

# BEST-LOVED SAINTS

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*Inspiring Biographies of Popular Saints  
for Young Catholics and Adults*

By  
Rev. Lawrence G. Lovasik, S.V.D.  
*Divine Word Missionary*



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# FOREWORD

**A**S material possessions and personal ambitions fail to satisfy, more and more people are turning to the life lived in Christ—the spiritual life, a holy life. We can learn what it means to live a holy life from those who heroically dedicated themselves to imitating Christ—the saints.

Based on authentic historical records, this book contains warmly human portraits of men and women whose faith, courage, and love exemplify the life of a Christian saint. They lived in every age, in every part of the earth, in every kind of Christian community. They were ordinary people whose words and actions testified to their belief in Jesus Christ.

The heart of this book lies in the personal narratives, which confirm that not all saints' lives are the same. They are shaped by their times, by individual traits of personality, by trials faced and endured. What they have in common is their devotion to the living Word of God, Jesus Christ, who said of himself: "I am the way, the truth, and the life." That is what makes every one of these dramatic stories a perfect vehicle for meditation and inspiration to help us imitate these, our wonderful brothers and sisters in Christ, in our own small way.

I have grouped these stories in chronological order so that the reader may appreciate the growth of spiritual life in the Church over many centuries. May these examples of Christian virtue serve as an inspiration to us in our own day-to-day striving for holiness.

*Father Lawrence G. Lovasik, S.V.D.*

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# MARY, QUEEN OF ALL SAINTS

**M**ARY, the Mother of God and our Mother, is the Queen of all saints because she made the most diligent use of the rich treasure of grace which God granted to her. Her thoughts were always occupied in learning to know and praise God; her heart loved Him above all things. She zealously accepted every inspiration to good. Thus sanctifying grace was wondrously increased in her soul.

Mary was no more than a teenager when she was called to her special mission by God. Her home was in Nazareth, a village in Galilee that was so unimportant, it hadn't been mentioned in the Bible before her time. Like most Jews of her time, Mary and the others in her village were poor. They were simple people who lived plain lives and worked hard.

Romans had occupied the land of the Jews and the people were hoping and praying that a Messiah would come to rescue them from their oppressors. But they were looking for someone who looked like a mighty king. When God sent a Messiah who was like His people, poor, He chose Mary as Jesus' mother because she too was one of the poor. She was someone willing to be the servant of God.

Because she was full of grace, Mary also excelled in every virtue much more than every other saint. All the traits of Jesus were expressed in her as faithfully as they could be expressed in any creature. Because of her fullness of grace and the splendor of her virtues, she was raised above all the saints; she is their Queen.

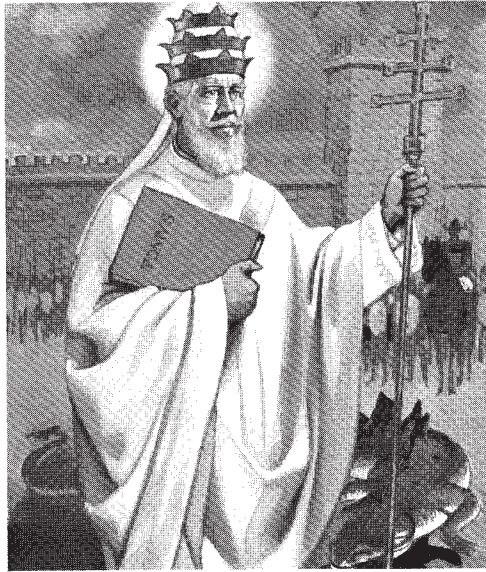


## JOACHIM AND ANNE

**A**LL our information concerning Saints Joachim and Anne, the parents of Mary, is derived from a non-canonical Infancy Gospel known as the “Proto-evangelium” of James, which goes back to about A.D. 150.

In Nazareth there lived a devout couple, Joachim and Anne. They were childless, a condition that was held as a bitter misfortune among the Jews. One feast day, Joachim went to the Temple to offer sacrifice, but was turned away by a certain Ruben, who said that men without children were unworthy to be admitted. Grief-stricken, Joachim did not return home, but went into the mountains to plead with God in solitude. Also Anne,





## LEO THE GREAT

(?-461)

**L**EO was probably a native of Tuscany, but he considered himself a Roman. Rome to him was a holy city, and he protected it with the only weapon he had—a non-violent presence. He was the Pope and Bishop of Rome from 440 to 461.

The Roman Empire in his day was divided into East and West with two emperors, one in Constantinople (Istanbul) and one in Ravenna (in Italy). In the East, the empire was still relatively intact; the West was ravaged on its frontiers by invading German Tribes. Rome itself had been plundered in 410 by the Visigoths. Invaders settled in the Roman provinces and old social ways were breaking down.



## CLARE

(1193-1253)

**C**LARE was born at Assisi in 1193. She was the daughter of a count and countess. She heard Saint Francis preach in the streets of Assisi and told him of her desire to give herself to God. They became close friends.

On Palm Sunday, in the year 1212, the Bishop of Assisi presented a palm to this noble maiden of eighteen, who was beautifully dressed. That same night she left her beautiful home and went to the church of Our Lady of the Angels, where she met Francis and his Brothers. In that poor little chapel of the Portiuncula she received





## ANTHONY OF PADUA

(1195-1231)

**A**NTHONY was born in Lisbon, Portugal, in 1195. His parents were very rich and wanted him to be a great nobleman. But the Gospel call to leave everything and follow Christ was the rule of his life. Over and over again God called him to something new in His plan. Each time Anthony responded with renewed zeal and self-sacrificing love to serve his Lord more completely.

As a very young man he decided to join the Augustinians, giving up a future of wealth and power to be a servant of God. Later, when the bodies of the first Franciscan martyrs were carried through the town where he