

THE 2024 DIGITAL *Saintly Scorecard*

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE
TO LENT MADNESS 2024

LENT  MADNESS

lentmadness.org

ABOUT LENT MADNESS

Lent Madness began in 2010 as the brainchild of the Rev. Tim Schenck. In seeking a fun, engaging way for people to learn about the men and women who have inspired generations of Christians, Tim came up with this unique Lenten devotion. Combining his love of sports with his passion for the lives of the saints, Lent Madness was born on his blog “Clergy Confidential.”

The format is straightforward: 32 saints are placed in a tournament-style, single-elimination bracket. Each pairing remains open for 24 hours, and people vote for their favorite saints. Sixteen saints make it to the Saintly Sixteen; eight advance to the Elate Eight; four make it to the Faithful Four; two to the Championship; and the winner is awarded the coveted Golden Halo. The first round consists of basic biographical information about each of the 32 saints, then things get more interesting in the subsequent rounds as we offer quotes and quirks, explore legends, and even move into the area of saintly kitsch.

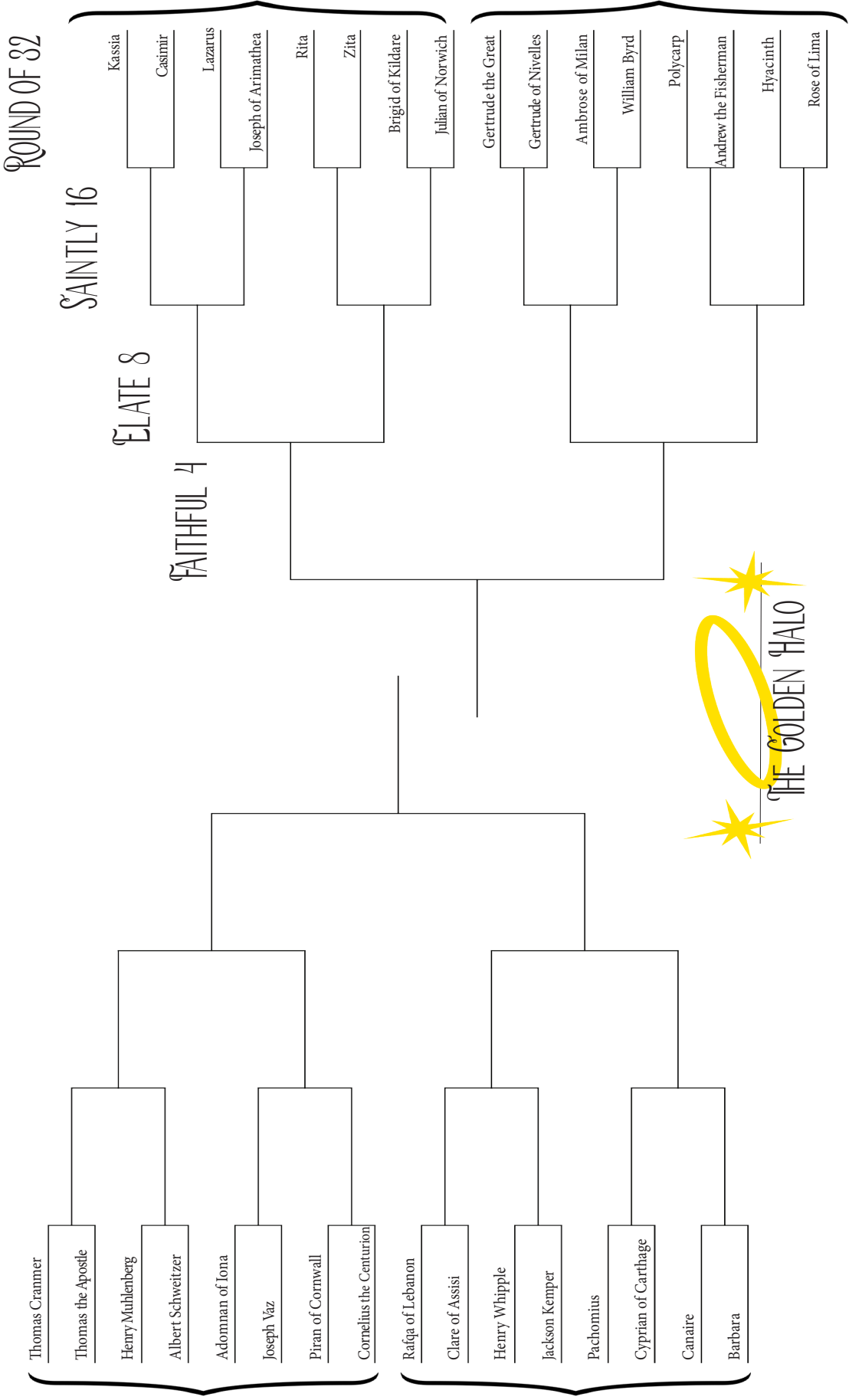
In 2012, Tim partnered with the Rev. Canon Scott Gunn, executive director of Forward Movement, an historic move that brought Lent Madness to the masses. With Tim and Scott serving as the self-appointed Supreme Executive Committee, Lent Madness has become the world's most popular online Lenten devotion. Or at least that's our story.

Of course, the entire notion of saints “competing” with one another is absurd—each one of them has already received his or her “golden halo.” As long as people are learning and having fun in the process, the eventual outcome is wholly irrelevant.

Yes, Lent is a sacred time of preparation, penitence, self-reflection, and renewal, but there's no reason a Lenten discipline need be dreary as we “prepare with joy for the Paschal feast.” Taking our faith seriously—but not ourselves—is the essence of Lent Madness, and as it continues to grow and evolve, what won't change is the opportunity to meet some amazing people who have come before us in the faith. What we learn from the saints is that they, like us, are flawed human beings through whose lives Christ's love shone brightly. If this love can shine brightly in their lives, perhaps we too can be beacons of the Good News.

Learn more at lentmadness.org

Follow the match-up daily during Lent at lentmadness.org





ADOMNAN OF IONA

O God, by whose grace your servant Adomnan, kindled with the flame of your love, became a burning and a shining light in your Church: Grant that we also may be aflame with the spirit of love and discipline, and walk before you as children of light; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (BCP)

How to hagiographize the hagiographer?

Also known as Eunan, Adomnan was born around 624 CE in what is now County Donegal, Ireland. As a young man, he became renowned for his scholarship, mastery of scripture, and deep theological thought. It's not entirely clear when he joined the famous monastery at Iona, but this learned monk is closely identified with it.

His most well-known work is the *Life of Columba*, the story of the founder and first abbot of the island-based Iona Abbey, where Adomnan himself also served as abbot (in 679 he became the ninth abbot after Columba). Not only does Adomnan's story recount the founding of the abbey, it also (for all its inconsistencies) gives the most thorough history of medieval Scotland. This hagiography is part of how Columba became known as one of the 12 Apostles of Ireland and helped vault him to his status as a beloved and popular saint.

Adomnan promoted his Law, AKA Cain Adomnain, AKA the Law of Innocents, which took root throughout Ireland. The law exempted women, children, and clerics from going to battle. It's widely credited with making medieval warfare more humane. Or at least less monstrous. This was the first agreement of its kind, and some have called it an ancient Geneva Accords.

The Catholic cathedral in Letterkenny, County Donegal is named for both him and St. Columba in a cute combo of canonicity. Because of their geographical and biographical proximity, Adomnan and Columba are often considered a two-for-one deal.

Adomnan was instrumental in Iona's (and eventually all of Ireland's) official adoption of the Roman calculation of Easter – that is, the decision that the feast falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon of spring. So next time you're googling “what date is Easter this year,” you can thank Adomnan.

Adomnan died on September 23, 704, and soon thereafter was named a saint in Scotland and Ireland. His feast day is celebrated on the 23rd of September, and his relics reside in Iona.

If you, too, have an appreciation for:

1. Your ancestors, predecessors, and institutional memory
2. The protection of women, children, and clerics
3. Consistency in calendaring

Then you should love Adomnan.

KEEGAN OSINSKI



AMBROSE OF MILAN

O God, who gave your servant Ambrose grace eloquently to proclaim your righteousness in the great congregation and fearlessly to bear reproach for the honor of your Name: Mercifully grant to all bishops and pastors such excellence in preaching and faithfulness in ministering your Word, that your people may be partakers with them of the glory that shall be revealed; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (LFF 2022)

On the off chance you find yourself in a tense gathering to choose a bishop, and a child's voice sounds out, offering your name as a prime choice, you might wish to run, and quickly. It was how Ambrose, at the time an unbaptized catechumen, found himself on a journey that would lead to him being baptized and ordained as bishop within a week.

Ambrose of Milan was born around 339 CE. From a young age he was recognized as being an excellent speaker and became a successful attorney. In 370, he became governor of that portion of Milan and the surrounding region. It was four years later, when the Arian bishop of twenty years died, and the city was torn in strife as to the election of a new bishop. Ambrose, in his role as governor, came to the electing convention to appeal for peace – at which point a child's voice first cried "Ambrose for bishop!" with the crowd quickly following. He tried to reject the call. Yet when word reached the emperor, rather than grant Ambrose a reprieve, he quipped that he was pleased to have chosen governors who were fit for episcopal office. Ambrose was baptized and ordained bishop within the week. He was only thirty-five years old.

Ambrose took on a tutor to guide him in Christian thought, studying the works of Origen and Basil among others. His considerable skill at poetry and oratory made him a prolific hymn writer, and a skillful author of practical discourses on Christian faith and practice. He became a mentor and influence on perhaps the most influential theologian of Western Christianity – Augustine of Hippo – and he himself baptized Augustine on Easter Eve of 387.

Perhaps Ambrose's greatest mark of distinction was that he did not hesitate to stand fast in the face of secular authorities, including the emperors of both the Western and Eastern Roman Empires. He warned the young emperor Gratian of the importance of upholding the catholic faith against the Arian heresy – even though Gratian's own uncle was chief protector to the Arians. He told Valentinian that the emperor was in the church, and not above it. And when Theodosius became the undisputed ruler of both the eastern and western, Ambrose would rebuke and excommunicate him for his role in a massacre at Thessalonica that had killed thousands of innocents. Theodosius, realizing Ambrose's sway and moral voice, did public penance and was restored to the community of the church.

Ambrose would survive Theodosius by two years and would die on Good Friday of 397 at the age of fifty-seven. Ambrose was buried in the crypt of the Basilica that now bears his name in Milan.

DAVID SIBLEY



ANDREW THE FISHERMAN

Almighty God, who gave such grace to your apostle Andrew that he readily obeyed the call of your Son Jesus Christ, and brought his brother with him: Give us, who are called by your Holy Word, grace to follow him without delay, and to bring those near to us into his gracious presence; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (BCP)

St. Andrew is a saint whom we encounter first in the pages of Scripture. He and his brother Simon are casting their nets into the Sea of Galilee when Jesus strolls by and asks them to join with him. Immediately, he drops his net and follows. From then on, Andrew becomes a disciple of Jesus.

In John's gospel, the encounter is presented slightly differently –John records Andrew as being a disciple of John the Baptist first, before John kindly redirects his focus to Jesus, exclaiming “Behold the Lamb of God!” as Jesus walks past one day. Upon hearing this, Andrew and his brother up and start trailing after Jesus, evidently without even a word of introduction. After a few moments, Jesus realizes he's acquired literal followers and asks them what they're doing. Andrew responds by asking “Rabbi, where are you staying?” Jesus invites him to come and see, and again, from then on, he is a steadfast companion.

Following Christ's resurrection, tradition varies widely about what became of him. Eusebius quotes Origen, who tells us that Andrew went to Scythia to preach, and then all around northern Greece and what is now southern Russia. The Chronicle of Nestor records that he continued on, making it as far as Kiev, and then to Novogorod. He then went to Thrace to preach, founded the city of Constantinople on his way, and finally ended up in Achaia, in Patras, where he was put to death by the Roman Empire. Andrew protested his death, not because he feared death, but because he felt himself unworthy to die in the same manner as his Lord, and so he was crucified by being bound –not nailed –to the cross, though the exact X shape that has come to be known as the saltire was only described in the Middle Ages.

Because of his extensive travels, St. Andrew is the patron saint of Ukraine, Russia, Romania, Scotland, and Constantinople, as well as fishermen and singers.

MEGAN CASTELLAN



BARBARA

Embolden your church, O God, with the stories of your saints Catherine, Barbara, and Margaret, that we might face all trials and adversities with a fearless mind and an unbroken spirit, knowing that we are more than conquerors through Jesus Christ who strengthens us. Through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (LFF 2022)

Barbara was born in the third century CE in either Heliopolis in Syria (or possibly in modern-day Egypt) or Nicomedia in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) to a wealthy pagan family. After the death of Barbara's mother, her father was worried for her safety, so he built a large tower to protect her – and keep her isolated from men.

Despite her father's shrewd sheltering of her early life, Barbara converted to Christianity and refused to marry, having chosen consecrated virginity. It's said that a traveling physician introduced Barbara to Christianity during one of her father's extended absences. She believed the message of faith and was baptized. While her father was away, she hired workmen to construct a third window in her tower to represent the Trinity. She also used her finger to etch a cross upon the wall. Upon her father's return, Barbara explained the significance of the windows and told him of her newfound faith.

Her enraged father intended to give her over to the authorities, but she was miraculously whisked away to a mountain gorge. Her father pursued her and eventually persuaded a shepherd to betray her hiding place.

Like many women of her time who wanted to resist forced marriage and assert their autonomy, she committed herself to the church in order to avoid various crusty dusty suitors. Her father therefore sent her to her martyrdom, and in some stories, he beheaded her himself, so loath he was to pawn her off to another man.

Of course, since she was a holy woman, her evil father was punished by being struck by lightning and entirely consumed by fire on his way home. For this reason, St. Barbara is prayed to for protection from explosives. Which is kind of ironic.

Her feast day is December 4, and she is the patron saint of military workers, including gunsmiths, artillery detachments, armor makers, and mathematicians. Her relics can be found at St. Vladimir Cathedral in Kiev. According to the Orthodox Church in America's website, "The hand of Saint Barbara is kept in a special shrine at Saint Michael's Monastery in Kiev, on the left side of the church. The glove covering her hand is changed frequently, then the old glove is cut up and the pieces are distributed to pilgrims." This does make me wonder, what do they do with the other glove of the pair?

If you like

1. Independent women
2. Bad guys getting blown up
3. Fancy gloves

Then you'll love Saint Barbara.



BRIGID OF KILDARE

O God, whose servant Brigid, kindled with the flame of your love, became a shining light in your church: Grant that we also may be aflame with the spirit of love and discipline, and walk before you as children of light; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (LFF 2022)

Maybe it's surprising that St. Brigid of Kildare is so universally beloved when her miracles include popping her own eye out of its socket and causing her brother's eyeballs to explode in his head. But then, Brigid also is said to have hung her coat on a literal sunbeam.

She's known as the "Mary of the Gael" and considered — alongside St. Patrick and St. Columba — one of the three national saints of Ireland.

And, in recent years, the Brigidine Sisters in Kildare report they've seen a reclamation of the traditions and customs associated with their namesake.

"Her life still speaks to us in the twenty-first century," according to the sisters' website. Brigid was born at what the Brigidine Sisters call a "a time of major transition" in fifth century Ireland and "embodies in herself the pre-Christian Celtic and Christian Celtic spirit."

Her father was a local chieftain and her mother a slave who was sold to a Druid when the chieftain's wife discovered she was pregnant. Brigid was raised in the Druid's home, reportedly befriending him and St. Patrick alike. One of the earliest writings about her life, "Broccan's Hymn," describes Brigid as a "wonderful ladder for pagan-folk to visit the kingdom of Mary's Son." She still links Christianity and contemporary Pagan traditions, as some believe Brigid may not have been a historical figure, but rather a Christianization of the Celtic goddess who shares the same name and many attributes.

Brigid gave freely to the poor; performed wonders from an early age and, after refusing marriage with her eye-popping miracle, entered consecrated life. In one of the best-known stories about Brigid, St. Mel accidentally read her the order of episcopal consecration, which would make her a bishop. When it was brought to Mel's attention, he replied, "No power have I in this matter; inasmuch as by God hath been given unto her this honor beyond every woman."

The saint is perhaps best known for the double monastery for men and women she built around 470 in Kildare, which went on to become a center of education, pilgrimage, worship, and hospitality.

Her feast day is February 1, which coincides with the beginning of spring and Imbolc, when Wiccans (plus practitioners of other contemporary Pagan traditions) remember the goddess Brigid; people of many different beliefs mark the occasion by twisting reeds into Brigid's crosses.

EMILY MILLER



WILLIAM BYRD

O God, whom saints and angels delight to worship in heaven: Be ever present with your servants who seek through art and music to perfect the praises offered by your people on earth; and grant to them even now glimpses of your beauty, and make them worthy at length to behold it unveiled for evermore; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (This is the prayer for musicians. The collect for Byrd is protected by copyright. BCP)

William Byrd is considered one of the most important, influential, and famous Renaissance Anglican church music composers. His standing ranks up there with Henry Purcell.

Byrd was born in 1539 or 1540 in London, where he grew up. Wealthy, educated, and raised with a passionate love for music, he was a student, assistant, and friend of Thomas Tallis, a well-known and important musician with whom he is often paired.

Byrd began composing music at an early age and may have been a chorister at the esteemed St. Paul's Cathedral in London. He achieved renown as an organist and chorus master at Lincoln Cathedral, about 150 miles north of London. This notable position and some later appointments brought him within the circle of the reigning Queen Elizabeth I.

Even though his religion had been outlawed by the time he was an adult, Byrd skirted under the religious climate of the day and remained a lifelong Roman Catholic. He composed church music for both the Anglican Church and his own church. Although a Roman Catholic, he was on good terms with Queen Elizabeth I, who was known to be an accomplished musician as was her father, King Henry VIII.

Byrd was a prolific writer of sacred music and published volumes of religious songs, psalms, masses, and madrigals for instruments and/or voices, sometimes collaborating with others. It is estimated that more than 600 of his compositions remain. Among his many works – both small and grandiose – for the Anglican Church are “O Lord, Make thy Servant Elizabeth our Queen” and “How Long Shall Mine Enemies Sing Joyfully.”

His association with Tallis prompted a prestigious appointment by Queen Elizabeth I for the selecting, printing, publishing, and selling of music, both religious and secular.

Byrd died of heart failure in Essex 400 hundred years ago, on July 4, 1623, having survived the Elizabethan era as a Roman Catholic. He is buried in an unmarked grave at St. Peter and St. Paul Church in Standon Massey, Essex, England.

Interestingly, Byrd's works do not appear in the widely used Episcopal Church Hymnal 1982, although six compositions by his sometimes-writing partner Tallis are included. Byrd and Tallis, along with fellow English composer John Merbecke, were listed in Holy Women Holy Men for November 21, but they do not appear in Lesser Feasts and Fasts 2022.



CONAIRE

Almighty God, by your Holy Spirit you have made us one with your saints in heaven and on earth: Grant that in our earthly pilgrimage we may always be supported by this fellowship of love and prayer, and know ourselves to be surrounded by their witness to your power and mercy. We ask this for the sake of Jesus Christ, in whom all our intercessions are acceptable through the Spirit, and who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen. (BCP)

Any woman who's been called "stubborn" or "obstinate" or told her gender kept her from following God's calling will relate to the story of St. Conaire.

Little is recorded about Conaire's life, but as it neared its end in the year 530, she had a vision of all the churches of Ireland. A tower of fire rose from each church to heaven, but the greatest tower came from the monastery founded by St. Senan at Inis Cathaig, an island off the coast of County Clare in Ireland.

Naturally, Conaire followed the light to Inis Cathaig, crossing the sea "with dry feet as if she were on smooth land," in one telling. Senan greeted her at the harbor.

"You see, I have come," Conaire said, according to her biography on the website of St. Canera Catholic Church in Neosho, Missouri.

But Senan refused to let her enter the monastery, as the monks' vows of chastity prohibited them from having contact with women.

Conaire's reply rings true through the ages:

How canst thou say that? Art thou better than Jesus Christ? He came to redeem women no less than men. He suffered on the Cross for women as well as men. He opens the kingdom of heaven to women as surely as to men. Why then dost thou shut women out from this isle?

In the end, Senan, apparently unimpressed by the fact Conaire was standing on water throughout this entire exchange, permitted the saint to come ashore, though not much farther. She went to heaven "straightaway" after receiving communion and was buried on the coast, as she had requested.

Her story lives on in the "Life of St. Senan." So does her righteous indignation.

EMILY MILLER



CASIMIR

O God, who didst preserve thy servant Casimir constant and faithful in thy service amidst the delights of a court, and the attractive allurements of the world, grant, we beseech thee, that by his intercession thy people may despise the transitory things of the world and eagerly pursue things which are eternal: through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prince Casimir Jagiellon, prince of the kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, was born at Wawel Castle in Kraków in October 1458. He was the second son of King Casimir IV, but when his elder brother was elected King of Bohemia, he became the heir apparent.

Throughout his life, he was known for his piety and his devotion to the poor and sick. It's hard to know how he had time for religious devotion or charitable acts, because he spent a lot of his time learning languages. He was fluent in Lithuanian, Polish, German, and Latin.

As he grew older, Casimir's reputation for religious piety began to spread. Once when he was awaiting entry at the gate of a church before dawn, he contracted an illness. Another time, he refused physicians' advice to have sexual relations in order to cure his illness. Perhaps because of his own ill health, Casimir was known for his compassionate care of the sick and the poor.

But it wasn't all piety and devotion for the prince. Casimir spent much of his life enmeshed in palace intrigue, both in his own realms and those of neighboring areas. When his father attempted to arrange a marriage between Casimir and the daughter of Emperor Ferdinand III, Casimir refused. He said he preferred to remain celibate, perhaps sensing his own imminent death. Soon after, he developed tuberculosis, from which he died in March 1484 at the tender young age of 25.

Casimir was buried at Vilnius Cathedral. Almost immediately after his death, a cult of devotion arose. Complicated delays at the papacy hampered his cause, but Casimir was canonized as a saint in 1583. Among other miracles, he was said to have appeared to the Lithuanian army at the time of a miraculous victory.

You will often see the saint depicted with three hands, or at least two right hands. Some say this is the result of an early convention to depict Casimir's ability to accomplish so much. How could someone with only two hands do all that?! But there is also a story that the painter of Casimir's portrait in Vilnius Cathedral tried to move the hand in his painting, but the extra hand miraculously reappeared after being painted over. So if you ever see this saint depicted with the "wrong" hands, it's the result of a mistake, a pious symbol, or a miracle.

Today Casimir is recognized as the patron saint of Poland and Lithuania. He should probably also be the patron saint of errors in portraiture.

A. NONNY-MUSS



CLARE OF ASSISI

O God, whose blessed Son became poor that we, through his poverty, might become rich: Deliver us from an inordinate love of this world, that we, inspired by the devotion of your servant Clare, might serve you with singleness of heart and attain to the riches of the age to come; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (LFF 2022)

Clare of Assisi was a thirteenth-century monastic nun and one of the first followers of Francis of Assisi. Clare Offreduccio was born in 1194 to a wealthy, noble Italian family. Her family planned for Clare to marry young, but she insisted on waiting until she was eighteen. When she was eighteen, she heard Francis preach at a Lenten series, and his words led her to seek out Francis and beg him to allow her to join his order. Francis cut Clare's hair, symbolizing austerity and rejection of secular society. At the Palm Sunday service the next week, Clare exchanged her ornate dress for a plain robe with a thick veil. Clare was determined to change her life and, like Francis, renounced her wealth and devoted herself to following a rule of prayer, poverty, and service to the poor.

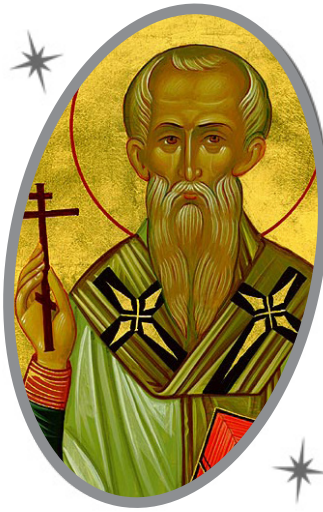
Francis first placed Clare in a convent in San Paulo with Benedictine nuns. Her family and friends tried repeatedly to bring Clare home, but she insisted on staying with the Franciscan order. Once they saw her short hair, they realized she had no intention of returning home and gave up their attempts to remove her. Sixteen days later, Clare's sister, Catarina, joined Clare at the monastery and changed her name to Agnes. Francis placed Clare in a modest dwelling that he rebuilt next to the Church of St. Damiano at Assisi, and other women began to join them. They became known as the Poor Ladies of St. Damiano.

Francis led the order at first, but in 1216, after resisting, Clare assumed the role of abbess. The women followed a strict rule created by Francis focused on prayer and manual labor. The women lived in an enclosure, separating themselves from the secular world. They did not eat meat, walked barefoot, slept on the floor, and mainly lived in silence. What food they ate, they begged for.

Clare wanted her community to follow Francis's rule of strict poverty, which meant the women could not own land. When the opportunity arose to create a more lenient rule, other priests and bishops refused to allow the women to adhere to their rule, so she went to the pope. Pope Gregory IX worried that the women's health would suffer if they did not change their rule and give up such extreme poverty. Clare convinced him to allow the order to continue fully following Christ according to their rule. Gregory IX reapproved their *Privilegium Paupertatis*, or privilege of poverty.

After this victory, Clare began writing a rule for the order they could follow after her death. Her rule was approved two days before she died in 1253 at age 59. After Clare's death, the order changed its name to the Poor Clares. The Poor Clares are active today in the Roman Catholic and Anglican traditions.

MIRIAM MCKENNEY



CORNELIUS THE CENTURION

O God, who by your Spirit called Cornelius the Centurion to be the first Christian among the Gentiles: Grant to your church such a ready will to go where you send and to do what you command that the prejudices that blind us might cease, and that we might welcome all who turn to you in love; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (LFF 2022)

Cornelius was a Gentile and centurion, a commander in the Roman army. Archaeological evidence suggests he was a commander in the Cohors II Italica Civium Romanorum, a cohort of made up of Roman citizens from the Italia region and Syrians. His name associates him with the gens Cornelia, one of the great Roman families that produced lauded statesmen and military leaders.

Cornelius appears in the Book of Acts and is described as a devout man who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously, and who prayed constantly to God. God-fearing signified a person who believed and followed proscriptions of Mosaic law but who had not fully converted to Judaism through circumcision.

Cornelius has a vision where an angel of God says, "Cornelius, your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. Send men to Joppa for a certain Simon who is called Peter." Cornelius does as commanded, not surprising for a career soldier.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch in Joppa, Peter is also having a vision. He sees heaven opened and something like a large sheet coming down filled with various kinds of four-footed creatures and reptiles and birds of the air. Peter hears the voice of God commanding him to eat from the creatures he sees, which appalls Peter; as the creatures are considered unclean by Jewish dietary laws. Peter voices his disapproval, only to have God declare, "What God has made clean, you must not call profane."

While Peter is mulling over this vision, Cornelius's people arrive at the house where Peter is staying. Peter and some women and men go with the messengers to Cæsarea, where Cornelius greets them. Peter and Cornelius share their visions, and both realize they each have part of the new thing God is telling them.

Peter puts it all together, proclaiming that anyone who fears God and practices righteousness is a follower, circumcised or not. Cornelius and his household are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Thus, Cornelius is recognized as the first Gentile convert in some faith traditions.

Acts makes no further mention of Cornelius, and the annals of church history are equally thin. Some traditions hold he became either Bishop of Cæsarea or Bishop of Scepsis in Mysia.

Cornelius is the patron of St. Cornelius Chapel on Governor's Island when it was a military outpost in New York. It has since been closed but is still owned by Trinity Wall Street. The only active Episcopal Church named after St. Cornelius is in Dodge City (yep, of Gunsmoke fame). Founded in 1888, St. Cornelius is the oldest church building in Dodge and has welcomed cowboys and cowgirls, marshals and outlaws, for well over a century.



THOMAS CRANMER

Keep us, O Lord, constant in faith and zealous in witness, that, like your servants Hugh Latimer, Nicholas Ridley, and Thomas Cranmer we may live in your fear, die in your favor, and rest in your peace; for the sake of Jesus Christ, your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (LFF 2022)

If you have taken to heart the prayer to “read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest” the holy scriptures that are written for our learning, or felt in awe in considering how in Holy Communion “we continually dwell in [Christ] and he in us,” you can thank Thomas Cranmer for these memorable turns of phrase.

Born in 1489, Cranmer undertook studies at Jesus College, Cambridge, where he was ordained. There he first came into extended contact with the text of holy scripture and the thought of the Continental Reformation. By 1529, when it was becoming clear that Pope Clement VII would not grant an annulment of Henry VIII's marriage to Catherine of Aragon, Cranmer, convinced of the superiority of the King over the pope in purely English matters, worked eagerly to sway learned opinion on Henry's behalf. When Archbishop of Canterbury William Warham died in 1532, Henry swiftly arranged for Cranmer's elevation to the see of Canterbury.

Upon becoming archbishop, Cranmer became the king's chief instrument in asserting Royal Supremacy over the church in England. He annulled Henry and Catherine's marriage in 1533 (later pronouncing similar judgments on marriages to Anne Boleyn and Anne of Cleves) and he agreed with Parliament's Act of Supremacy in 1534 which split the Church in England from the Roman Church.

Yet Cranmer was also his own man, devoted to the reformation of the English church. Together with Thomas Cromwell, he supported the first widespread dissemination of the Bible in English. After Henry's death, during the reign of Edward VI, Cranmer achieved his greatest legacy and highest ambition—to revise Church services into a “tongue understood by the people.” He published the Great Litany in English in 1544, and his embrace of the ideas of the Continental Reformation ultimately led to the production of the first Book of Common Prayer in 1549 and its subsequent 1552 revision. It was his intense devotion to the English Reformation that would ultimately be his undoing.

Upon the accession of Mary I, a staunch Roman Catholic, to the crown following a nine-day power struggle, Cranmer was accused of treason and heresy, and was arrested and held inhumanely. The stress of his captivity led to deep depression and two recantations of the doctrines he once prized. At his martyrdom, however, he renounced his recantations, and when burned at the stake in Oxford in 1556, he put his hand into fire, proclaiming “this hand hath offended.”

It is to that hand that Anglican churches worldwide owe the masterful prose and poetry and essentially scriptural spirituality that infuse the Book of Common Prayer, guiding us in prayer to this day.

DAVID SIBLEY



CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE

Almighty God, who gave to your servant Cyprian boldness to confess the Name of our Savior Jesus Christ before the rulers of this world and courage to die for this faith: Grant that we may always be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in us and to suffer gladly for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (LFF 2022)

Thascius Caecilius Cyprianus, whom we know as St. Cyprian, was born in Carthage around the year 200 CE. Although he faced persecution and torture, he persevered for his faith. A theologian and a bishop, Cyprian was the first bishop martyr of Africa.

During his lifetime, Carthage was an important city for trade, manufacturing, and agriculture. The port of Carthage saw trade with all parts of the known world—Asia, Africa, India, and the Mediterranean. This allowed Cyprian a global-knowledge and an understanding of others.

His parents were well-to-do pagans; his father was a senator. Cyprian was educated in the law. After a wild-boy phase, he practiced law and converted to Christianity in 246. Two years later, he was a bishop, and shortly thereafter, he faced persecution by Roman Emperor Decius, which forced him into hiding, although some refer to this as a retreat. Nevertheless, he returned to Carthage in 251, only to face more threats, this time from the new Emperor Gallus in 252.

He was no stranger to controversy in the early church. He was a strong believer in baptism and displayed his Christian beliefs in his daily living; for example, he organized medical assistance during a particularly nasty plague.

The ongoing persecutions greatly impacted him and his authority as a bishop. While he survived physical threats, he also found himself at odds over fundamental theology with the Bishop of Rome, Stephen. Pope Stephen's death in 257 ended all those disputes, only to be followed shortly thereafter with more persecution, this time by Emperor Valerian.

Cyprian was a writer, orator, translator, teacher, and religious leader who displayed no fear. He was a prolific letter-writer, allowing him to connect with his far-flung flock throughout North Africa. His expansive library of books, letters, and essays focus on ethics, history, and Christian thought; one that has been passed on through the ages is *On the Unity of The Catholic Church*.

Nonetheless, Cyprian did not survive Roman persecution. He was martyred on September 14, 258 in his hometown of Carthage. In the public square, he was tried and beheaded, so to make him an example to others. Legend says he gave 25 gold coins to his executioner.

His feast day is celebrated in the Anglican, Episcopal, Western and Eastern Orthodox, Lutheran, and Catholic Churches. He is listed for September 13 in *Lesser Feasts and Fasts 2022*. He is the patron saint of North Africa and the Berbers, a North African ethnic group, also known as Amazigh or Imazighen. As for his remains, nearly 500 years after his death, Charlemagne sent his relics to France; parts of St. Cyprian are claimed in Lyons, Arles, Venice, Compiègne, and Flanders.



GERTRUDE THE GREAT

Almighty God, who gave to your servants Mechthilde and Gertrude special gifts of grace to understand and teach the truth in Christ Jesus: Grant that by their teachings we may know you, the one true God, and Jesus Christ your Son; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gertrude the Great (1256 – c. 1302) was a German Benedictine nun, mystic, theologian, and writer. Gertrude was born on January 6, 1256, in Eisleben, Thuringia. As is often the case with people who lived long ago, there are differing accounts of her early life. One source claims that at age four or five, Gertrude was taken to St. Mary's Monastery to the monastery's school in Helfta with the intention of her becoming an oblate when she was old enough. Another source claims that she was taken to St. Mary's due to her parents' death. The abbess put Gertrude in the care of Mechthilde, a nun and the abbess's younger sister. St. Mary's was known for cultivating the spiritual gifts of the nuns who lived there, and we have written works from this time that prove the success of the nuns' intellectual and spiritual environment.

Gertrude thrived in the Monastery under the care of Mechthilde and eventually entered the monastery formally and studied various subjects. The two were close throughout their lives as nuns. In 1281, at age 25, Gertrude experienced a vision that changed her life, the first of many. She began to focus her studies on theology and scripture and cultivated a strong practice of prayer and meditation. She wrote spiritual treatises for the other nuns and, along with Mechthilde, practiced nuptial mysticism, seeing herself as the bride of Christ.

Gertrude wrote many works, but only a few remain. Her most well-known work is *Legatus Memorialis Abundantiae Divinae Pietatis* or *The Herald of Divine Love*. Comprised of five books, book two was written by Gertrude and is viewed as the core of the work. Other nuns wrote the other books during and after Gertrude's lifetime; it's possible that Gertrude dictated some of them to nuns. Gertrude's writings give us insight into her education at the monastery, as she wrote in fluent Latin, and show that Gertrude knew scriptures and the writing of early theologians and philosophers, including Augustine, as well as her contemporaries, including William of St. Thierry and Bernard of Clairvaux.

Because she became known as the most prominent theological writer of her time, male or female, she was given the title Gertrude the Great. Gertrude died in 1302, but the exact date is unknown. Therefore, people often commemorate her with her foster mother and teacher, Mechthilde. The Episcopal Church celebrates her feast day on November 21.

MIRIAM MCKENNEY



GERTRUDE OF NIVELLES

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

Some people spend March 17 celebrating a certain saint by going out for a green beer. Others celebrate by staying in with their cat.

That's because two saints share the same feast day: St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, and St. Gertrude of Nivelles, the patron saint of cats.

Gertrude was born around 628 CE into "what was to become the most illustrious dynasty of early medieval Europe," according to scholar Miles Pattenden. Her great-great-great-nephew was Charlemagne, Pattenden notes, and the king of the Franks attended a banquet hosted by her family when Gertrude was 10 years old.

At that banquet, Gertrude reportedly lost her temper when King Dagobert offered to arrange her marriage to a duke, swearing she would not marry "any earthly spouse but Christ the Lord." The king and her father might have tried to convince her otherwise, but the two men died shortly thereafter.

A stream of suitors continued until Gertrude and her mother, Itta, established their own monastery, the Abbey of Nivelles in present-day Belgium. Gertrude became abbess after Itta's death, welcoming Irish monks and other pilgrims, memorizing much of Scripture and tending to her garden.

So where do the cats come in?

Buckle up for this journey: One theory goes that because Gertrude was known for her hospitality (or maybe because she often prayed for those in purgatory), she was embraced as the patron saint of travelers and those who had recently died — who, you could say, were traveling from one life to the next, perhaps with a layover in purgatory. Because souls in purgatory were portrayed as mice, Gertrude was often depicted with mice at her feet or scurrying up her robes. Because Gertrude was covered in mice, she was invoked against rodents. Then she became associated with cats, who also are handy in warding off mice.

Gertrude is rumored to be handy in warding off sea monsters, too, but we'll save the legends for future rounds of Lent Madness.

Meantime, if you need an excuse to stay in this St. Patrick's Day, St. Gertrude of Nivelles stands ready to provide it.

EMILY MILLER



HYACINTH

O God, who didst make Blessed Hyacinth, Thy Confessor, glorious amongst the people of divers nations for the holiness of his life and the glory of his miracles, grant that by his example we may amend our lives, and be defended by his help in all adversities. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hyacinth was born in 1185 to a noble family in Silesia, Poland. As young nobleman of his age did, he received a thorough education and was trained as a priest, where his uncle (a bishop) appointed him as a canon at a local cathedral. This same uncle took Hyacinth with him when he traveled to Rome, a trip that would change Hyacinth's life.

During his time in Rome, Hyacinth encountered Dominic of Osma, who had recently founded the order of Dominicans, a group of avowed people committed to sharing the Gospel through preaching the Good News and preaching against heresy. Hyacinth received his religious habit in 1220 from Dominic himself.

Hyacinth then returned to Poland and Kyiv to establish the Dominican Order in the Northlands and preach to the people of Poland. Through his efforts, Dominican friaries soon existed in all the major cities in Poland and thousands of lay people were converted to Christianity through the preaching of Hyacinth. Tradition holds that Hyacinth evangelized throughout northern Europe in city squares, markets, and streets and if necessary, churches, leading to his title as Apostle of the North.

When Hyacinth was in Kyiv, the city was invaded by Moguls. Hyacinth ordered his friars to flee for their safety. He finished praying Mass, then prepared to move to safety himself. In full vestments, he took the Blessed Sacrament with him. As he was leaving, legend holds Hyacinth heard the voice of the Blessed Virgin Mary asking Hyacinth to take her, too. Hyacinth realized the statue of Mary, Mother of God, was quite large and heavy, but he complied, and to his surprise, he was able to easily carry the large statue. Images of Hyacinth frequently show him carrying a monstrance (even though monstrances weren't used until over a century later) and a statue of Mary. He is also the patron saint of weightlifters.

A Polish saying, "Święty Jacek z pierogami!" (St. Hyacinth and his pierogi!) comes from another miracle attributed to Hyacinth. The saying is one of pleasant surprise, and comes from the story that Hyacinth, while walking from one village to another, came upon the town of Kościelec, where the crops had been destroyed due to hailstorms. The villagers faced certain starvation with no crops to harvest for bread. Hyacinth invited the villagers to pray with him. They all knelt, praying for God to deliver them. The next day, the crops were restored, and the harvest was plentiful. In gratitude, the villagers made pierogi for Hyacinth to celebrate the miracle.

Hyacinth died 15 August 1257 in Kraków, Poland. He is buried in the Basilica of the Holy Trinity, which also houses a Dominican monastery founded by Hyacinth.



JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA

Merciful God, whose servant Joseph of Arimathea with reverence and godly fear prepared the body of our Lord and Savior for burial and laid it in his own tomb: Grant to us, your faithful people, grace and courage to love and serve Jesus with sincere devotion all the days of our life; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (LFF 2022)

Joseph of Arimathea's role in the death of Jesus is recorded in all four gospels; beyond that, we know nothing about him. Matthew's gospel tells us that Joseph was from Arimathea, wealthy, and a disciple of Jesus. He asked Pilate for Jesus's body, and Pilate had people give the body to Joseph. Joseph wrapped Jesus's body in clean linen and put it in a new tomb that he had carved into a rock. He rolled a large stone in front of it and left Mary Magdalene and Mary watching the tomb.

In Mark's gospel, we learn that Joseph of Arimathea was a council member. He wasn't just a member; he was respected, which could explain how Joseph would have access to Pilate and why Pilate would grant his request. We also learn that Joseph was waiting for the kingdom of God, indicating his knowledge of Jesus's teachings. Joseph went boldly to Pilate to request Jesus's body, showing that while he was a respected member of the council, he was still taking a risk making this request. Mark tells us that when Joseph asked for Jesus's body, Pilate had to check and see if Jesus was dead. We learn that Joseph took the body down from the cross, wrapped it in linen, and took it to the tomb. The rest of Mark's gospel mirrors Matthew's account. We don't always get more information from Mark than from Matthew.

Luke leads with words about Joseph's character by stating he was good and righteous and that although he was a council member, he disagreed with what they were doing. We learn that Arimathea is a Jewish town, and as in Mark, Luke tells us that Joseph was waiting for the kingdom of God. Luke clarifies that the tomb Joseph prepared was a new tomb where no other dead person had been laid. Luke does not name the women who followed Joseph on the day of Preparation, but they viewed and perhaps oversaw how Joseph laid Jesus's body. Luke says that they returned to prepare spices and ointments, and observed the sabbath.

The gospel of John gets right to the heart of Joseph of Arimathea's role as a secret disciple. John also says that after Pilate let Joseph take Jesus's body, Nicodemus came with Joseph and brought one hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes. They prepared Jesus's body according to the burial customs of the Jews. John says that the garden where Jesus was crucified also had a new tomb, and since it was the day of Preparation and time was of the essence, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus's body there. Joseph of Arimathea's brave and difficult actions are worthy of commemoration by the church each year on August 1.

MIRIAM MCKENNEY



JULIAN OF NORWICH

Triune God, Father and Mother to us all, who showed your servant Julian revelations of your nurturing and sustaining love: Move our hearts, like hers, to seek you above all things, for in giving us yourself you give us all. Amen. (LFF 2022)

Julian of Norwich was born around 1342, likely in Norwich, England. Her life is known from her writing, called *Revelations of Divine Love* or *Showings*. Her writings are some of the earliest surviving writings by an English woman.

Very little is known of Julian's life. Julian may not have been her given name. She was an anchoress at St. Julian's Church, which may be the source of the name by which history knows her. References to her come from four bequests who name Julian and note her role as an anchoress, that is, a person who withdrew from secular society to live in small enclosures attached to churches and to lead a life focused on prayer and solitude. They generally only experienced outside contact through small windows allowing access to receive the Holy Eucharist and to offer spiritual guidance to clergy and lay people.

We can glean some information about Julian's life. She had at least two maids who assisted her, as both were named in the bequests. Because her mother was with her during her serious illness, historians believe Julian was likely from a family of means that would have allowed some bending of the rules for anchorites not afforded those who were poorer. Her call to be an anchoress likely meant her family could contribute financially to the church that supported Julian and her consecrated life.

Julian was well known and regarded for her spiritual counsel. The *Book of Margery Kempe* shares the author's meetings with Julian as a spiritual director in about 1413, some three years before Julian's death. Julian experienced a serious illness around her early 30's. The priest prayed last rites, and as Julian anticipated her death, she had a series of 15 visions as she gazed at the crucifix. She had a final vision the following morning. Julian recovered from her illness, and wrote her visions, which became the known as the *Shorter Text* version of *Revelations of Divine Love*. Sometime later, probably about a decade, Julian more deeply reflected on her visions and their meaning for Christians and wrote a longer text, as many of her visions were contrary to the Church's teachings of Jesus and sin.

Revelations of Divine Love contains many important understandings of God and Jesus. Julian prayed for three graces from God to have a vision. In her visions, she sees and hears insights of God's love. She sees sin as fitting, even appropriate in some ways, for God's love to be known and experienced by us imperfect humans and not exclusively a punishment. She equates God's love in feminine and motherly images and frames the Holy Trinity in domestic terms. God and Jesus are masculine and feminine, not solely one.

LAURIE BROCK



KASSIA

O God of boundless mercy, whose handmaiden Kassiani brought forth poetry and song: Inspire in your church a new song, that following her most excellent example, we may boldly proclaim the truth of your Word; even Jesus Christ, our Savior and Deliverer. Amen. (LFF 2022)

Writer, hymnist, poet, composer, and early feminist, Kassia is an important contributor to religious music, and is the only woman to have her works included in the Byzantine liturgy.

Kassia – also known as Cassia, Kassiani, Kasia, Kassiane, Kassiani, Casia, Ikasia, Cassia, Kassiane, Kassiana, Kassianh or Eikasia – was born to a wealthy Greek family sometime between 805 and 810 in Constantinople, now known as Istanbul, in Turkey. At that time, Constantinople was a thriving city of commerce, language, culture, and scholarship. Kassia was educated in the classics, the church, philosophy, and writing, and learned much from the many world-wide visitors frequenting Constantinople for business.

Kassia was known for her beauty. She was chosen to participate in a “Bride Show,” presented for Byzantine Emperor Theophilos to check out women for him to select as a wife. Although she caught his eye, Kassia’s interests and her feminist beliefs were not aligned with the emperor and his views on women. He chose another bride, and Kassia gladly turned to monastic living. She founded a convent in nearby Xerolophos where she served as abbess.

At that time, theological disagreements about religious images and icons placed her and Emperor Theophilos in opposite corners. Because of her beliefs, the same emperor whom she almost married subjected her to lashings and beatings. She was not swayed by his actions and continued to express her feminist views through her writings and music.

Kassia’s works, both music and poetry, focus on women in the gospels. She was the only composer of her time to write about redemption and salvation of women who had sinned.

Her creativity was evidenced in the many musical selections and hymns she wrote, with some still sung in the Byzantine church. Most well-known of her pieces is the “Hymn of Kassia,” also called the “Troparion of Kassiani,” still often chanted on Wednesday during Holy Week in the Orthodox churches. She also authored poems and non-religious literature, of which 261 have survived. Kassia eventually made her way to the Greek island of Kasos, where she died between 867 and 890 and is buried.

She remains relevant and pops up in today’s culture, with her works performed by modern musicians Frank Turner, soprano Deborah Kayser and bassist/composer Nick Tsiavos and the American string quartet Kronos. Kassia also appeared as a character in the TV series *The Vikings*.

Her feast day is listed as September 7 in *Lesser Feasts and Fasts 2022* and the Orthodox Church.

Kassia is the patron saint of feminism and gender justice.



JACKSON KEMPER

O God, who sent your son Jesus Christ to preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near: Grant that we, like your servant Jackson Kemper, may proclaim the Gospel in our own day, with courage, vision, and perseverance; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, now and for ever. Amen.
(LFF 2022)

The influence and impact of Jackson Kemper reaches across the centuries. His mark on the Episcopal Church – from evangelism and education to the support of Native Americans – still reverberates today. Kemper, the first missionary bishop of the Episcopal Church, is known as “The Bishop of the Whole Northwest.” And for good reason – most of his ministry years were devoted to the Midwest at a time when settlements were stretching westward.

Descriptions of Kemper range from being kind to being a zealot. Nonetheless, he maintained one focus – to spread the word of God throughout the new regions of this burgeoning country. Born in New York state on December 24, 1789, Kemper’s father was an assistant to General Washington in the Continental Army and his mother came from an important Dutch family in New Amsterdam. At Columbia College (now University), Kemper studied theology with Bishop Henry Hobart, graduating in 1809. After his ordination in 1814, he served as Bishop William White’s assistant in Philadelphia. Ordained a bishop in 1835, no sooner had a bishop’s miter been placed on his head that he headed west for new regions.

Kemper’s original territory was today’s Indiana and Missouri. From there, he expanded his ministry into neighboring areas: Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, and Wisconsin, as well as points south.

Life was not easy on the frontier, but nothing deterred Kemper. Despite hardships, Kemper trekked thousands of miles utilizing all available travel modalities – ships, horses, and walking.

His accomplishments were astonishing: organizing dioceses, planting churches, ordaining priests and deacons, confirming thousands, founding schools and a seminary. Dedicated to education and training of much-needed clergy, he founded Kemper College in St. Louis, Missouri. Although financial difficulties closed the school in 1845, his determination was not stymied. His next school was Nashotah House in Wisconsin in 1842, still operating as one of the seminaries of the Episcopal Church. In 1852 he founded Racine College, which closed in 1933.

He was a tireless advocate for Native Americans and promoted mission work among the Potawatomi, Seneca, Oneida, and Huron Tribes. Of significance, Kemper ordained Enmegahbowh, of the Ottawa Tribe, as a deacon in 1859. Later, Enmegahbowh became the first Native American Episcopal priest.

When the Diocese of Wisconsin was formed, Kemper was named provisional bishop from 1847 until 1854, then bishop until his death in 1870. Kemper was married twice; he and his second wife Ann had three children. He died on May 24, 1870, in Nashotah where he is buried. His legacy lives on. In addition to Nashotah House, the Bishop Kemper School for Ministry, founded in 2013, is a joint venture of the Dioceses of Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, West Missouri, and Western Kansas. Kemper’s feast day is May 24.



LAZARUS

Generous God, whose Son Jesus Christ enjoyed the friendship and hospitality of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus of Bethany: Open our hearts to love you, our ears to hear you, and our hands to welcome and serve you in others, through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (GCW 2015)

Lazarus of Bethany is familiar to us from the gospels – he appears in the Gospel of John as the brother of Mary and Martha of Bethany – a beloved friend of Jesus who falls gravely ill and then dies towards the end of Jesus's earthly ministry. Jesus, having fled Judea because of conflict with the local leadership, receives this news, and heads back to Bethany to console his grieving family. When Mary and Martha run to meet him, they remonstrate with him – Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. And it is in response to this cry of the heart that Jesus declares, I am the resurrection and the life. They who believe in me will not die.

Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead, amazing all in attendance (especially Martha, who correctly, if overly-practically, points out that because he had been dead four days, there would be a particular smell.) From there, tradition guides us. The Eastern Orthodox, who call Lazarus “The Four-Days Dead,” tell that he then flees from Judea, because of local plots to take his life. He heads then to Cyprus, to the town of Kition. Here he meets up with Barnabas and Paul, who make him the first bishop of Kition, and he serves well for over 30 years. They also contend that the Blessed Virgin Mary wove his special bishop robe for him herself, as a mark of respect.

Attesting to this legend, in 890 a tomb was found in the region with the inscription “Lazarus, friend of Christ.” The remains were disinterred and removed to Constantinople, the seat of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

There is yet an alternate story, told by the French. In this tradition, following the resurrection of Christ, Lazarus, Mary, and Martha were put adrift from the Judean coast in a boat without sails or oars, finally landing on the coast of southern France. They split up, going in different directions to preach the gospel. Lazarus goes to Marseilles and becomes bishop there. For this reason, the congregation at Autun claims to have his corporal remains, but the cathedral at Marseilles still claims to have his head.

Whichever tradition, Lazarus remains a testimony to the power of Christ over death, and the enduring power of the resurrection.

MEGAN CASTELLAN



HENRY MÜHLENBERG

Loving God, shepherd of your people, we thank you for the ministry of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, who left his native land to minister where called; make us mindful of our own vocation to serve where you call us; in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (GCW 2015)

Heinrich Melchior Mühlenberg is credited with bringing Lutheranism to the New World, thereby earning him the title “Patriarch of the Lutheran Church in America.” But his mark on this new land stretched beyond religion and far into the emerging country and the halls of U.S. government.

Born September 6, 1711, in Hanover, Germany, Mühlenberg was educated at the University of Halle and studied theology at the University of Göttingen where he joined with others in charitable works, including the founding of an orphanage. He was ordained in 1739.

A pastor with a great reputation, he responded to the 1742 missionary call from the far-flung German-speaking colonists in Pennsylvania who wished for leadership to worship in their Lutheran faith.

Despite the challenges and financial woes he faced, Mühlenberg excelled as a church planter and was a competent administrator, a detailed organizer, and an educator. He was known to express views against slavery on these shores.

While his ministry centered in the Keystone State, Mühlenberg started congregations in Maryland, New Jersey, and New York. His oversight eventually reached 80 congregations. His dedicated training of new pastors assured the span and reach of Lutheranism.

Mühlenberg's impact cannot be underestimated. His legacy is intertwined with the roots of this country and lives on in religion, government, print, and education. His significant accomplishments include the creation of the first Lutheran synod in America, known as the Pennsylvania Ministerium. He was successful in writing a uniform liturgy for Lutheran churches. Of equal significance, in 1761 the church constitution he penned was accepted, and his hymnal followed in 1786.

He strove to stay neutral during the Revolutionary War, despite his children taking active parts. However, in 1777 the British considered him an enemy.

Mühlenberg and his wife Anna Maria, the daughter of a prominent colonial leader, raised 11 children. Among them: Peter Gabriel, an ordained pastor and a Major General in the Continental Army who was elected to the U.S. Congress; Frederick, the first U.S. Congress Speaker of the House; Henry, Jr., a scientist who became president of Franklin College (now Franklin & Marshall); Elisabeth, married to Revolutionary War hero General Francis Swaine; Maria Salome, called Sally, wed to U.S. Congressman Matthias Richards; Eve, married to Emmanuel Schulze, whose son John Andrew Schulze was elected the sixth Governor of Pennsylvania. Mühlenberg's great-grandson, William Augustus Muhlenberg, was a prominent Anglican priest.

Muhlenberg College, in Allentown, Pennsylvania, was named in his honor following his dedication to education. Mühlenberg died on October 7, 1787, in Trappe, Pennsylvania, outside Philadelphia, where he is buried.



PACHOMIUS

Set us free, O God, from all false desires, vain ambitions, and everything that would separate us from your love; that, like your servant Pachomius, we might give ourselves fully to a life of discipleship, seeking you alone and serving those whom you have given us to serve; through Jesus Christ, our only mediator and advocate. Amen. (LFF 2022)

Pachomius was born in the late third century CE in upper Egypt to pagan parents. When he was a young man, he was conscripted to serve in the Roman army. Conscripts were housed in prison-like conditions. While essentially imprisoned, Pachomius and his fellow conscripts were tended to by Christians (apparently they took Jesus's exhortation in Matthew 25 to look after prisoners seriously).

The care provided by Christians grabbed Pachomius's attention and he vowed to learn more about their strange faith when his military service ended.

After his release from the Roman army in 313 or 314, Pachomius converted to Christianity and was baptized. He spent seven years as an ascetic until he had a calling to establish a community of monks. He thus established cenobitic (from the Greek, *koinos* + *bios* = common life) monasticism, wherein a group of monks live in a community but in individual cells and are governed by an abbot (up to this point, Christian ascetics lived solitary lives in the desert).

His first monastery was established in 320 with his brother and about 100 monks. They shared common clothing and food and had tasks assigned according to ability. To help govern the community, Pachomius created a rule—the earliest extant—that established the rhythms and patterns of the community. That rule was later adapted to the *Ascetica*, which is still used in Orthodox communities (it is similar to the Western Rule of Saint Benedict). Pachomius was a gifted administrator.

Pachomius was never ordained and monastics in his communities were not priests. Pachomius wrote and spoke Coptic. He never learned Latin or Greek. Yet Pachomius served as an abbot for 30 years and founded 11 monasteries/communities for as many as 7,000 monks. He is the first Christian to use a prayer rope, originally conceived as an aid for uneducated monks to accomplish their prayers.

Pachomius died in 346 or 348 of the plague. His feast day is celebrated on May 15 in the West.

DAVID CREECH



PIRAN OF CORNWALL

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

Piran was likely born in Ireland and began his ministry there. His ministry really took off after miraculously saving King Aengus of Ireland's seven harpists. A month earlier, they had died in a storm, trapped in a bog; Piran prayed for three straight days and nights, and they were miraculously brought back to life. For obvious reasons, Piran thus became spiritual advisor to the king.

He served King Aengus for seven years until the king decided that he wanted to abandon his wife, the queen, for a young courtier. The king expected Piran's support and was surprised when Piran publicly criticized him.

In a rage, the king had Piran bound to a millstone and thrown off a cliff into the stormy sea. Miraculously, when the stone hit the turbulent waters, the wind and sea miraculously calmed, the millstone floated, and the ropes that bound him to the granite simply slipped off. Piran was carried away on this unexpected raft and drifted aimlessly for days until he finally landed in Cornwall.

When he landed on the beach he built a chapel from which to proclaim the Gospel. Legend has it that his first disciples in the new land were a badger, a fox, and a bear. St. Piran's Oratory is the oldest Christian church in all of Britain.

One night, quite by accident, Piran rediscovered smelting. A black rock in his fireplace got so hot that it began to leak out tin. He called people to come witness the miracle. Soon tanners were mining and smelting tin and turning a nice profit all over Europe. His flag, a white cross on a black background, symbolizes the bright tin emerging from black rock. He is to this day the patron saint of tin miners.

St. Piran has been described as "the merriest, hardest drinking, hardest living holy man Cornwall ever knew." He would indulge in alcohol (there is a phrase, "as drunk as a Perraner," that he apparently inspired) and would never miss the opportunity to celebrate with his congregations.

In addition to reviving the Cornish economy and knowing how to have a good time, Piran also performed miracles and many acts of charity. This drew more and more people to his communities.

Piran ultimately fell into disfavor with the king of Cornwall and was killed around 480 CE. He was initially buried but his remains were later exhumed and distributed to various churches for veneration. His feast day is March 5.

DAVID CREECH



POLYCARP

O God, the maker of heaven and earth, you gave your venerable servant, the holy and gentle Polycarp, the boldness to confess Jesus Christ as King and Savior and the steadfastness to die for his faith: Give us grace, following his example, to share the cup of Christ and to rise to eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (LFF 2022)

Polycarp was the bishop of Smyrna and a leading figure in Roman Asia in the middle of the second century CE.

For better or worse, Polycarp is remembered as a champion of orthodoxy. He took the arch-heretics Marcion and Valentinus to task. His letter to the Philippians explores how right belief and right action are closely intertwined. Throughout the letter he demonstrates familiarity with the Greek translation of the Jewish scriptures and some of Paul's letters (which he appears to treat like scripture at times). He is both learned and pastoral.

His death is described at length in the early Christian text, *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*. In 155, during a local episode of persecution, Polycarp, now age 86, was arrested and brought to trial. In a trance, God had already revealed to Polycarp his arrest and the type of death he was to die. In fact, throughout the text, Polycarp is a bit of a charismatic, experiencing visions and hearing God's encouragement throughout the ordeal.

After refusing to give an offering to Caesar and verbally sparring with the local magistrate, Polycarp was sentenced to death by burning. As they prepared the pyre, Polycarp refused to be bound, telling the soldiers that God would enable him to stand firm in the flames. When the pyre was lit, the flames circled around him but did not touch him. At the same time, we are told that bystanders smelled a sweet fragrance, like bread baking. The text also describes a "fragrant aroma" like "incense or some other precious spice."

When it became clear that Polycarp would not die by fire, the executioner was ordered to stab him to finish the deed. As he was pierced, a dove emerged from his side along with so much blood that the fire around him was extinguished. His death was so noble and inspiring that the magistrate worried that Polycarp would now be worshiped alongside Christ so he had his body cremated and reduced to ashes.

In the end, Polycarp is a faithful witness who bridges an important gap between the apostolic age and what would later become orthodox Christianity. He learned from the Apostle John, corresponded with Christian contemporaries like Ignatius of Antioch, and inspired later Christian leaders, including the theologian Irenaeus and the church historian Eusebius. His writings, and the story of his martyrdom, can be found in the collection of writings called *The Apostolic Fathers*.

DAVID CREECH



RAFQA OF LEBANON

O God, by whose grace your servant Rafqa, kindled with the flame of your love, became a burning and a shining light in your Church: Grant that we also may be aflame with the spirit of love and discipline, and walk before you as children of light; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (BCP)

Rafqa of Lebanon was born in 1832, to a Christian family in Himlaya, Matn district, in what is now Lebanon. Her early life was marked by loss – her mother died when she was seven, and at age 12, her father fell on hard times, so he sent her out to be a servant for a number of years. When she returned, he had remarried. Her new stepmother wanted her to marry the stepmother's brother; her aunt wanted her to marry her cousin; Rafqa wanted to do neither, so she prayed for a solution. The answer came in the form of the monastery, so she fled to the nearby, and aptly named, Our Lady of Liberation at Bikfaya.

After a few years of regaining her bearings, Rafqa decided to join a new religious institution, dedicated to educating women full time in the arts, sciences, and religion. With the Mariamettes, she thrived. Her superiors sent her to help with a Jesuit mission in 1860, in the mountains of Deir el-Qamar. She was there when a brutal civil war broke out, including the massacre of 1,200 Christians in her village. Witnessing this horror had a lasting effect on Rafqa.

The next year, she took her postulancy in the Mariamette order. She came back to be the kitchen manager at Ghazir, and in her free time, studied Arabic, calligraphy, and math. She later went on to teach at Byblos, and then to found a school at Ma'ad. In 1871, the Mariamette order merged with another, and Rafqa was faced with a conundrum: either go back to regular life, join another order, or join the new merged order. She prayed about it, and received a vision of three men, one of which told her to join the Baladite order. Thus she immediately headed off to the monastery of St. Simon in Al-Qam.

The Baladite order was cloistered, so the schedule was much more rigid than Rafqa was used to, centering around prayer and manual labor. The nuns cultivated silkworms, knitted, and grew vegetables. Rafqa fell ill beginning in 1885, with some mysterious ailment around her eye. Doctors couldn't do anything, apart from painful examinations, but after two years, a visiting American doctor recommended the affected eye be removed, which he proceeded to do without anesthesia (so she could share in the sufferings of Christ). Rafqa then became blind, but continued to spin wool and cotton, and knit socks for the other nuns. Eventually, because of her declining health, Rafqa was brought to a new monastery in Batroun, where the climate was less harsh. It was there that she died in 1914, four minutes after receiving last rites.

MEGAN CASTELLAN



RITA

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

St. Rita was born Margherita Lotti in Cascia, Italy in 1381. She was born to pious parents and at a young age wanted to join a convent and become a nun. When she was 12 years old, her parents forced her to marry.

Her husband was abusive and violent. She bore two boys and, in spite of awful conditions at home, she was an exemplary wife and mother.

Her husband was not only violent at home but also with others. He was involved in a long running feud with another family. Ultimately he was stabbed and killed by a rival. At his funeral, Rita publicly pardoned his murderers.

After his death, her sons wanted revenge and were encouraged by her husband's brother to continue to feud. In addition to praying for peace, Rita also worked hard to teach her boys the way of forgiveness and peace. They continued the feud for about a year when they both died of dysentery. Some saw their death as an answer to her prayers.

After the death of her husband and boys, Rita wanted to finally join the convent. Her request was refused, as they were worried that she was not a virgin. They were also troubled by the long-standing feud her husband had engaged in and his subsequent violent death.

Ultimately bubonic plague struck the family enemy and caused him to relinquish the feud he had with her family. The conflict was resolved and at age 36 Rita was given permission to join the monastery.

She lived her last years with great austerity and engaged in self-mortification. When Rita was about 60, she was meditating on the crucifixion and developed a bleeding wound on her forehead. She is often depicted in art with a thorn and this partial stigmata.

Rita died of tuberculosis in 1457. Pope Leo XIII canonized her as the Patroness of Impossible Causes. She is more popularly known as the patron saint of abused wives and heartbroken women. Her feast day is May 22.

DAVID CREECH



ROSE OF LIMA

Merciful God, you sent your Gospel to the people of Peru through Martin de Porres, who brought its comfort even to slaves; through Rosa de Lima, who worked among the poorest of the poor; and through Toribio de Mogrovejo, who founded the first seminary in the Americas and baptized many: Help us to follow their example in bringing fearlessly the comfort of your grace to all downtrodden and outcast people, that your Church may be renewed with songs of salvation and praise; through Jesus Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (GCW 2015)

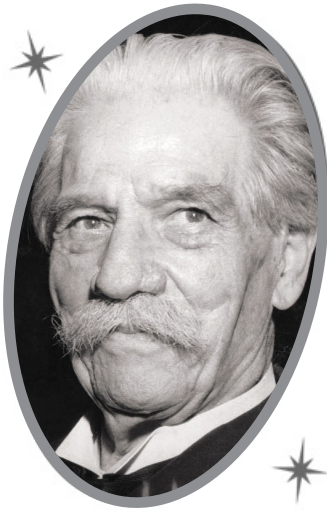
Rosa of Lima was born around April 20-30, 1586 in Lima, Peru. She is the patron saint of all of Peru, South America and the Philippines and is known for being the first saint canonized in the western hemisphere. She is also the patron saint of embroiderers, gardeners and those that suffer because of their piety.

Rosa's story is one of parental conflict, coupled with extreme devotion and chastity. She was a beautiful woman. Her story is one that is uncomfortable: in conflict with the physical beauty she was bestowed, she preferred to seek the beauty of God. Early in life, Rosa felt called to serve God. She was drawn to a penitential and spiritual life focused on study, prayer, and self-denial.

Her mother wanted her to marry. In defiance, Rosa cut off all her hair and burned her skin with hot peppers to make herself repugnant to the men her mother was parading for marriage. Their struggle continued for years. Upon taking a vow of chastity, her mother finally relented and allowed Rosa to become a Dominican. However, they would not let her join the convent and instead confined her to their home with strict boundaries on where she could worship. Rosa spent her days in embroidery and gardening. She would spend hours in prayer, adoration of St. Mary, and in taking communion daily. Unfortunately, Rosa was known for self-flagellation, fasting, wearing a crown of thorns, and sleeping on a bed of potsherds. She lived a life of solitude, self-rejection, and denial.

To the reader, this life may seem repugnant. It appears that everything about Rosa was uncomfortable. She was uncomfortable with her looks, the attention her looks garnered, her parents' wishes for a "normal" life of marriage and children, and discomfort with almost anything but prostration before the cross. It is often difficult to reconcile our understanding of God's love in light of Rosa's story. However, we are reminded, that in the presence of a story of great suffering, great self-disgust, and self-loathing, the beacon of this story is God.

ANNA COURIE



ALBERT SCHWEITZER

O God, who endowed your servant Albert Schweitzer with a multitude of gifts for learning, beauty, and service: Inspire your Church that we, following his example, may be utterly dedicated to you, that all our works might be done to your glory and the welfare of your people; through Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (GCW 2015)

Some people would label Albert Schweitzer an over achiever: theologian, philosopher, medical doctor, missionary, author, musician, Nobel Prize winner, and more. But when we read about the remarkable life of Albert, we see someone who lived a scriptural conviction of “with God, all things are possible.”

Albert Schweitzer was born January 14, 1875, in Alsace, Germany (now in France). His father and grandfather were Lutheran ministers, laying the foundation for his desire to study theology and philosophy at the University of Strasbourg. Albert’s studies culminated in a doctorate in philosophy with a focus on Kantian theology and became a licensed pastor. He is well known for the publication of his research in *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*. Concurrently, Albert continued his musical studies in piano and organ that helped fund his educational pursuits and then later, medical missionaries to Africa. His study of music was published in “J.S. Bach: le musicien-poète (1905).”

During his mandatory military service requirement, Albert experienced a mystical epiphany while studying Matthew. In his studies, he heard God’s call to “heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8). Part of his philosophy of this experience can be found in his treatise “A Philosophy of Civilization” published in 1923.

Upon his return home, Albert enrolled in medical school, specializing in tropical and infectious disease with the intent to be a medical missionary to Africa. Prior to leaving, he published his medical dissertation on “The Psychiatric Study of Jesus.” Then, in 1913, Albert and his bride, Helene Breslau, set sail for Lambaréné in what is now Gabon, Africa. There, Albert and Helene treated over 2,000 patients suffering from complex diseases such as leprosy, malaria, yellow fever, smallpox, dysentery, elephantiasis, sleeping sickness, and other maladies of.

Albert would continue to perform to raise money for his mission. He best known for his presentation of Bach’s work. That money led to the building of the Schweitzer Hospital in Lambaréné including over 70 outbuildings and a refuge for those with leprosy.

Albert continued to write prolifically about his experiences, research, and studies in philosophy, theology and music. He went on to publish additional works including: “The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle,” “Bach’s Organ Works,” and “The Problem of Peace in the World Today.” Albert was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1952. The prize included a \$33,000 dollar award that Albert and Helene reinvested in the hospital to continue his work, long after he died.

ANNA COURIE



THOMAS THE APOSTLE

Everliving God, who strengthened your apostle Thomas with firm and certain faith in your Son's resurrection: Grant us so perfectly and without doubt to believe in Jesus Christ, our Lord and our God, that our faith may never be found wanting in your sight; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (BCP)

Thomas is simply named as a member of the 12 in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The Gospel of John, however, takes special interest in Thomas. And the disciple does not always look so great.

In John 11:16, when Jesus wants to return to Judea to mourn his friend Lazarus, Thomas sarcastically remarks, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." In John 14:5, during Jesus's last meal with his friends, Thomas expresses confusion about Jesus's plain teaching.

Perhaps most notoriously, Thomas refuses to believe the reports of the disciples when they announce that Jesus was raised from the dead. In John 20:25, Thomas famously says, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe." (Though, to be fair, he only wanted what the other disciples already got to experience.)

Whatever beef the author of the Gospel of John may have had with Thomas, his assaults on Thomas's character were effective. It probably does not help that Thomas's name was attached to a collection of Jesus's sayings that some would deem heretical. The image of "doubting" Thomas, the heretic, persists.

Such a view however, overlooks some of Thomas's amazing triumphs. Shortly after expressing his desire to see the resurrected Christ for himself, Thomas makes one of the strongest Christological affirmations in the entire New Testament when, upon touching the resurrected Christ's wounds, he exclaims, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28)

Thomas also became one of early Christianity's greatest champions. He took the gospel all the way to India. His bold proclamation was accompanied by many miracles. Several early Christian texts bear his name and recount his exploits. The Acts of Thomas tell of his many adventures spreading the gospel (if you vote him into the next round, I promise to share some of the juicier tales). The Infancy Gospel of Thomas (which is really mostly about Jesus' childhood) is essential reading, and really, the Gospel of Thomas is worth careful study too. That his name is attached to so many early Christian texts betrays his importance to the nascent movement.

Thomas was killed in India, either by a spear or at the hands of some angry priests (maybe angry priests with spears!). His feast day is celebrated on December 21 in the Episcopal Church. His story is often told on the second Sunday of Easter.

DAVID CREECH



JOSEPH VAZ

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

Joseph Vaz is known as the Apostle of Sri Lanka, though it took him 36 years to reach the country.

Vaz was born on April 21, 1651, in the Indian state of Goa.

He was ordained a Catholic priest in 1676, going barefoot in solidarity with the poor and requesting an assignment to Sri Lanka, which was largely Buddhist. Many Catholics who lived in the country did not have access to a priest or church. Even more were persecuted by Dutch colonists, who were Protestant.

Vaz was sent instead to what is now Karnataka in southwestern India, where he spent several years before returning to Goa. There, he worked with the indigenous people to found the Goa Oratory of Saint Philip Neri, which is believed to be the "first fully native religious community of the Latin rite in Asia," according to the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

Finally, he made his way to Sri Lanka in April 1687.

The first non-European missionary to the country, he went door to door, begging for his living, getting to know the local Catholics and their languages, and performing the sacraments in secret. He encountered a church that was not only persecuted, but divided.

He eventually won favor in the independent Kingdom of Kandy, outside of Dutch rule, either because of his care for the sick during a smallpox epidemic or because of an Elijah-like showdown with Buddhist leaders to produce rain after a drought, depending on your source. He made long missionary journeys, reviving the spirits and faith of Catholics across Sri Lanka.

Vaz died — "exhausted," as Pope Francis noted during the saint's canonization — on January 16, 1711, and was canonized by Francis during the pope's 2015 apostolic visit to Sri Lanka.

At a mass celebrating the canonization, Pope Francis said, "I encourage each of you to look to Saint Joseph as a sure guide. He teaches us how to go out to the peripheries, to make Jesus Christ everywhere known and loved."

EMILY MILLER



HENRY BENJAMIN WHIPPLE

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

The westward expansion of the United States in the nineteenth century due to belief in Manifest Destiny carried with it an unstoppable tide of cruelty, dishonesty, and corruption toward Native Americans. Often, we whitewash past actions by arguing they should be judged “in the standards of their time;” yet much like how Bartolomé de las Casas held the Spanish to account for atrocities in the time of Columbus, Henry Benjamin Whipple reminds us that well over a century ago, brave saints spoke boldly against the degradation and maltreatment of indigenous people in the name of Jesus.

Henry Whipple was born in upstate New York in 1822, and became an Episcopalian under the influence of his grandparents and wife. After attending Oberlin College, he worked for a brief time in his father’s business until he was ordained priest in 1850. He would serve parishes in upstate New York and Chicago, gaining a reputation for service to immigrants. It was from Chicago that Whipple was elected as the first bishop of Minnesota in 1859 at the age of thirty-seven, a see he would occupy for 42 years until his death in 1901.

Whipple would eagerly set about planting the church in his diocese, making regular trips across Minnesota, including in the harsh winter. After his first visitation in the nascent diocese, he returned with a commitment not only to establish missions among the Ojibwe and Dakota peoples, but also to advocate for their welfare and well-being.

Bishop Whipple made fierce pleas for clemency for native warriors who fought against the United States in the Dakota War of 1862. On December 26, 1862, thirty-eight Dakota were hanged for supposed war crimes in the largest mass execution in American history. Their “trials” lasted mere minutes; the accused were afforded no lawyers. Whipple decried these show trials in the press, pleading for clemency, and opposing mass executions, deportations, and genocide of native people. Whipple’s defense of indigenous people earned him scorn from his white peers; many of his fellow bishops deemed him mad. Whipple would even call to account his own cousin, Henry Sibley, the architect of punitive treaties with native peoples and of the war against the Dakota. Whipple’s pleas had an impact: while 303 had been condemned to hanging, President Lincoln commuted the sentence of 265 of those in a fiercely unpopular decision.

Bishop Whipple’s moral clarity when the powers around him resisted his judgment remains the foremost marker of his ministry, and among his legacies is the ordination of the first Native American priest in the Episcopal Church, Enmegahbowh. His legacy is reflected in the Pauline motto of the Diocese of Minnesota: Pax Per Sanguinem Crucis – peace by the blood of the cross.

DAVID SIBLEY



ZITA

Merciful God, who has given to us all things necessary for life and godliness; Grant that we, like your servant Zita, may be faithful in the exercise of our duties and that, whatever you give us to do, we may do it heartily to you for the honor and glory of your Name; through him who has called us to virtue, Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Amen. (LFF 2022)

Today I whispered a prayer to St. Zita as I struggled to find my keys. Had Steve Jobs been a Catholic, he might have named the AirTag the Zita, as she is the patron saint of lost keys.

Born around 1212 in Tuscany, Italy, Zita not only keeps watch over missing keys, but she also serves as the patron saint of household chores, housekeepers, waitresses, domestic servants, and maids, and also the town of Lucca, Italy. Placed into servitude at a young age, Zita was a kind, compassionate, and dedicated individual despite a miserable life of beatings and abuse. She is known as the "incorruptible" as no matter how hard her fellow servants tried to discredit her, she would turn the other cheek and seek kindness first. She is also known as "incorruptible" as her body was found to be fully intact following exhumation.

Zita practiced the sacrament of giving. She is known for giving a third of her wages to her family, saving a third for herself, and giving the remaining third to the poor. These stories of giving surround Zita. Including one story where it is said she took bread from the castle to give to the poor. She was betrayed by jealous servants, and upon inspection, she was found to be carrying flowers. Another story reports her giving away the castle's pantry stores to beggars, and yet on inspection, the pantry was full. An additional tale describes her baking bread and then freely giving the bread to the hungry. Zita's story is one of giving. Giving food, giving alms, giving time, and giving grace. Something we can all serve to emulate.

Zita died April 27, 1272. Upon her death, it is said that the bells in Lucca rang spontaneously as Zita passed to heaven. Over 150 miracles are attributed to the work of Zita. In 1580, Zita was exhumed, and her body was found to be incorrupt. She was later canonized in 1696 and her body is on display at Basilica di San Frediano in Lucca, Italy.

The Episcopal Church recognized Zita as a saint in 2020 with a feast day of April 27. In Lucca, the town amasses flowers and bread to recognize her life. We can best celebrate her life by living our own in service to others.

ANNA COURIE

ABOUT THE CELEBRITY BLOGGERS

If it's Lent, that means it's time for devotions, reflections, spiritual reading, wearing purple nail polish, and, of course, Lent Madness! The excitement continues for me as I mark another Lent Madness season as a Celebrity Blogger and add another Golden Halo mug to my collection. For Lent 2024, I plan to delve deep into more spiritual reading – and I am always open to suggestions of book titles. First up – “Devotions for People Who Don't Do Devotions” by our own Lent Madness Supreme Executive Committee member Tim Schenck. -**Neva Rae Fox**

The Rev. Laurie Brock, returns as a Distinguished Celebrity Blogger because this, like God's love, is eternal. She serves as the rector of St. Michael the Archangel Episcopal Church in Lexington, Kentucky. She blogs occasionally at www.revlauriebrock.com. She has written two books about horses and spirituality, *Horses Speak of God* and *God, Grace, and Horses*. Her next book, *Souvenirs of the Holy*, is scheduled to be published in fall 2024. She frequently shares photos of horses and random stuff on Instagram at @revlaurieinlex and at various church gatherings as a retreat leader and speaker. When she's not doing priest things, she is riding her horse Nina, the Official Horse of Lent Madness.

Anna Fitch Courie is a wife, nurse, university faculty, and author of multiple titles on health, wellness, and spirituality. Her current professional focus is on the strategic development of wellness programs. Anna keeps busy as mom to Patton and Merryn, her human children, and Norman and Jaeda, her fur-children. When not working, she enjoys spending time with her husband Treb hiking, traveling, playing board games, reading, and attending as many Clemson football games as possible.

Keegan Osinski is the librarian for theology and ethics at Vanderbilt University's Divinity Library. She is the author of *Queering Wesley*, *Queering the Church*.

The Rev. Megan Castellán, Distinguished Celebrity Blogger, is the Canon to the Ordinary for Formation and Mission in the Diocese of Central New York. Previously, she lived and worked in Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York, Arizona, Missouri, and a period of time in the West Bank that the government can't know about. Her ongoing adventures and strong opinions are chronicled in her blog *Red Shoes, Funny Shirt* and on BlueSky @revlucymeg. (From time to time, she also writes actual books, such as *Welcome to a Life of Faith in the Episcopal Church*.) She and her husband, Ben, live a Noah-like existence in Ithaca, NY with their two dogs, two cats, and two small children.

The Rev. David Sibley serves as Rector of St. Paul's Church in Walla Walla, Washington, within the Diocese of Spokane. Raised in South Carolina, David proudly studied and did research in chemistry at Furman University before a call to ordination. He is a graduate of General Theological Seminary and has previously served parishes in New York City and Long Island. He was a four-time Jeopardy! Champion in 2022, until his brief run was ended by an eventual 21-game champion. When not in church, David enjoys travel, trivia, all things food and music related, and enjoying any number of sporting events, especially the Chicago Cubs, Walla Walla Sweets, South Carolina Gamecocks, and Liverpool Football Club.

Emily McFarlan Miller is communications specialist for Indigenous Pathways and a freelance reporter writing about the spiritual and supernatural. In 2017, she wrote an article about Lent Madness for Religion News Service, and the rest is history. When she's not writing for or about Lent Madness, she enjoys hosting Halloween for her family (her sister has dibs on Easter) and working with her husband, Joel, on the fixer-upper they share in Chicago with their son, Asher, and cat, Poe. Find Emily online at emmillerwrites.com.

This is **David Creech's** 11th year as a Celebrity Blogger. He has managed so far to remain undistinguished. Undeterred by more than a decade of losing, he is still fascinated by hagiography, both ancient and modern. He is a product of an Evangelical seminary and a Catholic PhD program and taught for years at a Lutheran college and worships with Episcopalians. Some would say he is an ecumenical voice but mostly he's just confused. His book title is long and boring (*The Use of Scripture in the Apocryphon of John: A Diachronic Analysis of the Variant Versions*) but nearly sold out of its initial print run of 200 copies. He also edited the New Testament portion of *The Path*, a fantastic abridged Bible (in Spanish too!) He has long dabbled in a project that explores early Christian criminality. A native of Southern California now exiled in the Upper Midwest, David lives in Saint Paul, Minnesota with his family. You can follow him on Bluesky or Threads (but not that other site filled with much weeping and gnashing of teeth).

Miriam Willard McKenney is a child of God who fiercely loves her husband, David, and their three adult daughters. Miriam felt God's call to the ministry of librarianship from an early age. After receiving her Master's in Library Science at the University of Michigan, she practiced librarianship for over 20 years before joining the staff at Forward Movement. Miriam serves as Director of Mission at Forward Movement and Director of Dismantling Racism for the Diocese of Southern Ohio. She's also a professor of children's literature at Xavier University. Miriam loves to spend time outdoors year-round, as nature has gifts to give us every day.

ABOUT THE SUPREME EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



Tim Schenck is rector of Bethesda-by-the-Sea in Palm Beach, Florida. He has previously served parishes in Massachusetts, New York, and Maryland. He is the author of five books full of humor and faith, including *Devotions for People Who Don't Do Devotions* (Forward Movement) and *Holy Grounds: The Surprising Connection Between Coffee and Faith—From Dancing Goats to Satan's Drink* (Fortress Press). When not tending to his parish, drinking single-origin coffee, or desperately seeking material for sermons and articles, Tim is likely hanging out with his wife, Bryna, and their two rescue dogs, Cooper and Daisy Duke. Follow him on X (Twitter) @fathertim.



Scott Gunn is executive director of Forward Movement in Cincinnati, Ohio, whose mission is to inspire disciples and empower evangelists. Prior to his work at Forward Movement, Scott was a parish priest in Rhode Island, and before that he worked in the tech industry in a variety of settings. Scott's fourth book, *Easter Triumph, Easter Joy*, was published in 2022, and his writing has appeared in a number of print magazines, journals, and websites. Scott's dog provides inside information via Twitter, Instagram, or Facebook at @GeorgeTDog. You can find Scott on X (Twitter) @scottagunn.

ABOUT FORWARD MOVEMENT

Forward Movement inspires disciples and empowers evangelists. While we produce great resources and programs like the *Saintly Scorecard* and *Lent Madness*, Forward Movement is not a publishing company. We are a discipleship ministry.

We carry out this ministry by producing books, daily reflections, studies for small groups, and online resources. People around the world read our daily devotions through *Forward Day by Day*, which is also available in Spanish (*Adelante Día a Día*) and Braille, online, as a podcast, and as an app for your smartphones or tablets. It is mailed to more than fifty countries, and we donate thousands of copies each quarter to prisons, hospitals, and nursing homes. We actively seek partners across the Church and look for ways to provide resources that inspire and challenge. A ministry of the Episcopal Church for eighty years, Forward Movement is a nonprofit organization funded by sales of resources and gifts from generous donors.



To learn more about Forward Movement and our resources, visit us at ForwardMovement.org (or VenAdelante.org). We are delighted to be doing this work and invite your prayers and support.

Show Lent Madness and Forward Movement some love: If you have enjoyed the spirit of fun and learning through Lent Madness, please support the ministry of Forward Movement so that we can bring light and life to Christians and seekers.

Visit forwardmovement.org/donate.