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# SAINTS EXPERIENCE AND EMULATE

**Faith formation series  
Additional Text**

## STD V

1. **St. Francis of Assisi**
2. **St. Clare of Assisi**
3. **St. Don Bosco**
4. **St. John Berchmans**



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*Title:*

**Saints Experience and Emulate**

*Printed and Published by*

Department of Catechesis  
Diocese of Faridabad

*Distributed by*

Department of Catechesis  
Faridabad Diocese  
8 A/13, W.E.A., Karol Bagh  
New Delhi-110 005  
Phone : 011-25759160  
E-mail : dsmcatechism@gmail.com  
Website : www.faridabaddiocese.in

*Printed at*

Innovative Designers & Printers  
F-32/6, First Floor, Okhla Indl. Area, Phase - II  
New Delhi - 110 020  
Tel. : 011-6660 5070, 6640 8241

Year of Publication - 2006

Reprinted - 2012

Price: RS. 10 /-

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July 03, 2006

## MESSAGE

I am very happy to know that the Catechism Department of the Delhi Syro Malabar Mission publishes the life histories of saints as a supplementary to the catechism regular texts.

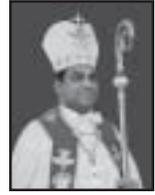
Saints are our life models. Their life histories are inspiring forces to all who like to grow in faith. The lives of saints teach us how they experienced God in their lives. Study of these life histories enables us to be faithful to the Word of God as well as to the teachings of the Catholic Church which we transmit to the next generation through catechism books. I pray that all who read these lives of saints may be inspired to follow them in their footsteps aspiring for sanctity of life to which every Christian is called by God.

I congratulate all who worked to bring out these books and pray that their efforts may bear fruits of holiness in the lives of many.

*+ Varkey Vithayathil*

**Varkey Cardinal Vithayathil**  
Major Archbishop of the Syro Malabar Church

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Date : June 19, 2012

## MESSAGE

I am pleased to learn that our Catechism Department is preparing a new edition of the life histories of saints as a supplement syllabus to the catechism text books. This is all the more pertinent as the first version after the erection of the new Diocese of Faridabad. First of all, I congratulate our Director of Catechism, his team and all who cooperated in this venture.

Role models are necessary in our life, especially for those who are trying to give shape to the foundation of their religious life. Saints are those inspiring personalities who practiced the divine virtues of faith, hope and charity in a heroic manner. Their examples of deep faith and selfless love teach us how to give witness to gospel values in modern times. Saints are not extraordinary men and women, but who lived an ordinary life, but practiced these virtues in an extraordinary manner. Already in their childhood, saints were exemplary and it goes without saying that our boys and girls can take them as role models in Christian life.

Parents, grandparents as well as elder members of the family should foster devotion to saints in the children and try to introduce their inspiring stories to them. Teachers of catechism have a special responsibility to inculcate devotion to saints to the pupils and the current publication will be a useful instrument in that attempt. May the contents of this book inspire the readers and enable them to practice faith, hope and charity in their daily life.

The quintessence of sainthood is the attempt “to become perfect as the Heavenly Father is perfect”. May this booklet facilitate forming little saints among the catechism boys and girls of newly erected Diocese of Faridabad.

The image shows a handwritten signature in dark ink. The signature is written in a cursive style and appears to read 'K. Bharanikulangara'. The signature is positioned above the printed name of the Archbishop.

**Archbishop Kuriakose Bharanikulangara**  
Bishop of Faridabad

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# GREETINGS

Faith formation of the People of God is an important ministry of the Church. It is through faith education the young generation is integrated into the faith and faith life of the Church. In such an education the introduction of the life histories of saints who lived the Christian faith is very important. Such an introduction will help them to personalize the values and models of the saints. It is with this objective the Archdiocese of Ernakulam-Angamally had published the life-history series of the saints named, *Vishudhare Ariyan Anukarickan*, as subsidiary textbooks for faith formation from Std. IV to IX. Now I am happy to know that the Delhi Syro-Malabar Catechetical Centre is publishing an English edition of these textbooks. I am sure that this will benefit the children to know the saints, to love them and to imitate them in their lives. I appreciate this venture and congratulate all who contributed to the publication of these text books. I wish and pray that let the publication of these books help to inspire our children to lead a model Christian life.

Once again wishing every success,

Kochi  
3.7.2006

**Fr. Jose Puthiyedath**  
Secretary, Syro-Malabar Catechetical Commission



Catechesis is the primary duty of the Church. It is the process by which church permeates its life to the generations to come. The child initiated to the church by baptism always looks for role models in their spiritual and social life. They get enough role models in politics, social work, films, sports, music, arts etc. Church has to be genuinely serious about presenting role models so that the children may be enabled to take Christian life as a big challenge. Individuals who have responded to the invitation of Jesus and spent their life as a sacrifice are presented as saints to be loved, admired and imitated. So we have selected a few of them for our young children to love, appreciate and imitate. This is a beautiful step in the modern times and I do advise the teachers to learn about the saints seriously and present them as role models for the children.

Wishing every success in this beautiful mission,

New Delhi  
4. 7. 2006

**Fr. Jose Edassery**  
Coordinator, Delhi Syro-Malabar Mission

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# P R E F A C E

Saints are the guiding lights of Christian life. Their way of life stands as sign and motivation to us. Their intercession gives us strength. Learning more about the life and history of saints encourages us to follow their example. Children have a tendency to imitate others. Learning about saints at an early age will help the children to emulate the saints.

The Delhi Syro-Malabar Catechetical centre is publishing the English Edition of “*Visudhare Ariyan, Anukarikan,*” an additional catechism text for use in the Personal Parishes under the Delhi Syro-Malabar Mission. This is to help children learn and adapt the lifestyle of these venerable persons, who are shining examples of Christian life. The life story of 24 holy persons is included in six books, which are meant for the children of classes IV to IX. For each class, the life stories of four saints are included. I have no doubt these books will have a lasting impact on the faith formation of children. Catechism teachers are requested to understand the usefulness and importance of the short biography of these blessed saints in the faith formation of children. You are requested to take extra care to introduce these books to children to achieve the desired result.

This Additional Text book, *Saints - Experience and Emulate* - was originally written in Malayalam by a catechism teacher Shri Shaji Malippara and was published by the Catechetical department of Ernakulam-Angamally Archdiocese. I express my wholehearted thanks to Shri Shaji and Fr. Jose Puthiyedath, Director, Department of Catechesis, Archdiocese of Ernakulam – Angamally, for permitting us to publish its English edition. I extend my sincere thanks to Fr. Abraham CST, Mr. Jose Kaviyil and Mrs. Marys Antony for their sincere support in publishing this book. I also remember with thanks each and every person who have extended their help and support in many ways in brining out this book. I wish that by using this book, children will know about saints and will get motivated to adapt their lifestyles. I dedicate these books to the children of the Delhi Syro-Malabar Mission and pray that God help us and lead us to succeed in all our endeavors.

7 – 7 - 2006

**Fr. Joshy Vezhaparambil**

Director, Delhi Syro-Malabar Catechetical Centre

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## ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI



### **Another Christ (1181-1226)**

You must have watched Eddie Murphy's "Dr. Doolittle." The film narrates the story of a special medical doctor, who is able to communicate with animals. This ability allows him to help animals with various maladies.

Well, that is fiction. But can you imagine there was indeed a human being who could converse with animals? Yes, there was such a person. We know him as Saint Francis of Assisi.

Francis was not born with the gift of animal language. Neither was he born a saint.

He gained the ability to talk to animals when he got closer to nature in which he saw the reflection of God's glory and majesty.

As a child, Francis was everything but saintly. He was as naughty as many of you. He rebelled against his father and indulged in pranks of a teenager. But, all that ended one day when God called him. The greatness of Francis was that he listened to God and obeyed Him.

Now, Francis of Assisi is one of most favorite saints in the Catholic Church. His popularity has gone beyond the Church's boundaries. Even in India, he has thousands of admirers.

Saint Francis Assisi's prayer, "Lord Jesus, make me an instrument of your peace," resonates whenever people of different religions gather to pray.

### **Now, who was this saint?**

Francis was born in Italy on September 26, 1182 and enjoyed all the comforts and luxuries. His father Pietro Bernardone (Peter Bernard) was a rich silk merchant.

Of his mother, Pica, little is known, but she is said to have belonged to a noble family of Provence. Francis was one of their several children. There is a legend that he was born in a stable.

At baptism he was given the name, Giovanni, which his father disliked and later changed it to Francesco. Francis' father was fond of France, with which he had business relations. Francis means "Young Frenchman"

At the age of 6 Assisi joined school and he learned Latin, Italian and little bits of mathematics. According to his father it was sufficient to help him in his silk business. His mother taught him prayers and the way of life for becoming a generous and good boy with a hint to help the poor, the gift we receive from the Almighty whereas his father was against giving alms to the poor.

### **KING MAKER**

Francis' education came to an end at the age of 14. By that time he had become a handsome and charming young man. He became the

leader among the sons of rich lords of Italy. He enjoyed life with his rich and thrilled friends and used to take money from his father's shop to entertain them in nightclubs. His mother prayed hard for his return to normal life. His father was very angry at Francis' way of life.

In 1201 when the natives of Assisi went to war against Perugia, Francis joined the war. His parents supported it because they thought that his departure from his daily routine of rough life will change him, but the war cost him a year in prison. He returned from the prison with illness and tired, but his mother brought him into good health very fast. He again attempted in late 1205 to join the Papal forces against Frederick II in Apulia where he had a vision, which directed him to return to Assisi. The question he heard through the vision was "which is appropriate – to serve the Lord or the servant". Francis replied, it is better to serve the Lord. He was then directed to return home where he would get further instructions. At last God heard his mother's prayers. Francis decided to serve the Lord and he spent most of his time praying in the church away from his friends.

### **A Call to rebuild the Church**

Francis left for a pilgrimage to Rome. He distributed all the money he had to the beggars and finally he exchanged his own majestic silk dress with the torn and ugly dress of a beggar and lived among them for some time. When he came back to the home Peter Bernard came to know about the change of his beloved son. He was inconsolable and locked him in a room and instructed his wife not to feed him. However, his mother set him free and he again went to the church to pray.

While praying silently to God he again heard the voice of Lord

speaking; “You have to accept the hardship with joy”, with this in mind he could find a leper at the roadside. On seeing the wretched wounds and smell from the leper he avoided him, then he recalled the words “You have to accept what you hate, with joy”. Francis ran back to the leper and gave some money and embraced him in his wretched soars. Later he could not find the leper. He understood that it was God appeared as a leper before him. Hearing all this Peter Bernard sent his son out of his house after beating him very cruelly.

Francis spent his time at the St. Damian’s Church and the nearby forests. The church was in a bad shape. He heard the voice of God to re-build the church. He tried to gather money by selling silk cloths taken from his father’s shop. His father was not pleased and he complained to the bishop. He returned the dress he was wearing to his father and got a pair of dress from a servant of the bishop. He started collecting stones from the public for the construction of the church. At first, people were confused, but later on everybody helped him to rebuild the church.

### **Gospel Life**

The Gospel reading during the mass on February 24, 1208 was a touching inspiration to Francis, - “Kingdom of God is very near, you throw away the gold and silver and you should not have any belongings, extra dress, tunic, or slippers”.

When he came out of the church he threw away his slippers and belt and he tied a piece of rope around his waist and started preaching like a true follower of Jesus Christ. From the street to the pulpit his preaching made people to think of one’s identity in the world. The rich son turned as the poorest of the poor in deed and life and made a great impact among the audience.

Seeing Francis' way of life dedicated to the renovation of the church many followed him. He exhorted his companions to live as per the Gospel and preach the Gospel in prayer. They were asked to beg when hungry and also to do labour in the fields to live. He named his associates "friars" i.e. Brothers" (Society of the poor brothers). They formed groups and went for preaching gospel. Some people laughed at him, some admired and many people wanted to follow in his company.

He made rules and regulations for their brother-friars. Their group was named as friars minor (Fraters Minors) the little brothers. He advised them to lead a life purely based on the Gospel, i.e. the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ and to walk in His footsteps and take Mary, Queen of the Angels, as their guide and protector.

### **Beggars before Pope**

Friars and companion reached Rome to get their constitution approved by the Pope. As they were in beggar's dress Holy Father scolded them and sent back. But in a dream Pope realized their identity and called them back for discussion on their constitution. After long discussion their constitution got approval. They were very happy to get their constitution approved by the Pope. They worked joyfully and more enthusiastically with their message for the poor and needy by treating the lepers, praising God and occasionally begging and doing labour for their daily expenses.

### **Second Christ (Altus Christus)**

Many people including priests came forward to the friars. Friars were afraid to receive priesthood, as humble servants.

Friars, attired in brown, moved beyond Italy, preaching with zeal

and fervour that the Almighty obviously seemed pleased to add to their number. The first ever General Chapter, the “Chapter of Mats” held at Pentecost in 1219 at Portiuncula brought 5000 Friars together. Friars had to request Pope Honorius III to formally introduce a year of novitiate for new friars.

With veiling of Clare, a pretty young maiden of noble descent in Assisi, on the night of Palm Sunday in the year 1212, Second Order “Poor Clares” for women came into being. In 1221 he founded the third order of Brothers and Sisters of penance, the lay fraternity.

He regarded the nature, all the living beings like birds, fishes etc. as brothers and sisters as all were the creation of God. He also regarded Sun, moon, stars, wind, rain, snow, heat, earth, rocks, flowers and all green plants ... as his brethren. He praised God, the creator of these, in his famous song “Suryakirthanam”.

### **The first Crib**

Passionately enamored of the incarnation, it was Francis who gave the first Christmas crib. On the night of Christmas in 1223, he recreated the nativity scene in a cave at Greccio, complete with ox, ass, hay and manger.

### **Stigmatization**

In 1224 on around the feast of Exultation of the Holy Cross, during the contemplation of the Passion of Christ, he was blessed with the imprint of the five sacred wounds of the crucified Lord on his person.

Another important prayer we find always in Francis was “Lord, make me an instrument of your peace” that we often pray. Way of the Cross was a remembrance of Francis’ Holy Land visit.

Francis became weak with so many diseases including other sufferings. When pain becomes harder he used to sing praising God for bearing the pain. In his dying moments, he sought and obtained permission from his superior to be allowed to die naked on the bare earth imitating his Master Jesus Christ. On October 3, 1226, Francis breathed his last at the same place that had witnessed the revelation of his mission and birth of his orders.

Francis' mortal remains were initially buried in the church of San Giorgio at Assisi on 4<sup>th</sup> October 1225 and later transferred to Basilica erected to his memory by Brother Elias of Cortona, on May 25, 1230.

He was canonized on July 28, 1228 by Pope Gregory IX. Pope Pius XI termed him as “Alter Christus” – another Christ.

The prayer of Francis now we repeat at the Way of the Cross.

“We adore you and we bless you, Lord Jesus Christ, here and in all the churches because by your Holy Cross you have redeemed the world”.



**LIFE AT A GLANCE**

Birth	September 26, 1182
Joins in religious life	February 24, 1208
Death	October 03, 1226
Sainthood	July 28, 1228

**FEAST DAY : OCTOBER - 04**

**GEMS**

“Lord, make me an instrument of your peace”

**MESSAGE**

“Return to the gospels and follow them faithfully”.

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## ST. CLARE OF ASSISI (1194-1253)



Can saints have friends from the opposite sex? Of course, they can. Saint Francis of Assisi had a woman friend. Her name was Saint Clare of Assisi. But you have a good reason to love Saint Clare. She is the patron saint of television.

How did a 13<sup>th</sup> century saint become the patron of television, a 20<sup>th</sup> century invention? That is an interesting story. But first, let us study how Saint Clare became Saint Francis of Assisi's girl friend.

Saint Francis and Saint Clare lived many centuries before television was invented.

Saint Clare was born on July 16, 1194 and she was 13 years younger to Saint Francis of Assisi.

Like Saint Francis, Saint Clare was born at Assisi, a town in Italy. She was the eldest daughter of Favorino Scifi and Blessed Ortolana. Her father was the Count of Sasso-Rosso, a representative of an ancient Roman family. He owned a large palace in Assisi and a castle on the slope of Mount Subasio.

Her mother too belonged to a noble family. Ortolana was known for her zeal and piety. While on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, she prayed

for the well being of her child she was then carrying. She heard a voice saying, “You will deliver a child who will enlighten the whole world.” She called her daughter Clare, which means light. Along with basic Christian prayers, Ortolana taught Clare to deal kindly with the poor.

As a child, Clare was devoted to prayer and practiced mortification. As she passed into girlhood she began to dislike the worldly riches and yearned for a spiritual life.

All of us have heroes. For some cricketers are their heroes while others go after movie stars. Others admire doctors or nurses. We consider our heroes really special and want to become like them when we grow up.

Clare’s hero was Saint Francis of Assisi. He was not a doctor or a famous painter, or even a great singer. Yet, Clare chose him as her hero because she found in him a man of God. She tried to imitate Saint Francis and his Master Jesus Christ.

She was 18 when Saint Francis came to preach during Lent in Assisi’s Church of San Giorgio. His inspired words inflamed Clare’s heart.

Like Saint Francis, Clare wanted to depend totally on God. She wanted to spend her time praising God and in prayer. She didn’t want to spend time thinking about what she would eat or where she would sleep.

But the 13<sup>th</sup> century that Saint Clare lived viewed as very strange even for men to live totally on the charity of others. Women who wanted to lead a spiritual life joined convents where they worked to earn for their congregations, and farmed to raise food to eat.

It was not just the age that was against Saint Clare’s plan. As Clare turned 18, her father planned a splendid marriage for her. But Clare decided not to marry but work for the poor. On Palm Sunday in 1212,

Clare along with her cousin Rufino visited Saint Francis and told him her desire to live a life of poverty and charity. Saint Francis recognized Clare as someone God had chosen for great things. He also foresaw many people following her example in centuries to come. On that day, Clare attended Mass but forgot to collect the blessed palm leaves. The main celebrant brought her the leaves. Clare took this as a sign of God's approval of her plan.

The same night, Clare with the help of her maid left her home through the back-door, which was in those days meant for taking away dead-body from the house. By going out through the back door, she symbolically told herself that she was leaving the world of luxury and its pleasures. She came to a church at Porziuncula, where Saint Francis and his disciples met her with lights in their hands.

She knelt down at the altar and removed her precious jewels. Later, she changed her silk dress into rough cotton clothes she had brought with her. Her beautiful hair was removed and she wore a black cloth on her head. She tied around her waist with a coir-cord and she took the vow of chastity and permanent poverty before Franciscan friars.

The friars took her to a Benedictine convent at that night. Her maid returned home with her jewels and dress. Hearing this, her father and relatives became furious and went to the Benedictine convent to take back her forcefully. As they were very angry Clare came before them and displayed her shaven head and the new dress of an ascetic (*sanyasin*). Seeing this her father and his team went back.

A week later, Clare joined San Angelo Convent. Clare's younger sister Agnes, who was only 15 then, followed her to the convent. This made their father furious again. He came with soldiers to take Agnes back forcefully. According to a legend, as the soldiers tried to carry Agnes away, she became very heavy. They also beat her, but soon got tired and left. As the commotion was going on outside the convent, Clare

was praying at the altar. Agnes also took the vows. She is now revered as Saint Agnes of Assisi.

Other young women who wanted to be brides of Jesus also joined the sisters. Saint Francis allowed Clare to organise an order of women to live the way he and his men did. Clare and her companions wore no shoes, ate no meat, lived in a simple house. They maintained silence most of the time. Yet they were very happy.

Clare and her sisters remained with the nuns at San Angelo until Saint Francis moved them to a simple house adjoining the chapel of San Damiano, situated outside the town. Saint Francis had rebuilt the house and got the permission from the Benedictines to use it as a permanent place for his spiritual daughters. Thus was founded the first community of the Order of Poor Ladies, or of Poor Clares, the second congregation Saint Francis of Assisi founded.

Saint Clare had a three-point spiritual agenda. 1) Love God; 2) Confess one's failures; and (3) meditate the suffering of Jesus all through one's life.

The Franciscan friars supported the new convent. These poor Clares began to work among the depressed and the lepers. Clare wanted to work in distant missions. Saint Francis asked her and her sisters to remain with Jesus in prayer as God's plan for them. Clare's prayers helped much, especially Francis in his preaching.

After Clare's father died, her younger sister Beatrice and her widowed mother joined as humble members of the order. The Church appreciated the new community's meditative prayer, spirit of poverty and fraternal love. The Pope and the Church hierarchy found poor Clares an asset to the Church at a time of renewal of the Franciscan Friars. Many nuns from other convents joined the Poor Clares forcing some old convents to close.

Saint Clare often meditated on the suffering and death on the cross

of Jesus Christ. Her penance and fast affected her health. Pope Innocent IV gave her the last rites and attended her funeral. On August 11, 1253, she went to her final Home.

### **Growth of Poor Clares**

Saint Clare's life in prayer made her congregation known every where in the Church. God heard her prayers and many sinners repented and led a pious life.

Saint Clare led her order for 40 years. Where ever the Franciscans went in Europe, the Poor Clares followed, so that by the time of Saint Clare's death, the order had convents all over Germany, Italy and Bohemia. Even before Clare's death, many people considered her a saint.

### **Beloved Poverty**

The strength of the daughters of Saint Clare is their adherence to evangelical poverty.

In the beginning Saint Clare and her companions had no written rule to follow. All they had was the brief *formula vitae* St. Francis had given them. Around 1219, Cardinal Ugolino, whom the Pope had appointed protector of the order, drew up a constitution for the Clares. The cardinal took the Rule of St. Benedict as the basis. The new rule, in effect, took away from the Clares the Franciscan character of absolute poverty and made it for all practical purposes another branch of the Benedictines.

Saint Clare resisted the innovations as she found the new rule permitted the order to own common property. Saint Francis had forbidden the Poor Ladies to possess worldly goods even in common. Owning nothing, they were to depend entirely upon what they get from begging. Cardinal Ugolino considered such complete renunciation as unpractical for cloistered women.

Meanwhile, the cardinal became Pope Gregory IX. When he came to Assisi to canonize Saint Francis in 1228, he visited Saint Clare. He pressed her to accept some property to meet her community's unforeseen needs. But Saint Clare refused. Pope Gregory misunderstood her refusal as her fear of violating her vow of strict poverty. He offered to absolve her from it. "Holy Father, I crave for absolution from my sins," replied Clare, "but I desire not to be absolved from the obligation of following Jesus Christ."

Later Pope Innocent IV approved the original constitution. She embraced the copy of the approved constitution and prayed, "Lord send your servant peacefully now."

Saint Clare governed the convent for nearly forty years until her death. As the mother general, she had power and authority, but she was always at the service of her sisters. She served at table, tended the sick, washed and kissed the feet of her lay sisters when they returned footsore from begging. Saint Clare would rise in the middle of the night to cover her sisters who had kicked off their blankets in the night. She was the first to rise in the morning, to ring the bell, and light the candles.

### **To Eternal Glory**

Saint Clare breathed her last while repeating her much beloved prayer of the Five Sacred Wounds. She was buried at the San Georgia Church presided by Pope Innocent IV. Word about her holiness spread all over the world. Pope Alexander IV declared her a saint on September 26, 1255.

### **Saint with the Monstrance**

Do you know how artists portray Saint Clare? A nun holding a monstrance. There is a story behind such depiction.

Thomas of Celano, a contemporary recorded this story to show the power of Saint Clare's prayers and the depth of her trust in Christ. In

1244, Emperor Frederick II was at war with the Pope over some land dispute. His troops came to attack Assisi. Saint Damien's Church and the convent, outside the city walls, were their first targets. While the attackers tried to seal the convent walls, Saint Clare, who was ill and bed-ridden, had herself carried out to the gate. There she set a monstrance containing Sacrament in sight of the enemy.

Prostrating herself before it, she prayed aloud: "Does it please Thee, O God, to deliver into the hands of these beasts the defenseless children whom I have nourished with Thy love? I beseech Thee, good Lord; protect these whom now I am not able to protect." Whereupon she heard a voice like the voice of a little child saying, "I will have them always in My care." She prayed again, for the city, and again the voice came, reassuring her. She then turned to the trembling nuns and said, "Have no fear, little daughters; trust in Jesus." At this, a sudden terror seized their attackers and they ran away.

Shortly afterward one of Frederick's generals laid siege to Assisi. On hearing this, Clare asked her nuns to cover their heads with ashes and plead with Christ for the city's safety. They prayed for whole day and night. A storm at night uprooted the attackers's tents, forcing them to flee.

### **Now, how did she become the patron saint of television?**

Pope Pius XII declared Saint Clare the patron saint of television in 1958. The pope, who had kept abreast with the latest scientific developments, was fascinated by the emergence of television as the hot, new communication medium of the 1950s.

Usually, Popes choose a patron saint, who has some connection with the cause. At first glance, it is hard to see any link between television and the 13th-century cloistered nun.

But Pope Pius XII knew what he was doing. He recalled an episode from Saint Clare's life that one could say prefigured television.

A witness at Saint Clare's canonization proceedings testified that one Christmas Eve the saint was so ill she could not leave her bed to attend Midnight Mass. After all the nuns had gone, Saint Clare sighed and said, "See Lord, I am left here alone with You." At that moment God granted her a vision in which she saw and heard the Mass as clearly as if she had been present in the convent chapel. Pope Pius interpreted this vision as a kind of miraculous broadcast, and named Saint Clare the patron of television.

Now, you have a reason to pray to her.

**Patron:** embroiderers; eye disease; eyes; gilders; goldsmiths; goldworkers; good weather; laundry workers; needleworkers; telegraphs; telephones; television.

*"Go forth in peace, for you have followed the good road. Go forth without fear, for he who created you has made you holy, has always protected you, and loves you as a mother. Blessed be you, my God, for having created me".*

### **Saint Clare of Assisi**

*O wondrous blessed clarity of Clare!  
In life she shone to a few;  
after death she shines on the whole world!  
On earth she was a clear light;  
Now in heaven she is a brilliant sun.  
O how great the vehemence of the  
brilliance of this clarity!  
On earth this light was indeed kept  
within cloistered walls,  
yet shed abroad its shining rays;  
It was confined within a convent cell,  
yet spread itself through the wide world.*

— **Pope Innocent IV**

**LIFE AT A GLANCE**

Birth	:	July 16, 1194
Consecrated life	:	March 18, 1212
Died	:	August 11, 1253
Sainthood	:	September 26, 1255

**FEAST DAY: AUGUST - 11**  
(Earlier August 12)

**GEMS**

“Accept the vow of poverty and you will attain everything else.”

**MESSAGE**

We can win worldly pleasures by ardent following the gospel.

## ST. DON BOSCO (1815-1888)



(Founder of the Salvation Congregation)

“Children you can do any thing, but no sin”

St. Don Bosco was a companion of children and youth. He rescued them from evil ways and led them to God with his gentleness and kindness.

He was born on August 16, 1815 in Becco, a beautiful village in Italy, as the second son to Francis Bosco and Margaret. His father died before John turned two. Margaret taught her three children to do good to all.

### **Lesson from the theft**

One day, a thief stole their grapes, but they caught him. Margaret told her sons the thief came to steal only their grapes but there were thieves steal people’s innocence. “You should recognize them and stay away from them,” she advised her children. John could receive the Holy Communion at the age of ten against the custom of that time. Due to the poor family background, though he had great desire

to study, John could not start his formal studies but learned the prayers taught by his mother. He also helped his mother in the field and looked after the cattle.

### **A Helping Hand**

John had a good memory and learning power. A priest showed interest to teach him, but in return John had to do lot of work for the priest. John was very good in studies but some teachers discriminated him since he was poor. John had to face many financial problems too. John faced the problems with prayers. The Blessed Mother encouraged him to go forward. He did all household works along with his studies. He was also good in games. This came very handy in his future works.

When he had to join the seminary he had no money but villagers helped him during his seminary life. On October 25, 1835 John received his habit in preparation to join the major seminary. He was very careful in following the rules and was good in studies and reading. He made notes of important points, which he found useful in his spiritual life. He felt that no amount of studies is enough to become a priest. While he was on a retreat he noted down nine important resolutions and decided to follow them till his death.

John was ordained a priest on June 5, 1841. At his first Mass, he prayed, “Keep my words fruitful to save souls.” His mother Margaret’s joy knew no bounds to see her son as a priest. She exhorted John to think only of salvation of souls. After his priesthood he was called “Don Bosco” (Don means father in Italian).

### **Friend of Children**

Don Bosco loved children very much. They were always with him. He wanted children to be cared and protected. So he started Oratory

on Dec. 8, 1841. This Oratory turned into the Salesian Congregation. All the aspirants were to work among the children with a new mission.

### **Salesians to the Other World**

The new mission prompted many to become Salesians. The congregation spread to other parts of Italy and other countries. Don Bosco also became famous. The congregation started in 1859 and got papal approval in 1864.

In 1872, on popular demand, another wing for women was started under the name “Daughters of Mary Help of Christ”. The mission for the children progressed well. Don Bosco decided to train them with love and not to punish them, so he could make change in them, touching their hearts. He was very strict about giving everything for their body and soul. He used to play, sing and take children for picnic.

### **Labourer who reaped divinity**

Don Bosco was a priest, teacher, writer and organizer. He was hard working for the cause of souls. He used to exhort his people. “We need to work hard to live forever but live thinking that we may die today.”

He was strict in his prayer, meditation and penance. He lived among the children of the Oratory and took the same food they ate. He was very thankful to all those who helped him in his efforts. He has written hundreds of books in a simple language for ordinary people. His vision to impart technical education to children is worth emulating by all nations.

When he found that he was not able to pull on well, he entrusted all his works to his followers. He offered his last Mass on December 11, 1887 and received his last Holy Communion on January 29, 1888 and died on January 31, 1888.

His sanctity and dedication to the cause of goodness made him much famous after his death. So many miraculous healings were attributed to the saint. On April 1, 1934, Pope Pious XI raised him to the altar to venerate. He was made patron of all Catholic publication on March 25, 1936.

St. Don Bosco brought the children as property of the nation and of God. He was a modern saint with modern people. Do everything but no sin, was his message to the world. He loved the Blessed Mother, help of Christians in a special way.



**LIFE AT A GLANCE**

Birth	: August 16, 1815
First Holy Communion	: March 26, 1826
Priestly ordination	: June 5, 1841
Begins oratory	: December 8, 1841
Recognized Salesian congregation	: March 1, 1869
Death	: January 31, 1888
Sainthood	: April 1, 1934

**FEAST DAY: JANUARY – 31.**

**GEMS**

“Do whatever you can; the rest will be done by Jesus and His Mother.”

**MESSAGE**

Win others through forgiveness and love not by punishment.

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## ST. JOHN BERCHMANS (1599-161)



### **Patron of Altar Servers**

Do you dress and behave in order to get the approval of your friends? Does the pressure to get your actions approved by friends force you to do things you do not like to do? Do you feel let down when others think less of you? Hey, you are a victim of peer pressure!

All of us experience peer pressure. At times peer pressure makes us do things that are not socially acceptable.

Does this mean we should shun our friends? No way. We should have friends and we should be faithful to them. The art is in balancing peer pressure and genuine friendship.

And a saint who succeeded in doing this is Saint John Berchmans, the patron saint of Altar Boys. He pleased others without straying from God's path.

John Berchmans was a saint in hurry. "If I do not become a saint when I am young, I shall never become one," he used to say. When he died he was only 22 years and five months old.

John Berchmans was born on March 13, 1599 at Deiste near Belgium's famous town of Leuve. He was the eldest among three sons of a poor cobbler.

When he was seven, his parish priest Father M. Emmerick remarked prophetically that the Lord would work wonders in the child.

John was kind, gentle, and affectionate towards people. When John was nine, a long and serious illness struck his mother. John spent several hours each day by her bedside, and consoled her with his words.

He was a favourite with his playmates because he was brave and open. He had attractive manners and a bright and joyful disposition. People felt attracted towards him.

John's friends loved him and he returned their affection by his kindness, without, however, deviating from the dictates of his conscience. John discreetly tried to correct their negligence and to restrain their frivolous conversation.

John was studious and had a bright intellect and retentive memory. He nurtured these gifts by devoting to study whatever time he could find from his recreation.

What, however, distinguished him from his companions was his piety. When he was just about seven, he started getting up early to serve two or three Masses.

He attended religious instructions and listened to Sunday sermons with the deep recollection. He made pilgrimages to the sanctuary of Montaignu, a few miles from Deist, reciting the rosary as he went, or absorbed in meditation.

From the beginning John was willing to help anybody. He had no

enemies. Whenever he got some time he went to the church and spent time in reciting the Rosary.

### **Priesthood only desire**

From childhood, John had an ardent desire to become a priest. At the boarding school, he had good companions and good atmosphere to pray, especially before the Holy Eucharist.

After three years in the boarding school John was called by his father home and told that he could not continue his studies since his father had no money. John requested his father to allow him to continue his studies. He promised to live frugally and study well. At that time the parish priest of Mekliu Cathedral came to John's house. John's father shared his problem with priest, who in turn agreed to accommodate John provided he cleaned rooms and washed dishes. John began to live with the priest. After finishing the household work, he used to study late in the night. He topped the class.

The priest kept a hunter dog. John taught the dog several hunting tricks, including catching ducks from the river. He was happy the dog obeyed his orders. This set him thinking; "The dog is obeying my orders, then what about me, whether I am obeying my Creator, the God. "

When the Society of Jesus, or the Jesuits, started a college at Mechlin in 1615 John joined as its first student. He was only 16. The college provided him the opportunity to pray before the Holy Eucharist.

As soon as he entered the Jesuit college at Mechlin, he was enrolled in the Society of the Blessed Virgin, or the Sodality. He made a resolution to recite her Office daily. He would, moreover, ask the director of the sodality every month to prescribe for him some special acts of devotion to Mary. On Fridays, at nightfall, he would go out

barefooted and make the Stations of the Cross in the town. Such fervent, filial piety won for him the grace of a religious vocation. Towards the end of his rhetoric course, he felt a distinct call to the Society of Jesus.

Since he had his studies at a Jesuit college, he developed good relation with the priests. After much prayer he decided to join them. He took his small savings and gave a good portion to the poor, rest he offered for Mass. Daily Communion was not granted to people at that time. But John got the privilege and was delighted to receive Holy Communion daily.

### **The Society of Jesus**

John wrote to his parents about his decision to join the Society of Jesus. But his father wanted him to become a diocesan priest. He tried to divert John from his plan, but nothing would deter John as he was convinced that God had called him to join the Society of Jesus. Finally, his father agreed. On September 24, 1616, John entered the Jesuit novitiate. When he received the Jesuit habit he wrote in his diary, “In order to become a saint I will fulfill all the rules 100 per cent satisfactorily.”

The Society of Jesus considers that the Church sanctified its rules when it canonized John Berchmans. John was a stickler for rules. He loved the Jesuit training. He was firm in his resolutions and mature in behaviour and very good in studies. As he was always joyous he was called “Brother Joyful.” He loved to do penances and sacrifices on his own. He avoided using heating during Rome’s harsh winter.

On December 1, 1616 his mother died. In between his brother James joined the Jesuits and another brother Adrian joined Augustinians. After the death of John’s mother, his father joined a seminary April 1, 1618 but died eight months later.

Without knowing his father's death, John wrote to his father to visit him before going to Rome for his studies in philosophy. When he found his father was no more, he accepted the will of God and chose the Heavenly Father as his father. He prayed "Our Father" with more stress.

John decided to study well for his future career as a good priest. He used to assist all who came for his help while on visit to Rome. He had a cherished dream to go to China after becoming a priest and spend the rest of his life there as a missionary.

After two years of novitiate in Mechlin John made his perpetual vows, and was sent to Antwerp to begin the study of philosophy.

Remaining there only a few weeks, he set out for Rome, where he was to continue the same study. After the journeying hundreds of kilometers on foot, carrying a wallet on his back, John arrived at the Roman College. He studied for two years and passed on to the third year class in philosophy in the year 1621.

One day early in August of that same year he was selected by the prefect of studies to take part in a philosophical disputation at the Greek College, at that time under the charge of the Dominicans. He opened the discussion with great perspicuity and erudition, but, on returning to his own college, he was seized with a violent fever of which he died, on August 13, at the age of twenty-two years and five months.

In 1621, John became sick. He was treated but his condition deteriorated. On August 11, 1621, a priest brought Holy Communion. Kneeling down; with love and adoration he received Jesus in the Holy Sacrament of Communion and Sacrament of anointing the sick.

There were so many to pray for John's recovery. On his bed he took

his Crucifix, Rosary and Jesuit Constitution and embraced them with a desire to die keeping them with him. He was well aware of his imminent death. He said “good bye” to all the friends who came to visit him at his bedside.

On his last hours he had terrible pain and temptation. He called on Jesus and Mary to overcome them. On 1 August 13, 1621, his superior came to his sick room and prayed with him, his beloved Holy Rosary and litany of Blessed Mother. John died calling the names of Jesus and Mary repeatedly.

The Church canonized him later. St. John Berchmans was a saint always tried to be with the Blessed Sacrament at the Altar.

### **John Berchmans – the saint**

During the second part of his life, John offered the type of the saint who performs ordinary actions with extraordinary perfection. In his purity, obedience, and admirable charity he resembled many Religious, but he surpassed them all by his intense love for the rules of his order.

The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus lead those who observe them exactly to the highest degree of sanctity, as has been declared by Pope Julius III and his successors. The attainment of that ideal was what John proposed to himself.

That is why he displayed such wisdom in conforming his will to that of his superiors and to the rules. He would have preferred death to the violation of the least of the rules of his order. “My penance”, he would say, “is to live the common life... I will pay the greatest attention to the least inspiration of God.”

He observed this fidelity in the performance of all his duties till the

last day of his life, as is attested by his spiritual directors. When he died, a large multitude gathered for several days to see him and to invoke his intercession.

The same year, Phillip, Duke of Aerschot, had a petition presented to Pope Gregory XV for the taking of information with a view to his beatification. John Berchmans was declared Blessed in 1865, and was canonized in 1888. His statues represent him with hands clasped, holding his crucifix, his book of rules, and his rosary.



**LIFE AT A GLANCE**

Birth : March 13, 1599  
Enters Jesuit novitiate : September 24, 1616  
Death : August 13, 1621

**FEAST DAY: AUGUST – 13.**

**GEMS**

“I would like to die rather than disobey even a single law.”

**MESSAGE**

Sanctity is not in doing greater things but in careful fulfillment of things which demands obedience.