his female tenants. He beheaded her with his sword. Solange, headless, stood up, picked up her head, and carried it to the next town, now known as Sainte-Solange, where she preached and described what had happened to her. (There were no evewitnesses.) Only then did she rest in peace.

Miracles were immediately attributed to her. Solange's head was kept as a relic. In 1281, an altar was erected for her, and the church and town were renamed in her honor. Solange's story bears extraordinary resemblance to ancient Celtic veneration of severed, oracular heads, as, for instance, that of Bran the Blessed.

Saint Solange is invoked to relieve drought.

FAVORED PEOPLE: rape victims.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Solange is depicted as a young girl kneeling before a cross accompanied by her sheep.

FEAST: 10 May.

SEE ALSO Maria Goretti, Saint; Winifride, Saint and Glossary: Altar; Relics.

#### ∾ Sons of Moses

Also known as Bene Moshe; Ait Bene Moshe; B'Nai Moshe.

**CLASSIFICATIONS:** Jewish saints.

The name Sons of Moses is a misnomer. These Moroccan Jewish guardian spirits are the souls of Moses' contemporaries, not his children. Furthermore, the most famous "son" is female.

The Sons of Moses resemble Theosophy's Ascended Masters. Their realm is not in the Himalayas, however; it is beyond the Sambatyon River. The Sambatyon may be a mythic river, although various attempts have been made to locate it on the globe. Water does not flow in the Sambatyon. Instead, it is variously described as a river of fire, sand, stones, or some combination of these. It is a dangerous river, not easily crossed. The Sons of Moses periodically emerge on earth to help Jews in peril.

The best known of the group is Lalla Rivka (Lady Rebecca), also sometimes called Sidi Bel Abbes, although that's a masculine name. Perhaps her behavior is not stereotypically ladylike enough, so she creates confusion. Lalla Rivka is a sword-wielding warrior spirit who rides her horse into battle and is credited with

killing soldiers who menaced a Moroccan Jewish community. She bears an extremely strong resemblance to the ancient Semitic deity Anat, once worshipped by Jews in Egypt.

SEE ALSO Lalla; Miriam; Moses; Sidi Bel Abbes.

#### 👡 Susanna, Saint

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Saint Susanna (died 11 August 295) came from an elegant, upscale Roman family of Dalmatian ancestry. Her uncle was Pope Caius. Emperor Diocletian, a close relative, wanted Susanna to marry his adopted son, but she had already taken a vow of chastity.

Diocletian wouldn't take no for an answer. Susanna converted relatives and messengers sent to escort her to her wedding. Exposed as a Christian, she was arrested, tortured, and finally beheaded in her father's house. (He died in prison six months later and was also canonized.) Their house was eventually transformed into a church and Saint Susanna developed a tremendous following. In 590, the church was renamed in her honor.

There is no historical evidence of Susanna's existence. She has been officially removed from the roster of saints. Regardless of that fact, Saint Susanna is a renowned miracle worker famous for resolving impossible situations—those for which solutions seemingly do not exist. Susanna creates solutions.

- She assists with romantic, marital, and legal situations.
- She is the matron and guardian of children.
- Susanna loves animals; her aid is invoked to heal and protect dogs, cats, and other pets.
- Saint Susanna heals and dispels depression.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Susanna is usually envisioned as a beautiful young woman gazing upward toward Heaven, her hands clasped in prayer.

**SACRED FLOWERS**: lily; small Cape marigold.

SACRED SITE: Rome's Church of Santa Susanna.

#### FEAST: 11 August.

There is another earlier Saint Susanna. Little is known about her, except that she is among the female disciples of Christ mentioned in the Gospel of Luke (chapter 8). She is the Saint Susanna who is considered a Holy Myrrh Bearer.

SEE ALSO Myrrh Bearers, Holy.

#### ∾ Swithin, Saint

Also known as Swithun; Svithun.

CLASSIFICATION: Anglican and Roman Catholic saint.

Saint Swithin (c. 800–2 July 862) was the bishop of Winchester in England from 852 until his death. He served as advisor to King Egbert of Wessex. Swithin is renowned for the many miracles attributed to him while alive and after his death. Most famously, Saint Swithin repaired eggs that had been broken. Those who cry over the proverbial spilled milk and are seeking a saint might consider Swithin.

Saying that no vault is as fine as the vault of Heaven, Saint Swithin requested to be buried in the open-air churchyard cemetery rather than inside the church itself, as is traditional for bishops. Monks wished to rebury his body, but their plans were foiled by forty consecutive days of incessant, torrential rain. This was eventually interpreted as indicating the saint's anger at being moved. He was left alone and the rain ceased. Miracles were soon reported at his grave and a chapel was eventually built over it, in accordance with a dream vision from Swithin expressing his approval.

Saint Swithin provides a dream oracle:

- 1. On the eve of his feast, cut the corners off a fine piece of paper and burn them.
- 2. Using a brand-new, never-before-used pen with red ink, write the three things you most desire to know on the paper.
- 3. Fold the paper up.
- 4 Remove three hairs from your head and wran them around the naner.

- 5. Tie each hair into a knot, repeating one question with each knot.
- 6. Sleep with this paper beneath your pillow for three nights. Allegedly, what you wish to know will be revealed to you in your dreams.

The weather on Saint Swithin's feast day is believed to forecast coming weather. If it rains on Saint Swithin's day, forty more days of inclement weather may be anticipated. Likewise, if the sun shines on his feast, one can look forward to almost six more weeks of pleasant weather. As an old rhyme suggests:

If on Saint Swithin's Day it really pours You'd be best off to stay indoors.

Saint Swithin is invoked to relieve drought. Miracles of healing have reputedly occurred at his shrine in Winchester Cathedral.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Saint Swithin is portrayed as a bishop with broken eggs at his feet.

SACRED SITES:

- His shrine in Winchester Cathedral was destroyed during the Reformation. A new one was dedicated to him in 1962.
- Saint Svithun Cathedral in Stavanger, Norway.

**BOTANICAL**: small Cape marigold (*Calendula pluvialis*).

FEAST: 15 July, the day his relics were moved indoors.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; apples; pilgrimage.

## ∾ Sylvester, Saint

Also known as Pope Saint Sylvester.

**CLASSIFICATION**: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Saint Sylvester (died 31 December 335) was pope when Emperor Constantine made Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire. He served as

counselor and spiritual advisor to Emperor Constantine. Born in Rome, Sylvester became pope on 31 January 314. His feast day, 31 December, commemorates the anniversary of his death but also coincides with secular New Year's Eve in the Western World. In many parts of Europe, the name Sylvester is synonymous with New Year's Eve and has entered the popular vocabulary. In other words, people of all religious persuasions may not gossip about plans for New Year's Eve; instead, they eagerly await Sylvester.

Although Pope Sylvester was a devout Christian, it's possible that his parents or whoever named him were not. The name Sylvester derives from *sylvan*, a Latin word meaning "wooded" or "wilderness" that also echoes the name of the Pagan deity Sylvanus, the spirit of wild nature.

Saint Sylvester is widely venerated in German and Central European folk tradition, but his nature does not correspond to that of the historical pope.

- He is no somber cleric, but a spirit of ecstatic revelry and intoxication.
- Sylvester Night is intensely associated with magic, witches, and divination.

It's believed that the Wild Hunt, that parade of marauding nocturnal spirits and specters, rides out on Sylvester's night. Witches journey to mountain peaks to dance and revel. Sylvester Night—the night of 31 December and the early hours of 1 January—is considered among the most powerful nights for love magic, especially for spells intended to force men's fidelity.

Branches of fragrant juniper are burned so that the resulting smoke will drive away lingering misfortune from the old year and ward off danger in the new. Elder branches are soaked, then bent into wheels and kept in the home as talismans to provide protection and good fortune until next Sylvester.

Midnight on Sylvester Eve, the moment when 30 December becomes 31 December, is also not without spells. The Central European death goddess Madame Death sits perched in pear trees. At midnight on this night, a broth prepared from wild pears was poured over thresholds to prevent Madame Death from entering a home that year—combined with a prayer to Saint Sylvester, of course. As wild pears are not accessible to all, it may be worth experimenting with a glass of Poire William or another beverage containing real pears as a substitute. Perhaps a champagne cocktail blended with a pear liqueur and dedicated to Saint Sylvester will do the trick.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Sylvester is depicted trampling the dragon of Paganism.

ATTRIBUTES: chained dragon; bull and tiara.

**SACRED PLANT**: speedwell (Veronica officinalis), also known as the Sylvester flower.

**FEASTS:** 31 December (Western Church); 2 January and 21 May (Eastern Church).

**OFFERINGS**: candles; incense. Throw a huge party in his honor with libations or an overflowing glass for the saint.

# Т

#### 👡 Taigi, Blessed Anna Maria

**EPITHET:** The Tuscan Seeress.

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint (canonization pending).

Anna Maria Taigi (29 May 1769–9 June 1837), visionary, prophetess, and mystic, was born in Siena, where her parents owned an apothecary. They went bankrupt when she was six and the family moved to Rome, where her parents became servants. Anna went to school for only two years before she too entered the workforce, laboring as a maid. She was a very pretty girl and her mother hoped that she would marry well, but Anna Maria fell in love with a porter and married him. Her mother never really forgave her. Her treatment of Anna is among the reasons this saint is traditionally invoked against verbal abuse.

Soon after she married, Anna had a profound spiritual epiphany and sought a religious vocation. She attended Mass daily and joined the Trinitarian order. She wanted to live platonically with her husband, but he refused. She raised four children on her husband's modest salary, while simultaneously becoming an advisor to popes, cardinals, and her neighbors. (Three other children died.)

Her parents, always teetering on the brink of financial disaster, came to live with Anna and her husband, Dominic, who adored Anna, but did not get along with her parents—or with most people, for that matter. He was a hot-tempered man; if dinner wasn't to his liking, he'd dump it on the floor. Not for nothing is Anna also invoked to assist with spousal abuse.

In 1790, after the birth of her first child, a glowing luminous ball of light like a miniature sun surrounded by thorns appeared to Anna. She saw it constantly, but it was visible only to her—the equivalent of her own private, sacred crystal ball. Anna Maria interpreted this light as representing eternal wisdom. When she gazed into it, present and future events anywhere in the world were revealed to her, as well as the secret contents of people's souls. Anna became a gifted and renowned seer and healer.

Anna never charged for her services, refusing payment even from the wealthy. She healed in person and long distance via her globe. She accurately foretold deaths so that people could prepare themselves. She urged Pope Pius VII to receive last rites. He died four days later. Anna Maria Taigi is among the saints who received the stigmata. She is now perhaps most famous for her apocalyptic prophesies.

According to Anna Maria, God will send two punishments to humanity. The first originates on earth and is in the form of war, revolution, and other familiar ills. The second originates in Heaven. All lights will go out and the earth will be plunged into darkness for three days and three nights. It will be impossible to see. Artificial light sources like flashlights and lamps will fail, with the sole exception of *blessed* candles.

Doors and windows must be kept sealed, as the air will be filled with deadly pestilential demons. All enemies of the Church, known or unknown, will perish during those three days, except for a few whom God intends to convert. *Most* true believers will be saved, but not all, and safety is not guaranteed. (Open the window and you're finished, regardless of what you believe.) Anna Maria Taigi advised that during these three days of darkness, people should stay home, pray the rosary, and beg for God's mercy.

- Anna was beatified by Pope Benedict XV in 1920.
- She is invoked against verbal and spousal abuse.

Although current literature about her emphasizes her piety and devout Christianity, during her lifetime she was widely considered to be an occultist as well as a prophetess. She was described as the Tuscan Seeress, the title of a feature article about her in the journal, *The Occult Review*. Lingering occult associations may at least partially explain why Anna Maria Taigi has not yet been canonized.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: mothers; homemakers; victims of spousal or verbal abuse; crystal-ball gazers.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** Anna Maria Taigi is portrayed gazing into her luminous globe.

ATTRIBUTE: luminous globe.

FEAST: 9 June.

**SACRED SITE**: Her body was initially incorrupt, but because of humidity and inadequate enshrinement, it has deteriorated. A wax figure now encloses her remains, which are enshrined at Rome's Basilica of San Crisogono in Trastevere.

**OFFERINGS:** flowers; candles; pilgrimage.

SEE Glossary: Incorrupt; Stigmata.

#### 👡 Talbot, Venerable Matt

**EPITHET:** The Worker's Saint.

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint; canonization pending.

Matt Talbot (2 May 1856–7 June 1925) was the second of twelve children of a Dublin dock worker and a charwoman. Most of the men in his family, including his father, were very heavy drinkers. Matt began drinking heavily at age twelve when he left school and found work at a wine merchant's shop where he dipped into the wares.

He was profoundly alcoholic. His sisters later testified that Matt would sell his boots for liquor money. When the money was gone, he'd drink on credit. No credit? He'd steal. He once stole an old man's fiddle and pawned it to support his habit.

Matt was a chronic alcoholic from age twelve to age twenty-eight. One Saturday, Matt walked to O'Meara's pub on Dublin's North Strand with his two youngest brothers. With no cash, they stood outside waiting for someone to offer to buy them a drink, but acquaintance after acquaintance walked right past them. Matt experienced an epiphany and told his brothers that he was going home. He shocked his mother by arriving home early and sober. He shocked her more by announcing that he was going to take the pledge (an oath before a priest never to drink again).

Matt went to Holy Cross College, where he sought to pledge for life. A realistic priest told him to swear for three months and, if he could last that long, to come back and take a longer pledge. Matt kept his pledge for forty-one years, until be died

unun ne meu.

Matt devised his own sobriety plan, following the same schedule daily: up early for five o'clock Mass, then off to work at a construction site. After work, he went back to church, where he stayed until it was time to go home, eat, and sleep. He became extremely devout, adopting austerities and mortifying his flesh. Matt slept on a wood plank with a wood block for a pillow. He paid off all his debts and everything he owed. He scoured Dublin, searching for the fiddler whose instrument he had stolen, but was never able to find him. He lived with his mother until she died. He then rented a little room. He donated most of his salary to charity or gave it to needy neighbors.

Matt died suddenly of a heart attack while walking to Mass on Trinity Sunday. No one was able to identify him. Taken to the hospital and undressed, the extent of his austerities was revealed to the world. Matt wore a heavy chain around his waist, and chains around one arm and leg and cords around the other.

Word spread that a holy man had died. Crowds flocked to his funeral. Matt Talbot became an icon for the temperance movement, as he remains. In his youth, the future Pope John Paul II wrote a paper about Matt Talbot. His canonization process began in May 1947 but is not complete. Matt Talbot is the sacred sponsor of alcoholics and addicts of all kinds.

**SACRED SITES:** 

- A cross marks the spot where he died on Granby Lane, Dublin.
- He is enshrined at Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Dublin, where his tomb has a glass panel so that his coffin is visible.

**OFFERINGS**: Do *not* give him an alcoholic drink. Matt drank cold cocoa and ate dry toast. Offer broken chains to symbolize the addictions you need to break.

#### 🔊 Tara

Also known as Dolma; Drolma; Do'ma (Tibet); Tarani Bosatsu (Japan).

**EPITHETS:** The Queen of Compassion; Queen of Knowledge; The One Who Saves; Fierce Protectress; Mother of Liberation.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Bodhisattva.

Simultaneously a bodhisattva, a Buddha, and Tibet's favorite goddess, Tara is

the most beloved member of the Tibetan pantheon. She is the miraculous savior who rescues from suffering. Call on Tara whenever urgent assistance is needed.

Tara is a Buddha, a fully realized being who achieved Nirvana but selflessly vowed to remain on earth as a bodhisattva. Her name derives from a Sanskrit root word meaning "to traverse" or "cross over." Tara helps others cross over to immortality and enlightenment. Her name is also related to the root words for "star" and "the pupil of the eye." Tara is also venerated by Hindus.

According to legend, the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara gazed down at earth from Heaven and was absolutely overwhelmed by the endless human suffering he witnessed. No matter how many people he saved, there were always more in need. In despair, a tear fell from each eye. These tears transformed into the two paths of Tara.

- White Tara is the peaceful white tear that fell from Avalokiteshvara's left eye.
- Green Tara is the fierce green tear that fell from Avalokiteshvara's right eye.

These two manifestations of Tara soothed Avalokiteshvara's despair, encouraging him not to abandon his efforts, but to persist. Green Tara and White Tara are Avalokiteshvara's constant companions. They are associated with the two devout Buddhist wives of Songtsen Gampo (died 649), the Tibetan king who first brought the Dharma to Tibet. Songtsen Gampo is considered an avatar or incarnation of Avalokiteshvara, while his wives are considered avatars of Tara.

- Green Tara is incarnate in his Nepalese wife, Princess Brikuti.
- White Tara is incarnate in his Chinese wife, Princess Wen-Ch'eng.

The name Kwan Yin is a Chinese translation of the Sanskrit Avalokiteshvara. Many consider Kwan Yin and Avalokiteshvara to be two names for the same being. Tara, however, is understood as an emanation of Avalokiteshvara—an independent being who is Avalokiteshvara's constant and most devoted companion. Kwan Yin and Tara may be venerated together, but they are not the same being. Tara is not merely another name for Kwan Yin. According to some myths, in earlier incarnations, Tara and Avalokiteshvara became the ancestors of the Tibetan people. Tara is less well known in East Asia. In Japan, she is considred one holy being, not two. She simultaeously embodies White Tara and Green Tara, and thus her color is pale green, a merger of the two.

Tara protects against a series of dangers, including wind, water, fire, snakes,

elephants, vicious spirits, thieves, imprisonment, and the power of kings. She protects against malevolent spirits, ghosts, and hauntings. Tara doesn't just banish them. She brings them to enlightenment so that they are transformed into benevolent beings. Tara brings her devotees to spiritual enlightenment, too. She also heals all illnesses and provides fertility to those seeking to conceive.

Officially, if esoterically, the two aspects of Tara are considered to be one sacred being. Devotees of folk religion may, however, perceive each of the manifestations as a distinct and unique being.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: everyone, but especially Tibetans. Tara is a being of sublime compassions and generosity.

**MANIFESTATION:** Tara has an unlimited number of forms, but she is usually envisioned in the form of a beautiful woman.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Tara's image is found in virtually every temple and monastery in Buddhist Central Asia. She is a favorite subject of Tibetan Thangka paintings. Depending on Buddhist tradition, there may be more than two manisfestations of Tara, each identified by a color. Thus there is also Blue Tara and Yellow Tara. Each of Tara's manifestations possesses its own distinct iconography—different colors, poses, mudras, and attributes that serve to identify her.

**ATTRIBUTES**: crown; vajra; wheel; lute; book; Buddhist rosary; lotus; pomegranate.

SPIRITUAL ALLY: Avalokiteshvara.

**SACRED SITE:** Dolma-La Pass, the arduous circumambulatory route around Tibet's sacred Mount Kailash. The route was reputedly first initiated by Tara. The large Tara Rock at the pass is covered with Tibetan prayer flags.

SACRED ANIMALS: wolf; monkey.

MANTRA: Tara's basic root mantra is OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SVOHA! (pronounced: om ta-ray too ta-ray too-ray so-ha). Chanting it allegedly promotes longevity, provides healing, and removes obstacles and difficulties from your path. **OFFERINGS**: candles; incense; flowers. Feed animals, birds, and needy people, especially children.

SEE ALSO Avalokiteshvara; Kwan Yin and Glossary: Path.

# 👡 Teilo, Saint

Also known as Eliud; Elios.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic and Anglican saint.

Teilo (c. 480–9 February c. 560) was the grandson of King Ceredig of Ceredigion, for whom the Welsh county of Cardiganshire is named. He was among the leaders of the Celtic Christian Church in sixth-century Wales and is one of the Welsh saints associated with King Arthur.

Teilo was a close companion of Saint David. Together they made pilgrimages to Jerusalem and Rome. Teilo founded a monastic community, which he eventually transferred to Brittany after a devastating plague struck Wales in 549. In Brittany, Teilo reputedly subdued and tamed a winged dragon.

Long a comparatively obscure saint, at least outside Wales, Teilo reemerged powerfully in 2008, when an episode of the television series *Torchwood* was set in the fictional Saint Teilo's Military Hospital. Saint Teilo is, however, genuinely associated with healing, especially of nervous disorders and mental illness. Historically, institutions dedicated to healing have been named in his honor. Saint Teilo is also the patron saint of horses and fruit trees.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Teilo is portrayed wearing bishop's robes and riding a stag.

SACRED SITE: Cardiff's Llandaff Cathedral, which he may have founded and where his body is allegedly contained (many other churches also claim to possess his corpse).

FEAST: 9 February.

SEE ALSO Arthurian Saints; David, Saint.

#### 👡 Tekle Haimanot, Saint

Also known as Takla Haimanot; Haymanout.

CLASSIFICATION: Ethiopian Orthodox and Coptic saint.

Tekle Haimanot (c. 1215–c. 1313), among the most beloved Ethiopian saints, claimed descent from a long line of priests. Miracles attended his birth and childhood. Michael Archangel appeared to his parents before he was born, advising them that their future child would be blessed. Tekle's very first words were a protest against receiving his mother's milk on a fast day. He learned all the psalms by heart and was ordained by the time he was fifteen. He traversed Ethiopia performing feats and miracles, including resurrection of the dead. He studied under Ethiopia's great monastic saints.

Tekle Haimanot made three pilgrimages to Jerusalem. He then founded the still-existing monastery of Debre Libanos, north of Addis Ababa. Tekle is usually portrayed with wings, for which various explanations are given. According to one version, he prayed for seven years standing on one leg, until finally the other dropped off. Angels brought him wings so that he was not immobilized. Alternatively, he was living in a monastery on a hill so steep that ropes were needed to descend. When the rope broke and Tekle was trapped, he invoked Michael Archangel, who brought him wings.

Tekle reputedly died of the plague just four months before his hundredth birthday. He promised to protect those who call on him and honor his feast. Saint Tekle is credited with many miracles of healing.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Tekle Haimanot is depicted with three sets of wings on his back.

**ATTRIBUTE**: eight spears with which he surrounded himself so that he could not fall asleep while praying; bells; his detached leg, which may be shown brandished by an angel or floating up to Heaven, or winged and thus flying up to Heaven.

NUMBER: 8.

**SACRED DAY:** The twenty-fourth day of each month of the Ethiopian calendar is dedicated to Tekle.

FEAST: 17 August.

SACRED SITES:

- Debre Libranos, the cave hermitage north of Addis Ababa that Tekle founded in the 13th century and where his tomb may be visited. The church presently on the site was built in 1961. The cave where Tekle prayed, a short walk up the hill, is the source of the monastery's Holy Water, which reputedly protects against demons and possesses healing properties, especially for stomach disorders.
- Saint Takla Himanout's Coptic Church in Ibrahimia, Alexandria, Egypt, contains relics of the saint.

SEE ALSO Michael Archangel, Saint; Peregrine, Saint and Glossary: Holy Water.

# ∾ Teresa of the Andes

#### CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Teresa of the Andes (13 July 1900–12 April 1920) was born Juanita Fernández Solar to a wealthy family in Santiago, Chile. As a young girl, she read the autobiography of Thérèse of Lisieux and was profoundly moved. At age eighteen, she entered the Carmelite convent in the city of Los Andes, eighty kilometers from Santiago, adopting the name Teresa in honor of Teresa of Ávila.

Teresa contracted typhus and died just three months short of her twentieth birthday. Following her death, miracles were attributed to her. She was canonized in 1993, the first Chilean saint. She is invoked for healing and preventing illness.

FAVORED PEOPLE: young people.

ATTRIBUTES: flowers; cross.

FEASTS: 12 April; 13 July.

**SPIRITUAL ALLIES**: Teresa may be invoked with the other saintly Teresas, Lisieux and Ávila, whom she loved.

SACRED SITES: • The Sanctuary of Toroca of the Ander near the torm of Lee Ander built in

- The Sanctuary of Teresa of the Andes near the town of Los Andes, built in 1987 to house her relics, is visited by 100,000 people annually.
- The Monasterio del Espiritu Santo on Santa Teresa Avenue in Los Andes, her home, now contains a museum dedicated to Teresa featuring clothing and photographs.

SEE ALSO Teresa of Ávila; Thérèse of Lisieux.

# 👡 Teresa of Ávila, Saint

Also known as Teresa of the Child Jesus.

**EPITHET:** The Seraphic Virgin.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic Saint.

In her youth, little indicated that Spanish-born Teresa Sánchez Cepeda Davila y Ahumada (28 March 1515–4 October 1582) would grow up to become a mystic visionary, prolific author, first female Doctor of the Church, and among the most influential Roman Catholic scholars. Many saints claim early spiritual awakenings and childhoods spent in prayer and austerity. Teresa enjoyed pretty clothes and romance novels. She ate and danced with pleasure. Her mother died when she was twelve. Teresa entered a Carmelite convent when she was twenty, but it was not particularly austere.

During her first year in the convent, she began suffering ill-health, including heart pains and fainting spells. Teresa thought God was punishing her for her sinful ways. (Some modern scholars think she suffered from malaria.) Her father sent her to recuperate at a sanitarium, but Teresa's condition got worse, not better, culminating in a three-day coma. A grave was dug for her; she was given up for dead, but she awoke.

Teresa was paralyzed and in terrible pain for eight months. Eventually, the paralysis subsided, but it was not until she was forty that all symptoms of her illness departed. Teresa attributed her recovery to Saint Joseph. She returned to the convent but began to experience searing mystic visions that caused her profound spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental anguish—or alternatively, plunged her into entranced ecstasy. Her confessors suspected the influence of the devil.

A seraph, a fire angel, appeared to Teresa and repeatedly plunged a flame-

tipped golden sword into her heart. Although she was aware that it was a visionary experience, the pain she experienced was genuine and physical.

Teresa saw angels frequently. During her visions, she sometimes levitated. Occasionally, she asked her sister nuns to hold her to the ground so that she wouldn't levitate in public and cause a commotion. Teresa lived in constant fear of the Inquisition. In addition to her unconventional and unorthodox experiences, she was doubly under suspicion because she came from a Converso Jewish family. Her grandfather had been condemned by the Inquisition. In 1485, long before Teresa's birth, her father and grandfather were permitted to reconcile with the Church, but only after walking barefoot through the streets of Toledo wearing yellow *sambenitos*, humiliating penitential garments.

Teresa of Ávila eventually founded her own order, the Discalced (Barefoot) Carmelites, where nuns could follow a more rigid, austere rule. For twenty years, she traveled through Spain setting up convents and friaries. Her last years were difficult. Although during her lifetime she was always controversial, Teresa was canonized within forty years of her death.

- Teresa is the most famous and influential devotee of El Niño, the Divine Child.
- She is invoked to heal and soothe headaches and migraines.
- Teresa of Ávila is invoked against heart disease and cardiac arrest. Those who have survived heart attacks may consider themselves under her matronage.
- She is invoked against the fires of Purgatory.

Teresa of Ávila plays a central role in author Abraham Verghese's novel *Cutting for Stone*. She is the inspiration for the sculptor Bernini's masterpiece, *The Ecstacy of Saint Teresa*.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: lace makers; mystics; those mocked for their spiritual experiences.

ATTRIBUTES: heart; arrow; book.

#### SACRED SITES:

- the Shrine of Teresa of Ávila in Ávila, Spain
- Her heart, preserved as a relic in the Carmelite convent in Alba de Tormes, Spain, displays marks that have been interpreted as indicating piercing by a spear.

FEAST: 15 October.

**OFFERINGS**: ex-votos in the form of flaming or pierced hearts; images of baby Jesus.

SEE ALSO Anima Sola; Isabel of Portugal; Joseph, Saint; Teresa of the Andes, Saint; Teresita.

#### ∾ Teresita

Also known as Santa Teresita; Teresa Urrea.

EPITHETS: The Saint of Cabora; La Niña de Cabora.

**CLASSIFICATION:** unofficial saint.

Teresa Urrea (15 October 1873–11 January 1906), mystic, visionary, and miracle healer, was born on a ranch in northern Mexico on the feast of Teresa of Avila, after whom she was named. The name by which she is best known, Teresita, literally means "Little Teresa." Her mother was a fourteen-year-old Indian girl. Her father, Don Tomás Urrea, was a landowner and scion of a powerful, wealthy family. Teresita was raised by her mother and aunt. She was an extraordinary child who demonstrated potent healing skills. At age fifteen, she went to live at her father's hacienda in Cabora, where she was apprenticed to a *curandera* (traditional healer).

When she was about sixteen, a ranch worker either raped her or tried to rape her. Teresita fell into a deep coma and was unconscious for twelve days. She was given up for dead. Funeral proceedings for her began but were interrupted when Teresita sat up in the middle of her own wake. She explained that she had been with Mary, who had assigned her work to do.

For the next several months, Teresita slipped uncontrollably in and out of trances. Finally emerging from this experience, Teresita had changed. Always a skillful healer, now she displayed miraculous powers. Among her techniques, she healed with dirt moistened with her own saliva. Teresita was now clairvoyant and could accurately foretell the future. She also delivered public spiritual messages announcing that priests were not required to baptize or perform marriages—that others could do so as well.

Crowds flocked to Cabora seeking cures. She saw *everyone* who came to her and healed most of them. For approximately two years, Cabora was a major pilgrimage site. On any given day, anywhere between 1000 and 5000 people were camped out there. Teresita began to be hailed as a saint. People of all classes and ethnicities came: Spanish, *mestizos*, and especially local Yaqui and Mayo Indians, who became extremely devoted to Teresita. Spiritual merchants arrived, selling prayer cards and medallions bearing Teresita's image. Newspaper reporters from Mexico and the United States arrived as well. Eventually, Cabora drew the eye of the Roman Catholic Church and the conservative Mexican federal government.

A local priest sent two nuns to test Teresita's power. While Teresita was entranced, one nun thrust a long hair pin into her leg. Teresita didn't flinch, but the pin was stuck and the nun was unable to remove it. When Teresita awoke, she easily pulled out the pin and gave it to the nun, telling her to take it back to the priest and testify to what she had seen with her own eyes. The two nuns, perceiving that she was truly clairvoyant and that they were in the presence of the sacred, dropped to their knees and begged her forgiveness.

It was a time of tremendous social upheaval in Mexico. Many found Teresita inspirational and considered her a revolutionary heroine, although it is unclear that this was ever her intent. The Church and government became very hostile toward her.

On 15 May 1892, when a group of Mayo Indians sacked the town of Navajoa, Sonora, their battle cry was "Viva la Santa de Cabora!" referring to Teresita. In response, on 19 May, the Mexican army arrived at Cabora and ordered Don Tomás and Teresita into exile. A military escort put them on a train to the border. Teresita and her father crossed into the United States on 5 July 1892.

They lived in Arizona, where Teresita continued to heal. In 1900, she was married to a man who tried to shoot her the day after the wedding. (It's theorized that he was an agent of Mexican dictator Porfirio Díaz.) She went to San Jose, California, to recuperate. There she began to treat a three-year-old boy afflicted with meningitis. Five physicians had pronounced him incurable, but his health improved under Teresita's care. Publicity from the case earned her a national faith-healing tour. She told newspaper reporters about her desire to travel to Egypt, India, and Paris to learn about the source of her powers.

Teresita died of tuberculosis at age thirty-three. Of all the renowned folk saints hailing from the United States—Mexico border region, she is the most suppressed and the least well known, although she still has a strong cult of devotion in the Yaqui and Mayo communities. Teresita is channeled by Fidencista mediums. She can heal virtually anything and may be invoked for advice and to reveal the future. *The Hummingbird's Daughter*, a 2006 novel based on Teresita's life, was written by her great-nephew, Luis Alberto Urrea.

**SACRED SITE:** Her grave was moved at least twice because of copper-mine expansion; its present whereabouts are subject to debate.

**OFFERINGS:** candles; flowers. Find her grave.

SEE ALSO Christina the Amazing; Jaramillo, Don Pedro; Maid of Ludomir; Fidencio, El Niño; Teresa of Ávila and Glossary: Curanderismo.

👡 Theodore of Sykeon, Saint

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Theodore of Sykeon (died 22 April 613), miracle worker and prophet, spent his early childhood amid his mother's family business—a brothel with a tavern attached. Theodore's father was a circus acrobat who worked with a camel act. When he was six, his mother hired a new cook. Her cooking was so fabulous and attracted so many customers that Theodore's mother, grandmother, and aunts could all afford to quit the prostitution business. The divine cook was also a devout and persuasive Christian. Theodore converted and at eighteen became a priest.

Theodore eventually became a hermit near Sykeon, located in what is now modern Turkey. He developed a reputation as a healer, exorcist, and wonder worker. His many miracles, when he was alive and after, include healing the emperor's son of elephantiasis and banishing plagues of beetles, locusts, and mice.

Theodore's self-imposed austerities were also the stuff of legend. He had himself bound with chains, placed in a cage, and suspended like this for weeks above a cave in a cliff. He founded monasteries and was elected bishop in approximately 590, but missed the solitary spiritual life. After ten years, he resigned to once again become a hermit.

<sup>•</sup> Saint Theodore of Sykeon is renowned for reconciling unhappily married

couples.

- He heals all illnesses and is famed for bestowing fertility.
- He is considered the patron saint of rain—he brings it when it's needed and banishes it when there's too much.

**SPIRITUAL ALLY:** Saint Theodore was a great devotee of Saint George, whom his family credited with sending the miraculous cook.

FEAST: 22 April.

SEE ALSO George, Saint.

## ∼ Theophano the Empress, Saint

Also known as Theophano Martiniake; Theophano Augusta; Theophania.

CLASSIFICATION: Eastern Orthodox saint.

The parents of Theophano Martiniake (died 10 November 897) were long childless. They credited the conception of their long-awaited daughter to the intercession of Mary Theotokos, an aspect of the Blessed Mother whose name literally means "Mary who brings forth God," but which is more commonly translated as "Mary, Mother of God." Theophano was named in honor of Theotokos.

A well-educated and beautiful young woman, she was wed to Leo, heir to the Byzantine throne. Although the facts of her ancestry are now uncertain, she was a member of the aristocracy, possibly related to the then-ruling Byzantine royal family or, some speculate, to the preceding dynasty.

The reigning emperor, Basil, arranged the marriage. Rumors suggested that Leo, officially described as Basil's son, was actually the son of Michael, the preceding emperor. Leo's mother had been Emperor Michael's mistress, even while wed to Basil. (Basil assassinated Michael before ascending the throne.) Relations between Basil and Leo were strained, to say the least. When Leo was young, Basil once threatened to blind him. Following the marriage—and responding to rumors that Leo intended to assassinate him and claim the throne —Basil had Leo, together with Theophano, imprisoned for three years.

Basil died in what is generally believed to be a hunting accident on 29 August 886, although Basil himself, on his deathbed, claimed it was an assassination

plot involving Leo. Leo succeeded to the Byzantine throne as Emperor Leo VI and Theophano was crowned empress.

Theophano dedicated herself to spirituality and the Church, spending her time fasting, praying, and reciting psalms. She gave alms to the poor and built churches and monasteries, including the Monastery of Saint Anastasia. She also gave birth to a daughter, Eudokia. In the meantime, Leo fell in love with Zoe Zaoutzaina, who became his mistress.

In 893, Theophano retired to a convent. She was genuinely a deeply committed Christian, but whether her retirement was voluntary or not is unclear. Zoé immediately and openly assumed the functions of empress, although Leo did not marry her until after Theophano's death. Theophano died in the convent on 10 November 897 at approximately twenty-seven years of age. Leo hailed her as a saint immediately and built a church over her grave. The Eastern Orthodox Church eventually concurred and she was glorified (canonized). She is invoked especially for healing.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: A favorite subject of icons, Theophano is usually portrayed as a richly dressed young woman. She may wear a crown.

ATTRIBUTE: Cross.

**SACRED SITE:** Her relics in the Church of Saint George in Istanbul are associated with many miraculous healings.

FEAST: 16 December.

SEE ALSO Anastasia, Saint; George, Saint and Glossary: All Saints; Relics.

#### ∾ Thérèse of Lisieux

Also known as Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face; Teresa; Theresa.

**EPITHET:** The Little Flower.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic Saint.

Thérèse (2 January 1873–30 September 1897) desperately wished to become a missionary in the Far East. Instead, she developed tuberculosis and never left her

convent. Thérèse came from a very devout, middle-class French family. Her mother died of breast cancer when Thérèse was four. As the baby of the family, she was coddled by her father and four sisters. Her constitution was always delicate and she called herself "the little flower."

At age fifteen, she followed two older sisters into the Carmelite Order but was a disastrous novice, lacking the slightest practical skills. She couldn't do the simplest household chores and fell asleep during meditation. She was called a disgrace before the entire congregation. Little sympathy was shown to her even after she developed tuberculosis.

"I will spend my Heaven doing good on earth," said Thérèse of Lisieux, who promised to send a rose to those who invoke or petition her as a sign that she has heard their plea and that their prayers will be answered.

Eventually, Thérèse found her calling. By age twenty-two, she was the convent's novice-mistress. She vowed to dedicate herself to love. Her sister suggested she write an autobiography, not realizing that Thérèse only had three more years to live. Her autobiography, *The Story of a Soul*, was a bestselling sensation that had a profound effect on many readers. It has been translated into thirty-eight languages. She is the saint of small things who recommended the path of spiritual childhood—absolute surrender and trust. Her spiritual path is called "the Little Way." Thérèse wrote that it was not necessary for everyone to accomplish heroic feats to attain holiness; it was sufficient only to love.

Thérèse died of tuberculosis at age twenty-five. Miracles were almost immediately attributed to her intercession. She was held up as a role model and spiritual example for young women. For instance, although she had tuberculosis, she slept in a freezing cold cell. She never complained and never requested a blanket or warmer coverings. She was canonized in 1925.

The Little Flower is a very powerful saint, credited with *many* miracles.

- Thérèse of Lisieux is protectress and matron saint of those with AIDS and tuberculosis, which she is asked to heal, alleviate, and prevent.
- She is invoked to heal and alleviate anything to do with addiction, including, but not limited, to drugs and alcohol.
- Thérèse is invoked in magical spells for true love and for romantic assistance.
- She can be petitioned for protection against vicious, wicked, malicious people.

• She breaks curses, hexes, and malevolent spells.

Iconic French singer Edith Piaf (1915–1963) credited Saint Thérèse of Lisieux with miraculously healing her complete blindness following a pilgrimage to her grave.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: florists; flower growers; orphans; aircraft crew and pilots; travelers.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** The Little Flower holds a bouquet of roses.

**SPIRITUAL ALLIES:** Canonization is in process for Thérèse's parents, Louis and Zèlie Martin, and her sisters.

SACRED DAY: Wednesday.

COLOR: pink.

FEAST: 1 October.

**SACRED SITES:** Numerous pilgrimage sites are associated with Thérèse, including, but not limited to, the following:

- The entire town of Lisieux in northwestern France has evolved into a pilgrimage site for lovers of Thérèse. Her relics are carried in an annual procession through the town on the last Sunday in September.
- Her relics are housed in the chapel of the Carmelite Convent in Lisieux—the same chapel where Thérèse herself prayed.
- The Basilica of Saint Thérèse in Lisieux—her parents are buried in the crypt.
- Les Buissonets—the house where Thérèse and her family lived for eleven years following the death of her mother—is now open to the public.

**OFFERINGS**: red or pink roses; pink lemonade; pink champagne; rose water. Bring her souvenirs from the Far East, the places she wished to see.

SEE ALSO Antonietta Meo; Rita, Saint; Teresa of the Andes, Saint; Therese Neumann.

## ∾ Therese Neumann

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

Therese Neumann, mystic, visionary, stigmatic, and Franciscan tertiary, was born in 1898 in the small Bavarian village of Konnersreuth. She arrived late at night, so it is unknown on which side of midnight she was born. She may have been born on 8 April, Good Friday, or on 9 April, Holy Saturday. She was baptized in the local church on 10 April, Easter Sunday.

Therese came from a large and impoverished peasant family—she was the first of ten children. She attended school from 1904 to 1911, but, as the eldest, was needed to help care for her siblings. A sturdy, robust girl, she did much physical labor at home and also worked as a servant. Always spiritually inclined, she wished to become a missionary.

On 10 May 1918, Therese was among those attempting to extinguish a fire in her uncle's barn. As she carried heavy buckets of water, she suddenly felt sharp pains and cramps. She fell and was never again the same.

Therese developed partial paralysis and continued to suffer repeated falls, resulting in disproportionately severe injuries. She lost most of her eyesight after another fall. By 1919, she was completely blind. She also suffered from pneumonia, digestive problems, and abscesses in her ears that caused hearing loss. Bedridden, she developed such severe bedsores that her bones were exposed. She prayed novenas, requesting the restoration of her health, hearing, and vision, and petitioned Thérèse of Lisieux for assistance.

- On 29 April 1923, the day Thérèse of Lisieux was beatified, Therese Neumann regained her sight.
- On 3 May 1923, an ulcer between her toes, severe enough to potentially require amputation, was spontaneously and miraculously healed when three rose leaves brought from the tomb of Thérèse of Lisieux were placed on the bandage.
- On 17 May 1925, the day Thérèse of Lisieux was canonized, she reported that she heard the new saint call to her, advising her that she was healed. Her paralysis and bedsores vanished.

However, on 7 November 1925, Therese once again took to her bed. On 13 November, she was diagnosed with appendicitis. She was deathly ill; her family feared she would die. While being prepared for surgery, Therese was wracked with convulsions. As her family watched, she then stared at the ceiling and said the word "yes." She directed her family to carry her immediately to a church, as she needed to pray. All traces of appendicitis had vanished. She was healed.

Therese developed a local reputation as a holy woman and people sought her intervention for their own health crises. Accepting this role, she began to pray for others. In 1922, she prayed that a young man's throat cancer be removed from him and transferred to her. He was miraculously healed and, although she did not develop cancer, from this point, Therese claimed that she could no longer consume food other than consecrated communion wafers.

From 1922 until her death in 1962, Therese Neumann allegedly consumed no food other than one consecrated wafer daily, which she claimed was consumed only for sacramental purposes. When attempts were made to trick her by giving her an unconsecrated wafer, she choked and was unable to swallow it. Therese also claimed not to have consumed water or any other liquid from 1926 until her death. She also reputedly slept no more than two hours a night.

In 1926, Therese began to manifest signs of the stigmata, although she initially kept this secret. However, blood eventually began to seep visibly through her clothing and secrecy could no longer be maintained. Each week, beginning Thursday at midnight and continuing until Friday at one in the afternoon, her wounds would open and bleed. Coinciding with the appearance of the stigmata, every Friday, Therese began experiencing profound visions of Christ's Passion. She claimed that, each week, she observed the entire Passion as a "helpless observer." She wept tears of blood.

Therese simultaneously entered trances in which she spoke Aramaic and comprehended Greek, Hebrew, and Latin. When not entranced, she could only speak colloquial German. Linguistic scholars declared her pronunciation and vocabulary authentic. Therese also "saw" the death, burial, and ascension of Mary and claimed that Mary's grave was in Jerusalem, not Ephesus, as is official doctrine. She was also able to deliver prophesies and advice while entranced but refused to assist anyone who implied that she was a clairvoyant or fortuneteller, insisting that her words were divinely inspired.

By 5 November 1926, Therese displayed nine bleeding wounds, which devotees claim never healed or became infected. Therese excited great local attention and became extremely controversial.

- Some were convinced that she was a holy woman and a living saint.
- Others insisted that she must be a fraudulent swindler.

In July 1927, Therese was placed under twenty-four-hour watch for two weeks by a medical physician and four Franciscan nurses who confirmed that, during that period, she consumed nothing beyond her daily wafer. German journalist and author Fritz Michael Gerlich (1883–1934), among the primary journalistic opponents to National Socialism, visited Therese, initially intending to debunk her but instead becoming convinced of her authenticity.

Gerlich became her biographer and, under her influence, converted to Catholicism in 1931. As his spiritual advisor, Therese encouraged Gerlich to continue his resistance to Hitler and the Nazis but strongly advised him to remain in Switzerland rather than returning to Germany. Gerlich did not take this advice and, following Hitler's ascension to power in 1933, was arrested and brought to Dachau, where he was killed.

Therese made no secret of her disapproval of Nazi policies and politics. Although never directly injured or attacked, she was under constant observation by the Gestapo and continuously suffered threat of arrest. The Nazis mocked and ridiculed her, and harassed her family and local priest. During World War II, Therese refused ration cards, saying she had no need of food or drink, claiming instead to live on God's light.

After World War II, Therese transformed into an international phenomenon as news of her miraculous existence spread worldwide. The Nazis had isolated Therese, but at war's end, mass pilgrimages to her home once again began. Among the hundreds of thousands of visitors and pilgrims were American soldiers who then brought word of Therese to the United States. Paramahansa Yogananda (1893–1952), founder of the Self-Realization Foundation, visited Therese in 1935 and then devoted a chapter to her in his bestselling *Autobiography of a Yogi*, published in 1946, which further spread her fame. Despite her apparent lack of nourishment and the physical suffering she experienced, Therese was never emaciated but instead appears robust in photographs. Her weight remained consistent. Yogananda described her as "healthy, well-formed, rosy-cheeked, and cheerful."

The controversy surrounding Therese refused to diminish. The Roman Catholic Church has consistently treated her with ambivalence, neither denying nor confirming her reported stigmata or inedia, the miraculous ability to survive without nourishment. During her lifetime, Therese was kept under ecclesiastical supervision and forbidden to receive visitors without the knowledge and permission of the local bishop, although whether this was intended to protect her from throngs of tourists and miracle seekers, prevent unauthorized pilgrimages, or simply control her remains subject to debate and perspective or simply control ner remains subject to debate and perspective.

Therese maintained a prolific correspondence. People wrote to her seeking her blessings, with many claiming to be cured due to her intervention. One of her brothers told Yogananda, who was very fond of her, that Therese healed by absorbing other people's ailments into her own body.

After her death from cardiac arrest on 18 September 1962, she immediately began displaying signs associated with sainthood. Her body was examined by physicians, who testified that, even four days after her death, there was no putrefaction or cadaverous smell. Rigor mortis failed to set in. In fact, Therese remained so pliant that some feared that she wasn't really dead but was only entranced or in a state of suspended animation.

Immediately hailed as a local folk saint, over 40,000 people have since signed a petition to open her cause for sainthood. Beatification proceedings were formally opened on 13 February 2005. Miracles are attributed to her, and people continue to send notes to the rectory at Konnersreuth requesting her intervention.

**SACRED SITE**: The shrine at her gravesite in the Konnersreuth cemetery is covered with votive plaques testifying to miracles received.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; charitable donations and donations on behalf of the birds and fish that Therese loved; votive tablets testifying to miracles received; pilgrimage to her grave.

SEE ALSO Catherine of Siena; Pio, Saint; Taigi, Anna Maria; Thérèse of Lisieux and Glossary: Incorrupt; Novena; Saint, Official; Stigmata; Tertiary.

## ∾ Thomas, Saint

Also known as Didymus; Thomas the Apostle; Judas Thomas.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Thomas (died c. 72) is one of Jesus' original twelve disciples. His skepticism inspired the phrase "doubting Thomas." He is now invoked against doubt, especially self-doubt.

Legend has it that after the crucifixion of Jesus, Thomas traveled to India, where he preached the gospel, performed miracles including a resurrection, worked as a carpenter, and was accidentally killed. An alternative legend

suggests that he was stabbed on purpose when he came into conflict with a Pagan priest in India. The Christians of Saint Thomas, a community of Christians along India's Malabar Coast, credit Thomas with converting their ancestors.

Saint Thomas is a saint of secrets. He is the subject of many mysteries. Thomas means "twin" in Aramaic, as does Didymus, his Greek name. So whose twin was he?

Apocryphal and unofficial traditions whisper that Thomas is Jesus' twin brother. Several Gnostic texts, part of the Nag Hammadi cache, are attributed to Thomas, including the Book of Thomas the Contender and the Gospel of Thomas.

Thomas is among those saints with profound magical reputations that seem at odds with their history and original persona. Saint Thomas Eve is considered among the most magical of nights. Thomas' original feast was 21 December, on or near the winter solstice. It was changed to 3 July. If you consider the new feast a bonus day and still celebrate the old one, then there is twice the opportunity for magic.

In Central European tradition, Thomas rides out on his eve like a Wild Hunter. He drives a fiery chariot and leads a retinue of spirits. People listen for the sound of his chariot passing at midnight. If you call out to him as he passes, he will bless you with protection, health, and longevity.

Thomas drives to cemeteries, where he calls out for everyone named Thomas to rise. Because of the popular tradition of naming children after the saint on whose feast they were born, it is the eve of most, if not all, of these Thomases' birthdays. The dead men rise from their grave to join Thomas at the central cemetery cross, which now glows strangely red. After praying together, Thomas blesses his name-children. They return to the grave, he vanishes or moves on to another cemetery, and the glowing cross fades.

Saint Thomas Eve, the night before his feast day, is considered among the most powerful times for divination. Many rituals are designed specifically for this night.

#### Saint Thomas Eve True Love Divination

- 1. Peel an onion on Saint Thomas' Eve while invoking Thomas' aid and blessings.
- 2. Wrap it in your handkerchief or in a specially designated cloth.

- 3. Sleep with it under your pillow.
- 4. Your true love or your spouse (hopefully one and the same) should appear in your dreams.
- Saint Thomas is patron of the blind and is invoked to heal any kind of visual or eye disorder.
- He is requested for protection against malevolent spells and witchcraft.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: architects; builders; construction workers; carpenters; masons; stonecutters.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Thomas initially doubted the resurrection of Christ. He is often portrayed touching Christ's wounds or sticking his finger into one of them in order to receive proof.

ATTRIBUTES: lance (he was killed by one); T-square.

SACRED ANIMAL: peacock.

**BOTANICAL**: sparrow wort (*Erica passerina*).

GEMSTONE: aquamarine.

**mount:** Thomas rides a lion accompanied by a pair of hounds.

**FEASTS**: Thomas has several. Traditionally, the magical night is 21 December, but his other feasts are an opportunity to try your luck with the saint, too.

- 1 July—his feast in India
- 3 July—the new Western Church feast
- 6 October—Eastern Church
- 21 December—Western Church
- Thomas Sunday is celebrated on the Sunday after Easter.

SACRED SITES:

- Saint Thomas Basilica in Chennai, formerly Madras, India, built over the site of his grave.
- Saint Thomas Mount in Chennai, reputedly the site of his death
- Saint Thomas Cathedral, the first Anglican church in Mumbai
- The finger Thomas poked into the wounds of Jesus is reputedly housed in

Rome's Basilica di Santa Croce in Gerusalemme.

• Saint Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, named in his honor and a lovely place for a pilgrimage

SEE ALSO Andrew, Saint; Apostles; James the Just.

## ∞ Three Saints in the West

Also known as Three Saints of the Western World; Three Saints of the Western Pure Land; Amida Triad; Amida Sanzon (Japanese).

**CLASSIFICATION:** Bodhisattvas.

The "west" from which these three saints hail is not the Western Hemisphere or the directional opposite of the Orient. In East Asian cosmology, Paradise is located in the west, thus the Western World is another name for Heaven. This concept of "west" as the heavenly direction predates Buddhism. Ancient Taoist paradise realms are also located in the west. Thus Hsi Wang Mu, the primordial Chinese goddess who guards the peaches of immortality, is known as the Western Mother or the Queen Mother of the West.

In China, these ancient beliefs intersected with the concept of Buddhist Hell realms and were then transmitted to Japan with Buddhism. Although reincarnation is among the tenets of Buddhism—the soul reincarnates continually until Nirvana or true enlightenment is achieved—between incarnations, the soul may be subject to purifying stints in a Hell realm. Although temporary, some of these stints may be quite lengthy and the Buddhist Hells are no more pleasant than Christian Hell. They are fiery places of pain, populated by punishing demons.

In response, the controversial messianic school of Pure Land Buddhism arose.

- Pure Land Buddhism suggests that faith is sufficient to attain Paradise.
- Faith, specifically in Amida Buddha, provides the shortcut that bypasses Hell.

Pure Land is another name for Heaven, also known as the Western World, or the Realm of the West. The Sanskrit name of its presiding Buddha is Amitabha, but he is known in East Asia as Amida. (Although there is only one historical Buddha—Siddhartha Gautama, who founded Buddhism—many other Buddhas also exist. Hypothetically at least, everyone can someday attain inirvana and achieve Buddha status.)

Amida Buddha vowed to rescue anyone and everyone who called out to him, even the lowest and most sordidly sinful. According to the tenets of the Pure Land school of Buddhism, anyone who sincerely calls or chants the name of Amida Buddha on his or her deathbed is guaranteed entry to the Pure Land. Amida Buddha and his two bodhisattva assistants will appear, either individually or together, to escort the dead soul personally to the Western World and defeat other spirits who may wish to transport the soul to Hell.

Amida's assistants are Dai Shi Zhi and Kwan Yin. Together, they are the Three Saints in the West who manifest, either as apparitions or in visions, to welcome and transport the dying. Devotees are cautioned that at least in the context of safe passage to the Pure Land, visions of any other Buddhas or bodhisattvas are not to be trusted; they may be illusions or tricks played by masquerading evil spirits who seek to prevent the dying from entering the Pure Land. Only the Three Saints of the West, also known as the Amida Triad, can guarantee admission to the Pure Land.

Amida, Kwan Yin, and Dai Shi Zhi also possess individual followings. Kwan Yin, in particular, is among the most beloved of all holy beings. In addition to rescuing souls from Hell, they may be invoked for help with any problem, issue, or medical condition.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Amida Buddha is portrayed flanked by Kwan Yin and Dai Shi Zhi. They may merely stand together or they may be portrayed descending from the clouds to welcome the faithful to the Pure Land

#### SACRED SITES:

- Shanghai's Hall of Three Saints
- The name of the Hall of Guidance in the White Horse Temple complex near Louyang, China, emphasizes that the three saints enshrined there will "guide" believers to the Western Paradise.
- Their gilt bronze image housed in the Zenkoji Temple in Nagano Prefecture the temple's primary devotional object—arrived in approximately 522 and may be the first Buddhist image ever brought to Japan. Never displayed in public, visitors instead descend a staircase in darkness and make their way down a dark hall to the statue. Tradition suggests that those whose fingers brush the lock beneath the image are guaranteed admission to the Western Paradise.

## ∾ Toribio Romo, Saint

**EPITHET:** Patron of Immigrants.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Toribio Romo González, born 16 April 1900 in the town of Santa Ana de Guadalupe in the state of Jalisco, Mexico, was ordained as a priest in 1922. He was killed by Mexican soldiers during the Cristero War, the rebellion against the anticlerical provisions of the Mexican constitution of 1917. On 25 February 1928, soldiers broke into his home and shot him. Toribio Romo died in his sister's arms. He was twenty-seven years old. In May 2000, Pope John Paul II canonized Toribio Romo, along with twenty-four others associated with the Cristero War.

Toribio Romo is a saint with a mission. He is the patron of border crossers. Witnesses describe being personally guided across the border between Mexico and the United States by Saint Toribio. The first documented account derives from a man named José who arrived at the border without documents. As he despaired of crossing into the United States, a man approached him and offered him safe passage, a meal, and employment. José asked how much this would cost him and the stranger told him merely to visit him in Santa Ana de Guadalupe someday.

José made it into the United States. The stranger's promises materialized. He eventually returned to Mexico, hoping to thank his benefactor. When he arrived in the village, local people directed him to Toribio Romo's small grave shrine. Since then, there have been frequent sightings of Saint Toribio. He is not always immediately recognizable, but he gives his "address" in Mexico—the location of his shrine—to those he assists.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: border crossers in general; Mexican migrant workers in particular.

MANIFESTATION: Toribio Romo is described as an angel dressed in dark clothing.

FEAST: 25 May.

SACRED SITES: People visit his shrine in Santa Ana de Guadalupe in Jalisco, Mexico, to repay favors given, but also to request them. His coffin is on display by the altar. The bloodstained clothing that he wore when he died is also on display. There is also a shrine dedicated to Toribio Romo in Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church of Tulsa, Oklahoma.

**OFFERINGS**: assistance to immigrants; candles; pilgrimage.

SEE ALSO Fidencio, El Niño; Juan Soldado.

## 👡 Triduana, Saint

Also known as Teadwell; Trøllhaena; Trothan; Trothaena.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

There are various legends of Saint Triduana. She may have been a pretty young Greek girl in the fourth or fifth century who was among those accompanying the relics of Saint Andrew to Scotland. She may have been born in Scotland in the eighth century. In all versions, however, Triduana has two consistent traits:

- Intent on devoting her life to Christ, she made a vow of chastity.
- She had exceptionally beautiful blue eyes.

Nectan, King of the Picts, fell in love with Triduana and sought to marry her. The Picts are among the indigenous people of Scotland. Saint Triduana is sometimes described as Pictish herself. Hoping perhaps to flatter Triduana and underestimating her opposition to marriage, King Nectan complimented the beauty of her eyes. Triduana ripped them out with a thorn and sent them to the king, advising him that he could have her eyes, but he couldn't have her.

Triduana settled in Restalrig, now a suburb of Edinburgh, where she developed a reputation as a healer, especially of visual ailments. People traveled great distances to consult with her. Saint Triduana died and was buried in Restalrig. Her well was recognized as a place of healing until at least the late 16th century, when pilgrimages were discouraged by the Protestant Reformation. Saint Triduana was not only a local saint—travelers came there from elsewhere in Europe too, especially from Scandinavia. FAVORED PEOPLE: ophthalmologists.

**SACRED SITES:** The shrine of Triduana in Restalrig Collegiate Church and Triduana's Wellhouse in Restalrig, which has a long reputation for healing visual ailments, including blindness. She may also have had other chapels and well shrines throughout Scotland.

FEAST: 8 October.

SEE ALSO Andrew, Saint; Lucy, Saint; Uncumber, Saint; Well Saints.

## ∼ Trung Sisters

Also known as The Two Ladies Trung; Hai Ba Trung; The Rain Maidens; Pure Spirit Ladies.

CLASSIFICATION: folk saints.

Trung Trac and Trung Nhi were the daughters of the Lord of Me-Linh, a prominent and powerful first-century Vietnamese military chief. They were members of the nobility, as was Trung Trac's husband. Trung is their surname or family name. In Vietnamese, as in Chinese, Hungarian, and many other languages, the family name is given first. The sisters' dates of birth are unknown, but they are believed to have been born in approximately 10 ce and to have been close in age. Trung Trac is the elder and widely considered the dominant sister. The Trung sisters are typically venerated together, but both have historically also had independent followings. In other words, the sisters may be invoked together or separately. However, they were constant companions in life and apparently remain so in death.

The sisters grew up under Chinese rule. Following Han Chinese annexation of Vietnam in 111 bce, Chinese overlords were sent to fulfill all prominent government positions, although local feudal chiefs remained Vietnamese. Taxes were imposed, a system unfamiliar to the Vietnamese, who had previously relied on a tradition of lavish gift-giving to keep coffers filled. Needless to say, people were unhappy. A rebellious mood had long been simmering and active resistance against the Chinese broke out in 39 ce.

Perhaps in an attempt to intimidate leaders of the resistance and nip the revolt in the bud, in 20 co. a Chinese general raped Trung Trac and killed her bushand In the bud, in 55 ce, a Chniese general raped Trung Trac and Knied her husband. The plan backfired. The enraged Trung sisters organized a revolt, forming an army of approximately 80,000 men and women. Thirty-six generals were female, including the Trung sisters' mother. The rebellion was successful and the sisters were proclaimed co-queens of a kingdom extending from Hué to southern China. Their royal court was established in their ancestral home, Me-Linh, now a suburb of Hanoi.

The kingdom of the Trung sisters—an independent Vietnam— lasted three years. In 42 ce, Chinese forces reentered Vietnam. Fighting was fierce, but the Vietnamese, outnumbered by the more experienced and organized Chinese army, were defeated. Rather than be captured, the Trung sisters jumped into the Hat-Giang River and were drowned. Other versions of their deaths are also recorded.

- Abandoned by their followers, they died in battle.
- After they were captured and beheaded, their heads were sent to China as trophies.
- They never actually died but ascended into the clouds.

Like Joan of Arc, the Trung sisters are venerated as saints and as national heroines. Numerous miracles were quickly attributed to them. The sisters evolved into folk saints and temples were dedicated to them. Especially known for their assistance in times of drought or flooding, they became known as the Rain Maidens. According to Ngo Si Lien, a 15th-century Vietnamese historian, prayers dedicated to the sisters never go unanswered. Their cult spread and, by the 15th century, they were even venerated as miracle workers in China.

Because the sisters are also considered symbolic of Vietnamese independence and resistance to invasion, their cult was never entirely suppressed, even under Communist rule. Trung Sisters Day is simultaneously celebrated as Vietnam's National Women's Day.

Although particularly associated with miracles of precipitation, they may be invoked for any sort of assistance or miracle.

**MANIFESTATIONS**: The Trung sisters manifest in dreams and visions. After they appeared in a 12th-century Vietnamese king's dreams, he described them as pretty women wearing green robes over red garments, with red crowns and sashes and riding iron horses.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: The Trung sisters are typically portrayed riding elephants into battle or over clouds, indicating their power over precipitation.

ATTRIBUTE: swords (each sister wields one).

**FESTIVAL:** A festival honoring the sisters is traditionally held at the Hai Ba Trung Temple in Hanoi on the fifth and sixth days of the second lunar month.

**FEAST:** the fifteenth day of the first Vietnamese lunar month.

SACRED SITES: Their most famous shrine is the Hai Ba Trung Temple in Hanoi, near Hoan Kiem Lake; however, statues, temples, and shrines are dedicated to them throughout Vietnam. There were once Taoist shrines dedicated to them in China as well, including one in Canton.

**OFFERINGS**: incense; candles; pilgrimage.

SEE ALSO Boudica; Joan of Arc; Le Chan.

# U

### ∾ Uncumber, Saint

Also known as Wilgefortis; Liberata; Livrade; Kummernis; Ontkommena.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

The wife of a Pagan king of Portugal bore septuplets. The seven girls secretly converted to Christianity. One sister was betrothed to the king of Sicily but, unbeknownst to her father, she had already taken a private vow of chastity. Unlike Saint Lucy or Saint Triduana—who found themselves in similar situations—this young lady declined to take matters into her own hands. Instead, she prayed to God to be saved. She begged to be made so repulsive that no one would ever wish to marry her.

God heard her prayers and blessed her with excessive facial hair. Her fiancé took one look at her full beard and mustache and withdrew his proposal of marriage. The princess' father was so enraged that he had her crucified. Her last words before dying on the cross were a blessing: she promised that all who remembered her would be freed from their troubles and encumbrances. They would be *unencumbered*. That princess is now known as Saint Uncumber. The Vatican, disavowing this legend, officially suppressed the cult of Saint Uncumber in 1969.

Veneration of Saint Uncumber first emerged in 14th-century Flanders. Scholars suggest that Northern Europeans were confused by an unusual Italian crucifix that depicted a gowned, crowned, bearded Christ. The figure on the cross appeared feminine to them and, despite the beard, was assumed to be a young royal woman. Whether or not devotion to Saint Uncumber was initially based on a case of mistaken identity, numerous miracles were soon attributed to her. Her veneration spread and, during the medieval era, she was a popular saint throughout Europe. This saint's actual name is unknown. In addition to Uncumber, she is known as Wilgefortis and Liberata.

- Wilgefortis derives from *virgo fortis*, meaning "strong virgin" or "determined virgin."
- Uncumber and its variants derive from her deathbed vow and because, allegedly, in exchange for minor offerings, she was guaranteed to uncumber a woman of her husband.
- Churchmen wishing to Latinize the name "Uncumber" called her Liberata, using "liberate" as a synonym for "unencumber" (in the medieval era, the word was *uncumber*).

Saint Uncumber-Liberata was conflated with the Spanish Saint Liberata and her legend is heavily influenced by that of the earlier Spanish saint. It can be very difficult to distinguish between them.

- Uncumber is invoked to protect women against spousal abuse.
- Officially, she is invoked by those trapped in unhappy unions.
- Unofficially, she is invoked by women desperate to unencumber themselves of difficult husbands, one way or another.

Sir Thomas More wrote that "for a peck of oats," Saint Uncumber "would provide a horse for an evil husband to ride to the devil upon."

One man's fascination with Saint Uncumber is a pivotal part of the plot of Robertson Davies' 1970 novel Fifth Business.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: bearded ladies; the unhappily married; those trapped in undesired relationships.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: a crucified woman wearing a crown—sometimes she is bearded, sometimes not.

SACRED SITES: Offerings were traditionally made to Uncumber at her shrine in Saint Paul's Cathedral in London. She once had shrines throughout Europe, some of which still remain.

FEAST: 20 July.

**OFFERING:** candles; oats.

SEE ALSO Liberata, Saint.

## ∾ Urban of Langres, Saint

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Urban (327–c. 390) served as the sixth bishop of Langres in the Champagne region of France from 374 until his death. During a time of persecution against Christians, Urban hid in a vineyard. By the time it was safe to emerge, he had converted the laborers who hid him to Christianity. Ever since, he has been the patron of the wine industry, especially French wines.

Urban is the patron of anyone who works with wine in any capacity, from those who tend the grapes to those who sell the bottles. He is also invoked to protect against any harm that may be caused by wine—alcoholism or drunk driving, for instance—as well as any harm that may affect wine, vineyards, and the harvest, like storms, frost, and blight.

- Allegedly, the weather on Saint Urban's Day reveals the upcoming autumn's weather.
- If the sun shines on Saint Urban's Day, a successful grape harvest is expected.

Saint Urban is also invoked for hair growth. Place a lock of your hair before an image of Saint Urban and request that he stimulate its growth.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: those employed in any aspect of the wine industry, from grape pickers to vineyard owners, to servers in wine bars; also gardeners in general.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Urban is portrayed as a bishop holding a bunch of grapes or with a grape vine at his side.

**ATTRIBUTES**: grapes; grape vine; book with grapes or a wine vessel on its cover.

FEASTS: 23 January; 2 April.

**OFFERINGS**: What else? Wine. Offer him a glass or buy a round in his honor. Alternatively, help out a failing vineyard.

# V

#### 👡 Valentine, Saint

Also known as Valentinus; Valentino.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated by most branches of Christianity.

Valentine's Day, or 14 February, has become such a popular secular holiday that many forget that its complete name is *Saint* Valentine's Day and that it is a day dedicated to a Christian saint. It's not a difficult omission to make, since nothing is known of Saint Valentine beyond his name and his burial on Rome's Via Flaminia on 14 February, although there are many legends.

The key to Saint Valentine and why he is associated with lovers may derive from the date of his feast, which was once part of the weeklong Lupercalia festival, perhaps Rome's most ancient feast. The Lupercalia commemorates the saving of Rome's founders, Romulus and Remus, by the she-wolf.

February, once the last month of the Roman year, was dedicated to purification rites before the start of the new year. The Lupercalia was central to these rites. The Lupercalia didn't so much celebrate "romance" as we know it today, but fertility. Certain rituals performed during the Lupercalia were believed to assure a previously barren woman's future fertility. It was an enormously beloved and somewhat raucous holiday.

Valentine's name does not occur on the earliest lists of Christian martyrs. His feast of 14 February was first established in 496 by Pope Gelasius I (died 21 November 496), who had become pope four years earlier. Gelasius described Valentine as among those who should be reverenced by man, even though their lives and actions were known only to God. Following a long political struggle, Gelasius had, that same year, finally suppressed the Pagan festival of the Lupercalia. Saint Valentine was removed from the official calendar roll of Roman Catholic saints in 1969.

Various legends exist explaining why Saint Valentine is associated with love and romance. The most popular suggest that he was a bishop who enabled Christians, then persecuted, to marry or otherwise helped them. Caught, he was beheaded.

Saint Valentine is invoked for healing as well as love. He protects against fainting and is requested to heal epilepsy and other seizure disorders. In northern Italy, epilepsy was once traditionally known as Saint Valentine's Malady.

FAVORED PEOPLE: beekeepers; engaged couples.

ATTRIBUTES: a lover's knot; love birds; roses.

**BOTANICAL:** yellow crocus.

**SACRED SITES:** Relics identified as those of Saint Valentine are widely distributed, including in the following places:

- Rome's Basilica of Santa Maria in Cosmedin, which houses his flowercrowned skull.
- Roquemaure, near Avignon, France, known as the Capital of Lovers. In 1868, a local dignitary purchased the relics of Saint Valentine from Rome and had them transported to Roquemaure to protect the local vineyards, which were suffering from a phylloxera infestation. The vineyards were restored to health within four years. Saint Valentine's relics are housed in Roquemaure's 14th-century Collegiate Church of Saint Jean-Baptiste and Saint Jean l'Evangéliste. The town has a winery named Saint Valentine. Over 20,000 people attend Roquemaure's annual Fête du Baiser, or Kissing Festival, held on the Saturday following Saint Valentine's Day.
- The Whitefriar Street Carmelite Church in Dublin where, on Saint Valentine's Day, his casket is carried to the High Altar for a special Mass dedicated to young people and lovers.
- The Catholic Church of St. Francis and St. Clara's Italian Community in Athens, Greece, where annually on 14 February the priest blesses the red roses located beneath the altar that are then distributed to the congregation.

FEASTS: 14 February (Western Church); 30 July (Eastern Church).

**OFFERINGS**: candles; wine; pilgrimage to one of the sites associated with him.

SEE Glossary: Relics.

#### ∾ Veronica, Saint

Also known as Saint Berenice; Veronika.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

A compassionate woman standing among the crowds lining the Via Dolorosa watching Jesus carry his cross to Golgotha took pity on him. She used her veil to wipe the sweat, blood, and mud from his face. After he passed, she glanced at her veil and discovered Jesus' face magically and irrevocably imprinted upon it.

That image is known as the Vera Icon, the *true* icon, as it wasn't painted but is considered an actual imprint. The woman in the crowd is now known and venerated as Saint Veronica. *Veronica* may be a variant of *Berenice*, originally a Macedonian name that became extremely popular in lands conquered by Alexander the Great.

Many queens and princesses of Egypt and Judea were named Berenice, including the Jewish queen who became the lover of Roman emperor Titus not long after the time of Christ. On the other hand, Veronica may not originally have been a name but may derive from the Latin *vera* (true) and the Greek *icon* (image). Some perceive the term "true icon" to be an oblique rebuke toward the Shroud of Turin.

The veil reputedly has miraculous properties. Contact with the true veil allegedly heals, restores eyesight to the blind, quenches thirst, and possibly resurrects the dead. It apparently somehow ended up in Rome, possibly brought by Crusaders from Jerusalem.

The legend of Veronica's veil does not appear in the Gospels and is not documented before the Middle Ages. By the 11th century, the veil was on display, but since the 1527 sack of Rome, its whereabouts have been mysterious. Some suggest that the veil was stolen or destroyed. Others claim that it was hidden in Saint Peter's Basilica, although at least one Italian monastery claims to have it. A veil is occasionally displayed over the image of Saint Veronica in Saint Peter's Basilica and the implication is that this is the true one.

Officially speaking, Saint Veronica fades from view after the miracle of her veil. Legend, however, identifies her as the wife of Saint Amadour. Alternatively, some believe that Saint Veronica and Saint Martha of Bethany are

one and the same, or that the mysterious woman with the veil is really Mary Magdalen.

FAVORED PEOPLE: photographers; laundry workers.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** A woman holds a cloth that bears an image of Christ's face.

**SACRED DAYS:** In addition to her feasts, Veronica is honored on Shrove Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday.

#### SACRED SITES:

- The Chapel of the Holy Face on the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem, allegedly the site of the miracle and possibly also Veronica's home.
- The Shrine of Saint Veronica in Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome.

FEASTS: 4 February; 12 July.

SEE ALSO Amadour, Saint; Jacobus Burgundus Molensis the Martyr; Martha, Saint; Mary Magdalen.

## ∾ Victor of Marseilles, Saint

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Victor, a second-century Roman officer stationed in Marseilles, refused to worship the emperor. He was arrested, bound, and dragged through the streets. Offered another opportunity to sacrifice, he again refused. This time, he was scourged, tortured, and tossed into prison. At midnight, Victor was visited by three angels whose radiant light filled the jail. Three guards who witnessed the scene instantly converted to Christianity and ended up martyred alongside Victor.

News of the guards' conversion further enraged authorities, who had all four men dragged to the marketplace for public execution. The three guards were beheaded, but Victor, blamed as the ringleader, was marked for a slow, painful death. One of his feet was severed. Victor was supposed to be crushed to death beneath a millstone, but the millstone broke as soon as it made contact with his body, and so Victor was beheaded, too. The bodies of the four men were tossed into the sea but were rescued by Christians, who buried them in an abandoned quarry that had been transformed into a secret graveyard.

Saint Victor is invoked against lightning. He is petitioned to heal and empower ailing or weakened children. His blessings are sought for terminally ill children to keep them alive.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: millers; torture victims; cemetery workers; ailing children; soldiers; cabinetmakers.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: a man crushed by a millstone; a headless man being lifted from the sea by angels.

**RITUAL**: His crypt in France is the scene for a famous procession on Candlemas (2 February).

COLOR: green.

### SACRED SITES:

- The Abbey of Saint Victor was founded in the fourth century by Saint John Cassian over the quarry containing Victor's secret grave. Once a major Provençal pilgrimage center, the abbey reputedly contains Victor's body, as well as fragments of Saint Andrew's cross and clothing said to belong to the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalen.
- Haitian Vodou considers Saint Victor to be among the spirits who preside over graveyards. Invocations and petitions are offered to him at cemetery gates.

FEASTS: 21 July; 1 July.

**OFFERINGS**: wine; green candles; French pastry, especially *navettes*, a traditional Marseillaise pastry in the shape of a boat that is associated with his Candlemas festivities.

SEE ALSO Andrew, Saint; Mary; Mary Magdalen; Marys of the Sea.

## ∾ Vincent, Saint

Also known as Vincent of Saragossa; Vincent the Deacon; Vincente; Vincenzo.

**CLASSIFICATION**: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Saint Vincent of Saragossa (died c. 309) is the first Christian martyr from Spain. Tortured on a gridiron before being killed, his corpse was thrown into a swamp. A raven guarded him against all approaching hungry animals until Christians rescued and buried him. Vincent was immediately recognized as a saint and holy man. After his execution by Roman soldiers, bystanders rushed up to dip cloth and clothes into his blood in an attempt to create potent relics.

Saint Vincent is the patron saint of Lisbon and Portugal. He possesses many shrines throughout Iberia, many situated on the pilgrimage route to Compostela. Vincent protects the wine harvest and anyone involved in wine production. They may request his assistance with anything.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: vintners; grape growers; grape pickers; vinegar makers; oenophiles.

ATTRIBUTE: ewer.

SACRED ANIMAL: raven.

SACRED PLANT: witlow grass (Draba verna).

FEASTS: 22 January (Western Church); 11 November (Eastern Church).

SACRED SITES:

- Cape St. Vincent in Portugal is where Saint Vincent's corpse was reputedly brought ashore and buried. A shrine built over his grave was guarded by ravens.
- The Monastery of São Vicente de Fora (Saint Vincent Outside the Walls) in Lisbon now houses his relics. When they were moved from the Algarve to Lisbon in the 12th century, ravens accompanied the saint.
- The Caribbean island of St. Vincent was "discovered" by Europeans on the saint's feast and is thus dedicated to him.

**OFFERINGS**: wine, candles; fine vinegar (not the cheap stuff); pilgrimage; feed ravens and crows; donations or efforts on behalf of bird rehabilitation; images of ravens.

SEE ALSO Casilda, Saint; James the Conqueror, Saint; Meinrad, Saint; Urban, Saint and Glossary: Relics.

### 👡 Viridiana, Saint

Also known as Veridiana; Verdana.

**EPITHET:** The Foster Mother of Vipers.

CLASSIFICATION: Roman Catholic saint.

Saint Viridiana (1182–10 February 1242) was a devout child from a noble family in Castelfiorentino, near Florence, Italy. Even as a little girl, she mortified her flesh, wearing a hair shirt and a tight iron band. Viridiana fasted to the point of virtual starvation and slept on the cold, bare floor. She made pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela and to Rome. Returning at age twenty, she determined to become an anchorite, an ascetic who withdraws from the world.

At her own request, Viridiana was walled inside a tiny cell built for her next to a church. Having entered, she never left that cell. A tiny window was left open so that she could receive food, confession, and sometimes conversation. For the next thirty-four years until her death, no human being saw Viridiana; the operative words being "human being."

Viridiana was not alone. Two huge snakes moved into her sanctuary and insisted on sharing her meals, spartan as they were. (Viridiana ate only one miniscule meal daily, abstaining completely from meat, eggs, cheese, and wine.) If the snakes deemed their portions inadequate, insufficient, or just maybe not to their liking, they allegedly reared up and beat Viridiana with their tails. Despite this rough treatment, she became very fond of her sole companions and wept when one died. She told no one about them except her confessor, whom she swore to secrecy.

Viridiana developed a reputation as a holy woman who could perform miracles of healing. People traveled to visit her, including Francis of Assisi, who visited in 1222 and made her a member of his newly founded order. Viridiana reputedly died kneeling in prayer. At the moment of her death, the bells of Castelfiorentino began ringing spontaneously. Removed from her cell, Viridiana's body was carried in procession to the church where she lay in state for seventeen days. Those who came to pay their respects and touched her body experienced miracles of healing: eyesight was restored; wounds, leprosy, and paralysis were healed. An unofficial saint for several hundred years, she was canonized in 1533. Saint Viridiana is petitioned for healing and safety from fire, snakes, and evil spirits. **ICONOGRAPHY**: Viridiana is portrayed as a nun preaching to snakes.

SACRED SITE: Her relics are housed in Castelfiorentino, where her cell may be visited. Her possessions are on display there: a cross, a statue of Santiago from Compostela, a clove of garlic from her last meal, a wicker basket containing her knitting wool. The skull of one of her snakes is near Viridiana's grave. The other escaped when she died and was never seen again.

FEASTS: 1 February; 16 February.

SEE ALSO Francis of Assis; James the Greater, Saint; Santiago and Glossary: Relics; Saint, Official; Saint, Unofficial.

## ∾ Vitus, Saint

Also known as Vito; Vite; Veit.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Saint Vitus (died 15 June 303) was a young Sicilian boy from a noble family who converted to Christianity during his childhood. The events of his martyrdom are said to have occurred when he was either seven years old or twelve.

Young Vitus successfully exorcised Emperor Diocletian's son, expelling spirits that caused the victim to twitch compulsively. Rather than being thanked or rewarded, Vitus was accused of sorcery and arrested. During his imprisonment, a band of dancing angels entertained the young boy. Vitus was placed in a cauldron filled with boiling oil; he was thrown to hungry lions; he was stretched on the rack and scourged. No matter what was done to him, Vitus always emerged unharmed. Finally, an angel rescued him, bringing the boy home to Sicily, where he died peacefully.

- Saint Vitus is a master exorcist, capable of expelling all kinds of unwanted spirits, from ghosts to demons.
- He is invoked against oversleeping, bed-wetting, or any kind of sleep disorder.
- He protects against rabies and dog bites.
- He's invoked against snake bite, too.
- Vitus is invoked against any kind of animal attack.
- He is the natron saint of noultry

- me panon same or poundy.

Vitus is a master healer, counted among the Fourteen Holy Helpers. He is invoked against any kind of ailment that causes the body to shake, as well as epilepsy and other seizure disorders.

Once among the most beloved saints, Vitus was also feared because of his close associations with the dance manias that swept through Europe beginning in the 11th century. Masses of people danced compulsively, unable to stop, whether because they literally could not stop or because they were convinced that if they stopped dancing, they would die. The most famous of these dance manias were the Danse Macabre, the Tarantella, and the Saint Vitus Dance. These were ecstatic dances, sometimes spontaneous, sometimes well organized. (Some may have been ancient shamanic rites in disguise.) People literally danced until they dropped, dancing compulsively for days or even weeks, in many cases finally ending their dance in chapels dedicated to Vitus or in front of his statue.

The Saint Vitus Dance craze was particularly prevalent in German lands where the saint is known as Saint Veit. In some regions, Saint Veit's iconography, interests, and blessings are different from those of Vitus elsewhere. It is believed that, in these cases, the Pagan deities Wotan or Svantovit may lurk beneath the mask of the saint. This Saint Veit is patron saint of mushrooms. He rides through fields on his blind, white stallion leading a retinue of goblins. Mushrooms, especially fly agaric (Amanita muscaria), grow where his horse's froth hits the ground. If you love mushrooms, or grow or pick them, Veit may be your saint.

All sorts of explanations are now given for these dance manias, ranging from mass hysteria to ergot poisoning, but at the time, they were perceived as a curse. Saint Vitus reputedly causes and cures compulsive dancing. People used the saint's name as a threat. To say: "Let Vitus take you!" meant that you hoped someone would dance to death. Saint Willibrord allegedly heals and counteracts the curse of Saint Vitus Dance.

Saint Vitus is also the folk name given Sydenham's chorea, an illness characterized by rapid jerking movements. And yes, Vitus can allegedly cure it. A folk name for epilepsy is Saint Vitus Dance. Saint Vitus has inspired songs by jazz greats Louis Jordan and Horace Silver. It is traditionally believed that dancing in front of Saint Vitus' statue on his feast day ensures a year of good health.

**FAVORED PEOPLE:** Saint Vitus is the patron saint of the theater and anyone employed in any theatrical capacity. He is the patron of actors, dancers, comedians, and most especially traveling entertainers of all kinds. Vitus also patronizes brewers, tinkers, coppersmiths, travelers, vintners, and pharmacists.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** He is portrayed as a boy sitting or praying inside a huge cauldron or surrounded by dogs or lions.

ATTRIBUTES: palm branch of martyrdom; cauldron; rooster.

**RITUAL**: It is traditional to dance all night on the eve of his feast.

**SACRED ANIMALS**: rooster (a rooster was thrown into the boiling oil with him), typically a white one; dog; lion.

SACRED SITES: The bones from his hand are in the Cathedral of Saint Vitus in Prague. Known as the Crown of the Kingdom, this is the largest church in the Czech Republic, but literally thousands of churches are also dedicated to Saint Vitus.

FEASTS: 15 June; 28 June (Serbian Orthodox Church).

**OFFERINGS**: candles; incense; donations and efforts on behalf of animal shelters, especially dog-rescue societies. Dance for him.

SEE ALSO Ben Temalion; Fourteen Holy Helpers; Paul Taranta, Saint; Willibrord, Saint.

# W

#### 🔊 Walpurga, Saint

Also known as Walburga; Walpurgis; Valborg.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Saint Walpurga (c. 710–25 February 799), an English abbess, was probably born in Wessex to a devoutly Christian family. Several of her relatives are also saints. She traveled to what is now modern Germany, then still largely Pagan, where, as a missionary abbess, she founded religious houses, eventually presiding over a community of nuns in the German town of Heidenham. Comparatively little is known of her life, but she was renowned for her extreme fasting.

After Walpurga's death from natural causes, her body was laid to rest in a hollow stone niche, which soon began exuding aromatic, miracle-producing oil. A church was built over her grave. Walpurga was canonized in 870 and her relics were distributed throughout Europe. Walpurgis Oil, as it is known, has reputedly been producing healing miracles for over 1000 years. The oil continues to exude, especially between October and February.

Saint Walpurga assumed many of the functions of the Teutonic grain goddess whose name is also Walpurga and who was once widely worshipped in the same region. The goddess is the inspiration for Walpurgis Night, the name regionally given to May Eve, the last night in April, a night of sacred revelry for witches and those who love them. Walpurgis Day, 1 May, is also, perhaps coincidentally, a feast day dedicated to Saint Walpurga. It is theorized that the original Walpurga may have been an aspect of the Teutonic earth goddess Herta or her daughter Freya. The name Walpurga may be related to *vala*, the ancient Norse equivalent of a sybil or prophetess.

• Saint Walpurga defends against magic and witchcraft.

- She offers protection from plague, famine, crop failures, and the bites of rabid dogs.
- She is credited with healing eating disorders, including severe anorexia.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Walpurgis is portrayed as a nun with a crozier in one hand and a flask or ewer in the other.

ATTRIBUTES: sheaf of grain; three ears of grain; phial of oil.

PLACE: Walpurga is matron saint of Antwerp.

**FEASTS:** 25 February commemorates her death; 1 May officially commemorates the date of her canonization.

**SACRED SITE:** her shrine in Eichstatt, Germany.

SEE ALSO Amadour, Saint; Philomena, Saint.

## ∾ Wazana, Rabbi Abraham

Also known as Avraham Wazana.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Jewish saint.

Rabbi Abraham Wazana, renowned sage, scholar, Kabbalist, and miracle worker, is the progenitor of the Moroccan-Jewish Wazana clan, famed for its many powerful saints. He is called Abraham El-Kebir (Abraham the Great) to distinguish him from his grandson, another Rabbi Abraham Wazana, who is the father of yet another miracle producer, Jacob Wazana.

Once while traveling toward the city of Ouarzazate on a Friday as twilight and the Jewish Sabbath approached, Abraham Wazana decided to stop overnight beside a spring. He sent his escort onward to advise of his arrival the next day. The Jews of Ouarzazate were dismayed to hear that he was spending the night at this spring, known locally as the nocturnal haunt of bandits, beasts, and djinn. They underestimated Wazana.

In fact, bandits did approach, seeking to rob the lone traveler. As they drew near, they found themselves paralyzed. They discovered that they could only

move *away* from Wazana, not toward him. The thieves fled and Wazana was left alone to prepare his meal and pray. At nightfall, beasts approached—hyenas, lions, tigers, and snakes. They had been sent by the Prophet Elijah to guard Wazana while he slept. Elijah himself, armed with a rifle, stood vigil all night on a hilltop overlooking the spring.

The next day, the animals kept Wazana company while he prayed and studied. Finally, when evening fell, a lion requested that he depart so that they could eat. Wazana explained that he had to wait for his escort from Ouarzazate. The lion told him not to bother waiting; he'd bring him to Ouarzazate himself.

Rabbi Abraham Wazana arrived in Ouarzazate riding a lion and accompanied by an entourage of other lions, only to discover people in mourning for him. They had presumed he had died, one way or another, at the spring. Wazana directed that the lions be fed Sabbath leftovers. After they ate, he uttered the Ineffable Name of God and the lions vanished into thin air. Needless to say, Wazana's reputation as a miracle worker was assured.

On the night Wazana died, he invited 200 scholars to feast with him, requesting that they read from the Book of Psalms until midnight. At midnight, as if they were characters in *Sleeping Beauty*, all the scholars instantly fell sound asleep, so no one witnessed Wazana's death. He appeared to two people in their dreams, his favorite student and a righteous woman, advising them where they would find his corpse, quite a distance away. He was discovered where he said he would be—in the cemetery at Ait Budiel, mysteriously washed, wrapped in a shroud, and ready for his funeral.

Miracles are associated with his tomb-shrine. He continues to make frequent appearances in dreams. Wazana is famed for healing infertility. Once, during a severe drought, he appeared to a dreaming woman, advising her that when she awoke there would be water in a dry river bed. The next morning she checked and, against all logic, clean, fresh water was there.

**SACRED SITES:** his shrine in Ait Budiel, Morocco. A stream nearby is renowned for magical and healing powers. Allegedly, all attempts to divert the stream have resulted in instant death. Celebrations are also held in Netanya, Israel, on his feast day.

**FEAST**: the anniversary of his death on the third day of the Hebrew lunar month Tevet, the month usually corresponding to the zodiac sign Capricorn.

OFFERINGS: prayers for his soul; candles; pilgrimage; good deeds and charity

given in his name. If he helps with pregnancy, name the baby in his honor.

SEE ALSO Ephraim Ankawa, Rabbi; Wazana, Rabbi Jacob and Glossary: Djinn.

👡 Wazana, Rabbi Jacob

Also known as Ya'akov Wazana; Ya'aqov Wazana; Yacob Wazana.

**CLASSIFICATION**: Jewish saint.

Rabbi Jacob Wazana (c. 1902–1952), perhaps the most extraordinary, mysterious, and unconventional Jewish saint, is the great-grandson of Rabbi Abraham Wazana. A renowned shaman, scholar, and miracle worker extraordinaire, Jacob Wazana healed Muslims and Jews, located stolen goods for French and Arab authorities, and served governors and sheikhs—sometimes willingly, but often conscripted into service.

Born in the village of Assaraz in Morocco's western High Atlas Mountains, Jacob Wazana studied with Jewish Kabbalists and local Muslim healers and magical practitioners. He apprenticed with the famed magicians of the Souss, a region of Morocco renowned for its wonder workers and occult traditions.

However, Wazana's incredible knowledge and power allegedly do not stem from human sources, but from his sacred marriage to a spirit identified as a demon, djinn, or *afarit*. Afarits—also spelled *ifrits*—are particularly fearsome djinn. (According to one legend, Wazana's bride was an afarit of the sea.) They had several spirit children—depending on the version of the legend, anywhere from two to five children.

Wherever he traveled and stayed, Wazana insisted on having a private room, ostensibly so that his spirit family could join him. (He was also an extremely fastidious man, possibly a more mundane reason for his then-unusual insistence on privacy.) Wazana was overheard talking to spirits all night.

His sacred spirit marriage gave Jacob Wazana miraculous powers of healing and exorcism.

- He allegedly made lost objects materialize out of thin air.
- He possessed a magic mirror that he used to locate missing persons.
- He brought those hovering on the brink of death back to life.

*Like many shamanic healers, Jacob Wazana was adept at both sleight of hand and true magic.* 

Rabbi Wazana was a djinn-master. The djinn cooperated with him, helping him heal and perform exorcisms, but his spirit marriage may also have prevented him from human marriage and children—and damaged his reputation as a saint. Wazana never married or had children. Lifelong bachelors are looked upon with suspicion in traditional Jewish communities. Associations with Muslim sorcerers, rumors of a spirit wife, and his forthright practice of magic lent him a further air of disrepute. Rumors spread that he trafficked in malevolent magic and that he was a spell caster for hire. Over fifty years after his death, this notoriety lingers. Conventional Jewish sources ignore Rabbi Jacob Wazana or treat him as an oddity or embarrassment. He is typically omitted from lists of renowned saints, sages, and scholars.

After his death, all photographs of Jacob Wazana vanished. No known images currently exist. Those who knew him describe him as a tall, handsome, jovial man who was scrupulously clean. He dressed distinctively, completely in white except for his signature hat, a red tarboosh (similar to a fez) covered with amulets. He also sometimes wore a black cloak.

Rabbi Wazana died at age fifty, eight days after successfully performing an exorcism that the djinn had expressly forbidden him to perform. He defied them; this exorcism was done on his own, without their cooperation. A sheikh's daughter had stepped on some baby snakes, killing them. These snakes were really baby djinn whose enraged parents instantly attacked. Because their babies died, the djinn demanded the girl's life, refusing to be propitiated. The sheikh demanded that Wazana heal his daughter. The djinn warned that if he treated this young girl, he would die in her place. On the other hand, if he failed to heed the sheikh's summons, he would be arrested and members of his family and community might possibly be endangered.

Jacob Wazana did not die a peaceful death. His last days were spent in tremendous pain. He was visibly fearful and nervous, not his usual self. He was aware that he had angered the djinn. The local theory regarding his death is that the djinn expelled from the girl's body entered Wazana's instead. Just before he died, he gave three blood-curdling shrieks. When people rushed to his room, he was found on the floor with blood spurting from his throat.

After Wazana's death, neighbors raided the room where he died. All his belongings disappeared. The whereabouts of his books, magic mirror, amulets,

staff, hat, and the copper ring he always wore and with which he allegedly commanded djinn are unknown. Only one item was returned: a robe belonging to his beloved mother that he particularly treasured. A looter returned it to the Wazana family after Jacob appeared in her dream, threatening her with grievous injury if she failed to surrender it.

Rabbi Jacob Wazana continues to make frequent appearances in dreams and continues to work wonders.

- He heals infertility, impotence, and chronic miscarriage.
- He protects those anticipating difficult childbirths.
- He heals ailing children.
- He heals illnesses caused by malicious spirits.
- He breaks hexes, curses, and spells.
- He identifies thieves and locates lost and stolen objects.

SACRED SITE: his grave in the cemetery in Agouim, Morocco, not far from the grave of another saint, Rabbi David U-Moshe, to whom Wazana was very devoted. However, when his biographer Yoram Bilu visited the cemetery in 1993, he discovered it ruined and untended. Wazana's grave could not be identified.

**FEAST**: the anniversary of his death on the twenty-seventh day of the Hebrew lunar month Tammuz.

**OFFERINGS:** In terms of food and drink, make sure that all Wazana's offerings are the finest possible. Although an unpretentious man, he had extremely good taste. He drinks Moroccan mint tea, a blend of true tea and spearmint with fresh sprigs of mint and lots of sugar. In life, he preferred Casa Sports cigarettes, a Moroccan brand. If these are unavailable, French brands are the substitution of choice. He drinks arak and mahia. Feed him fine Moroccan cuisine. Food should be kosher.

Also offer candles, prayers for his soul, public testimony to his miracles, charity and good deeds done in his name, and pilgrimage. If he bestows fertility and the child is a boy, name it in his honor. Find and clean his grave.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**, see Yoram Bilu, *Without Bounds* (Wayne State Univ. Press, 2000), a biography and examination of his life. **see also** Wazana, Rabbi Abraham and Glossary: *Djinn*.

## 👡 Well Saints

Since that old proverbial time-immemorial, wells and fresh-water and mineral springs have been associated with healing and with spirits. Even now, people travel miles to "take the waters" and receive healing or a therapeutic boost. Spas and medical complexes are often built around these springs. Water may be drunk or people may splash themselves with it or immerse themselves in it. Sometimes, physical contact with the water isn't necessary or possible; instead rituals may be performed at wells, typically involving circumambulation (ritualized circling of the well) or tying rags and ribbons to the well or to nearby trees. Wells and springs may have specialties—some are acclaimed for miraculously healing visual or reproductive disorders or for removing bad luck.

Whether spirits are as attracted to wells as people—hence their associations or whether the wells actually receive their power from the presence of spirits is subject to debate and speculation. A high percentage of saints are associated with these healing wells and are categorized as "well saints." The phenomenon of well saints transcends religious boundaries. There are Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and Zoroastrian well saints.

Many saints are credited with miraculously producing springs, which then become sources of further miracles. For example, according to legend, Rome's *Tre Fontane* (Three Fountains) miraculously emerged where Saint Paul's severed head bounced three times after his execution. The only problem with this legend, as with those of so many other well saints, is that the wells are considerably older than the historical saints. Paul's Roman springs are known to have existed in pre-Christian times, when they were known as *Aquae Salviae*. Lourdes—perhaps the most famous healing spring in the world—is a significant exception. Saint Bernadette genuinely uncovered a previously unknown or nonexistent spring. However, scholars theorize that in many cases, traditions associated with wells and springs were merely transferred to new religions so that people could maintain and continue spiritual practices that were important to them. For example, many Celtic saints are associated with miraculous wells. Therapeutic water shrines were highly significant to pre-Christian Celtic traditions.

SEE ALSO Alkelda, Saint; Amand, Saint; Andrew, Saint; Anna Pendragon; Anne, Saint; Bartolo, Saint; Bent El-Hmus; Bernadette of Lourdes, Saint; Bethen; Blaise, Saint; Brigid, Saint; Calogero, Saint; Celtic Saints; Clement, Saint; Colombe of Sens; Dwyn, Saint; Elian, Saint; Ephraim Ankawa, Rabbi; George, Saint; Gobnait, Saint; Godelieve, Saint; Guinefort, Saint; Helena of Skofde, Saint; John the Baptist; Khidr, Al; Lalla Haoua; Lalla Luna Bat Khalifa; Margaret of Antioch; Mary; Nectan, Saint; Nikhbanou; Nino, Saint; Non, Saint; Paul, Saint; Sidi Ali ben Hamdush; Sidi Ali ben Harazem; Sidi Belyout; Wazana, Rabbi Abraham; Willibrod, Saint; Winifride, Saint.

## ∾ Willibrord, Saint

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

Saint Willibrord (658–7 November 739) was an English missionary to Denmark and the Netherlands and the first bishop of Utrecht. He was an active missionary among the Pagan communities of the Low Countries. He smashed shrines, despoiled sacred wells, and toppled idols. He died while founding the Benedictine Abbey in Echternach, Luxemburg.

Willibrord became famous during the Middle Ages as the saint best able to combat and cure the dance mania known as the Saint Vitus Dance. Dancing for Saint Willibrord allegedly enables people to gain control over their bodies and only dance when they choose. Dancing for Willibrord allegedly also heals nervous disorders.

- Willibrord is invoked against chorea, epilepsy and other seizure disorders, lumbago, and all forms of herpes.
- He is the patron saint of Luxemburg.

**RITUAL**: Willibrord is honored and celebrated at his annual Dancing Procession in Echternach, Luxembourg, on Pentecost Tuesday. The dance consists of three steps forward and five steps back, first encircling the saint's tomb and then leaving the church.

SACRED SITES: Willibrord's tomb is in the crypt behind the high altar of the Benedictine Abbey in Echternach. He is also associated with various springs and wells throughout Luxembourg, Belgium, and the Netherlands. Willibrord Springs, as they are known, reputedly heal nervous disorders, especially of children.

FEASTS: 7 November; 29 November.

SEE ALSO Vitus, Saint; Well Saints.

## ∾ Winifride of Wales, Saint

Also known as Guinevere; Guinevra; Winifred.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

The very beautiful Winifride (c. 600–c. 655), a member of the Welsh nobility and the niece of Saint Benno, was pursued romantically by a local chieftain. Winifride had already made a private vow of chastity and a pledge to become a nun, but this did not dissuade her suitor, who became more aggressive. He frightened Winifride. She tried to run for sanctuary to her uncle's church, but Caradog, the chieftain, caught her and sliced off her head. She may or may not have been raped.

Winifride's head rolled down a hill and a healing well sprang up where it stopped. Luckily, Saint Benno witnessed this miracle. Quickly picking up her head, he was able to reattach it to Winifride's body. She revived and was as good as new except for a permanent thin red line about her throat. She joined a convent and lived for many more years, finally expiring of natural causes.

Winifride's myth was first documented in the 12th century. Although the spring is attributed to her assault and the healing powers to her sanctity, the spring and its pilgrimage may be significantly older than the era in which Winifride, a historically documented person, lived. Her legend may cloak a pre-Christian spirit or derive from Celtic traditions regarding sacred heads.

Saint Winifride's Well, a major pilgrimage site since the seventh century, is described as the Lourdes of Wales, although it is far older than the French shrine. Its waters are reputed to cure leprosy, skin diseases, and neurological ailments. There are many claims of the lame entering the waters only to leave their disabilities behind. When his wife, Mary of Modena, failed to conceive, British king James II brought her to Holywell. Shortly after, she conceived their son, James Stuart, the future Old Pretender. Saint Winifride is invoked for help by those receiving unwanted advances.

FAVORED PEOPLE: rape victims; incest victims; payroll clerks.

**MANIFESTATION**: She may carry her head under her arm, or it may be attached to her head. If so, she will have a thin red line around her throat.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: She is depicted as a young woman in traditional Celtic dress or as an abbess with a sword in one hand and her head in the other. She is often posed beside her well or by a fountain.

ATTRIBUTES: sword; a chopping block; axe; her head.

**PETITION**: It is traditional to take three dips in the well and then make your request of Saint Winifride.

FEAST: 3 November.

SACRED SITES: Saint Winifride's Holy Well in the town of Holywell is counted among the Seven Wonders of Wales and is the oldest continuously operated pilgrimage site in Britain. The name of the town, Holywell, pays homage to Saint Winifride's well.

In 1138, Winifride's relics were brought to Shrewsbury where they were enshrined. On the way, the party carrying her stopped overnight in Woolston, Shropshire. A new healing well allegedly sprang up at the spot where Winifride's body was lain down. This well, called Winifred's Well (English spelling, rather than Welsh), allegedly heals bruises, wounds, and broken bones.

**OFFERING:** candles.

SEE ALSO Benno, Saint; Well Saints.

# Х

👡 Xenia, Saint

SEE Ksenya, Saint.

## Y

### ∾ Yevgeny

**CLASSIFICATION:** unofficial Saint

Young Yevgeny Aleksandrovich Rodionov (23 May 1977–23 May 1996) wanted to become a chef. Conscripted into the Russian army, he was deployed to Chechnya where, on 13 February 1996, he was captured and imprisoned in a cellar for three months before being beheaded on his nineteenth birthday.

Russian authorities initially did not tell his mother, Lubov Rodionova, that he had been kidnapped; she was told he had deserted. During the three months of his captivity, she searched desperately for him, eventually learning the truth. Upon his death, his Chechen Muslim kidnappers contacted her, demanding the equivalent of \$4000 in exchange for revealing the location of his corpse. She raised the money by selling her apartment. His kidnappers told her that Yevgeny was killed for refusing to renounce his Christian faith or remove his silver cross, which was found with his bones. (Devotees have since raised money so that she can re-purchase her home.) Yevgeny's father died five days after his funeral, unable to bear the loss of his son.

Yevgeny is credited with miracle healings and the reconciliation of enemies. Icons portraying him are increasingly popular. He is venerated by many people, but especially soldiers, who carry holy cards bearing his image. In 2004, the Russian Orthodox Church declined to canonize Yevgeny, but a movement still seeks recognition for him as an official saint. He is already venerated in many churches, as well as on personal altars. Notes seeking his intercession are left at his grave, where pilgrims arrive by the busload.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Icons of Yevgeny have proliferated and are not yet standardized. He is portrayed as a young haloed soldier who may wear camouflage fatigues, military uniform, or a robe befitting a saint. He is sometimes portrayed in the guise of a medieval Russian knight. Some icons allegedly emit perfume, considered a sign of sanctity.

**ATTRIBUTE:** Cross.

**SACRED SITE**: his grave in the village of Satino-Russkoye, near Moscow. His cross is kept as a relic in the church adjoining the cemetery.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; prayers for his soul; military medals.

SEE Glossary: Holy Cards; Icon; Saint, Official; Saint, Unofficial.

### ∾ Yves, Saint

Also known as Erwann; Ivo; Ives of Brittany; Ives of the Truth.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Yves Hélory (17 October 1253–19 May 1303) was a Breton lawyer of noble birth. Even back then, lawyers were the butt of popular jokes, many implying or frankly stating that there was no room in Heaven for attorneys or that the world would be better off without them. (Modern example: What do you call 100 lawyers at the bottom of the sea? A good start.)

Legend has it that Yves, an extremely devout man, profoundly disliked this disrespect. Aware that his profession lacked a patron saint, he traveled to Rome to request personally that the pope appoint a patron saint for lawyers. The pope was not overly enthusiastic. No particular saint immediately seemed appropriate, so he instructed Yves to walk around the Basilica of Saint John Lateran blindfolded while saying a certain number of Hail Marys. At the moment of conclusion, he was to grab hold of the nearest statue. Whichever saint's image he grabbed would be appointed patron saint of lawyers.

Yves did exactly as he was told. Upon removing his blindfold, he discovered himself before the altar of Michael Archangel, grabbing the image of the devil beneath Michael's foot. Onlookers laughed hysterically. Against his will, Yves had produced yet another lawyer joke. In utter despair, he retired to his rooms, where he soon died. Following his canonization, Yves was appointed patron saint of lawyers, attorneys, and notaries.

That's the legend anyway. History suggests that Yves, an ecclesiastical indge

died at home in Brittany of natural causes stemming from his extreme fasting. He was very generous to the poor, building a hospital for them using his own money. Yves is credited with many miracles, allegedly feeding hundreds with one loaf. His tombstone—now lost—reputedly read:

Yves was a lawyer but not a thief A true marvel in people's eyes.

Although, presumably, the historical Yves would disagree, the saint is now associated with Breton sorcery and magic spells. A traditional method of cursing someone is to "dedicate" that person to Saint Yves. Apparently, if the saint considers the spellcaster's grudge justified, then the victim is believed to be not long for this world. If the saint disagrees, however, the curse is expected to backfire and strike the spell caster instead, with the same dread results.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: lawyers; notaries; orphaned, abandoned children; lawyers representing orphaned or abandoned children may be his very favorite of all.

**ICONOGRAPHY**: Yves is envisioned standing between a rich man and a poor one. In addition to standard holy cards, he may be represented by the Rider-Waite-Smith Six of Coins tarot card.

ATTRIBUTES: a purse and a scroll.

**FLAG:** The flag of Saint Yves features a black engrailed cross and a black alerion —a small heraldic eagle lacking beak and talons—on an orange and yellow field.

#### FEASTS:

- 19 May is his official feast, but Yves is an immensely popular saint—the Breton equivalent of Saint Patrick. Feast-day celebrations tend to be extended, sometimes lasting for as long as a week.
- On the third Sunday in May, lawyers from around the world gather in Tréguier, along with supplicants and pilgrims, for the annual Pardon of the Poor, a Breton penitential ceremony.

### SACRED SITES:

• The Cathedral of Saint Tugdual was built over Yves' gravesite in his

hometown, the Breton town of Tréguier. His tomb and relics are in the cathedral. The church's magnificent stained-glass windows were destroyed during the French Revolution but were restored during the 20th century with funds raised by attorneys in France, Belgium, and the United States.

- The baroque Church of Saint Yves at La Sapienza in Rome is considered an architectural masterpiece.
- The Church of Saint-Yves-des-Bretons is among Rome's national churches of France.

**OFFERINGS**: candles; pilgrimage; good deeds and donations on behalf of the poor.

Ζ

### 🔊 Zdislava Of Lemberk, Saint

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Zdislava (c. 1220–1 January 1252) was born in Brno, now part of the Czech Republic, to a noble family. Her mother was from Sicily. When she was seven years old, Zdislava ran away to the forest to become a hermit. Forcibly brought back home, she was raised to be a noble lady but also trained as an herbal healer.

Zdislava was married to Havel, Duke of Lemberk, when she was a teenager. They had four children, but husband and wife did not get along. He insisted on keeping her in the manner befitting a duchess, going to considerable expense to do so, although she herself had very modest taste. However, Havel resented what he perceived as her excessive charity toward the poor and her extreme piety.

Zdislava took communion daily and fasted intensely, experiencing ecstatic visions. Insisting that her husband build a hospice for the poor, she sneaked into the construction site at night to contribute personal touches, moving beams as she deemed fit. She was a proactive hands-on healer, personally caring for and bathing the ill. She took refugees fleeing from the Tatars into her own home, again much to her husband's displeasure. He did allow her to build a Dominican convent.

Zdislava died young of illness. After her death, her husband experienced a vision of her in full glory. Considered a saint in her lifetime by the local populace, she was an unofficial saint for centuries and only canonized in 1995 by Pope John Paul II, who described her "extraordinary capacity for self-giving." Zdislava is invoked for peace and happiness in the family.

**FAVORED PEOPLE**: prisoners; the poor; refugees; the unhappily married.

#### **SACRED SITES:**

- the Church of Coints I announce and Idislams in Ishlamak - Dadiastadi Cosch

- the Church of Samts Laurence and Zuisiava in Jabionne v Poujesteur, Czech Republic, which she built and where she is buried
- The healing well from which Zdislava drew water still exists.

FEASTS: 1 January; 4 January; 30 May.

SEE ALSO John Paul II; Lawrence, Saint; Well Saints.

## 👡 Zita, Saint

**EPITHETS:** The Gentle Servant; The Little Cook.

**CLASSIFICATION:** Roman Catholic saint.

Zita (1218–27 April 1272), born near Lucca, Italy, was a devout child who sought only to serve God. Because of her family's poverty, she was sent into domestic service at age twelve. Hired by a wealthy family, she welcomed the opportunity for charitable deeds. Rather than doing her housework, she gave away food and clothing to anyone needy who came to the door. (As word spread through the neighborhood, *many* came to the door.)

The very first miracle associated with Zita is that she kept her job. She remained with the same family for forty-eight years, until her death. She frustrated them immensely and was constantly getting in trouble. (She once gave the master's good coat to a beggar.) However, they recognized her as a holy woman and perhaps perceived retaining Zita as their act of charity.

- Angels baked bread for her; hence, she is the matron of bakers.
- A fellow employee tried to rape her, but she fought him off, hence she is the matron of victims of rape.

Her would-be rapist's face sported several visible scratches, attracting the attention of their employer. He questioned Zita, who told him the truth. He promoted her to head housekeeper, placing the family children under her care. Considered a saint while alive, she was not officially canonized until 1696 but was venerated as an unofficial saint from the day she died. Over 150 miracles are attributed to her.

Zita is invoked to find lost keys. No elaborate offerings or complex rituals are required. Chant her rhyme:

Zita, Zita, I've lost my key! Please look around and find it for me!

**FAVORED PEOPLE:** domestic servants; waiters and waitresses; housewives; bakers.

**ICONOGRAPHY:** a woman giving bread to a beggar.

**SACRED SITE:** The Basilica of San Frediano in Lucca contains a shrine dedicated to Saint Zita, where her mummified body is displayed for public veneration.

FEAST: 27 April.

**RITUAL**: It is traditional to commemorate Zita's feast by baking loaves of bread.

**OFFERINGS**: yellow daffodils, her favorite flower; homemade loaves of bread; contributions to the poor or homeless.

SEE ALSO Anthony of Padua, Saint and Glossary: Saint, Official; Saint, Unofficial.

## 👡 Zoë, Saint

Also known as Zoa.

CLASSIFICATION: venerated as a saint by most branches of Christianity.

In the early fifth century, Zoë was a harlot of Cappadocia, now in modern Turkey. The standard legend suggests that she decided to destroy the local ascetic holy man Martinian's vow of chastity. Depending on the version, this may have been her own whim, or she may have been a tool of Satan, witting or unwitting.

Gaining admittance to his lonely cell by subterfuge on a dark, stormy night, Zoë attempted to seduce the hermit. His response was unexpected—he neither acquiesced nor threw her out. Instead, Martinian built a big fire and walked into it, choosing to burn his body rather than risk his soul to hellfire.

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Zoe may not have been an ordinary prostitute. Her name suggests that she was a devotee of a Gnostic tradition. She may have had her sights set on Martinian, not just from a perverse desire to tempt an ascetic, but because she sought his partnership in the Great Rite, the sacred sexual union of male and female energies. A spiritual man like Martinian who had conserved his sexual energy for so long would have been a prized partner.

Zoë did not run away screaming when Martinian set himself on fire. He did not die, but recovered. She was the only one there, so she must have rescued him and either cared for him or found someone else to do so. His actions had tremendous spiritual impact upon her. She stayed with him long enough for him to persuade her to travel to the Bethlehem home of the renowned Christian woman, Paula, friend of Saint Jerome, who was eventually sainted herself.

Zoë moved in with Paula. She spent the rest of her life fasting and praying and eventually gained renown as a wonder worker and miracle healer. Whether or not she manifested these powers earlier is unknown. Her traditional modern hagiography displays no interest in her life prior to her encounter with Martinian.

Saint Martinian escaped union with Zoë through fire. He later escaped union with Photina through water. The three saints are now venerated together.

#### Altar

- 1. Use the image of a monk to represent Martinian. Alternatively, a tarot Hermit card may be used to represent him.
- 2. Place him in the center of the altar between a red candle, representing Zoë, and a chalice of salted water, representing Photina.
- 3. The three are conventionally invoked for healing and protection. They possess particularly potent powers regarding avoiding and overcoming temptation, and so are valued allies in battles against addiction.
- 4. The three are less conventionally invoked to preside over sacred Tantric mysteries, especially those involving manipulation of sexual energy.

FEAST: 13 February. The day is shared with Martinian and Photina.

SEE ALSO Jerome, Saint; Martinian, Saint; Photina, Saint; Simon Magus.

## 👡 Zumbi

Also known as Zumbi dos Palmares.

**PRONOUNCED**: zoom-bee.

**EPITHET:** Black Leader of All Races.

CLASSIFICATION: unofficial saint.

Zumbi (1655–20 November 1695) was a leader of the Quilombo dos Palmares, settlements consisting largely of escaped slaves and free black people. Depending on who's counting, the population of Palmares in the 1690s is estimated at between 20,000 and 50,000 people. It was essentially a Central African state in the midst of Brazil. Palmares was an elected republic whose population also included Indians, those of European descent, and every possible combination. Palmares was attacked repeatedly by government forces for almost a century before it was finally destroyed.

Zumbi was born in Palmares but captured in a raid when he was only a few days old. Raised by a priest who taught him to read and write in Portuguese and Latin, Zumbi ran away at age fifteen, returning to Palmares. He did maintain contact with his old friend the priest, who was forever ostracized for his relationship with Zumbi.

As chief of Palmares for approximately twenty years, Zumbi led the resistance against the Portuguese until he was betrayed and killed. After death, his body was mutilated. His severed head was packed in salt to preserve it and brought to Recife, where it was impaled on a stick for public viewing.

Zumbi is venerated by Spiritualists, Kardecian Spiritists, Roman Catholics, and secularists.

- He speaks through mediums.
- Afro-Brazilian spiritual traditions classify him as a Preto Velho and an Exu spirit.
- He is a major component of the Roman Catholic inculturated Mass, which seeks to incorporate African influences.
- He is among the most important symbols of Brazil's secular blackempowerment movement.

**SPIRITUAL ALLY:** His wife, Dandara, a warrior, strategist, and the mother of Zumbi's three sons.

## Appendix I: Calendar Systems

### CALENDARS

Even though, in the age of globalization, standardized calendars are used throughout the world for business and other secular activities, spiritual events often remain timed to traditional, local, or religious calendars. Different religious traditions utilize different calendars. The feast days of saints from those traditions are most accurately determined using the appropriate calendar. This appendix offers a brief overview of the calendar systems referenced in this book. All dates given are approximations. To be absolutely sure of a feast date in any given year, you must actually check the appropriate calendar. Calendar conversion software is available, often for free online.

### ASTROLOGICAL

There are various astrological systems. The most prevalent in Western society is the tropical system introduced by mathematician and astrologer Ptolemy in the second century ce. This is the one described here, but other systems are in use elsewhere, such as the Vedic or sidereal systems used in India.

The astrological calendar begins with the vernal equinox. There are twelve zodiac signs that are essentially "months." Dates given below are approximate.

Aries: 21 March–20 April (Aries begins the astrological year; the first day of Aries coincides with the vernal equinox in the Northern Hemisphere and with the autumnal equinox in the Southern Hemisphere.)
Taurus: 21 April–20 May
Gemini: 21 May–20 June
Cancer: 21 June–20 July

Leo: 21 July–20 August Virgo: 21 August–20 September Libra: 21 September–20 October Scorpio: 21 October–20 November Sagittarius: 21 November–20 December Capricorn: 21 December–20 January Aquarius: 21 January–20 February Pisces: 21 February–20 March

### CHINESE

The Chinese calendar is a luni-solar calendar, meaning that calculations are based on both the moon and the sun. According to popular belief, some form of this calendar has been in use for almost five millennia. (Archaeologists demur, suggesting that it has *only* been in use for three and a half millennia.) Many calendar systems throughout East Asia are very similar to this one.

Each year has twelve months, which are calculated by the moon, with an intercalary month added as needed. Each month begins at midnight at the dark moon, or when the sun and moon are astronomically conjunct, and continues up until, but not including, the following dark moon.

The northern winter solstice coincides with the eleventh month. The year begins with the Chinese New Year, which usually falls on the second new moon following the winter solstice, typically corresponding to the new moon in Aquarius. This may vary if there is an intercalary month. Months are numbered —first month, second month, and so forth—but are also named. (Intercalary months are not named.) Names may vary depending on region, era, or tradition, but the following is fairly standard:

First month (also known as Holiday Moon or First Moon) Second month (also known as Budding Moon or Apricot Blossom Moon)

Third month (also known as Sleepy Moon or Peach Blossom Moon) Fourth month (also known as Plum Moon or Peony Moon)—this month

is considered auspicious for pilgrimages to sacred places.

Fifth month (also known as Pomegranate Blossom Moon or Dragon Moon)

Sixth month (also known as Lotus Moon)

Seventh month (also known as Hungry Ghost Moon or Orchid Blossom Moon)
Eighth month (also known as Harvest Moon or Osmanthus Moon)
Ninth month (also known as Chrysanthemum Moon)
Tenth month (also known as Kind Moon)
Eleventh month (also known as White Moon or Winter Moon)
Twelfth month (also known as Winter Sacrifice Moon or Last Moon)

"Intercalary" refers to an additional day, days, or month inserted into an annual calendar to make it correspond with the solar year.

## COPTIC

The Coptic calendar, also known as the Egyptian or Alexandrian calendar, is the ritual calendar used by the Coptic Orthodox Church and is closely related to the Ethiopian calendar. This calendar is divided into thirteen months—twelve with thirty days each, and a thirteenth intercalary month whose number of days depends on whether it's a leap year. The Coptic calendar is based on that of ancient Egypt and is sometimes described as the oldest calendar system currently in use. Some of the months' names pay tribute to the ancient deities of Egypt. All dates given here are approximate.

- Thout: 11 September–10 October. The name honors god Thoth, Lord of Wisdom.
- Paopi (also known as Baba): 11 October–9 November. The name honors Hapi, Lord of the Nile River.
- Hathor: 10 November–9 December. The name derives from Hathor, beautiful goddess of love and joy.
- Koiak: 10 December–9 January. The name derives from Ka-Ha-Ka, or "good of good," an epithet of the sacred Apis Bull.
- Tobi (also known as Touba): 10 January–9 February. The name may be related to a Hebrew word meaning "good," or refer to the solar deity Amon-Ra.
- Meshir (also known as Amshir): 10 February–9 March. The name derives from an Egyptian wind spirit.
- Paremhat: 10 March–9 April. The name derives from the warrior deitv

Montu.

- Paremoude: 10 April–9 May. The name honors the cobra goddess Renenutet.
- Pashons (also known as Bashons): 10 May–9 June. The name honors Khonsu, Lord of the Moon.

- Paoni (also known as Baoni): 10 June–9 July. The name indicates the ancient Egyptian Valley Festival.
- Epip (also known as Abib): 10 July–9 August. The name honors Apep, the cosmic serpent.
- Mesori (also known as Mesra): 10 August–9 September. The name derives from an Egyptian word meaning "the birth of the sun."
- Pi Kogi Enavot (also known as El Nasii, the "little month"): an intercalary month that lasts only a few days, usually five or six.

ETHIOPIAN

Ethiopia is a land of many languages, so, depending on region and language, variations on the names of these months may be used. There are other calendar systems in Ethiopia as well—this is the ritual calendar used by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The Ethiopian calendar, also known as the Ge'ez calendar, is closely related to the Coptic calendar. There are twelve months of thirty days, plus an intercalary "leap month" of only a few days. Dates given here are approximations.

Maskaram or Meskerem: 11 September–10 October, the first month of the year
Teqemt or Tikemet: 11 October–10 November
Hadar: 11 November–10 December
Tahsas or Tahesas: 11 December–10 January
Terr: 11 January–10 February
Yakatit: 11 February–10 March
Magabit: 11 March–10 April
Miyazya or Miyaza: 11 April–10 May
Ganbot: 11 May–10 June
Sane: 11 June–10 July
Hamle: 11 July–10 August
Nabase: 11 August–10 September Pagamen or Pagume: an intercalary month

## Hindu

India's ritual calendar system is extremely sophisticated—and there is more than one of them. In fact, entire books have been written about Hindu ritual calendars alone. What follows is one standard system—the twelve-month calendar that corresponds to the astrological calendar. The year begins in conjunction with the northern vernal equinox. India is a vast land with many languages and spiritual traditions. Variations on the names of the months and their order depend upon region. Dates given here are approximations only.

Chaitra: 21 March–20 April Vaisakha: 21 April–20 May Jyestha: 21 May–20 June Ashadha: 21 June–20 July Shraavana (also known as Shravan or Sawan): 21 July–20 August Bhadra (also known as Bhadrapada): 21 August–20 September Ashwin (also known as Asvina): 21 September–20 October Kartik: 21 October–20 November Agrahayana: 21 November–20 December Pausha: 21 December–20 January (the start of this month corresponds to the winter solstice) Maagha: 21 January–20 February Phalguna: 21 February–20 March

### IRANIAN

The Iranian calendar, also known as the Persian, Zoroastrian, or Zarathustrian calendar, is a twelve-month luni-solar system corresponding to the astrological calendar. The year begins in conjunction with the northern vernal equinox. Names of the months are transliterated—these spellings are fairly standard, but other variants are used as well.

Farvardin: 21 March–20 April. The name refers to "Guardian Angel." Ordibehesht: 21 April–20 May. The name refers to the goodness of the

Creator.

Khordad: 21 May–20 June. The name refers to "perfection."

Tir: 21 June–20 July. The name refers to Sirius, the Dog Star, which rises at this time.

Mordad: 21 July–20 August. The name refers to "undying."

Shahrevar: 21 August–20 September. The name refers to "dominion."

Mihr: 21 September–20 October. The name refers to "light" and to the ancient Persian deity Mithra.

Aban: 21 October–20 November. The name refers to "water."

Azar or Adar: 21 November–20 December. The name refers to "fire."

Day or Dae: 21 December–20 January. The name refers to the Creator.

Bahman: 21 January–20 February. The name refers to "highmindedness."

Esphand: 21 February–20 March. The name refers to "equanimity."

ISLAMIC

The Islamic calendar is a pure lunar calendar with twelve lunar months and a year consisting of 354 or 355 days. The beginning of each month coincides with the appearance of the new moon. This is a movable calendar, meaning that the months migrate through the year and are not fixed to solar events like the equinoxes or solstices. Thus a given month may occur in the winter or summer. The months are given in order:

Muharram Safar Rabi'al-Awwal (also known as Rabi' al-Akhir) Rabi'al-Thani (also known as Jumada al-Ula) Jumada al-Awwal (also known as Jumada al-Ukhra or Jumada al-Akhir) Jumada al-Thani Rajab Sha'aban Ramadan Shawwal Dhu al'Qidah Dhu al'Hijjah

### JEWISH

The Jewish calendar is a luni-solar system consisting of twelve months of 29 or 30 days each. The beginning of each month corresponds to the appearance of the new moon. A thirteenth leap month, also known as an "embolismic month," is added as needed to remain synchronized with the solar year. In Hebrew, a year possessing a leap month is known as a "pregnant year."

- Similar to the astrological and Iranian calendars, the first day of the Jewish year corresponds to the northern vernal equinox.
- Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish *religious* New Year, does not correspond with the first day of the year but is celebrated on the first day of the seventh month. An old saying describes the month of Nissan as the beginning of the months, but the month of Tishrei as the beginning of the year.
  - Month 1—Nissan: begins at the vernal equinox, approximately 21
    - March, and lasts for 30 days.
  - Month 2—Iyar: lasts for 29 days.
  - Month 3—Sivan: lasts for 30 days.
  - Month 4—Tammuz: lasts for 29 days
  - Month 5—Av: lasts for 30 days.
  - Month 6—Elul: lasts for 29 days.
  - Month 7—Tishrei ( also known as Tishri): lasts for 30 days.
  - Month 8—Heshvan (also spelled Cheshvan): lasts for 29 or 30 days.
  - Month 9—Kislev: lasts for 29 or 30 days.
  - Month 10—Tevet (also known as Tebet; also pronounced Teves in Yiddish): lasts for 29 days.
  - Month 11—Shevat (also known as Shvat): lasts for 30 days.
  - Month 12—Adar: lasts for 30 days.
  - Month 13—Adar Beit: lasts for 29 days. This is a leap month added to the calendar as needed to maintain synchronicity with solar events like equinoxes.

## TIBETAN

The Tibetan calendar is an extremely complex luni-solar system that has, over the centuries, been influenced by the calendar systems of China, India (Sanskrit), and Mongolia. Each year typically possesses twelve months of 29 or 30 days each. The beginning of each month corresponds to the appearance of the new moon. A thirteenth, or leap, month is added as needed to maintain correspondence between solar and lunar phenomena. Extra, additional (or "double") days and missing (or "skip") days are also incorporated to maintain this celestial harmony. The Tibetan calendar is similar to the Chinese calendar, but they are not identical. Months have different lengths and the New Year may begin on different dates. Months are numbered and named after their ruling animal signs.

Month One is the Dragon Month. Month Two is the Snake Month. Month Three is the Horse Month. Month Four is the Sheep Month. Month Five is the Monkey Month. Month Six is the Bird Month. Month Seven is the Dog Month. Month Eight is the Pig or Boar Month. Month Nine is the Mouse Month. Month Ten is the Ox Month. Month Eleven is the Tiger Month. Month Twelve is the Rabbit Month.

### VIETNAMESE

The traditional Vietnamese luni-solar calendar is very similar to that of the Chinese, but it does occasionally differ. Each year has twelve months of 29 or 30 days each. Approximately every third year, a thirteenth "leap month" is added to the calendar in order to reconcile lunar and solar phenomena. The winter solstice always occurs during the eleventh month. Rather than being named, months are numbered from one to twelve or thirteen.

## **Appendix II: Saints and Their Patronages**

This appendix will help you locate potential patron or matron saints.

AILMENTS, CONDITIONS, AND ILLNESSES

A high percentage of saints are renowned as healers. Any saint may be invoked for any sort of healing. What follows is a list of ailments and the saints known to specialize in healing them. Saint Raphael Archangel is associated with healing in general, as are the Fourteen Holy Helpers, the Silverless Physicians, and the Seven Saints of Marrakesh.

Addiction: Jude; Maximón; Talbot, Matt; Thérèse of Lisieux AIDS: Damien; Gennaro; Lazarus; Peregrine; Thérèse of Lisieux Alcoholism: Bibiana; John of God; Jude; Ksenya; Martin of Tours; Maximón; Talbot, Matt; Urban; Mychal Judge Alopecia: Urban Amputees: Anthony of Padua; Antonietta Meo Anorexia: Pelagia; Walpurga Anxiety: Julian of Norwich Anxiety, social: José Dolores Arthritis: Calogero; James the Greater Autism: Mychal Judge; Philomena **Bed-wetting:** Vitus Bleeding: Margaret of Antioch; Rasputin Blindness: Aharon Ha-Cohen; Daniel Hashomer; David; Lucy; Odile; Sidi Bel Abbes; Sidi Ben Achir; Triduana Blood disorders: Gennaro; Rasputin Breast ailments: Agatha **Boils:** Pantaleimon

Bone, broken: Drogo; Mammes

Bone, disorders: Antonietta Meo; Erkembode

Bubonic plague: Adrian of Nicomedia

Burns: Catherine of Siena; John the Revelator; Lawrence; Onofrio

Cancer: Aldegund; Giles; Peregrine; Philomena

Cancer, bone: Antonietta Meo

Cancer, breast: Agatha; Aldegund

Cancer, pancreatic: Pancras

Cancer, skin: Anthony of the Desert

Cardiac arrest: Teresa of Ávila

Cold, common: Martin of Tours

Colic: Elmo; Panteleimon

Convulsions: Willibrord

Cramps: Andrew; Elmo; Pancras

Dental troubles: Alena; Apollonia; Christopher

Depression: Christina the Amazing; Drogo; Erkembode; Susanna

Developmental disorders, children's: Bartholomew of the Sea

Digestive disorders: Emerentiana

Dysentery: Andrew

Earache: Christopher

Eating disorders: Pelagia; Walpurga.

Epilepsy: Balthazar; Donato; Genesius; Valentine; Vitus; Willibrord

Evil Eye: Donato; Engrácia; Lucy; Michael Archangel; Nicholas; Raphael Archangel.

Eye problems: Aharon Ha-Cohen; Aldegund; Alena; José Dolores; Lucy; Odile; Raphael

Fainting: Valentine

Fertility: Abihatsira, Rabbi Makhluf ben Yosef; Agatha; Amram ben Diwan; Andrew; Anne; Avalokiteshvara; Baba Habash; Bousso, Mame Diarra; Brigid; Cosmos and Damian; Daniel Hashomer; Elijah the Prophet; Ephraim Ankawa, Rabbi; Gabriel Archangel; Ghriba, La; José Dolores; Kwan Yin; Mai Mishra; Margaret of Antioch; Mary Magdalen; Nikbanou; Philomena; Sidi Brahim; Wazana, Rabbi Abraham; Wazana, Rabbi Jacob

Fertility, desire for female children: Claire

Fertility, desire for male children: Abihatsira, Rabbi Makhluf Ben

Yosef; Avalokiteshara; Elijah the Prophet; Kwan Yin

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revel. Lawrence, relei Fibromyalgia: George Fistula: Fiacre Gallstones: Drogo; Liborius Gangrene: Anthony of the Desert; Cosmos and Damian Glands, swollen: Andrew Goiter: Andrew Hangover: Bibiana; Drogo Headaches and migraines: Acacius; Agueda; Bibiana; Bona; Denis; Guglielma; Hildegard of Bingen; John the Baptist; Pancras; Panteleimon; Paraskeva the New; Teresa of Avila Hearing disorders and impairment: Drogo; Francis de Sales Heart disorders: John of God; Philomena; Teresa of Ávila Hemophilia: Gennaro; Rasputin Hemorrhoids: Fiacre Hepatitis C: Antonietta Meo Hernia: Amico; Cosmos and Damian; Drogo; Mammes Herpes: Willibrord Hip disorders: Germaine Cousin; James the Greater HIV: Damien; Lazarus; Thérèse of Lisieux Impotence: Cosmos; Wazana, Rabbi Jacob Infections, bacterial: Adrian of Nicomedia; Agrippina Insomnia: Michael Archangel Intestinal problems: Elmo Joint disorders: Calogero Kidney disease: Benedict; Drogo; Margaret of Antioch Kidney stones: Barbara; Benedict; Drogo; Liborius Labor pains (childbirth): Elmo; Margaret of Antioch Lactation disorders: Giles; Guglielma; Isabel of Portugal Leprosy: Agrippina; Damien; Lazarus; Sidi Bel Abbes Leukemia: Gennaro Meningitis: Gemma Galgani Menstrual problems: Isabel of Portugal Mental illness: Amin ud-Din; Benedict Joseph Labre; Christina the Amazing; Daniel Hashomer; Drogo; Dymphna; Elijah the Prophet; George; Gertrude of Nivelles; Giles; John of God; Peter; Sidi Abderrahmane; Sidi Ali ben Harazem; Sidi Ben Achir Miscarriage, prevention: 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani; Catherine of Siena;

Dorothy of Montau; Raymond Nonnatus; Wazana, Rabbi Jacob Miscarriage, voluntary or involuntary: Jizo Motion sickness: Michael Archangel Neck, stiff: Andrew Night terrors: Giles Nightmares: Christopher; Gabriel Archangel; John the Baptist Pain, chronic: Andrew Paralysis: Sidi Ben Achir Parkinson's disease: John Paul II; Vitus Phobias: Gertrude of Nivelles Poisoning: John the Revelator; Paul Premature birth: Andrew Prenatal ailments and disorders: Mychal Judge Psoriasis: Anthony of the Desert Rabies: Denis; Domenico, Hubert, Peter; Quiteria; Walpurga Reproductive disorders, female: Casilda; Margaret of Antioch; Rita Reproductive disorders, male: Cosmos Rheumatism: Calogero; Euphemia; James the Greater Rosacea: Anthony of the Desert Scabies: Mark Seasickness: Michael Archangel Seizure disorders: Balthazar; Bibiana; Daniel Hashomer; Donato; Dymphna; Genesius; Giles; Pancras; Valentine; Vitus Shingles: Anthony of the Desert; Willibrord Skin ailments and diseases: Agnes; Anthony of the Desert; Lazarus Sleep disorders: Vitus Sleepwalking: Dymphna Smallpox: Benedict the Black; Lazarus; Sidi Merri Snake bite: Domenico; Peter Speech disorders: Anthony of Padua; Drogo Speech impediment: Andrew Spinal injuries and disorders: Gemma Galgani; Germaine Cousin Stomach disorders: Brice; Emerentiana Stuttering: Bartholomew of the Sea Syphilis: Denis; George Terminal illness: Acacius; Amram ben Diwan; Andrew; Ksenya; Sidi Ali Bou Ghaleb: Simon bar Yohai Torminal illness shildren'se Antonistta Mass Julitta, I suise Vistor

1 eminial miless, children S. Antometia Meo, Junita, Louis, Victor Throat disorders: Blaise; Godelieve; Lalla Luna Bat Khalifa Tongue, ailments: John of Nepomuk Toothache: Alena; Apollonia; Blaise; Domenico Tourette's syndrome: Bartholomew Tuberculosis: Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother; Gemma Galgani; Panteleimon: Thérèse of Lisieux Tumors: Rita **Ulcers: Eligius** Uterine bleeding: Casilda; Margaret of Antioch Varicose veins: Anthony of the Desert Venereal diseases: Fiacre; George Vision disorders: Aharon Ha-Cohen; Daniel Hashomer; Lucy; Odile; Sidi Bel Abbes Wounds: Aldegund; Rita Wounds, festering: Philomena

ANIMALS

Saints Amico, Benedict, Blaise, Dwynn, Francis of Assisi, Gerlac, and Susanna are invoked to provide healing for animals in general. Anthony of the desert is the guardian of domestic animals, especially livestock.

Bear: Colombe of Sens Bees: Bernard of Clairvaux; Rita Birds: Rahman Baba Bloodhound: Hubert Cat: Bagnesi, Blessed Maria; Gertrude of Nivelles; Jizo Cattle: Brigid; Sebastian Deer: Giles Dogs: Bernard of Montjoux; Lazarus; Roch; Vitus Dogs, rescue: Bernard of Montjoux Geese: Martin of Tours Horses: Boris and Gleb; Eligius; George; Martin of Tours; Teilo Pigs: Anthony of the desert Poultry: Vitus Rabbits and hares: Melangell Kodents: Gertrude of Nivenes Snakes: Agnes; Brigid; Margaret of Antioch; Paul; Shlomo Ben Lhans; Sidi Mohammed ben Aïssa; Viridiana Wolves: Ailbe; Jizo; Tara

#### CAREERS AND VOCATIONS

Academic: Catherine of Alexandria Actor: Genesius: Vitus Adventurer: Bona Alchemist: Albertus Magnus; Cyprian; John the Revelator Animal rescue: Francis of Assisi Antiquarian: Dismas Apitherapist: Gobnait Architect: Barbara; Thomas Archivist: Jerome; Lawrence Armorer: Michael Archangel; Sebastian Arms dealer: Adrian Aromatherapist: Joseph of Arimathea; Mary Magdalen; Myrrh Bearers, Holy Arrowsmith: Sebastian Art dealer: Dismas Artist: Luke Assassin: George Astrologer: Agabus Astronaut: Joseph of Cupertino Athlete: Jaramillo, Don Pedro; Sebastian Author: Francis de Sales; Isidore of Seville; John the Revelator; Luke; Paul Baker: Donato; Elizabeth of Hungary; Joseph Barber: Cosmos and Damian Barista: Drogo; Omar Bead artisan: Baba Ghor Bead manufacturer: Baba Ghor Beekeeper: Bernard of Clairvaux; Gobnait; Valentine Beggar: Alexius; Elijah the Prophet; Giles; Martin of Tours Bicycle messenger: Mary

Biker: Crispin and Crispian Bird rehabilitator: Francis of Assisi Blacksmith: Clement; Cosmos and Damian; Giles Blood donor: Mary Bomb technician: Barbara Bookbinder: John of God: Sebastian Bookseller: John of God; John the Revelator Border guards: Nicholas Brewer: Adrian; Arnold; Barbara; Dorothy of Caesarea; Gambrinus; Lawrence; Luke; Vitus Bus driver: Catherine of Alexandria; Christopher; Colonia, Sarita; Frances of Rome Butcher: Adrian; Anthony of the Desert Cabinetmaker: Victor Candle maker: Bernard of Clairvaux; Genevieve Candy maker: Cosmos and Damian; Paschal Baylon Carney: Julian the Hospitaller Cemetery worker: Victor Chef: Lawrence; Mary; Paschal Baylon Chef, pastry: Joseph; Paschal Baylon Chemist: Cosmos and Damian Circus performer or employee: Julian the Hospitaller Clairvoyant: Claire; Hildegard of Bingen; Lucy; Odile Clown: Julian the Hospitaller Code monkey: Isidore of Seville Coffeehouse owner and employee: Drogo; Mary Comedian: Genesius; Lawrence; Vitus Commando: Michael Archangel Composer: Cecilia Computer programmer: Expedite; Isidore of Seville Computer technician: Isidore of Seville Confectioner: Lawrence; Paschal Baylon Construction worker: Barbara; Mary Cook: Lawrence; Paschal Baylon Counterfeiter: Aldric; Eligius Crystal-ball gazer: Taigi, Anna Maria **Dancer:** Vitus Demonologist: Benedict

Dentist: Apollonia; Cosmos and Damian Distiller: Louis; Mary; Nicholas Doormen: Alexius; Nicholas Dream interpreter: Jizo Driver: Catherine of Alexandria; Frances of Rome Editor: Francis de Sales; John the Revelator Environmentalist: Francis of Assisi **Equestrians:** Boris and Gleb Exorcist: Agrippina; Benedict; Cyprian; Ignatius Loyola; Michael Archangel Eve doctor: Odile Farmworker: George; Isidore the Laborer Farmer: Isidore the Laborer Ferry driver: Julian the Hospitaller Firefighter: Agatha; Anthony of the Desert; Barbara; Catherine of Siena; Florian; John of God; Michael Archangel; Mychal Judge Fishermen: Andrew; Mary; Rosalia Flight attendant: Bona; Mary Florist: Dorothy of Caesarea; Thérèse of Lisieux Forest worker: Hubert Forger: Aldric Fortuneteller: Agabus; Claire; Cyprian; Jizo; Madama, La; Odile Funeral worker: Dismas; Joseph of Arimathea; Simon bar Yochai Garage employee: Eligius Gardener: Dorothy of Caesarea; Isidore the Laborer Gatekeeper: Alexius Ghost hunter: Aquilina Grave digger: Joseph of Arimathea; Victor Gunner: Barbara Gunsmith: Barbara Hacker: Expedite Hair stylist: Anastacia; Mary Magdalen Healer: Agatha; Luke; Panteleimon Herbalist: Gertrude of Nivelles; Hildegard of Bingen; John the Baptist Homemaker: Martha Homeschooler: Hildegard of Bingen Hospice worker: John of God

Hospital worker: John of God Hotel employee: Julian the Hospitaller Housekeeper: Martha Innkeepers: Julian the Hospitaller; Martin of Tours Ironmonger: Sebastian Jeweler: Agatha; Eligius Jockey: Eligius Journalist: Brigid; Francis de Sales; Paul Juggler: Julian the Hospitaller Lace maker: Elizabeth of Hungary; Teresa of Ávila Law enforcement: Michael Archangel, Mychal Judge Lawyer: Genesius; Yves Leather worker: Crispin and Crispian; Simon Librarian: Catherine of Alexandria; Jerome; Lawrence Locksmith: Eligius; Leonard Kabbalist: Elijah the Prophet, Simon bar Yehai Mariner: Elmo; Mary; Sidi Mehrez Mathematician: Hubert; Hypatia Medium: Claire, Saint; Jizo; La Madama; Pascual, El Rey Mental-health professional: Dymphna Metalworker: Clement; Hubert Midwife: Dorothy of Caesarea; Drogo; John the Baptist; Panteleimon Migrant worker: Isidore the Laborer; Mariá de Torriba Milliner: James the Greater Mime: Julian the Hospitaller Miner: Anne; Barbara; Eligius; Leonard Murderer: George; Julian the Hospitaller Musician: Cecilia Nanny: Colonia, Sarita Numismatist: Eligius Nurse: Agatha; Alexius; Anastacia; Camillus; Catherine of Siena; Elizabeth of Hungary. Oculist or ophthalmologist: Cosmos and Damian; Triduana Oil blender: John the Revelator Optician: Hubert; Odile Paratrooper: Michael Archangel Pawnbroker: Nicholas Perfumer: Joseph of Arimathea

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Pharmacist: Cosmos and Damian; Gemma Galgani; James the Just; Vitus Physician: Cosmos and Damian; Elizabeth of Hungary; Luke; Panteleimon Pilot, airplane: Elijah, Saint; Marv Playing-card manufacturer: Balthazar Poet: Brigid; Cecilia Police: Michael Archangel Potter: Catherine of Alexandria; Isidore the Laborer; Sebastian Prison guard: Adrian Prisoner: Anastacia; Barbara; Colonia, Sarita; Dismas; Joan of Arc; John the Baptist; Leonard; Roch Prisoner, political: Barbara, Dismas; Leonard Prostitute: Afra; Colonia, Sarita; Liberata; Nicholas Psychiatrist: Christina the Amazing Psychic: Claire; Odile Publisher: John of God; John the Revelator; Paul Radiologist: Michael Archangel Rancher: Isidore the Laborer **Researcher:** Isidore of Seville Road builder: Elen of the Roads: James the Greater Safe cracker: Barbara Sailor: Elmo; Eulalia of Barcelona; Mary; Sidi Mehrez Sewing-machine operator: Catherine of Alexandria Sex worker: Afra; Colonia, Sarita; Liberata Shoemaker: Crispin and Crispinian; James the Greater Silversmith: Mary Singer: Cecilia Slave: Anastacia; Blandina; Marron; Raymond Nonnatus; Roch Smelter: Hubert Smuggler: Jesús Malverde Snake handlers: Christina of Bolsena; Viridiana Soldier: Barbara; George; Joan of Arc; Michael Archangel; Odile; Sebastian: Victor Soldier, female: Genevieve Stonemason: Barbara Student: Gemma Galgani; María Francia; Sidi Ali ben Harazem

Surgeon: Cosmos and Damian; Luke Tanner: Crispin and Crispinian; Martin of Tours; Simon **Taverner: Martin of Tours** Taxi driver: Catherine of Alexandria; Christopher; Colonia, Sarita; Eligius; Frances of Rome Thief: Colonia, Sarita; Dismas **Tinker: Vitus** Tinsmith: Joseph of Arimathea Tour guide: Bona **Translator:** Jerome Travel agent: Bona Travel writer: Paul Traveler: Christopher; Difunta Correa; Elen of the Roads; James the Greater; Joseph of Arimathea; Mary; Nicholas; Shin Thiwali; Sidi Merri; Sidi Mohammed ben Aïssa; Vitus Traveler, female: Kwan Yin; Sidi Mohammed ben Aïssa Trucker: Catherine of Alexandria; Christopher; Colonia, Sarita; Difunta Correa Undertaker: Dismas; Joseph of Arimathea; Sebastian; Simon bar Yohai **Upholsterer:** Mary Vampirologist: Aquilina; Gennaro Vendor, street: Colonia, Sarita Veterinarian: Cosmos and Damian; Eligius Vintner: Vincent Waitress: Martha Weaver: Agatha; Mary; Onofrio Wet nurse: Agatha; Giles Wildlife rehabilitator: Francis of Assisi Wine critic: Vincent Wine maker: Martin of Tours; Urban; Vincent Wine merchants: Martin of Tours; Vincent Witch: Comba; Cyprian; John the Baptist

### ETHNICITIES AND LOCATIONS

By definition, Saint Lucy presides over the Caribbean island of Saint Lucia, while Saint Barbara presides over the California city, Santa Barbara. If a location

is named for a saint, then that saint is its presiding guardian.

This is not a definitive list. Other saints are also associated with locations and ethnic groups; however, as page space is by necessity limited, this list is limited to saints contained in this book.

Aberdeen: Nicholas Africa: Benedict the Black African Americans: Benedict the Black: Martin de Porres Albania: Mark; Mary (Our Lady of Good Counsel) Algeria: Mary Alsace: Odile Americans, Native: Anthony of Padua Andorra: Colombe; Mary Angola: Mary Antwerp: Walpurga Archangelsk: Michael Archangel Argentina: Mary (Our Lady of Lujan) Armenia: Saint Bartholomew Australia: Mary Austria: Joseph; Mary (Our Lady of Mariazell) Barcelona: Eulalia of Barcelona Beirut: George Belgium: Mary Biscay: Mary (Our Lady of Begoña) Bohemia: John of Nepomuk; Joseph Bolivia: Mary **Brazil:** Mary British Isles: Elen of the Roads Brittany: Anne Brussels: Gudula **Burgundy:** Andrew Calabria: Francis the Fire Handler Canada: Anne; Joseph; Mary Canada, French: John the Baptist Casablanca: Lalla Beida; Sidi Belyout Catalonia: George Catania: Apollonia Chile: Mary

CIIIIC, 17101.y China: Mary Colombia: Mary Cornwall: Michael Archangel Costa Rica: Mary Creole French: Delille, Henriette Croatia: Mark Cuba: Mary (Our Lady of Charity) Dalmatia: Blaise; Mark Dominican Republic: Mary Dubrovnik: Blaise. Ecuador: Mary Edinburgh: Giles Egypt: Mark; Mary El Salvador: Mary England: George Europe: Benedict; Birgitta of Sweden European Union: Catherine of Siena Florence: John the Baptist France: Anne; Denis; Joan of Arc; Mary; Michael Archangel. Geneva: Francis de Sales Georgia: Andrew; George; Mary; Nino. Germany: Mary Glastonbury: Joseph of Arimathea; Mary; Mary Magdalen Greece: Andrew, Mary (Our Lady of Tinos); Nicholas; Paul Guam: Agueda; Mary Guatemala: James the Greater; Mary; Maximon Haiti: James the Greater; Senjak Havana: Christopher Hawaii: Damien Holland: Nicholas Honduras: Mary Hungary: Mary India: Francis de Sales; Mary Ireland: Brigid; Mary; Patrick Israel: Elijah the Prophet; Esther; Michael Archangel Italy: Catherine of Siena; Francis of Assisi; Mary Jamaica: Mary

Japan: Mary (Our Lady of Akita) Jews: Elijah the Prophet; Michael Archangel Jews, Iranian or Persian: Esther Jordan: John the Baptist Korea: Mary Kuwait: Mary Las Vegas: Peter Lebanon: Maron; Mary; Michael Archangel Lisbon: Vincent London: Elen of the Roads; Paul; Peter Los Angeles: Mary (Our Lady of the Angels) Luxembourg: Mary Lyon: Blandina; Mary Madrid: Helena; Isidore the Laborer Malta: Agatha; Mary; Paul Maracaibo: Mary (Our Lady of Chiquinguira) Marrakesh: Sidi Bel Abbes Mexico: Guadalupe Moldavia: Paraskeva the New Moscow: George; Matrona of Moscow Naples: Gennaro; Patricia of Naples New Orleans: Joan of Arc; Marie Laveau; Mary (Our Lady of Prompt Succour) New York City: Mychal Judge New Zealand: Mary Nicaragua: James the Greater; Mary Nigeria: Mary Nile river: Michael Archangel Palermo: Agatha; Benedict the Black; Rosalia Panama: Mary Paraguay: Mary Paris: Genevieve; Helena Pest (part of Budapest): Sebastian Peru: Mary Philippines: Anne; Mary Poland: Boris and Gleb; Mary (Our Lady of Czestochowa) Portugal: Mary; Victor Prague: John of Nenomuk

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Provence: Martha Puerto Rico: John the Baptist; Mary Quebec: Anne Roma (Gypsy): Cyprian; Sarah Romania: Andrew; Mary; Philothea Rome: Lawrence; Paul; Peter Russia: Andrew; Boris and Gleb Saint Kitt's: Christopher Saint Louis: Louis Saint Lucia: Lucy San Diego: James the Greater San Francisco: Francis of Assisi San Juan, Puerto Rico: John the Baptist Santa Fe: Foy Santiago, Chile: James the Greater Santiago, Cuba: James the Greater Scotland: Andrew Serbia: Paraskeva the New; Sava Sicily: Agatha; Andrew; Rosalia Slovakia: John of Nepomuk; Mary South Africa: Mary Spain: James the Greater; Mary Sweden: Birgitta of Sweden Switzerland: Mary Syria: Sergius and Bacchus Tanzania: Mary Tibet: Avalokiteshvara; Tara Tunis: Sidi Mehrez Turkey: John the Revelator Uganda: Mary Ukraine: Andrew United Kingdom: Mary **United States: Mary** Uruguay: Mary Venezuela; Bolívar, Simón; María Lionza; Mary (Our Lady of Coromoto) Venice: Mark; Roch

Vermont: Anne Vietnam: Mary; Trung Sisters Wales: David Zaire: Mary

HOBBIES AND SPORTS

Angling: Andrew; Benno Archery: Hubert; Sebastian Baseball: Rita Bicycling: Mary Equestrians: Anne Fencing: Michael Golf: Barbara Ice skating: Lidwina Mountain climbing: Bernard of Montjoux Skiing: Bernard of Montjoux Surfing: Christopher

NEEDS, DESIRES, DISASTERS, TROUBLES, EMERGENCIES

Saint Expedite is patron saint of emergencies, in general. Saint Genevieve is invoked to prevent disasters. Saint Gregory the Wonder Worker is invoked in cases of disaster, especially natural disasters.

Abduction: Bathilde Abuse, domestic: Anastacia; Godelieve; Ksenya; Monica Abuse, spousal: Taigi, Anna Maria; Uncumber Abuse, verbal: Taigi, Anna Maria Abuse, workplace: Anastacia Accusations, false: Blandina; Brice; Helen of Skofde Alligators and crocodiles: George Animal attack: Francis of Assisi; Vitus Animal, rabid: Quiteria Bombs: Barbara Breast-feeding, problems: Agatha; Giles; Guglielma; Isabel of Portugal;

матіпа тпе мопк Crime: Colonia, Sarita; Muerte, La Santissima. Crop failure: Walpurga Curse, deathbed: Aquilina Death of children: Antonietta Meo; Isidore the Laborer; Jizo; Julitta; Victor Demons and demonic possession: Agrippina; Aldegund; Bathild; Benedict; Denis; Donatio; Dymphna; Ignatius Loyola; Margaret of Antioch; Vitus Desert, dangers: Difunta Correa Dog, dangerous: Hubert Dog, rabid: Quiteria; Walpurga Drought: Eulalia of Barcelona; Isidore the Laborer; John of Nepomuk; **Trung Sisters** Drowning: Adjutor; Eligius; John of Nepomuk Earthquake: Agatha; Gregory the Wonder Worker; Margaret of Antioch Employment: Anthony of Padua; Onofrio; Pancras **Enemies:** Alexius Evil: John the Conqueror Explosion: Barbara **Explosives:** Barbara Famine: Jesús Malverde; Joan of Arc; Walpurga Fire: Barbara; Eligius; Florian; Jizo; Michael Archangel; Viridiana Floods: Avalokiteshvara; Christopher; Eligius; Gregory the Wonder Worker; John of Nepomuk; Margaret of Antioch; Margaret of Hungary; Trung Sisters Gambling problems: Camillus; Catherine of Alexandria; Maximón Ghosts: Aquilina; Michael Archangel; Vitus Hauntings: Vitus Immigration: Colonia, Sarita; Fidencio, El Niño; Jaramillo, Don Pedro; Jesús Malverde; Toribio Romo Incest: Dymphna Infidelity: Agnes In-laws: Godelieve Insects: Barbara: Francis of Assisi Justice: María Soledad; Meinrad; Michael Archangel; San La Muerte; Yves Kidnapping: Bathild

Land Mines: Barbara Lightning: Barbara; Victor Lost, hopeless, or impossible causes: Amram ben Diwan; Anthony of Padua; Gregory the Wonder Worker; Jude; Pancras; Philomena; Rita Missing persons: Anthony of Padua; Jude Natural disasters: Agatha; Margaret of Antioch Nightmares: Bartholomew; John the Baptist Parents, bad: Maurice **Pirates:** Aubin Poison: John the Revelator; Paul Poverty: Acarie, Madame; Anthony of Padua; Bousso; Mame Diarra; Brigid; Cajetan; Germaine Cousin; John the Conqueror; Jude; Martín de Porres: Martin of Tours. Racial tension: Martín de Porres Rape: Agatha; Anastacia; Dymphna; Michael Archangel; Solange Rodents: Gertrude of Nivelles; Francis of Assisi; Martin de Porres Sexual harassment: Anastacia Slavery: Blandina; Marron; Roch Snakes: Agatha; Brigid; George; Hubert; Viridiana; Vitus Storms: Barbara; Margaret of Antioch; Sidi Ben Achir; Sidi Merri Thirst: Francisco Lopez Torture: Agatha; Blandina Traffic and traveling: Christopher; Colonia, Sarita; Difunta Correa; Elen of the Roads; Frances of Rome; Gaucho Gil; Gilda; James the Greater; Kwan Yin Vampires: Andrew; Aquilina; Hilda; Ignatius Loyola Vermin: Francis of Assisi Violent death: Bartholomew Volcanoes: Agatha; Gennaro

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