

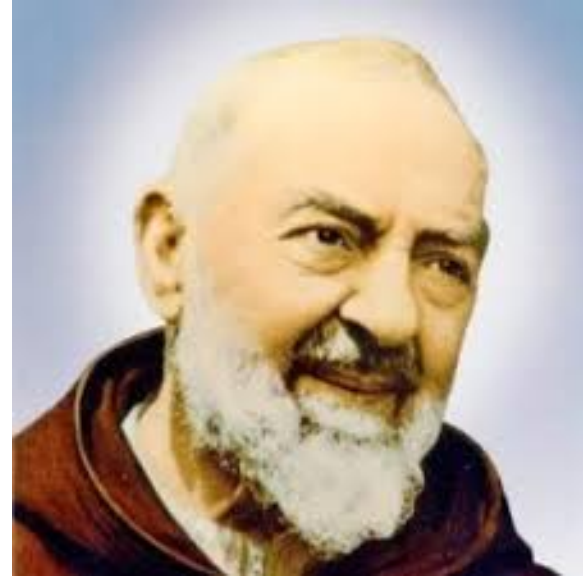
Spiritual
Development in relationship with God

Saint Padre Pio

St. Padre Pio was born in a small farming town in Italy in 1887. His family was a strong family of faith and by the age of 5, St. Padre Pio dedicated his life to God. Even as a small child his family reported that he loved to pray and loved the church. In early childhood St. Padre Pio communicated with spiritual guides, angels, Jesus, and the Virgin Mary. St. Padre Pio joined an order of Friars at 15 years old and by the age of 23 was ordained as a priest. It is said that even spending a few moments in St. Padre Pio's presence was life changing.

St. Padre Pio suffered from ill health his entire life, although the cause of this was never found. After offering himself as a "victim for poor sinners and souls in purgatory," at the age of 31, the stigmata of Christ, the wounds of Christ, appeared on his hands, feet and side, remaining there painfully for 50 years.

St. Padre Pio was a tireless worker, being of service in the church and in hospitals, consistently working 19 hour days without ever being known to take a vacation day in all of his 51 years. His miraculous healings and protections from harm are legendary. St. Padre Pio is the patron saint of civil defense workers, adolescents, and stress relief.



Physical

Development in health and natural skills

Saint George

St. George is undoubtedly amongst the most well known saints on this list. He was a third century Roman soldier and a priest in the Guard of Diocletian, who is venerated as a Christian martyr. He is regarded as the most prominent military saint and is one of the most revered in the Western World. George was raised as a Christian and decided at a young age that he wanted to be a soldier. He joined Diocletian's army and, before long, was one of the finest soldiers around. Some time later, Diocletian decided that all soldiers who were Christians had to renounce their faith and become pagan. George refused. Diocletian tried to convince him to convert because he didn't want to lose his best soldier, but George refused.

Recognizing the futility¹ of his efforts, Diocletian was left with no choice but to have him executed for his refusal. Before the execution, George gave his wealth to the poor and prepared himself. After various torture sessions, including laceration² on a wheel of swords, in which he was resuscitated three times, George was executed by decapitation before Nicomedia's city wall, on April 23, 303.

But most of all, Saint George is tough and powerful because he killed a dragon, or so the legend goes. Here is the story of St George and the Dragon:

"In the fully developed Western version...a dragon or Crocodile makes its nest at the spring that provides water for the city of "Silene" in Libya... Consequently, the citizens have to dislodge³ the dragon from its nest for a time, to collect water. To do so, each day they offer the dragon at first a sheep, and if no sheep can be found, then a maiden must go instead of the sheep. The victim is chosen by drawing lots. One day, this happens to be the princess. The monarch begs for her life to be spared, but to no avail. She is offered to the dragon, but there appears Saint George on his travels. He faces the dragon, protects himself with the sign of the cross, slays the dragon, and rescues the princess. The grateful citizens abandon their ancestral paganism and convert to Christianity."



¹futility - uselessness

²laceration - the process of wounding deeply

³dislodge - to move from a particular place

Moral

Development in recognizing and choosing the good

Saint Peter Claver

A native of Spain, young Jesuit Peter Claver left his homeland forever in 1610 to be a missionary in the colonies of the New World. He sailed into Cartagena, a rich port city washed by the Caribbean. He was ordained there in 1615.

By this time the slave trade had been established in the Americas for nearly 100 years, and Cartagena was a chief center for it. Ten thousand slaves poured into the port each year after crossing the Atlantic from West Africa under conditions so foul and inhuman that an estimated one-third of the passengers died in transit. Although the practice of slave-trading was condemned by Pope Paul III and later labeled “supreme villainy” by Pope Pius IX, it continued to flourish.

Peter Claver’s predecessor, Jesuit Father Alfonso de Sandoval, had devoted himself to the service of the slaves for 40 years before Claver arrived to continue his work, declaring himself “the slave of the Negroes forever.”

As soon as a slave ship entered the port, Peter Claver moved into its infested hold to minister to the ill-treated and exhausted passengers. After the slaves were herded out of the ship like chained animals and shut up in nearby yards to be gazed at by the crowds, Claver plunged in among them with medicines, food, bread, brandy, lemons, and tobacco. With the help of interpreters, he gave basic instructions and assured his brothers and sisters of their human dignity and God’s love. During the 40 years of his ministry, Claver instructed and baptized an estimated 300,000 slaves.

Fr. Claver’s apostolate extended beyond his care for slaves. He became a moral force, indeed, the apostle of Cartagena. He preached in the city square, gave missions to sailors and traders as well as country missions, during which he avoided, when possible, the hospitality of the planters and owners and lodged in the slave quarters instead.



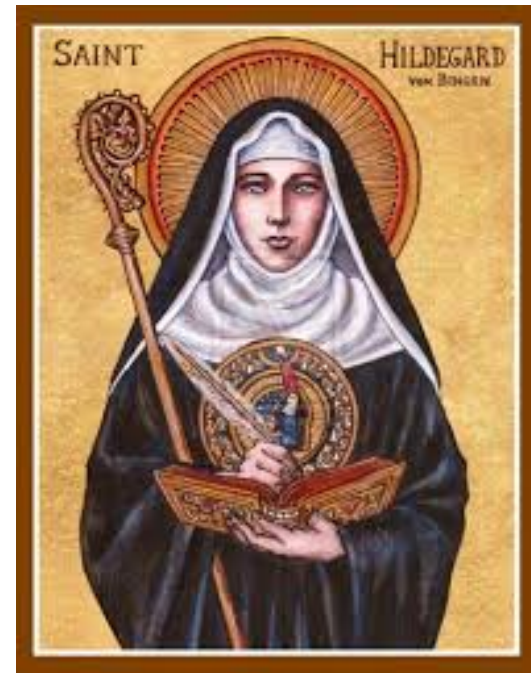
Intellectual
Development in the pursuit of Truth

St. Hildegard

Hildegard of Bingen, also known as Saint Hildegard, was a renowned German Benedictine abbess, writer, philosopher, composer, and visionary, widely regarded as the founder of scientific natural history in Germany. Her fellow nuns elected her as the magistra, and she founded the monasteries of Rupertsberg and Eibingen. She wrote theological, botanical¹, and medicinal texts, composed liturgical songs and poems, and explained her visions in her work 'Scivias.' She also invented a constructed language known as Lingua Ignota.

When Hildegard died on September 17, 1179, her nuns claimed that they saw two streams of light in the skies that crossed over the room where she was breathing her last. After her death, the monk Theoderic of Echternach compiled her hagiography², 'Vita Sanctae Hildegardis'. He had included the hagiographical work 'Libellus' or 'Little Book', which had been started by Godfrey of Disibodenberg who died before completing his work. Guibert of Gembloux was then invited to finish the work. However, he too could not complete the project. Theoderic finally completed the Vita.

The Roman Catholic Church has recognized her as a saint for centuries. However, it was only in October 2012 that Pope Benedict XVI declared her a saint through the process of canonization and proclaimed her a Doctor of the Church. Her writings were translated into English, and works based on her life including Barbara Lachman's 'The Journal of Hildegard of Bingen' and Joan Ohanneson's 'Scarlet Music: A Life of Hildegard of Bingen' were published. Centuries after her death, a recording of Hildegard's music, 'A Feather On The Breath Of God', with the pure soprano of Emma Kirkby and Gothic Voices became a bestseller.



¹botanical - relating to plants and flowers

²hagiography - the writing and study of the lives of the saints