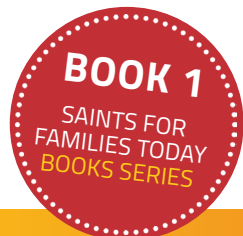


# INSPIRING STORIES OF CATHOLIC SAINTS FOR MARRIED COUPLES



AGAPÉ  
Catholic Ministries



DEDICATED TO BUILDING STRONG CHRIST CENTERED FAMILIES



After 15 years of teaching Catholic Marriage Preparation courses to engaged couples and offering married enrichment programs, I can say with certainty that as Catholic married couples, we need saintly role models. To see the witness of how other couples have lived their vocation to marriage with holiness and true faith in God, inspires us to do the same.

This short book is the first in a series which presents the stories of saints who can inspire us to follow Christ more closely on our path and vocation in life. Some saints did not share the same faith with their spouses and other saints not only shared the faith, but lived it to the fullest. Some were martyrs and others lived the daily martyrdom of ordinary life. Some of the saints had many children and other had none. Each of these couples or married saints comes with a specific God given gift, or virtue, to share with all of us.

We hope these stories lift your spirits, inspire you to love God more and have a happier and holier marriages.

## *Christian and Christine*

*Founders of Catholic Marriage Prep*  
[www.catholicmarriageprep.com](http://www.catholicmarriageprep.com)

**"THE LIFE OF HOLINESS WHICH IS RESPLENDENT IN SO MANY MEMBERS OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD, HUMBLE AND OFTEN UNSEEN, CONSTITUTES THE SIMPLEST AND MOST ATTRACTIVE WAY TO PERCEIVE AT ONCE THE BEAUTY OF TRUTH, THE LIBERATING FORCE OF GOD'S LOVE, AND THE VALUE OF UNCONDITIONAL FIDELITY TO ALL THE DEMANDS OF THE LORD'S LAW, EVEN IN THE MOST DIFFICULT SITUATIONS."**

**ST JOHN PAUL II**

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"For this reason, the Church, as a wise teacher of morality, has always invited believers to seek and to find in the Saints, and above all in the Virgin Mother of God "full of grace" and "all-holy", the model, the strength and the joy needed to live a life in accordance with God's commandments and the Beatitudes of the Gospel."

ST JOHN PAUL II





# CHAPTER 1

## MARRIED SAINTS FROM JESUS' TIME

"In this great undertaking which is the renewal of all things in Christ, marriage-it too purified and renewed-becomes a new reality, a sacrament of the New Covenant.

We see that at the beginning of the New Testament, as at the beginning of the Old, there is a married couple. Joseph and Mary are the summit from which holiness spreads all over the earth."

**ST JOHN PAUL II**

Saints Anne and Joachim were born in Nazareth, about 50 years before the birth of Christ. They were the Blessed Virgin Mary's parents, and therefore Jesus' grandparents. We can look to them as true witnesses of holiness as a married couple. They are the patron saints of grandparents and parents of children called to consecrated life or religious life.

## PRAYER

**ST JOACHIM AND ST ANNE, PRAY FOR ME TO BE A GOOD GRANDPARENT AND SPOUSE, NURTURING MY CHILDRENS' FAITH SO THAT THEY CAN ONE DAY SAY YES TO GOD'S WILL AND PLAN FOR THEIR LIVES.**

## SAINT JOACHIM & SAINT ANNE



Joachim was a shepherd of Nazareth. Saint Anne's father gave Joachim his pious daughter in marriage. The two spouses lived in the fear of the Lord and the practice of good works. Joachim and Anne had a beautiful daughter named Mary, who would become the Mother of Jesus. Mary had a pure soul which God preserved for her, so she could become the sinless mother of God. Every child is in a way a reflection of their parents. Therefore, Joachim and Anne must have been good, holy parents in order to have a daughter like Mary. As was the custom, it was Joachim who arranged for Mary to be wed to a strong, hardworking man named Joseph. A good father chose for his daughter the best husband. Tradition tells us that these Godly parents are buried near Jerusalem. It is also through tradition that we consider Joachim and Anne as their names, as it is difficult to trace facts with certainty. Whatever the truth of their lives, we know that it was the parents of Mary who nurtured, taught, and brought her up to be a worthy Mother of God. It was their teaching that led her to respond to God's request with faith, "Let it be done to me as you will." Mary must have followed their example of parenting as she brought up her own son, Jesus. Their faith laid the foundation of courage and strength that allowed her to stand by the cross as her son was crucified. As parents, they are the models of faith and love that we need in good times and bad.



## BLESSED VIRGIN MARY & SAINT JOSEPH

They were Jesus' parents here on Earth and were married for about 30 years. Being guardians to Jesus, they were therefore Guardians of the Eucharist. Much has been written and said about this most holy couple, a model for all. The fruit of their love is Jesus our Savior. They are the Patron Saints of Families.

### PRAYER

**HOLY FAMILY OF NAZARETH, GRANT THAT OUR FAMILIES TOO MAY BE PLACES OF COMMUNION AND PRAYER, AUTHENTIC SCHOOLS OF THE GOSPEL AND SMALL DOMESTIC CHURCHES.**

"In Nazareth, everything seems to happen 'normally'. Certainly, it is not difficult to imagine how much mothers could learn from Mary's tender care for her Son! And how much fathers could benefit from the example of Joseph, a righteous man, who dedicated his life to supporting and defending his wife and child – his family – through difficult times. Every Christian family – as Mary and Joseph did – must first welcome Jesus, listen to Him, speak with Him, shelter Him, protect Him, grow with Him; and in this way, make the world better. Let us make space in our heart and in our days for the Lord. This is what Mary and Joseph did, and it was not easy: how many difficulties they had to overcome! It was not a false or unreal family. The family of Nazareth calls to us to rediscover the vocation and the mission of the family, of every family. And so what happened in those thirty years in Nazareth can also happen to us: making love, not hate, normal; mutual help common, instead of indifference and hostility. It is not by chance that Nazareth means 'she who preserves', like Mary who, as the Gospel tells us, 'treasured all these things in her heart'. From then on, whenever there is a family that preserves this mystery, even if it should be at the outer reaches of the world, the mystery of the Son of God is at work. And He comes to save the world".

- Pope Francis



## SAINT ZACHARIAH & SAINT ELIZABETH

*"There was a priest named Zechariah of the priestly division of Abijah; his wife was the daughter of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth...Zechariah was chosen by lot to enter the sanctuary of the Lord to burn incense"*

*An Angel appeared to him during his service and said: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard. Your wife, Elizabeth, will bear you a son, and you shall name him John."*

*Luke 1:5, 14.*

### PRAYER

**LORD, GIVE ME THE GRACE TO TRUST IN YOU AS ST ELIZABETH AND ZACHARIAH DID WHEN IT COMES TO MY FAMILY AND CHILDREN. HELP ME TO RAISE MY CHILDREN TO BE WITNESS OF THE TRUTH AND LEADERS IN THEIR FAITH.**



This holy couple lived during the time of Christ. Elizabeth the Blessed Virgin Mary's cousin. It is this couple that Mary goes to visit in the Gospel of Luke, and we reflect upon Elizabeth's words of greeting in the mystery of the Rosary of the Visitation.

They knew Jesus from the time He was conceived in Mary's womb, and likely knew Him well as He was growing up. They lived in Ain Karim, a mountainous area near Nazareth. Elizabeth and Zachariah were also the parents of John the Baptist, who was Jesus' cousin and herald.

Along with St John the Baptist, they are the link between the old and the new covenants. The fruit of their love is St John the Baptist. They are examples of faithfulness to the law and complete trust in God.

“Man is created in the image and likeness of God who is himself love. Since God created him man and woman, their mutual love becomes an image of the absolute and unfailing love with which God loves man. ”

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH #1604





MARY & JOSEPH WEDDING BY JEAN-BAPTISTE WICAR - PUBLIC DOMAIN

# CHAPTER 2

## MARRIED SAINTS FROM THE EARLY CHRISTIAN ERA

"In the family we learn to love, to forgive, to be generous and open, not closed and selfish.

We learn to move beyond our needs, to encounter others and share our lives with them. That is why families are so important in God's plan."

**POPE FRANCIS**

Monica was born in Africa, around 300 AD, and later lived in Italy. She was a devoted Mother and Wife who prayed for the conversion of her husband, and of her son, who later became St Augustine. St Monica is an example of the virtue of perseverance in prayer. She never gave up hope or faith in God's saving grace.

## PRAYER

**LORD, HELP ME LEARN FROM THE EXAMPLE OF St MONICA, TO NEVER GIVE UP PRAYING FOR MY SPOUSE OR CHILDREN, NO MATTER HOW DIFFICULT THE CIRCUMSTANCES ARE IN LIFE. HELP ME TO LOVE MY FAMILY AND NOT SEEK PERSONAL REWARDS.**

St. Monica was raised as a Christian, but was given in marriage to a pagan official named Patricius, who had a bad temper and many other bad habits and even sinful ways. Her mother-in-law lived with them and was often abusive, which proved a constant challenge to St. Monica. She had three children; Augustine, Navigius, and Perpetua. Through her patience and prayers, she was able to convert her husband and his mother to the Catholic faith in 370. He died a year later. Other wives with marriage problems came to her for advice. Her children, Perpetua and Navigius, entered the religious life. St. Augustine was much more difficult, as she had to pray for him for 17 years before her perseverance was rewarded. This brilliant and gifted young man rejected the faith his mother had taught him. Augustine lived an immoral life and had a son out of wedlock. Monica was ready to disown Augustine, but in a dream it was revealed to her that eventually he would come back to the faith. She prayed and fasted for her son and stayed close to him, following him to Rome and Milan. In Milan, she met St. Ambrose, the bishop, who became her spiritual director. He promised her, "Surely the son of so many tears will not perish." It was Ambrose who finally converted Augustine. St. Augustine was baptized by St. Ambrose in 387. Monica died later that same year, on the way back to Africa from Rome in the Italian town of Ostia. The day before she died, she and her son had a beautiful conversation about the joys of heaven. She shows us that no mother should despair about the fate of her children, but always pray unceasingly, and God will answer.

## SAINT MONICA



## ST ISIDORE & MARIA DE LA CABEZA

1522 -1615. Madrid, Spain Married for 40 years. Profession: Farmer Both were of very humble origins and married young. After the loss of their first child, they lived a josephite marriage, meaning they had no intimate relations though they still lived together. They were both known to be hard workers and very devout. This simple married couple are the patron saints of Madrid. They are an example of the virtue of hard work and humility.



### PRAYER

**LORD, LET ME LEARN FROM THE EXAMPLE OF ST ISIDORE AND HIS HOLY WIFE, MARIA TO FIND HAPPINESS IN HARD WORK, PROVIDING FOR MY FAMILY. LET MY DEVOTION TO GOD AND REGULAR ATTENDANCE AT MASS NEVER WAIVER DUE TO WORK.**

St. Isidore was born in Madrid, Spain, in the year 1070. When he was barely old enough to wield a hoe, Isidore entered the service of a wealthy landowner and worked faithfully on his estate outside the city for the rest of his life. He married a young woman as simple and upright as himself. Maria de la Cabeza is also in the process of being declared a saint. They had one son, who died as a child. Isidore had deep religious instincts. He rose early in the morning to go to church and spent many a holiday devoutly visiting the churches of Madrid and surrounding areas. All day long, as he walked behind the plow, he communed with God. His devotion became a problem for his fellow workers. They complained that he often showed up late because of lingering in church too long, and that he prayed too much and neglected his work. When the master came to appraise the situation, he saw angels plowing the fields with Isidore, and never again doubted his worker. Isidore was known for his love of the poor, and there are accounts of his supplying them miraculously with food. He had a great concern for the proper treatment of animals. Many marvelous happenings accompanied his lifelong work in the fields and continued long after his holy death. He was favored with celestial visions, and died in 1130. His canonization was in 1622. He is the patron of farmers, and his feast day is May 15th.

Princess and Queen. Wife and mother of two children, one who would be future King of Portugal.

She is an example of being a peacemaker at home and finding strength in daily mass.

## PRAYER

**LORD, GIVE ME THE GRACE TO FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF ST ELIZABETH OF PORTUGAL, WHO WAS A TRUE PEACEMAKER IN HER HOME. LET ME FIND STRENGTH IN THE SACRAMENTS AND PERSEVERE IN MY PRAYER TO BE A GOOD EXAMPLE TO MY SPOUSE AND CHILDREN.**

## SAINT ELIZABETH OF PORTUGAL



Elizabeth was a Spanish princess who was given in marriage to King Denis of Portugal when she was young. She was very beautiful and very devout, going to Mass every day. Elizabeth was a holy wife, but although her husband was fond of her at first, he soon began to cause her great suffering. Though a good ruler, he did not imitate his wife's love of prayer and other virtues. Little by little, her example helped the King to live a better life he gained great respect for her. They had two children, a daughter named Constance and a son, Afonso, who later became King Afonso IV of Portugal. Elizabeth often served as intermediary between her husband and son, who did not get along, especially during the Civil War, between 1322 and 1324.

Legend has it that, in 1323, Elizabeth, mounted on a mule, positioned herself between both opposing armies on the field of Alvalade in order to prevent the combat. Peace returned in 1324, once their son swore loyalty to the king. As her husband the king lay dying, she never left his side, except for Mass, until he died a holy death. St. Elizabeth lived for eleven more years, doing even greater charity and penance. She was a wonderful model of kindness toward the poor and a successful peacemaker between members of her own family and between nations. Through daily Mass, she found strength to carry her many great crosses.

# ST BRIDGET OF SWEDEN

1303- 1373. Sweden. Widowed after 28 years of marriage. Mother of 8 children. Ruled Kingdom of Sweden alongside her husband. Helped the poor and sick. Founder of the Brigittine nuns and hospitals. After her husband died, Bridget gave away all her possessions and founded the religious order called the Brigittines. She passed away after a pilgrimage to Rome and the Holy Land and was declared a saint soon after.



## PRAYER

**LORD, GIVE ME THE GRACE TO FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF ST BRIDGET AND BE AN EXAMPLE TO MY SPOUSE OF FAITH AND LOVE FOR NEIGHBOR. HELP ME TO KNOW HOW TO RAISE MY CHILDREN TO BE STRONG IN THEIR FAITH.**

In 2010 Pope Benedict XVI gave a conference at a General Audience on Saint Bridget of Sweden, because this holy woman has much to teach the Church and the world.

*"We can distinguished two periods in this Saint's life. The first was characterized by her happily married state. Her husband was called Ulf and he was Governor of an important district of the Kingdom of Sweden. The marriage lasted for 28 years, until Ulf's death. Eight children were born, the second of whom, Catherine, is venerated as a Saint. This is an eloquent sign of Bridget's dedication to her children's education. Moreover, King Magnus of Sweden so appreciated her pedagogical wisdom that he summoned her to Court for a time, so that she could introduce his young wife, Blanche of Namur, to Swedish culture. Bridget, who was given spiritual guidance by a learned religious who initiated her into the study of the Scriptures, exercised a very positive influence on her family which, thanks to her presence, became a true "domestic church". Together with her husband she adopted the Rule of the Franciscan Tertiaries. She generously practiced works of charity for the poor; she also founded a hospital. At his wife's side Ulf's character improved and he advanced in the Christian life. On their return from a long pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, which they made in 1341 with other members of the family, the couple developed a project of living in continence; but a little while later, in the tranquility of a monastery to which he had retired, Ulf's earthly life ended. This first period of Bridget's life helps us to appreciate that Christian spouses can make a journey of holiness sustained by the grace of the sacrament of Marriage. It is often the woman, as happened in the life of St Bridget and Ulf, who with her religious sensitivity, delicacy and gentleness succeeds in persuading her husband to follow a path of faith." The second period of her life was after her husband died. Bridget gave away all her possessions and founded the religious order called the Brigittines. After a pilgrimage to Rome and the Holy Land, Bridget passed away and was declared a saint soon after.*



Father of four children. He is an example of courage and the role of a father and husband in supporting the Church and its missionary works. He defended his family and his beliefs.

## PRAYER

**LORD, GIVE ME THE GRACE TO FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF JUSTO UKON AND HELP THE SPREAD OF MY CATHOLIC FAITH IN MY COMMUNITY AND HOME. AS A MARRIED CATHOLIC, LET ME DEFEND THE CHURCH AND ITS MINISTERS, SHOWING MY FAMILY TO BE A PERSON OF FAITH IN ACTION.**

Takayama Ukon was born in 1552, in Japan, when missionaries were beginning to evangelize the country. By the time Takayama was 12 years old, his father had converted to Catholicism and had his son baptized as "Justo" by the missionary priests.

In 1571, Takayama participated in a battle as part of his coming-of-age ritual, which culminated in a duel to the death. He won but received terrible wounds in the process. During his recovery, he realized that he did not know or dedicate time to his Catholic faith. In 1574, he married and went on to have three sons and one daughter. Justo and his father fought through the turbulent age to secure their positions as lords, and managed to acquire the Takatsuki Castle. As a Catholic, Takayama used his power to support and protect the short-lived missionary expansion within Japan, influencing the conversion of thousands of Japanese people. In 1587, the persecution of Christians began, and many newly converted Catholics abandoned their beliefs or were martyred. By the 1600s, most missionaries had been either driven out of the country or into underground ministry. Instead of denying their faith, Takayama and his father left their prestigious position in society and chose an exiled life of poverty. Although many of his friends tried to persuade Takayama to deny Catholicism, he remained strong in his beliefs. Ten years passed, and the emperor became fiercer in his persecution against Christians. He eventually crucified 26 Catholics, and by 1614, Christianity in Japan was completely banned. That year, along with 300 other Japanese Christians, Justo left his home in Nagasaki and fled to the Philippines. He was received by the Spaniards living there, and learned that they wished to conquer Japan and free the persecuted Christians. Justo did not want to participate in such a battle because of the bloodshed. Takayama died on Feb. 3, 1615. He was declared Blessed by Pope Francis in 2016.

## BLESSED JUSTO TAKAYAMA UKON



# ST THOMAS MORE

Lawyer and Chancellor of England. Martyr. Remarried after his first wife died. He was beheaded by his king, Henry the VIII for defending the indissolubility of marriage and following the teachings of the Catholic Church. He is an example of the virtue of honesty and courage.



## PRAYER

**LORD, GIVE ME THE GRACE TO FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF ST THOMAS MORE AND DEFEND THE TEACHINGS OF THE CHURCH, ESPECIALLY THE SACRED NATURE OF MARRIAGE. LET ME LEAD BY EXAMPLE AND BE DEVOTED TO GOD, MY FAMILY AND COUNTRY.**

Thomas More was born in 1478, in England, and grew up in a Catholic family. He went to Oxford University and pursued a career in law. Although he considered becoming a monk, he was soon married to Jane Colt, with whom he had 4 children. She died young, leaving Thomas widowed with children. He then wed Alice More. Thomas took a great interest in the education of his children, especially his daughters, since they would not have the opportunity to study like their brothers. In October 1529, Thomas was appointed Chancellor of England under the rule Henry VIII. He was known to be a very faithful subject to the king and became one of his most sought out advisors and lawyers. Thomas was also an ardent, faithful member of the Catholic Church.

When Henry broke away from the true Church and began the Church of England, Thomas stood up for what he truly believed in, refusing to give in to Henry's demands. There were others, who, to keep their position in the government, rejected the Catholic Faith. Thomas would not budge, and was sentenced to imprisonment in the Tower of London. Still he to change his position, even when the king sent his daughter to plead with him.

As he was led to his death he is quoted as saying, "I die the king's good servant, but God's first." He could not bear to live a lie and abjure his faith, even if that meant his own death. Thomas was canonized in 1935. He is the patron saint of lawyers.

Widowed after 5 years of marriage. Mother of two children. Founder of the Sisters of Our Lady of Refuge in Mount Cavalry. She is an example of living your faith in the midst of trial or the struggle with addictions. She dedicated her life to God in her marriage and as a widow.

## PRAYER

**LORD, GIVE ME THE GRACE LIVE EACH DAY WITH FAITH LIKE ST VIRGINIA DID AND TO TRUST IN YOUR PLAN FOR MY LIFE, EVEN THOUGH I MAY NOT UNDERSTAND WHERE MY LIFE IS HEADING.**

Virginia was born in 1587 in Italy, to a wealthy noble family. While she originally wished to become a nun, her father persuaded her to marry Gaspare Bracelli, who came from a very popular and wealthy family.

Although Virginia had two daughters with Gaspare – Lelia and Isabella—her husband spent most of his time fighting addictions, especially gambling. Virginia was patient and prayed for him. She tried to convince her husband to change, but his unhealthy lifestyle caught up with him and he died only five years after their marriage. She was with him as he died and helped him to repent and receive the last sacraments. At 25 years old, Virginia became a widow. At that moment, she decided to dedicate her life to her children, and to God, not marrying again, though other men showed interest in her. She felt a calling “to serve God through the poor” and began to devote herself to the needy by sharing the wealth left to her by her husband. In particular, she cared for the needs of the abandoned children, the elderly and the sick. Soon, both unemployment and starvation became rampant, and it led Virginia to open a center for abandoned children and women. When the plague hit, she moved her center to an empty convent and helped over 300 patients. Virginia had a wonderful relationship with the young women who volunteered with her to help with the poor and sick. She taught them catechism, trained them in their work, and provided food and lodging for them. All of these circumstances led Virginia to see God’s hand in asking her to found an organization of women who would dedicate their time and lives to serve others and pray. The rest of her life was filled with serving the poor and sick, and maintaining the organization she founded. She also was known as a peacemaker in her town, resolving the bloody rivalries between noble families and knights. She died in 1651 at the age of 64, after a life of self-giving to other people. Pope John Paul II canonized her in 2003.

# ST VIRGINIA CENTURIONE



"When Christian couples receive the grace of the Sacrament of Matrimony, Christ dwells with them, gives them the strength to take up their crosses and so follow him, to rise again after they have fallen, to forgive one another, to bear one another's burdens, to be "subject to one another out of reverence for Christ," and to love one another with supernatural, tender, and fruitful love."

**CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH #1642**





ST LOUIS AND ZELLE MARTIN, PARENTS OF ST THERESE OF LISIEUX

# CHAPTER 3

## MID TO MODERN MARRIED SAINTS

"Prayer needs to become a regular habit in the daily life of each family.

Prayer is thanksgiving, praise of God, asking for forgiveness, supplication and invocation.

In all these forms the prayer of the family has much to say to God."

**ST JOHN PAUL II**

Faithful and devoted wife, widowed after 10 years of marriage. Convert to Catholicism. Mother and teacher. Founder of the Sisters of Charity and pioneer of Catholic education in North America. She is an example of the virtue of perseverance and self-improvement.

## ST ELIZABETH ANN SETON

### PRAYER

**LORD, GIVE ME THE GRACE TO FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF ST ELIZABETH SETON WHO WAS A DEVOTED SPOUSE, DOING WHATEVER NEEDED TO CARE FOR MY FAMILY — RICH OR POOR, IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH. HELP ME TO ALWAYS SEEK TO IMPROVE MYSELF AND THE LIVES OF OTHERS.**



Elizabeth Ann was born on August 28, 1774 in New York City. She was raised in the Episcopal Church. Her mother, daughter of an Episcopal minister, died when Elizabeth was 3. She was rejected by her stepmother, and her father left for England, leaving her to be raised in New York by her aunt and uncle. Elizabeth grew up in high society. She was a prolific reader and read everything from the Bible to contemporary novels. At age 19, she married William Seton, a wealthy businessman. They had five children. Although busy raising a large family, she continued to show great concern for the poor of the city. Due to this concern, she organized a group of prominent ladies who would visit the sick and the poor in their homes to render what aid they could. When war broke out between United Kingdom and Napoleon, her family business was bankrupt and they became impoverished. Soon after this, her husband fell ill and his doctors sent him to Italy for the warmer climate, with Elizabeth and their eldest daughter accompanying him. Landing at the port in Italy, they were held in quarantine because of his illness, and William died. Elizabeth and her daughter were taken in by the family of her late husband's business partners, and she was introduced to Catholicism. Two years later, after her return to the United States, she officially converted to Catholicism. In order to support herself and her children, Elizabeth had previously founded an academy for young ladies. Most of the parents withdrew their daughters from her school when they heard she was now Catholic. Soon she met a visiting priest who asked her to start a school with them. She moved to Maryland and founded Saint Joseph's Academy, a school dedicated to the education of Catholic girls. Elizabeth also felt God calling her to begin a religious community of nuns dedicated to the care of the children of the poor called the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph. She died of tuberculosis January 4, 1821, at the age of 46 and was buried in what is now the Basilica of the National Shrine of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton.

## BLESSED ELISABETTA SANNA

Widowed after 17 years of marriage. Mother to seven children. Suffered from a severe disability her entire life. She is an example of the virtue of fortitude and strength, not letting her physical limitations stop her from living a happy and holy life.

### PRAYER

**LORD, GIVE ME THE GRACE TO FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF BLESSED ELISABETTA AND NOT LET ANY PHYSICAL LIMITATION OR DISABILITY STOP ME FROM LIVING THE HAPPY AND HOLY LIFE THAT GOD WANTS ME TO LIVE. LET ME ALWAYS TRY TO DO GOOD TO THOSE IN NEED, NO MATTER WHERE I AM.**

Elisabetta was born in 1788, in Sardinia. She contracted smallpox when she was just three months old. As a result, she was never able to raise her arms. She could move her fingers and wrists but could not bring food to her mouth with her hands, nor could she make the sign of the Cross. Neither could she comb her hair, wash her face, or change her clothes. She could, however, knead bread, place things in the oven and remove them from it. Despite her physical disability, marriage was proposed to her and it was a very happy marriage. Seven children were born to them, two of whom died soon after birth. Elisabetta educated her children and others of the town, teaching them catechism and preparing them for the sacraments. Her house was open to all women who wanted to learn hymns and prayers. Her husband died at in 1825, after seventeen years of marriage, and she assumed full responsibility for the family and the administration of the home. While growing in the spiritual life, Elisabetta decided to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. She became ill on the journey and had to stop in Rome. Unable to return to Sardinia because of her health, she left her children in the care of her mother and brother. Her ailments increased year by year, and Elisabetta was obliged to remain in Rome. She suffered greatly because of the separation from her family. Entrusting herself to God, she accepted this new situation and served others while remaining faithful to the teachings of the Gospel and of the Church. She was often found visiting the sick, bringing comfort to them in the hospital and in private homes. To raise funds, she knitted, and the money she received for her work, as well as gifts given to her, were used to help the poor. Elisabetta also helped orphans, founding two orphanages. She sought to bring peace to families, to convert sinners, and prepared the sick to receive the sacraments. She died in Rome, with a reputation of sanctity, in 1857. She was declared blessed in 2016.



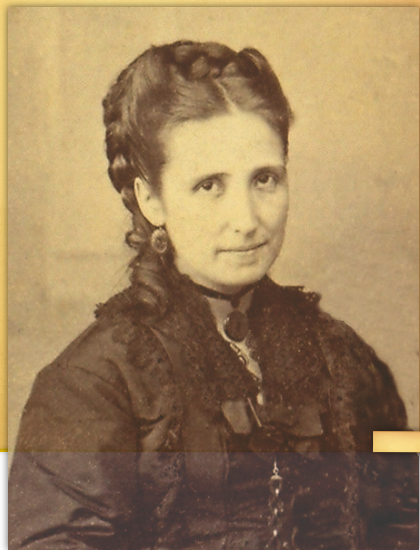
Widowed after 37 years of marriage. Mother of seven children. Foundress of the Sisters of the Holy Guardian Angels.

She is an example of the virtue of generosity and love for neighbor, going out of her way to solve the problems of the community and those in need.

## PRAYER

**LORD, LET ME LEARN FROM THE EXAMPLE OF BLESSED RAFAELA THAT THE WORLD NEEDS MEN AND WOMEN WHO ARE EXAMPLES OF HOLINESS OF LIFE AS MARRIED COUPLES AND MOTHERS AND FATHERS. HELP ME TO BE GENEROUS AND HELP THOSE IN NEED AROUND ME.**

## BLESSED RAFAELA YBARRA



Rafaela Ybarra was born in Bilbao, Spain, in 1843, to a wealthy Catholic family. She married José de Vilallonga in 1861, and they had a very happy marriage. She was the mother to seven children.

Her hometown was beginning to grow with factories, and work conditions were unjust. She saw children, especially young girls, left with no home or care. In 1894, with the support of her husband, she made a pledge to care for the poor and needy children in her hometown of Bilbao, opening homes for poor girls to provide education, training, food and love.

Her organization was named the Congregation of the Guardian Angels. Centers opened up all across Spain, and North and South America, to help children in need. She died on February 23rd, 1900 and was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1984. In 2010, her congregation had 35 homes across Spain and the Americas, continuing the good work that she started.



## BLESSED GUISEPPE TOVINI

1845 - 1895. Brescia, Italy. Married for 22 years. Father of ten children. Lawyer, politician and founder of Bank of St Paul. Three of his children followed religious vocations. He is an example of prudence and living his Catholic faith to the fullest in every aspect of his life.

### PRAYER

**LORD, GIVE ME THE GRACE TO BE OPEN AND LOVING TO THOSE YOU PLACE IN MY PATH, ESPECIALLY CHILDREN IN NEED. HELP ME TO CREATE A HOME WHERE MY CHILDREN ALWAYS FEEL LOVED AND ACCEPTED, AND WHERE MY SPOUSE AND I HELP EACH OTHER LIVE HOLY LIVES PLEASING TO GOD.**

Giuseppe Tovini was born in 1841 to a simple family that gave him a strong Christian education. He went to university and became a lawyer. His mother and father died during that time, leaving him with the responsibility of raising his siblings. Giuseppe worked in various law firms and there met the daughter of his employer, Emilia. They were married a few years later.

Giovanni and Emilia were blessed with ten children. One of their sons became a Jesuit priest, and two daughters entered the religious life. Giuseppe was a strong Catholic, a devoted husband and father, and a skilled lawyer. He worked for the rest of his life to support his family, yet he realized God was also calling him to use his talents and training to address contemporary social problems, and he became the town mayor.

Giuseppe accomplished a tremendous amount of lay apostolic work in his community, even founding a Catholic newspaper. As a lawyer, he knew that Catholic institutions required full financial and economic autonomy in order to operate freely, so he founded the Bank of St. Paul to help the Catholic institutions. He also supported the cause of Catholic education and started St. Joseph's Kindergarten and a secondary school. Everything he did was proclaiming a Christian message. He died at the age of 55 in 1895. Pope John Paul II declared him blessed in 1998. In the homily at Tovini's beatification, the Holy Father noted, "His constant concern was to defend the faith, convinced that—as he said at a congress—'without faith our children will never be rich; with faith they will never be poor.'"

Married for 10 years. Charles was the last emperor of Austria and King of Hungary.

Parents of eight children. They were examples of devout faith and apostles of peace.

## PRAYER

**LORD, LET ME FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF BLESSED CHARLES AND ZITA TO SEEK NO OTHER GLORY THAN TO FOLLOW YOUR WILL AND HUMBLY SERVE MY FAMILY AND SPOUSE WITH LOVE.**

## BLESSED CHARLES OF AUSTRIA & SERVANT OF GOD ZITA



Charles was born in a very noble and wealthy family, the last of the Habsburg dynasty. In 1916, in the middle of WWI, he became emperor of Austria and King of Hungary. He saw his office as a duty ordered by God for him to love and care for the people entrusted to him. Charles was a good king who looked for the welfare of his people, even amidst persecution and calumny.

On the 21st of October, 1911, he married Princess Zita of Bourbon and Parma. The couple was blessed with eight children during the ten years of their happy and exemplary married life. Charles declared to Zita on his deathbed: "I'll love you forever."

While exiled, Charles fell very ill. He endured his suffering without complaint and forgave all those who conspired against him. On his deathbed, he repeated the motto of his life: "I strive always in all things to understand as clearly as possible and follow the will of God, and this in the most perfect way". He died April 1st, 1922, at the age of 34, with his eyes turned toward the Holy Sacrament.

Pope John Paul II declared him blessed, saying, "From the beginning, the Emperor Charles conceived of his office as a holy service to his people. His chief concern was to follow the Christian vocation to holiness. May he be an example for all of us, especially for those who have political responsibilities in Europe today!" His wife, Zita, was expecting their last child when Charles passed. She died at the beautiful age of 96.

## VENERABLE PRÁXEDES FERNÁNDEZ



1886 - 1936. Spain. Married and working mother of four children. Widow and housecleaner. Mystic.

She is an example of holiness in daily life. She did the smallest things with the greatest love and nourished her soul through spiritual reading, prayer, and the sacraments.

### PRAYER

**LORD, GIVE ME THE GRACE TO BE OPEN AND LOVING TO THOSE YOU PLACE IN MY PATH, ESPECIALLY CHILDREN IN NEED. HELP ME TO CREATE A HOME WHERE MY CHILDREN ALWAYS FEEL LOVED AND ACCEPTED, AND WHERE MY SPOUSE AND I HELP EACH OTHER LIVE HOLY LIVES PLEASING TO GOD.**

Práxedes Fernández was born in Spain, in 1886. She was the daughter, sister, and mother, of miners. Before her marriage, she wished to enter the religious life but could not because her father was too ill. Instead, she became a catechist.

At the age of 20, she married Gabriel Fernandez, an electrician. They had four children, the last of them born shortly before Gabriel died in a train accident. After her husband's death, she began work as a housekeeper for several different families. Her reputation for holiness spread quickly.

She read the writings of St. Teresa, and often had her own mystical experiences. She always made sacrifices for the needs of those who came to her. She was injured in an attack her city. The injury was severe, she did not recover, and died in 1936. Her process for canonization has begun.

## BLESSED CONCEPCION CABRERA

1862- 1937. Mexico. Widowed after 17 years. Mother of nine children. Mystic and avid writer.

She is an example of prayer and love for the Church, being a spiritual example of faith for her family.

### PRAYER

**LORD, GIVE ME THE GRACE TO FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF BLESSED CONCHITA AND DEDICATE TIME TO PRAYER EVEN IN THE MIDST OF A BUSY FAMILY LIFE. HELP ME TO PUT MY CHILDREN'S SPIRITUAL WELL BEING AS A PRIORITY IN MY LIFE.**



Concepcion Cabrera was born in 1862 in Mexico. She grew up in a simple home with a great devotion and love for the Eucharist. Her family called her "Conchita". When she was 22 years old, she fell in love and married Francisco Armida. The couple had nine children together.

When she was only 39 years old, her husband unexpectedly died. As a young widow with young children, her life was not easy, and the Mexican Revolution was happening around her. Her writings reflect amazing peace, despite the mayhem and chaos around her. She prayed often and found her strength in God. Quickly, she became known as a mystic, and she wrote of her spiritual reflections and experiences. She never claimed to have visions of Jesus and Mary but spoke of Jesus through her prayers and meditations. Many of her writings are considered a great spiritual richness.

Her children claim that they never saw her writing, but her religious writings and meditations total over 60,000 handwritten pages. As a laywoman and mother, she aimed to show her readers how to love the Church. One of her books is called "A Mother's Letters" and it reflects the fact that she was not a cloistered mystic but a busy mother with nine children and a widow during a turbulent time in Mexico's political history. She died in 1937, at the age of 74, and was beatified in Mexico City in 2019.



## BLESSED FRANZ JÄGERSTÄTTER

Married for 8 years. Farmer, sacristan, soldier. Father of three children. He is an example of being a man of principle and truth, standing up courageously for what is right even if it means to die for your beliefs.

### PRAYER

**LORD, GIVE ME THE GRACE TO BE FOLLOW THE GOOD EXAMPLE OF BLESSED FRANZ AND FOLLOW MY CONSCIENCE TO ALWAYS DO WHAT IS RIGHT AND JUST IN GOD'S EYES. HELP ME TO BE A PERSON THAT PRAYS TO GOD ABOUT EVERY DAY DECISIONS.**

Franz Jägerstätter was born in 1907 in Upper Austria. Franz's father died in WWI and his mother remarried. Franz received a basic education in his village's one-room schoolhouse. His step-grandfather helped with his education and the boy became an avid reader. Franz was the first in his village to own a motorcycle. He was known to be a humble and devout Catholic who lived simply, working on a farm. He met and married Franziska in 1936 and they went on their honeymoon in Rome. Besides his farm work, Franz became the local sacristan in 1936, and began receiving the Eucharist daily. He always refused the customary offering for his services at funerals, preferring the spiritual and corporal works of mercy over any remuneration. Franz was a loving husband and good father to their three daughters. He was neither a revolutionary, nor part of any resistance movement, but in 1938 he was the only local citizen to vote against the "Anschluss" (annexation of Austria by Germany), because his conscience prevailed over the path of least resistance. Franz was called up for military service and sworn in in 1940. Shortly after, thanks to the intervention of his mayor, he was allowed to return to the farm. Later, he was in sent back to active service and then home again. He became convinced that participation in the war was a serious sin. In 1943, Franz was called again to military service and refused to fight for Hitler. He was immediately arrested and sent to trial where he was condemned to death. Before being executed, Franz wrote: "If I must write ... with my hands in chains, I find that much better than if my will were in chains. Neither prison nor chains nor sentence of death can rob a man of the Faith and his free will." Franziska was present at her husband's beatification in 2007. A film about his life is scheduled for release December 19, 2019.

1910 – 1942. Italy and Germany. Married for 3 years. Farmer, social action leader and soldier. Father to one son. He is an example of the virtue of courage and authenticity. Martyr.

## PRAYER

**LORD, GIVE ME THE GRACE TO FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF BLESSED JOSEF AND FOLLOW MY CONSCIENCE NO MATTER WHAT THE SACRIFICE MAY ENTAIL. IN MY MARRIAGE AND LIFE, LET ME ALWAYS PUT GOD FIRST AND TRUST THAT IN THAT WAY EVERYTHING ELSE WILL ALIGN.**

Josef was born in 1910, in Italy, and his parents were German-Italian. He grew up on a farm and was raised with strong Christian values. In his youth, he joined the Catholic Action and Society of St Vincent de Paul.

He became president of his local chapter when he was 22 years old. Josef constantly visited the poor, providing them both material and spiritual assistance. In an attempt to deepen his understanding of faith, he read the writings of the Saints. When he was 24, he became the head of Catholic Action in his diocese and he also secretly became a member of the anti-Nazi movement. In 1942, he married Hildegard Straub, and his son Alberto was born a year later. As part of Nazi conscription during World War II, he was forced to enroll in the SS unit in 1944, which forced him to leave his wife and newborn son for training in Prussia. On October 4th, 1944, Josef was in training when one of his friends—Franz—witnessed his heroic act: “Josef looked deep in thought and worried. Unexpectedly, he raised his hand and said in a loud voice, ‘Major-General I cannot take an oath to Hitler in the name of God. I cannot do it ... because my faith and my conscience do not allow it.’” Josef’s friends attempted to convince him to recant the explosive statement, but he rejected their efforts. He believed ardently that Nazism could not be reconciled in any way with the values of Christian ethics and saw clearly that the ideology ran counter to the divine law of God. As a result of this he was jailed and later transferred to Danzig where he was prosecuted. From prison he sent a number of letters to his wife and said of his actions, “You would not be my wife if you expected something different from me”. In 1945, he was condemned to death for treason and sentenced to be shot by a firing squad at the Dachau concentration camp. While on the train en route to his death, he fell ill with a fever and died with his Bible and Rosary in his hands. He was only 34 years old. Josef was beatified by Pope Francis on March 18, 2017, and declared a martyr. He is known as the “Martyr of the First Commandment” because he would not put another person before God.

## BLESSED JOSEF MEYR





## BLESSED EDWARD FOCHERINI

1907 - 1944. Italy. Married for 19 years. Father to seven children. Journalist. Writer and aid to Jewish people in WWII. He is an example of the virtue of love for neighbor and courage. His selfless actions saved countless lives of Jewish people in WWII and he was an advocate of creating a just society.

### PRAYER

**LORD, GIVE ME THE GRACE TO FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF BLESSED EDWARD AND HELP THOSE IN NEED AROUND ME, NOT LETTING MYSELF BE CONSUMED BY THE DEMANDS OF MY ORDINARY LIFE. LET MY LOVE FOR MY SPOUSE NEVER WAIVER UNTIL DEATH.**

Oduardo was born in 1907 in Italy. He grew up in a Catholic family and was very active in his parish youth groups. He was friendly and popular. He loved theatre, journalism, music, cycling and skiing—and had a special love of the youth whom he worked with in the parish. In 1930, he married Maria Marchesi, and they had a wonderful marriage, blessed with seven children. He was the president of his local Catholic Action and worked in the St Vincent de Paul Society before becoming a journalist and newspaper editor. During WWII, he provided Jews with false documents and IDs so they could escape Nazi death camps by emigrating to Switzerland. He is said to have saved over 100 Jewish lives thanks to his efforts. Arrested by the Nazi authorities, he was sentenced to a concentration camp where he later died in 1944. Edward sent a total of 166 letters to his wife while in prison. Before his death, he was able to smuggle his wedding ring out of the camp and back to his wife. He was declared blessed by Pope Francis in 2013. His family was present at his beatification ceremony – his children, 15 grand children and 21 great grand children. During the ceremony, a cardinal said, “He showed us, through his very existence, works and words - through his articles and above all the letters that he wrote to his wife and friends from prison - that the only way to live your life fully is in joyful service and attentiveness to others, without any distinction in creed or political bearing, and without fearing the consequences of your good actions.” In 1969 he received posthumous recognition from Yad Vashem for his heroic efforts during the war and was awarded the title of Righteous Among the Nations.



1912- 1945 Papua New Guinea. Married for 9 years. Father to three children. Catechist and teacher. He is an example of the virtue of honesty and piety. He was a martyr in the defense of purity and marriage.

## BLESSED PETER TOROT



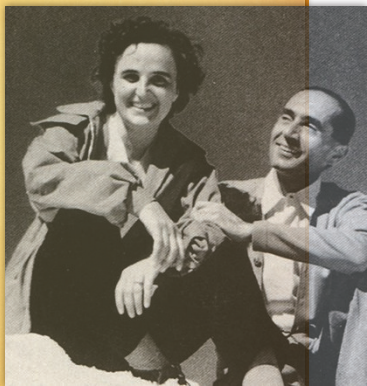
### PRAYER

**LORD, GIVE ME THE GRACE TO FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF BLESSED PETER AND BE A LEADER IN MY FAITH, TEACHING THOSE AROUND ME TO GROW CLOSER TO GOD AND FOLLOW HIS COMMANDMENTS. LET ME BE FAITHFUL UNTIL DEATH TO MY SPOUSE, DOING ALL THAT IS NEEDED TO ENSURE THE SANCTITY OF OUR MARRIAGE.**

Peter was born in 1912 in Papua New Guinea. He was the son of the village chief and his family converted to Catholicism when he was young. His father taught him the catechism, and when he was old enough, he sent him to school with the missionaries. Peter was known to be incredibly kind and always helped those in need. He thought about being a priest, but instead decided his calling was to be a catechist, and so went to University to study. He was soon commissioned as a catechist for his town and was an excellent teacher and very popular young man in his village. In 1936, he married Paula, and they had three children. They would pray every morning together and had a beautiful marriage. During WWII, the Japanese invaded Papua New Guinea and sent all Catholic priests and nuns into concentration camps. Peter, being a catechist, and as such a layman, remained free. Very quickly, the Japanese began a persecution of all Catholics, re-introducing polygamy and destroying Churches. Peter held secret prayer services even when the soldiers restricted all pastoral activities. When the church building was destroyed by the soldiers, Peter built a secret church in the woods where people would go to pray and have meetings there. Peter strove to defend the sanctity of marriage and to protect the women in his village from the soldiers. One policeman, who wanted to take yet another wife, denounced Peter to the Japanese as being opposed to polygamy. Peter was arrested and admitted that he was teaching the faith. As a result, he was imprisoned in a small windowless cell. Later, he was sentenced to two months in a concentration camp. The hatred for Peter ran deep in the authorities and he was brutally murdered via lethal injection and died shortly after. When the police returned to the town to tell people of his death, there was a massive uproar. The soldiers lied, saying that Peter had fallen ill. He was only 33 and Paula was expecting their third child. Pope John Paul II declared him blessed and a martyr in 1995.

## ST GIANNA MOLLA

1922-1962 . Milan, Italy Married for 7 years. Doctor. Mother of four children. Suffered from complications in pregnancy and ultimately gave her life to save her daughter in birth. She is an example of the love a parent has for her child and love for the gift of human life. Patron saint of those who suffer from difficult pregnancies.



### PRAYER

**LORD, GIVE ME THE GRACE TO FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF ST GIANNA AND PUT MY CHILDREN'S LIVES ALWAYS BEFORE MY OWN, SEEING EACH CHILD AS TRULY A GIFT FROM GOD. LET MY LOVE FOR LIFE SHINE THROUGH IN MY ACTIONS AND DECISIONS.**

Gianna Beretta was born near Milan on October 4, 1922. From the time she was young she embraced her faith and she saw life as a marvelous gift from God. While in high school and university she was very involved in apostolic service with other young people in Catholic Action, especially with the elderly and needy. She graduated with a degree in Medicine, specializing in pediatrics, and opened a medical clinic near her hometown. Gianna felt that her work as a doctor was truly a mission to help mothers and babies. She enjoyed painting, skiing, and working with young people helping others.

In 1955, she met Pietro Molla, and they soon became happily engaged. They had 3 children, Pierluigi (Louis), Mariolina, and Laura. She also suffered two miscarriages. In September 1961, she discovered she was expecting their fourth child. Around the 2nd month of pregnancy, she discovered she had developed a growth that required surgery to save her own life. However, the surgery put the life of her preborn child at risk. She decided to carry the baby to term, not removing the growth until the end. A few days before her baby was due, she said, "If you must decide between me and the child, do not hesitate: choose the child - I insist on it. Save her".

On April 21, 1962, baby Gianna was born. Despite all efforts and treatments to save both mother and baby, on April 28, 1962, Gianna Molla died, giving her life for her child. Her last words were, "Jesus, I love you." She was 39 years old. Gianna was canonized by Pope John Paul II in 2004.

1940-1994. Rwanda, Africa. Married for 29 years. Parents to ten children. Teacher and businessman. Founding member of the Emmanuel community in Africa. Martyrs. They are an example of courage and the strength found in living the faith fully with your spouse.

## PRAYER

**LORD, GIVE ME THE COURAGE TO BE OPEN AND FAITH-FILLED WITH MY SPOUSE, BUILDING A FAMILY AND HOME OF HOLINESS, LOVE AND A LIGHT FOR THE COMMUNITY.**

Daphrose Mukansanga and Cyprien Rugamba were born in the 1940s in Rwanda. Daphrose grew up in a Catholic community in the same parish as Cyprien Rugamba, who was to be her future husband. Although they were friends, both pursued their careers before finally realizing that God was calling them to be together as a married couple. Cyprien first tested his vocation in the seminary for two years, and then went to school in Belgium. He was a manager and loved music. Daphrose became a teacher because of her love for children.

They married in 1965 and had ten children. Cyprien went through a time when he was not active or committed to his faith like Daphrose. This caused many difficulties in their marriage. Daphrose prayed ardently for her husband, and he finally came back to the faith. From that moment on, they became a couple whose love and commitment were visible to everyone. The testing of their marriage and the healing action of conversion gave them particular strength in evangelizing African couples. They lived a life of intense faith in the charismatic renewal movement and in prayer groups. In particular, they showed immense compassion for the sick and for homeless children.

In 1989, during a visit to Paray-le-Monial, France, they met the Emmanuel Community – a Catholic movement. Through their hard work and dedication, the Emmanuel community was born in Rwanda in September 1990. Cyprien and Daphrose spoke about peace and denounced the call to violence that was spreading through the region. Violent factions soon placed them on the list of important people to assassinate during the civil war. They were killed in 1994, in their house, along with 6 of their 10 children. At the time of their death, the Emmanuel Community had a hundred members in Rwanda. Today there are more than a thousand. They were declared Servants of God in 2015.

## SERVANTS OF GOD CYPRIEN & DAPHROSE RUGAMBA





## VENERABLE JERZY CIESIELSKI

1929 - 1970. Krakow, Poland. Married for 13 years. Father of three children. University professor and good friend of Pope John Paul II. He is an example of living holiness in everyday life as a Catholic father, husband and friend.

### PRAYER

**LORD, GIVE ME THE GRACE TO FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF VENERABLE JERZY IN LIVING MY MARRIED VOCATION TO HOLINESS WITH JOY AND MAKING THE MOST OUT OF EACH MOMENT IN LIFE.**

When John Paul II (then Karol Wojtyła) was a local parish priest, he taught and guided a group of university students in Krakow who would soon become mothers and fathers. One of them was an engineering student, Jerzy Ciesielski. He was born in Krakow in 1929, just 9 years younger than John Paul II. This age difference meant that Ciesielski met Wojtyła when he was studying at the Polytechnic University of Krakow when Karol was still a young chaplain. Jerzy spent much of his university life attending meetings at the Basilica of St. Florian's Church with a circle of students that met regularly with Fr. Karol. Jerzy had been a scout as a youngster and shared two great passions with Wojtyła: the mountains, and canoeing. It was in this Catholic group that Jerzy met his wife, Danuta, whom he married in 1957. John Paul II was the priest who married them. "Fr. Karol came with us on trips, to concerts, to the theatre and the cinema—" Danuta explained, recalling the atmosphere of that group – "We talked during excursions, around the fire and at organized meetings which took place in our homes." In one of these discussions, John Paul II said that Jerzy spoke about the fact that regular Catholics were also called to become saints.

Jerzy became a professor at the university, and he and Danuta had 3 children. By that time, Fr Karol had become the Archbishop of Krakow. But the bond between him and the Catholic students remained the same as ever. In 1968, Jerzy decided to join a Catholic movement called the Focolare. He was offered the opportunity to teach young engineers for a semester at a university in Africa. He gladly accepted. In fall of that year, Jerzy's family went to visit him, and they decided to take a boat ride on the Nile River. The boat capsized, and only his wife Danuta and their elder daughter survived. Jerzy and his two boys died in 1970, when he was only 39 years old. John Paul II was there at his funeral and expressed extreme sadness at the passing of his friend. Jerzy's beatification process began in 1985 and Pope Francis recognized his heroic virtues in 2014.

1944- 1998. Perugia, Italy. Married for 33 years. Profession: Doctor Father of seven children, both natural and adopted.

He is an example of the virtue of magnanimity of heart and generosity, helping those in need, especially disabled children.

## PRAYER

**LORD, GIVE ME THE GRACE TO BE OPEN AND LOVING TO THOSE YOU PLACE IN MY PATH, ESPECIALLY CHILDREN IN NEED. HELP ME TO CREATE A HOME WHERE MY CHILDREN ALWAYS FEEL LOVED AND ACCEPTED, AND WHERE MY SPOUSE AND I HELP EACH OTHER LIVE HOLY LIVES PLEASING TO GOD.**

Vittorio Trancanelli was born in 1944 in Italy. He grew up in a Catholic home and decided at a young age to become a doctor. He studied tirelessly and began his medical career at a hospital in the little town of Perugia.

In 1965, he married Rosalia Sabatini. They had a wonderful marriage and God blessed them with two children. Throughout his life, Vittorio suffered from a rare illness called peritonitis, which was very painful. Regardless, he worked diligently as a doctor in Perugia, helping all those who were sick and came to him.

His deep faith in God was a crucial factor in his medical career. He worked with the disabled and welcomed them into his home. Vittorio and his wife adopted 7 children, including some with disabilities. He was named, "The Saint of the Operating Room".

He died in 1998, leaving behind a legacy of good works and a holy life as a doctor, father, and husband. Pope Francis declared him as venerable after confirming his heroic virtue in 2017.

## VENERABLE VITTORIO TRANCANELLI





## BLESSED LUIGI & MARIA BELTRAME QUATTROCCHI

1880-1951.Catania,Italy. Married for 50 years. Luigi was a lawyer by profession and Maria was an educator. Parents to four children, one of whom became a nun and their two sons became priests. They lived simple lives of heroic virtue as a married couple and parents.

In 2001, Pope John Paul II declared Luigi & Maria Quattrocchi as the first married couple in history to be beatified together. He said their lives as husband and wife, and as parents were models for all Christians.

Luigi and Maria were both born in Italy. Luigi went to university in Rome and graduated with a degree in Law. He worked at a number of banks and government organizations. Maria was born to a noble family in Florence and grew up very involved in social and cultural life. She loved music and was a member of Catholic Action. Luigi met Maria in Florence and they were married in 1905 in Rome. They had 4 children, Filippo, Cesare, Stefania and Enrichetta, and were happily married for 50 years. Their relationship and faith grew by attending Mass and receiving Holy Communion daily. They led a normal family life, full of sports, vacations, and school, and their house was always open to anyone who needed food or friendship. During the Second World War, their apartment in Rome was a shelter for refugees, Jews, and deserters. They would dress them as priests to help them escape. Every evening they prayed the Rosary together. They also held a family holy hour on the eve of the first Friday of every month and went to weekend retreats together. Luigi and Maria continued to grow in their faith together by going to religious courses at the Gregorian University. Maria took her motherly duties seriously, but also found time to pray, write, be a catechist, and was a volunteer nurse for the Red Cross during the Second World War. Gossip was banished in their family, especially gossip about priests. "The family has to be a sanctuary where God is always glorified." (Maria). The Quattrocchis had a great devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and consecrated their family to it. Their life wasn't devoid of trials, though. While Maria was pregnant with her fourth child, in 1913, it was discovered that she had placenta previa. Her condition was so serious that she was given a 5% chance of surviving her difficult last pregnancy. Abortion was strongly advised. Maria and Luigi firmly refused, putting their trust in God. In the end, both Maria and the baby girl, Enrichetta, were safe. Together with Luigi, and their children, they founded a scout group for youth from the poor parts of Rome. It is no surprise that their two sons became priests and chaplains in the army. Their daughter, Stefania, became a cloistered nun. In 1951, Luigi died of a heart attack in his home. After 14 years as a widow, Maria joined Luigi in heaven, and she died in her daughter Enrichetta's arms. At Luigi's funeral, a friend of his who was an atheist and a freemason said to the Quattrocchi sons, "Your father never pestered me with sermons. But I want to tell you: It's through his life that I discovered God and that I love the Gospel. Pray for me!"

# SAINTS LOUIS & ZELIE MARTIN



**“PARENTS WITHOUT  
EQUAL, WORTHY OF  
HEAVEN, HOLY SOIL  
IMPREGNATED WITH A  
VIRGINAL PERFUME. ”**

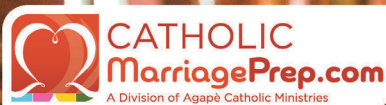
**- ST THERESE  
ABOUT HER PARENTS**

Louis and Zélie Martin were canonized together on October 18, 2015, Mission Sunday, in honor of their daughter, St. Thérèse, Patroness of Missionaries.

Louis Joseph Martin was born August 22nd, 1823 in Bordeaux, France, into a good Catholic and military family. Azélie-Marie Guérin was born December 23rd, 1831 in Saint-Denis-sur-Sarthon, France, into a good Catholic and military family as well. They both felt called to religious life, it didn't work out for both of them Louis became a watch maker and Zélie dedicated herself to the famous and difficult Alençon lace-making technique and became most talented, starting her own successful business. Zélie wrote to the Lord: "Since I am not worthy to be your spouse, like my sister, I will enter the married state, so as to fulfill your holy wish, O God. I beg you however to send me many children and grant that they will be consecrated to you." One day of April 1858, as she was walking through the Saint Leonard bridge over the Sarthe river, she saw Louis and heard in her heart: "This is the husband I have destined for you." They eventually met shortly after and they were married on July 13th, 1858.

Within fifteen years, nine children were born to them: seven girls and two boys. They lost four of their children in infancy. "We lived only for them, they were all our happiness." (Zélie) Each day began with Mass and ended with family prayer. They had a great devotion to the Eucharist and a great love of the poor. In 1873, shortly after the birth of the future St. Thérèse, Zélie was diagnosed with breast cancer. She was only 42 and died at 46. Thérèse, the youngest, was only 4 and Louis 54.

In 1888, Louis confessed to his daughters his offering of self to God; "My God, I am too happy. It's not possible to go to Heaven like that. I want to suffer something for you." Louis suffered a series of strokes that left him with brain damage. He had to be institutionalized for three years. From this ordinary, simple life, God harvested beautiful fruit. Louis and Zélie's five remaining daughters entered religious life. Among them, St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus, who became a Doctor of the Church and Léonie who is on her way to beatification.



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# 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary

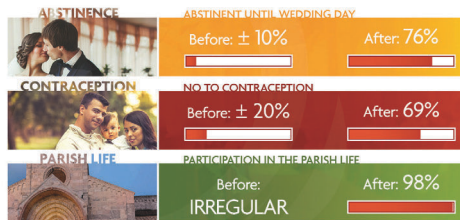
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Today over 30 Instructor Couples mentor one-on-one engaged couples from all around the world in English, Spanish and French. Since 2004, CatholicMarriagePrep.com empowered over 40,000 engaged couples to become Christ-centered families, fully active in their parishes.

## THE FRUITS



"I invited Christian and Christine Meert to teach marriage preparation in the Archdiocese of Denver in 1999. Since then, hundreds of couples have successfully completed their classes as part of the archdiocesan marriage preparation program.

I have found the Meerts to be excellent leaders in building strong Catholic families. They now offer their classes online. This allows couples with difficult schedules or living in different states to have quality marriage preparation as well.

Their classes – both online and in person – are deeply rooted in the guidance of the Church and John Paul II's teachings on sexuality, marriage and family life.

I am pleased to offer the Meerts and their apostolate my blessing and support."

Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, OFM Cap.