

The Saints and Mary

Sunday, November 22, 2020

- *A Saint's life reflects of Christ's life*
- *Therefore, the lives of Saints are rooted in scripture*
- *When the Church declares someone a Saint, the Church realizes her own being*

St. Nicholas (died 346)



On Dec. 6, the faithful commemorate a bishop in the early church who was known for generosity and love of children. Born in Lycia in Asia Minor around the late third or fourth century.

As a young man he is said to have made a pilgrimage to Palestine and Egypt to study in the school of the Desert Fathers. On returning some years later he was almost immediately ordained Bishop of Myra, which is now Demre, on the coast of modern-day Turkey. The bishop was imprisoned during the Diocletian persecution and only released when Constantine the Great came to power and made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire.

One of the most famous stories of the generosity of St. Nicholas says that he threw bags of gold through an open window in the house of a poor man to serve as dowry for the man's daughters, who otherwise would have been forced into prostitution. The gold is said to have landed in the family's shoes, which were drying near the fire. Therefore, children leave their shoes out by the door or hang their stockings by the fireplace in the hopes of receiving a gift on the eve of his feast.

St. Nicholas is associated with Christmas because of the tradition that he had the custom of giving secret gifts to children. His intercession is sought by the shipwrecked, by those in difficult economic circumstances, and for those affected by fires. He died on December 6, 346.

*St. Nicholas imaged Christ in his care for the poor and his love of children
Lives of Saints are tied to scripture and told in a scriptural way. Often their stories seem unreal to us because of the emphasis on their holiness.*

In the early Church the sanctity of the Saints seemed obvious, so a canonization process was not needed

St. Jesse of Tsilkani (circa 6th century)



Saint Jesse of Tsilkani arrived in Georgia in the 6th century with the other Syrian fathers and companions of Saint John of Zedazeni.

At the recommendation of Saint John of Zedazeni, Catholicos Evlavios of Kartli consecrated Saint Jesse as bishop of Tsilkani. The holy father traveled throughout his diocese preaching the Holy Gospel. Passing from city to city, from valley to mountain and back, the kind shepherd worked wonders, healed the infirm, cleansed lepers, cast out demons and raised those who were confined to their beds.

When the Lord made known to the saint the day of his repose, he gathered his disciples and church servitors, bade them farewell, blessed them, partook of the Holy Mysteries of Christ, and reposed in peace. His last words were “Lord, into Thy hands I commit my spirit!”

Saint Jesse of Tsilkani is buried in the Tsilkani Church of the Most Holy Theotokos.

St. Jesse imaged Christ with his healings and by casting out demons. Many medieval Saints were missionaries and kings who established the Church in their lands.

St. Grace of Lerida (died 1180)

Saint Grace is a Catholic saint that was the sister of Saint Maria and Saint Bernard. She was born of Muslim descent in Catalonia Spain; but converted to Catholicism.

Saint Grace, along with the help of her brother and sister, worked to help convert their brother, Almanzor, to the Catholic religion. They wanted him to see that the Muslim life was not the right option and that the Catholic church would be able to help save his soul. Their fourth sibling was fiercely loyal to his Muslim traditions and was not interested in converting. He chose his religion over the blood of his



family and turned his family into the authorities. The military authorities martyred Saint Grace in 1180.

The father of Grace was a Muslim Caliph. He was an important official in the Muslim religion and was able to provide nearly everything that his family needed. Being an important official caused him to become heavily disgraced when most of his children decided to convert to Catholicism. The family never reconciled after the children converted to Catholicism.

St. Grace is the patron Saint of the city of Valencia Spain. Her feast day is June 1st.

Most early Saint were killed for their faith. This reflects Christ's crucifixion.

St. Elizabeth of Hungary (1207-1231)

Every person faces good times and bad times. We see this truth in the life of Elizabeth of Hungary. Born in 1207, Elizabeth was the daughter of King Andrew II of Hungary. She grew up a deeply religious child and married Ludwig, the king of Thuringia (in Germany), when she was only 14. The two worked at their marriage. They respected one another. They loved their three children.

As king, Ludwig ruled fairly. As queen, Elizabeth built two hospitals to help her people. She washed and bandaged the sores of lepers. Each day, she gave thick crusty bread—warm from the oven—to hundreds of poor people.

Then Ludwig marched off to fight in the Crusades. (The Catholic Church fought these wars to win back the Holy Land.) While away, he died of the plague. Elizabeth, who was only 20, was heartbroken.

Her uncle tried to force her to marry again, but she had vowed that if anything happened to her husband, she would only serve God.



She helped build a hospital and devoted herself to caring for the sick. Elizabeth wore herself out with her good works, and in 1231, at the age of only 23, she died. Money and fame had never been important to her. She treasured her husband, her children, and God. That is why the Church honors her as a saint. Because she gave so much life-giving bread to the hungry, Elizabeth is the patron saint of bakers.

St. Elizabeth imaged Christ by her charity and generosity

In the middle ages, individual bishops would investigate and proclaim saints

St. Richard of Chichester (1197-1253)



Richard was born, c 1197, in the little town of Wyche, eight miles from Worcester, England. He and his elder brother were left orphans when young and Richard gave up the studies which he loved, to farm his brother's impoverished estate. His brother, in gratitude for Richard's successful care, proposed to make over to him all his lands but he refused both the estate and the offer of a brilliant marriage, to study for the priesthood at Oxford.

In 1235 he was appointed, for his learning and piety, chancellor of that University and afterwards, by St Edmund of Canterbury, chancellor of his diocese. He stood by that Saint in his long contest with the king and accompanied him into exile. After St. Edmund's death Richard returned to England to toil as a simple curate but was soon elected Bishop of Chichester in preference to the worthless nominee of Henry III.

The king in revenge refused to recognize the election and seized the revenues of the see. Richard found himself fighting the same battle in which St Edmund had died. He went to Lyons, was there consecrated as Bishop by Innocent IV in 1245 and returning to England, despite his poverty and the king's hostility, exercised fully his episcopal rights and thoroughly reformed his see. After two years his revenues were restored.

When a priest of noble blood polluted his office by sin, Richard deprived him of his benefice and refused the king's petition in his favor. On the other hand, when

a knight violently put a priest in prison, Richard compelled the knight to walk round the priest's church with the same log of wood on his neck to which he had chained the priest and when the burgesses of Lewes tore a criminal from the church and hanged him, Richard made them dig up the body from its unconsecrated grave and bear it back to the sanctuary they had violated.

Richard died in 1253. He was Canonized in 1262 by Pope Urban IV at Viterbo, Papal States (part of modern Italy). He is the patron Saint of coachmen.

St. Richard imaged Christ when he condemned the sins of powerful men despite the risk

Beginning in the 12th century, canonization of saints was reserved to the pope in Rome so that the Saints would be recognized throughout the Church

St. Nicolette (1381-1447)



Carpenter's daughter whose parents were near 60 at her birth. Colette was orphaned at age 17, and left in the care of a Benedictine abbot. Her guardian wanted her to marry, but Colette was drawn to religious life.

She had visions in which Saint Francis of Assisi ordered her to restore the Rule of Saint Clare to its original severity. When she hesitated, she was struck blind for three days and mute for three more; she saw this as a sign to take action.

Colette tried to follow her mission by explaining it; but had no success. Realizing she needed more authority behind her words, she walked to Nice, France, barefoot and clothed in a habit of patches, to meet Peter de Luna, acknowledged by the French as the schismatic Pope Benedict XIII. He professed her a Poor Clare, and was so impressed that he made her superioress of all convents of Minoreesses that she might reform or found, and a missionary to Franciscan friars and tertiaries.

She travelled from convent to convent, meeting opposition, abuse, slander, and was even accused of sorcery. Eventually she made some progress, especially in Savoy, where her reform gained sympathizers and recruits. This reform passed to Burgundy in France to Flanders in Belgium and to Spain.

Colette helped Saint Vincent Ferrer heal the papal schism. She founded seventeen convents; one branch of the Poor Clares is still known as the *Colettines*. She was known for a deep devotion to Christ's Passion with an appreciation and care for animals. Colette fasted every Friday, meditating on the Passion. After receiving Holy Communion, she would fall into ecstasies for hours. She foretold the date of her own death.

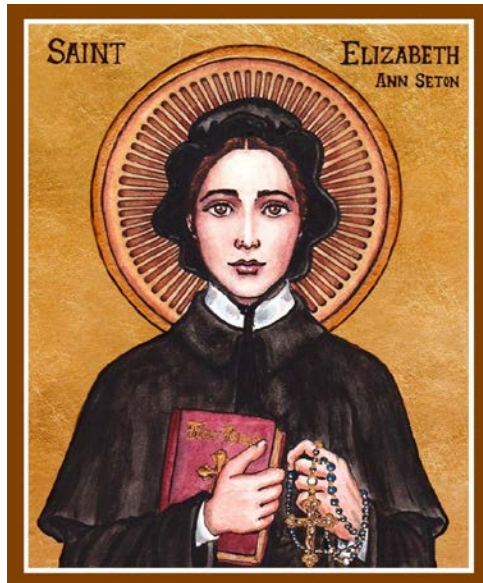
St. Nicolette is the patron Saint of women seeking to conceive, expectant mothers and sick children.

Women Saints such as St. Nicholette and St. Catherine of Siena were instrumental in healing a 15th century schism in which two or more men in France and Rome claimed to be pope

The Saints carry forth Christ's teaching by word and example

Christ prayed that his followers would be united. St. Nicholette tried to unite the Church by healing the papal schism

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton (1774-1821)



Mother Seton is one of the keystones of the American Catholic Church. She founded the first American religious community for women, the Sisters of Charity. She opened the first American parish school and established the first American Catholic orphanage. All this she did in the span of 46 years while raising her five children.

Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton is a true daughter of the American Revolution, born August 28, 1774, just two years before the Declaration of Independence. Reared a staunch Episcopalian, she learned the value of prayer, Scripture and a nightly examination of conscience.

The early deaths of her mother in 1777 and her baby sister in 1778 gave Elizabeth a feel for eternity and the temporariness of the pilgrim life on earth. Far from being brooding and sullen, she faced each new "holocaust," as she put it, with hopeful cheerfulness.

At 19, Elizabeth was the belle of New York and married a handsome, wealthy businessman, William Magee Seton. They had five children before his business

failed and he died of tuberculosis. At 30, Elizabeth was widowed, penniless, with five small children to support.

While in Italy with her dying husband, Elizabeth witnessed Catholicity in action through family friends. Three basic points led her to become a Catholic: belief in the Real Presence, devotion to the Blessed Mother and conviction that the Catholic Church led back to the apostles and to Christ. Many of her family and friends rejected her when she became a Catholic in March 1805.

To support her children, she opened a school in Baltimore. From the beginning, her group followed the lines of a religious community, which was officially founded in 1809.

The thousand or more letters of Mother Seton reveal the development of her spiritual life from ordinary goodness to heroic sanctity. She suffered great trials of sickness, misunderstanding, the death of loved ones (her husband and two young daughters) and the heartache of a wayward son.

She died January 4, 1821, and became the first American-born citizen to be beatified (1963) and then canonized (1975). She is buried in Emmitsburg, Maryland. She is the patron Saint of Catholic Schools, seafarers and widows.

The Saints reflect God's love for man in the worst of circumstances

BREAK

Mary, Mother of God

Mary was Christ's first disciple

- She asked for Christ's help for others at the wedding at Cana
- She never abandoned Christ at the crucifixion
- Mary is a conduit of grace and a vehicle of God's providence
- Mary is an image of the Church
- She pondered the events of Christ's life
- She said yes at the Annunciation and thereby carried God's story forward in Christ

Our Lady of Guadalupe

In December of 1531, a poor native Aztec Indian named Juan Diego was walking through the hills outside of Mexico City on his way to Mass. He heard sweet music



and a woman's voice calling his name from a hill called Tepeyac.

Juan Diego climbed the hill and found a woman who looked like she was also Aztec and dressed in traditional Aztec clothing. She identified herself as the Virgin Mary and instructed Juan Diego to tell his bishop to build a shrine on Tepeyac hill to encourage faithfulness in the people of Mexico City.

When he heard Juan Diego's request, the bishop was skeptical and asked for a sign. When Juan Diego went back and gave this message to Mary, she told him to go to the top of Tepeyac hill and pick the roses he would find there. Juan Diego gathered the roses in his *tilma*, a cloak-like a poncho, and Mary arranged the flowers and told

him to take them to the bishop.

When Juan showed the bishop the roses, they saw that an image of Mary was left upon Juan's cloak. The bishop was immediately convinced and built a shrine on Tepeyac. Soon, some 8 million people had come to the faith because of Mary's apparition.

Our Lady of Guadalupe was declared patroness of the Americas. And, as, in the image of Guadalupe, she is portrayed as an expectant mother (her pregnancy is indicated by the high-waisted black sash) she is depicted as pregnant with Jesus, she is also the patron of the Right to Life movement.

NEXT WEEK: OUR ETERNAL DESTINY, CHAPTER 13

Closing prayer: Hail Mary