
SAINTS EXPERIENCE AND EMULATE

Faith Formation Series Additional Text

STD VII

1. **St. Francis Xavier**
2. **St. Antony**
3. **St. Maria Goretty**
4. **St. Aloysious Gonzagz**



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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



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.

Archbishop Kuriakose Bharanikulangara
Bishop of Faridabad

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



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 Mr. N.P. Vincent, Mr. Jose Kaviyil and Mrs. Marys Antony for their sincere support in publishing this book. I also remember with gratitude 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 the almighty God may help us to succeed in all our endeavors.

7 – 7 - 2006

Fr. Joshy Vezhaparambil
Director, Delhi Syro-Malabar Catechetical Centre

ST. FRANCIS XAVIER



We know Saint Thomas, one of the disciples of Christ, is the Apostle of India. But who is the second apostle of India?

Saint Francis Xavier is the saint who is worthy of that position. In the 16th century, he preached the Gospel in several countries in Asia, including India's southern and southwestern coastal areas. He converted several thousands of people to Christianity. His life model is an inspiration for all of us.

Francis was born in the Castle of Xavier near Sanguesa, in Navarre, on 7th April, 1506. It was a Maundy Thursday. He died on the Island of Sancian near the coast of China on Dec. 2, 1552. He lived in this world only for 46 years and did 10 years of dedicated service as a missionary.

He was the sixth child of Lord Don Juan and Dona Maria. Don Juan was a calm, smart and busy lawyer. He used to take part in the Holy Mass and other religious activities along with his family members. In the palatial house, there was a small chapel with a cross in it. It

stood as a sign the spirituality of that house. Francis grew up in knowledge and devotion in this environment.

There was a war in Navarre, when Francis was six years old. Navarre was defeated in the war. Since Don Juan had a good relationship with the king's family, he lost all his wealth, except the bungalow and he died within one year. As revenge the brothers of Francis led many rebellions against the enemies, but lost even the bungalow. The 9-year-old Francis witnessed all this and could only wipe his mother's tears.

As a teenager, Francis lived happily, studying and playing. He took special interest to spend his time among the books.

In Pursuit of Knowledge

At the age of 18 Francis decided to obtain a degree from a reputed university in Paris. He wanted to bring back the lost glory of his family. But his mother was not ready to send him away. However, he left for Paris along with some students of his age on a horseback. After a long journey, the smart and efficient Francis reached Paris and joined Barbara College in Latin Quarter.

His hostel mate was Peter Faber, a calm, helpful, and generous person unlike Francis. He lived the life of a poor farmer, while Francis tried to maintain his high-class status. However, they loved and cared for each other. While Peter was engaged in reading and studies, Francis reigned in the world of sports, winning prizes. He was also good in studies. Peter Faber wanted to serve the world, while Francis wanted to conquer the world.

Francis wanted to attain all the worldly pleasures and to be noticed by all others. He appointed a servant to show his dignity. He went

outside the town on a horseback often. Together with it his expenses increased. Since the family did not have the means of income, his mother wanted to call him back. But his brothers opposed the idea and he continued to study in Paris. Although he lived a luxurious life, he did not involve in drinking or other sinful deeds. The enthusiastic effort of Peter in his studies was a constant encouragement for Francis to study. The fame of Francis helped Peter to lead a calm and quiet life. While Francis provided happiness to Peter, he in turn gave him knowledge. Their friendship was a blessing from God.

Meeting the ‘Guru’

During those times an elderly student joined St. Barbara College. He was a handicapped youth in shabby dress with unkempt hair, but with deep eyes. He had come to study after fighting a war that left him limping. He belonged to Spain and was different from everyone. He became the centre of attention in the college. Living the life of a beggar, he collected the youth and preached. Francis came to know about him. He saw him, understood him and his name was Ignatius of Loyola.

Ignatius had simplicity, maturity, knowledge, enthusiasm and other qualities. Many students used to gather around him to hear his speech. Francis did not like it. During that period Ignatius requested Peter to give him private tuition and he used to come to the room Francis and Peter shared. Francis and Ignatius used to meet each other quite often. Many students assembled in the room of Francis to see and hear Ignatius. Their number increased day by day, but Francis decided not to fall in that trap.

Francis dismissed the 38-year-old Ignatius’s call to spend life in God’s service as foolish. So, he did not listen to Ignatius. But, as days passed,

Ignatius filled in the thoughts of Francis. But he was not ready to change his life on someone else's advice. Although he avoided Ignatius, he began to feel uneasy in his mind. Ignatius, knowing Francis' financial difficulties, began to send children to him for tuition. Francis used to borrow money from Ignatius quite often.

Francis attained master's degree in 1530. He joined as a teacher in a famous college, but continued to stay in the old room. Meanwhile, Peter Faber decided to become a priest. Francis could not make a decision and he used to ponder over one of the sentences spoken by Ignatius: "What is the benefit if a person attains the whole world, but loses his soul?" Francis had never responded to that question, but he felt uneasy and he could not concentrate. He began to reflect and pray and finally decided to meet Ignatius. He took Ignatius as his guru and requested him to teach the lessons of spirituality.

Soldier of Christ

Francis heard the call of God and decided to become a priest. He began to grow spiritually under Ignatius. His old personality slowly disappeared and a new man emerged. On Aug. 15, 1534 seven persons, including Ignatius and Francis, reached Montmartre chapel and made a vow to live for Jesus and to strengthen the Catholic Church. Peter who was already a priest, offered the Holy Eucharist. He also took the vow. That small group became the founding fathers of the Society of Jesus, or the Jesuit society.

Francis and others stayed with Ignatius and except Peter all others studied theology to become priests. They started to observe fasting and penance and continued to study. They separated themselves into two groups to do service. Francis decided to serve the patients in the hospital and even in the worst conditions the highly qualified Francis

could serve them. One, who was proud of his wealth once, is now engaged in the works hated by every one.

Following Ignatius' instructions, Francis and friends reached Rome to meet the Pope. Understanding their sincerity and enthusiasm, he blessed them and allowed them to be ordained as priests. They returned to Venice and informed Ignatius. On June 24, 1537, Francis, along with others, was ordained as priest by the Bishop of Venice. Ignatius reminded them "You are soldiers of Christ" and they wished to be known as "Society of Jesus." Ignatius reached Rome and got the approval of Pope for the society.

To India

After becoming a priest, Francis wanted to go out to long and far off places to spread the good news of Jesus. It was that time that the Society of Jesus decided to send two priests to India. Although he was not included in the list, he became one of them later. With great pleasure he prepared for his journey to India. Ignatius reminded Francis "go to the place where God is calling you. Let the fire of faith be spreaded."

After working in Venice, Bolona and Rome, Francis started his journey to India from Lisbon on April 7, 1541 at the age of 36. The hard and risky journey ended on May 6, 1542 when he reached Goa. Having prayed to Saint Thomas, the first Apostle who preached the good news of Jesus in India, Francis began his service. He was acknowledged as the representative of Pope and was given the official dress before leaving for India. But he remained an ordinary person in the ship and helped others in their work. After reaching Goa, he met the bishop acknowledged his supremacy.

Francis began to understand India and its people very fast. He preferred to remain a humble priest and concentrated on strengthening the faith of Christians and preaching the good news to non-Christians. During that time, the Portuguese, by their immoral deeds, had caused severe damage to the Christianity. He reprimanded them and they used to forsake him. But Francis continued to urge them to receive the sacraments and live a good moral life. The news spread among people that a “good Christian” had come to Goa.

He tried to speak, sing and recite the prayers in the language of the people and could touch the hearts of the people. Through catechism, sacraments, hospital and prison visits, and house visits, he converted many people. He exhorted them “you can change your own life”. and thousands obeyed him. Francis walked on the coastal belt of India for many years, ringing a bell. Those who came hearing the bell received the word of God. He spread the Good News of God among the fishermen. In between he also visited the tomb of Saint Thomas at Mylapore.

Beyond the Boundaries

Francis was highly successful in his mission in India but was not satisfied. So he even went to the farthest Islands of Malacca. By that time he was appointed as the ‘Oriental Superior’.

After the proclamation of the word of God in Malacca, he went to Japan. He returned to Kochi and went to Japan again on April 25, 1549. He reached Japan in August and worked there for an year . Even though, he could not convert many, there were some notable conversions.

He also wished to preach Christ in China. So he returned to Goa

from Japan and proceeded to China. But he could not complete the journey. After his journey from Lisbon he could work for 11 years and 8 months. One third of that time was spent in the sea. He used to travel an average 60 kilometers a day. He had walked another 15,000 kilometers on the coastal area. In those journeys Francis had reached the verge of death many times and experienced many sufferings like Saint Paul. He lived among the poor and had rice water and even flower as food. He spent his time preaching and studying during the day and praying at night. He baptised over 50,000 people is a token of appreciation. The King of Travancore, Marthanda Varma, gave him the official name of “Valya Achan” (big priest).

Beyond the Heavens

Even though he started his journey to China, he could not reach there. He had to stay at the first Island of Sancian, which is southwest of Hong Kong. He reached there at the end of August in 1552. He had fever for 15 days and stay in a hut. Those who were with him left the place, but he continued to remain there, hoping that the ship to China would come. But, on November 21, he became seriously sick and his servant did not show much interest in treating Francis who layed motionless on a mat. Francis lost consciousness several times, but whenever he regained his consciousness he recited “Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me.” On Dec. 3, 1552, in the isolated hut of Sancian Island, he left for his heavenly abode.

He died without receiving any sacrament, but Jesus was living in his heart. That’s why he was able to travel to heaven. After a few days, some Portuguese merchants reached there and took his body to Goa.

The body of the saint is still enshrined at Goa in the church, which formerly belonged to the Society. In 1614 by order of Claudius

Acquaviva, General of the Society of Jesus, the right arm was severed at the elbow and conveyed to Rome, to keep at the present altar in the church of the Gesu.

Saint Francis Xavier is considered the greatest missionary since the time of the Apostles, and the zeal he displayed, the wonderful miracles he performed, and the great number of souls he brought to the light of true Faith, entitle him to this distinction. He was canonized with Saint Ignatius in 1622. However the Bull of canonization was not published until the following year on account of the death of Pope Gregory XV.

Saint Francis Xavier is the Apostle not only for India, but also for the entire oriental part of the globe. St. Francis Xavier, who lived preaching, praying and baptizing in the coastal areas of India, be the light of our life. Let his missionary zeal be an inspiration for us.



LIFE AT A GLANCE

Birth	:	April 7, 1506
Religious Profession	:	August 15, 1534
Priestly Ordination	:	June 24, 1537
Arrival in to India	:	May 6, 1542
Death	:	December 3, 1552

Feast Day : December 3

Gems

“Give the souls and take away the rest.”

Message

Jesus will be known to all people through committed and selfless missionaries.

ST. ANTONY



St. Antony of Padua is a well known Saint to the people of Kerala. He is the solace of many because of the miracles through his intercession. His life, which extended only for thirty-six years, was filled with events and services. He is one of the saints who has been elevated to the status of the Doctor of the Church. The life story of St. Antony will definitely awaken our enthusiasm in mission work.

Antony was born of Martin and Thresia in the town of Lisbon in Portugal. August 15, 1195 is considered to be his date of birth. As he was born in a high class family, he grew up in the midst of all comforts of life. His father was an officer at the king's palace. Anthony's baptismal name was Fernando and he was known by that name only.

His mother had offered him to the Blessed Mother in his very early age. If Fernando cried for any thing his mother used to show him the statue of Blessed Mother which made him stop crying. He learned the basic lessons of faith very fast. In those days schools were attached to churches and Ashrams. The teachers were either the priests or

nuns. Besides Latin, History, Science and religious texts also were taught. Fernando started his studies in one of such schools. As being a brilliant boy he had a good memory power.

All the boys of the school had to perform the services of the Altar boys. Fernando took part in the same earnestly. This helped him to grow in faith and increase his interest in the Holy Sacraments. At the early age itself he was able to think and feel about holy things and one of the incidents is mentioned below:

Once, Fernando was entrusted the responsibility of protecting the grains on the field from sparrows by his father. He did the job for several hours and after some time he felt that he should go to a nearby church and pray. He also could not neglect the responsibility given by his father. Innocently, he called the sparrows to come along with him. They followed him. He entered one of the nearby barns and once all the sparrows were inside, he locked the doors of the barn and went to the church and prayed. Since he was in a deep meditation, he did not realize that it was dark. At the end his father came to call him. He reached the barn and opened the gates and let the birds free.

A Call from Heaven

Fernando completed his school education meritoriously. Those days Portugal was known for its worldly pleasures. But Fernando was clear about its hollowness. He knew about several Ashrams in that area that were involved in various mission works. He felt that he could find the answer for his inner call from his life in the Ashram. So he decided to join in Augustinian religious order and in 1210 he joined the Ashram of St. Vincent. There he started his life by dedicating him self whole heartedly to God.

The Ashram was situated near to the city of Lisbon. Due to its proximity his family members and friends used to meet him often. He feared that their visits would prompt him to return from the Ashram. So he took a firm decision to shift to a different ashram at a distant place. He expressed his desire to the authorities and got a transfer to Coimbra in Portugal which was 175km from Lisbon. Fernando went to that place in 1212.

He spent his next 8 years in study, prayer and service at the Holy Cross Ashram in Coimbra. He got a special opportunity to study the Bible. After the completion of his studies he became a priest. Meanwhile he happened to meet the Franciscan Missionaries and became friends. In Feb 1220, those Franciscan missionaries, who had gone to Africa, were executed and their bodies were brought and buried in Coimbra. It was a real heart felt moment for Fernando as they were known to him. He desired to die for his faith. So he wanted to become a Franciscan as he felt his life in the Ashram could not fulfill his wishes. After spending a long time in meditation, he expressed his desire to some mendicant Franciscans. He also put a condition that he should be sent to Africa for missionary work immediately after joining the community. They agreed it happily.

New Name and New Dress

Fernando took the permission from the Rector of the Ashram to which he belonged and the Franciscan priests reached there and accepted him into their community. He changed the white dress of Augustinian community that he was wearing till date and instead started wearing the rough and grey coloured Franciscan dress. As he entered his new life, he changed his name to Antony. That's how Antony reached the community established by St. Francis Assisi from the community established by St. Augustine.

Antony had the intense desire to go as a missionary. After taking the vows of the Franciscan order, he and his co-priest Philip started their journey to Africa by ship. As soon as he reached there, he got fever and the treatments did not yield results. His condition became worse. As weeks passed, Antony and Philip took a decision to go back. He left his aim of becoming a martyr and prayed “God, let your will be done”.

The ship in which they were travelling back met with an accident but it reached a coast somehow. They reached a place called Sicili. There was a Franciscan Ashram near that place. After reaching there and taking rest Antony recovered from his illness. That year on May, 23 Francis conducted a meeting with all his co-brothers in the Franciscan order. Antony wanted to meet Francis who was known as a Saint. So he travelled 600 km to reach the meeting place called Assisi. The Franciscan order had its origin from that place. In the meeting, there were 3000 members. Antony was also able to see and hear Saint Francis closely.

When all people left after the meeting, Antony remained there still in prayer and silence. Fr. Gratian, superior of one of the Ashrams saw Antony in prayer and took him along. Since there was no priest to offer Eucharist at the Ashram of Mouno Paolo, he was accepted there. He lived in that Ashram on a hill top offering Holy Eucharist, preparing meal, cutting wood and cleaning rooms. As there was no one to disturb him, he prayed and observed abstinence for thousands of sinners. Antony praised God for the various ways on which God was leading him.

Sermons

In September, 1222, Antony was taken by his superior for an ordination ceremony. Holy function was led by a Bishop. The priests

of Dominican and Franciscan orders were the co-priests during that occasion. It was the time to deliver a speech on the greatness of priesthood. Priests one by one made excuses saying that they were not prepared. Antony, who was praying in one corner of the church, was asked by the superior to deliver the speech. Antony spoke about obedience. It was small but profound and heart tendering. It was a scholarly speech. Everyone appreciated him for his vast knowledge and eloquence.

St. Francis came to know the Franciscans received a person to teach Bible authoritatively. Thereafter, Antony was seen in the pulpits when sermons were delivered. He could deliver speech in Latin and other languages. The knowledge which he had obtained from Lisbon and Coimbra helped him in his sermons. The strength of the words spoken and the beautiful imageries made his sermons very attractive. The socio-political situation prevalent at that time was very disappointing. There was conflict between good and evil. Antony used the strongest weapon of holiness of soul. He endeavored to show good example.

Antony had an excellent memory power. He learnt holy books and the life histories of Saints. He was ever ready to preach bravely. His important mission was against those who propagated against the Church laws and misguided people. Francis entrusted him the responsibility of developing the skilled people, to fight against atheism. Thus Antony was appointed a reader in theology. Then he was instructed to go to France from Italy. He continued his mission of teaching and preaching there also. He established the reputed Franciscan educational institutions in France. He preached beautiful sermons in French. Meanwhile he was given higher responsibility of the Franciscan order like establishing new homes, developing new aspirants and knowing the status of Ashrams.

In the conference of 1227, Antony was appointed as the Minister Provincial. He took up the position with a serving mentality. He visited various Ashrams and undertook several journeys keeping the spirit of poverty possessed by Saint Francis. Continuous hard work without rest made him sick, but responsibilities got added on. He was given an opportunity to discuss with the Pope in Rome about the Franciscan Laws.

Holy Name of Padua

Antony is known along with the city of Padua because he reached that city at the end of his mission. He reached there in 1230 and served there as the soldier of the poor. He complained against those who were exploiting the poor. He criticized those who were doing financial injustices. One day a crooked merchant died. As told by Antony, when his chest was opened his heart was not seen there but it was found in the cash box.

Antony called for Charity. He was able to withdraw the order that permitted to imprison those who could not repay the debt. Even though he was born in a rich family he raised his voice for the poor. He often said that Jesus was poor.

Antony was a Saint who understood the power of the confessional. He used to hear confessions for the entire day without food and rest. He said that confession is the door to paradise. If you happened to drink the poison of sin, sincere and sorrowful confession is its only medicine. Those words touched many people. He was a blessed writer also. He utilized the early days in Padua to narrate the sermons for feast days. During the Lent season, he started preaching the Bible. He continuously preached during the 40 days of Lent. He used to preach in all the churches of the city.

Very soon people from near by villages, cities and palaces, began to gather to listen to him. More than 30,000 people flocked to hear him. There used to be a miraculous silence, when he preached. Men locked up their shops and attended his sermons. Many hardened criminals, careless Catholics; heretics were converted and brought to confession. That Lent season was a spiritual awakening for the Padua city. Literally speaking, he brought back the city of Padua for Jesus.

Fish and Donkey

St. Antony is known for his miracles. There were numerous miracles during his life time and after his death. Two miracles of his missionary life are important to mention. It is marked in the literary work called *“The Little Flowers of St. Francis”*.

One day Antony was preaching to the atheists. But they ridiculed him and did not hear his words. With sorrow, he turned to the nearby river and said “Fishes, listen to the word of God”. Immediately all the fishes of the river assembled and stood on the tails above the water to listen his Sermon. At the end of the Sermon, he blessed them and they swam back into the water.

The other miracle is associated with the Holy Eucharist. The atheist did not believe the presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. One day he publicly argued with people who stood against the Church’s teachings. One of the opponents of St. Antony came and said, ‘I have a mule, I will put it on fast for three days. Antony should remain with the tabernacle that is used to keep the Holy Eucharist here. Some fodder for the mule will be also put here. Let us see what the mule does.’ Antony accepted that challenge and prepared himself all the three days fasting and praying. On the third day the opponent came with the animal. Antony stood there with the Holy Eucharist in his

hands, but the mule, without even looking at the fodder kept aside, knelt down and adored the Blessed Sacrament. The opponent and his friends were amazed and repented.

Doctor of the Church

By the end of May 1231, Antony became very weak as if death was nearby. He experienced breathlessness and severe pain in his legs. He transferred himself from town to village. During that time he used to improve upon the feast sermons. He used to stay on a shed made on the top of a tree during day time. He used to spend in the night, the room. Due to headache and breathlessness, he did not have sleep in the night. He did not want food, lost concentration and was preparing for death.

On June 13, 1231 his soul went into heaven. Having heard about his death children ran around the streets shouting “Saint died, Antony died”. His funeral was attended by all the young and the old of Padua city with lighted candles. The sepulcher of that holy priest was decorated with miracles. Pilgrims came from Italy and foreign countries to be graced through his intercession. Those who cleansed their souls returned with abundant graces. After a month of his death the representatives of the people reached Rome requesting Pope for naming Antony as a saint. Before the completion of one year, which was on May 30, 1232, he was canonized a Saint by Pope Gregory IX. On January 16, 1946, he was elevated to the category of Doctor of the Church. Once, the head of the family where St. Antony stayed happened to see Blessed Mother handing over child Jesus into the hands of Antony. That’s why we see the picture and statue of St. Antony, holding child Jesus. Let us pray for the intercession of Saint Antony in order to grow in faith and to be deep in our devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

LIFE AT A GLANCE

Birth	:	August 15, 1195
Joins Religious Congregation	:	1210
Joins Franciscan Congregation	:	1220
Apostolate in Padua	:	1230
Death	:	June 13, 1231
Sainthood	:	May 30, 1232
Doctor of the Church	:	January 16, 1946

Feast Day : June 13

Gems

“The real repentant determines not to fall in sin again”.

Message

The core of Christian life is poverty, simplicity, humility, compassion, courage, and peace.

ST. MARIA GORETTY



(Patron of youth, young women, purity, and victims of rape)

Have you heard of the name Maria Goretti? This little Italian girl was slain before she reached the age of twelve for having preferred death to sin. She was canonized in 50 years.

She is the friend of all children, who lead a holy life. To be safe from the dangers of impurity her intercession is of great help to children. Every child should know her heart rendering life story. She was a small child like you. But she could climb the steps of holiness.

Saint Maria Goretti was born in October, 1890 in the small hilltop village of Corinaldo near Ancône. Her father was Luigi Goretti and mother Assunta.

Assunta consecrated Maria to the Blessed Virgin on the day of her baptism. Maria's courageous parents laboured under the sign of Christian poverty to support the children, but by 1896 their little plot of land proved insufficient to feed the growing family of six children and their parents. Maria's father decided that they would move down

to the plains of Rome, where it was said that fertile farm land could be rented at low cost. He made a deal with one Serenelli to share the same house and work for the same farmer.

The move to Ferriere di Conca, near Nettuno, proved fatal to the good Luigi. He died after four years, exhausted by the unhealthy climate, the heavy heat and his hard labour.

“Death rather than sin,” was the doctrine Assunta taught her children. The small family provided Maria the environment to grow in love of God and one another. Little Maria did not like to do even the smallest of sins. At the age of 6 on October 4, 1896, she made her first confession and received the Sacrament of Holy confirmation. Those days the First Holy Communion was given at a later stage. The required age was 11. Maria tried to live a life preserving the graces she obtained through the sacraments of baptism and confirmation.

As Maria neared the age of 11, she informed her mother of her greatest desire to receive Jesus in Holy Communion. She did not know how to read and there was no money for new dress and sandals. Every day there was plenty of work without rest. But she was eager to receive Jesus in her heart. However there was a way out for everything.

After completing the household job, Maria learned prayers with others help. She prepared herself with the other children for the First Holy Communion. It was a long 11 months’ preparation. At the end she appeared before the parish priest to answer questions about her faith. Her brother, Angelo also had reached the age for receiving Holy Communion. Her neighbours gave them dress, sandal and many gifts. That’s how Maria and Angelo received First Holy Communion in May 1901.

The priest who conducted the ceremony said to the first holy communicants “Today, Jesus has come into your hearts. So you should keep your hearts holy and innocent. Pray to our Blessed Mother daily. It is better to die rather than sin”. These words reached in the depth of Maria’s heart. She understood that Jesus was always along with her and seeing her. That day, being the happiest day in her life, remained as a memory all through out her life. After receiving Jesus, her behaviour also had a complete change. She grew more in love of one another.

Wife of Serenelli had died earlier and his elder son had left home. The younger son, Alexander was with him. Serenelli was a drunkard and idle and Alessandro was selfish and rebellious.

In June 1902, Serenelli’s son, Alessandro, began to cause trouble to Maria. He began to boss her around and to make advances towards her which she shrugged off. Her big mistake was that she did not tell of this her mother because she did not want to cause trouble.

The following month, on July 5, 1902, he decided that he would be denied no longer. Alessandro, aged 20, motioned her towards the bedroom but she refused shouting, “No! It is a sin! God does not want it!” He stabbed her 14 times.

While being taken to hospital in Nettuno on a horse-drawn ambulance she told everything. In the nearby hospital she underwent 20 hours of surgery without anaesthesia. During that time she forgave Alessandro and prayed for him.

On the following day, July 6, she died. She was not yet twelve years old. Alessandro was sentenced to 30 years of hard labour.

After six years in prison he was near despair and one night in 1910

Maria appeared to him in his cell. She smiled and was surrounded by lilies, symbols of purity. That was a turning point in Alessandro's life and he regained his peace.

His first deed after release from prison was to visit Maria's mother and ask for pardon. He accompanied her to Christmas Mass in the parish church where he spoke before the congregation, acknowledging his sin and asking forgiveness from God and the community. He took up work in a Capuchin monastery as the gardener.

In 1947 Maria Goretti was beatified. Her mother and murderer were present on that occasion. In June 1950 Pope Pius XII canonized Maria Goretti, declaring her to be a saint and martyr. Her mother was among some 500,000 people who turned up for the ceremony. It was the first time in history that a mother attended the canonization of her child.

In May 1970 Alessandro died. He had left the following letter, dated May 1961.

I'm nearly 80 years old. I'm about to depart. Looking back at my past, I can see that in my early youth, I chose a bad path, which led me to ruin myself. My behavior was influenced by print, mass media and bad examples, which are followed by the majority of young people without even thinking. And I did the same. I was not worried. There were a lot of generous and devoted people who surrounded me, but I paid no attention to them because a violent force blinded me and pushed me towards a wrong way of life.

When I was 20 years old, I committed a crime of passion. Now, that memory represents something horrible for me. Maria Goretti, now a saint, was my good Angel, sent to me through Providence to guide

and save me. I still have impressed upon my heart her words of rebuke and of pardon. She prayed for me, and interceded for her murderer. Thirty years of prison followed. If I had been of age, I would have spent all my life in prison. I accepted to be condemned because it was my own fault. Little Maria was really my light, my protector; with her help, I behaved well during the 27 years of prison and tried to live honestly when I was again accepted among the members of society.

The Brothers of St. Francis, Capuchins from Marche, welcomed me with angelic charity into their monastery as a brother, not as a servant. I've been living with their community for 24 years, and now I am serenely waiting to witness the vision of God, to hug my loved ones again, and to be next to my Guardian Angel and her dear mother, Assunta. I hope this letter that I wrote can teach others the happy lesson of avoiding evil and of always following the right path, like little children. I feel that religion with its precepts is not something we can live without, but rather it is the real comfort, the real strength in life and the only safe way in every circumstance, even the most painful ones of life.”

Signed, Alessandro Serenelli

Concluding Remarks

Maria Goretty stands out before us as a sign of purity and holiness. Even at the age of 12 she held on to the motto “death rather than sin”. Let us also try to follow the great example of maria goretty of being pure in our heart and body and shall forgive even to those who sin against us.

LIFE AT A GLANCE

Birth	:	October 16, 1890
First Confession	:	October 4, 1896
First Holy Communion	:	1901, may
Death	:	July 4, 1902
Declared Blessed	:	April 27, 1947
Sainthood	:	June 24, 1950

Feast Day: July 6

Gems

I will abstain from sin even at the cost of letting my body to be cut into pieces.

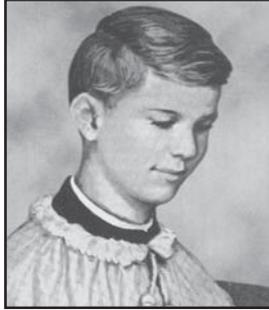
Message

Do not lose the heavenly privileges, fascinated by the worldly beauty.

Official Prayer to St. Maria Goretty

Oh Saint Maria Goretti who, strengthened by God's grace, did not hesitate even at the age of twelve to shed your blood and sacrifice life itself to defend your virginal purity, look graciously on the unhappy human race which has strayed far from the path of eternal salvation. Teach us all, and especially youth, with what courage and promptitude we should flee for the love of Jesus anything that could offend Him or stain our souls with sin. Obtain for us from our Lord victory in temptation, comfort in the sorrows of life, and the grace which we earnestly beg of thee (here insert intention), and may we one day enjoy with thee the imperishable glory of Heaven. Amen.

ST. ALOYSIUS GONZAGZ



Son of a Noble

It is said that Catholic Church is the garden of many saints. There are infants, children, young, adults and old among the saints. Those who were invited by Jesus in their youth are worshipped as advocates and intercessors of young people. Among them an important saint is Aloysius Gonzaga. The life of Aloysius, was filled with piety and devotion to God.

Aloysius was born on March 9, 1568 as the son of a noble in Italy. His father was a rich and famous soldier. He had much property and a beautiful lake in it. His mother, who was deeply faithful and pious, tried to bring him up in discipline and taught prayers in his childhood itself. She was an epitome in showing charity to the poor. That good mother could inculcate goodness in her son. Aloysius could recite the prayers and Gospel in his seventh year itself. He was brought up and devoted to the Catholic faith.

Young Soldier

When Aloysius was 5, his father was appointed as captain of soldiers. There were 3,000 soldiers working under him. He took his son to the military camp for giving training in soldiery. He wished to see him as a brave soldier. He gave Aloysius a small sword in his hand and made him wear the suit of armour. Aloysius liked it very much. Standing on a rock, he used to show the skills he learned, by swinging the sword and jumping down as a soldier. All the soldiers liked his plays. He learned the special language used by soldiers and spoke to them in that tone.

One day, Aloysius did a mischief in the military camp. While soldiers were sleeping in the afternoon, he entered the camp without being noticed and stole some gunpowder. He filled it in big cannons and lighted it. It was fired with a loud noise that made the soldiers awake frightened and rushed forward fearing that it was an attack of enemies. Then they came to know what had happened. At first Aloysius' father got angry but later he became proud of the bravery of his son.

During that time Italy started a war with Tunis. War ships left the harbour one by one. Aloysius was ready to board the ship in armour but his father did not allow him. He sent his son back to the house. Aloysius had learned coarse vocabulary from his life in the camp. He said such words now and then. His mother found it out when he reached home. Aloysius didn't know the meaning of the words. But his mother advised him not to use such improper expressions. He tried to obey what his mother said and decided not to use such bad words. He was deeply influenced by his mother's words.

Great things for God

When Aloysius was eight years old, his father retired from the service. By that time his desire to become a soldier had already vanished. He wished to do something great for God. He devoted his life to prayer, study and adoration to Our Lord. He spent much time in church and was attracted by the beautiful pictures of saints in the church. He repented for his mischief done in the camp and for using bad words. He used to kneel down on the floor and pray for a long time.

Aloysius' mother used to visit the house of the poor and gave them food and medicine. He also accompanied her in such family visits. It helped him to develop love for the poor in him. He was sad at seeing the hungry men and the pitiful pictures of children, who struggled with hunger and cold and it remained in his mind. He wished not to become famous but to do service to others.

Aloysius and his younger brother Rudolph studied in a reputed school in Florence. That time Aloysius got a book which inspired him to love God and serve the human beings. It helped him a lot in his life. He abandoned luxurious life and contented with bread and water. He took fasting on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday and practiced great austerities.

At the age of nine he had privately decided to become a religious and made a vow of perpetual virginity. He said, "In order to express my love and faith to Mother Mary I will always live in purity." At that time he had white lily flowers in his hand as the symbol of purity. Good books helped him to maintain the purity of mind and heart. He selected such books to read and tried never to sit idle.

In those days Holy Communion was not given very early. Aloysius

did his First Confession when he was 11 years. He confessed the sins he committed in the military camp with deep spirit of penance and fainted due to repentance. The priest consoled him and he could complete his confession only the next day. Later he confessed every now and then. He decided to improve his behaviour to others as he thought he was very bad tempered. That time he had only one aim – love God and never do sins.

Practice of Holy Life

In 1580 when Bishop of Milan visited their place Aloysius got an opportunity to talk to him. Bishop liked the innocence of that 12 year old boy. Being known that he had not received the first Holy Communion, Bishop gave him the Communion. That time people used to receive Communion only once in a week. But Aloysius received it thrice a week. He prayed long hours with tears in front of the crucifix. While remaining a good student in his other studies, the young man developed an affinity for the study of saints in his free time. It helped to create in him an intensive desire to serve others.

Aloysius' father was appointed as a Governor in the Province of Kasal in 1580. He took his family there. While crossing a river they met with an accident and their horse-cart got for into two by hitting on a rock. Aloysius, who was sitting in the back, fell into the flood of water but was saved by a man.

He took much time to pray and do penance by giving up woollens even in severe winter. He prayed at midnight kneeling on the cold stone floor in his unheated room. Even if he was disturbed by severe head ache, he was always found peaceful and happy. He was a vigorous young man who took part in badminton which was common

at that time. He had gone to see horse race with his friends and enjoyed scenic beauty from the top of a tower in his town.

Aloysius, who showed much interest in prayer, met with an accident once. He had lighted a candle while praying and fell asleep after some time. The candle was burning and at last his bed caught fire. He jumped out from the bed. When the servants reached, the fire had already spread in the room. With the help of the soldiers the fire was extinguished at last. Aloysius thanked God.

Days in Palace

When Aloysius was 13 years old, his father took him to the palace of King Philip II in Spain. Philip II was an eminent ruler in Europe. Aloysius stayed there as a page to the Spanish crown. He enjoyed the luxurious royal life. There were dramas and dances every day. He was taken by the Prince to the picnics but Aloysius was not interested in such life. He was not attracted by immoral games, dirty entertainments and kept him self away from bad books.

In the royal life also Aloysius prayed to Mother Mary intensely. He practiced many devotions and mortifications and safeguarded himself at all times from possible temptations. Mother Mary helped him and he took interest in helping others through sacrifices. He found pleasure in donating food to the poor. He collected the fruits, splendid in the palace, and gave to the hungry.

Even if he had no special duties in the palace, he did not waste his time. He utilized his time to gain more knowledge in Mathematics and Science which were his favourite subjects. He spent his time in prayer and reading the Lives of Saints.

In the Society of Jesus

When Aloysius was in the palace, he was praised for his rich family status. He, who didn't like such praises and fame used to tell, "There is no meaning in saying one's family status. There is no difference between the bones of the rich and the poor. They cannot be recognized also." Once his father pointed out his property and said, "These are mine. Tomorrow it will become yours." Aloysius asked, "Is that all?" His father said, "No, that orchard is also ours." But Aloysius kept on asking the same question and at last said, "I don't want this wealth. I want to serve God and Men."

When Aloysius was 15 years old, he read a book about the experience of Jesuit Missionaries in India. His resolve to become a Jesuit was formed and firmed at that time. He wished to do mission works in foreign countries. In 1583, while praying in the church of Annunciation in Florence he became clearly aware that Jesus was calling him through the intercession of Our Blessed Lady to be a religious and to join the Jesuits. He informed about it to his mother. She was overjoyed to see her eldest son to be a religious, but was a different situation with his father who flew into a rage and became very angry as he saw his son becoming a great leader and sportsman for he was very intelligent and had a sharp business head.

But Aloysius did not agree with it. He openly said that the only desire in his life was to become a priest. It made his father angry and he threatened him, "I will order my servants to thrash you after binding you on a rock pillar." But he was not shaken and was ready to bear all pains for Jesus. His father realized later that there was no benefit of threatening. Then he tried to change his mind with love. They boarded a ship from Spain to their motherland Italy.

Sea pirates followed their ship. Aloysius was in deep meditation as he knew that all the passengers would be killed if the pirates captured their ship. When the pirates reached the ship they had already reached the coast of Italy. Thus they were saved. Aloysius and his family went to their palace where they were visited by nobles who were their friends and relatives. They all persuaded him to withdraw from his decision but not succeeded. His father sent him on a tour to the courts of Italy hoping that the experience of such refined living would change his son's mind. But his determination proved to be stronger. At last his father agreed to his desire after four years of opposition. He said, "You can go where God calls you."

Aloysius wrote to the Superior General about his desire to join the Jesuits. He renounced all his inheritance, wealth and titles over to his younger brother Rudolph. Thus Aloysius became a poor man and set out to Rome on 25 November 1585 to join the Society of Jesus. He wore the habit of a monk at the age of 17. He, who was born in the family of nobles, was ready to do the meanest jobs in the ashram. He was filled with humility and obedience. He engaged in all works with great pleasure.

Divine Grace that Never Loses

Aloysius used to eat very less food and took alms in the streets of Rome with the permission of his superiors. He offered to whatever he got to the poor. His father died after two months. He felt sad but sent consoling words to his mother. Meanwhile there was a quarrel between his brother Rudolph and a Duke of Mantua on the possession of the property. Nobody could solve the problem. Aloysius reached there and explained Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Both of them joined in love and solved their problem.

When he was a Jesuit Novitiate, his sermon touched deep by in to the hearts of many and helped them to give up the paths of evil. After taking the first vow he started to study Theology after which he could be ordained. In 1591, plague and famine struck Italy. Members of the Society of Jesus came forward to serve the sick. Aloysius devoted his full strength to the care of the victims by washing their wounds and feeding them. At last he also got plague and for three months he was bed ridden with severe pain. He wished to reach the abode of Jesus soon.

Aloysius received the Holy Communion with full consciousness. He got much comfort from the crucifix placed near to his bed. On 21 June 1591 he left to the immortal world uttering the name of Jesus. He was 23 years then. In 1625 Aloysius Gonzaga was declared as a saint. In 1629 He was declared as the advocate and intercessor for the young people. He is a patron saint for the you as he showed much love to Jesus in his youth.



LIFE AT A GLANCE

Birth : March 9, 1568
First Holy Communion : 1580
Joins Jesuit Congregation : November 25, 1585
Death : June 21, 1591
Declared Patron of the Youth : 1629

Feast Day : June 21

Gems

“I desire to serve God and man”.

Message

We might be poor or rich, but become *sadhus* for Jesus.