

Books on saints your family will love

Our Catholic family has three branches: the Church militant (that's us!), the Church suffering (the souls in purgatory) and the Church triumphant (those already in heaven). Some members of the Church triumphant have been revealed through the process of canonization. Saints from all different walks of life, all different times in history and all different places across the globe have been put forth as examples for us, the Church militant.

It is incredibly helpful in our spiritual journey to delve more deeply into the lives of saints. And we can get to know many more of our brothers and sisters in heaven, especially during childhood, through books. The following are some wonderful compilations that can help us get acquainted with more members of our heavenly family.

“Cloud of Witness” by Katie Warner, illustrated by Meg Whalen

This newly released board book, [“Cloud of Witnesses,”](#) is our new go-to baptism gift. Each turn of the page introduces you to a new saint with a beautiful illustration and simple quote. The quotes were thoughtfully chosen to reflect their unique path to sanctity.



Whalen chose a colorful, yet aesthetically pleasing palette and skillfully captured the spirit of each saint in her portrayals. The book has 11 saints, including some of my all-time favorites: St. Pope John Paul II, St. Padre Pio, St. Therese of Lisieux, and, not found in any other compilations we own, St. Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer!

“Saintly Rhymes for Modern Times” by Meghan Bausch

Another recent release, “[Saintly Rhymes for Modern Times](#),” quickly became a favorite bedtime book in our home. While all the saints included are modern day, they are martyrs, mystics, young and old, priests and nuns, and even a married couple! Two masterfully crafted stanzas draw a quick sketch of each heavenly friend. No prose in the book seems awkward or forced.



Visually, the pages have a collaged feel to them, many having illustrations transposed over a real background image.

The backgrounds give you even more of a connection to each saint’s story. The family room of Sts. Louis and Zelie Martin shows you where the family grew and taught virtue. The African hut behind the illustration of St. Josephine Bakhita and the chain frame of her page help you visualize the stark contrast of her childhood before and after her capture. The field and rocky wall behind Lucia dos Santos and Sts. Jacinta and Francisco Marto transport you to the scene of their visions.

I like that when my children look at these pictures, they see people and places to which they easily can relate. They see Blessed Chiara Badano sitting in a bedroom much like their own with a tennis racket indicating a love of sports. They see Blessed Miguel Pro and Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati wearing styles still worn by men today (albeit only on more formal occasions!). They see a bicycle and motorcycle in the streets of Calcutta behind St. Teresa, and they see a typical American family watching Archbishop Fulton Sheen on a television. There

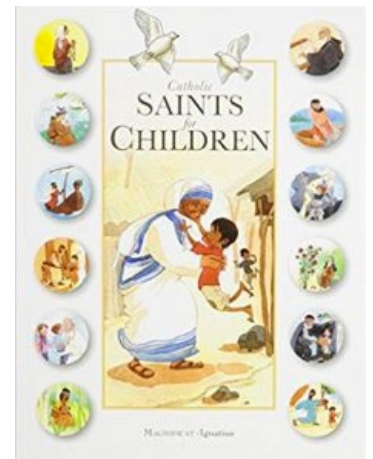
are no togas, chariots or knights in these pages!

This book is highly engaging as a read-aloud for younger kids and, with the rhyming stanzas, would make a great independent read for even struggling readers. This would make a great gift for godchildren 8 and under for any occasion.

“Catholic Saints for Children” by Annesophie Du Bouetiez, illustrated by Benedicte Lefebvre

For a compilation with a slightly more devotional feel, I would highly recommend [“Catholic Saints for Children.”](#) Each entry is made of three pages: a picture, story and prayer. The prayer is sometimes pulled from the saint’s own writings, sometimes taken from Scripture, and sometimes composed asking their help in imitating their example.

The stories are short but engaging, written to capture the imagination of young readers. Each story is followed by a brief reflection that suggests a resolution to help apply each saint’s example to our own lives. While the majority of the saints included hail from centuries past, a handful were chosen from the last 100 years or so.



Everything about this book is aesthetically pleasing. The plentiful whitespace around the text gives your eyes a definite place to rest. The embossed cover makes it a pleasure to hold and, though paperback, the thick pages give it a durable feel. But the crowning glory to this book is the lovely watercolor illustrations for each saint. The style reminds me of some storyboards I’ve seen of animated movies before the images are fully digitized.

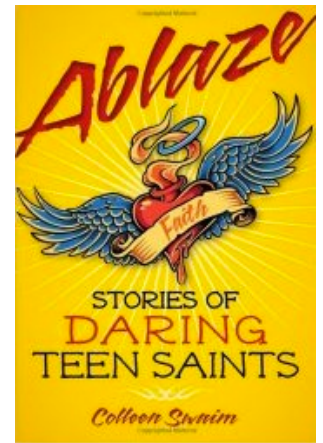
You could definitely read this aloud as a saint-a-day devotional, or as an independent devotional read for children ages 7 and up. If you need a gift for first Communion,

consider this book!

“Ablaze: Stories of Daring Teen Saints” by Colleen Swain

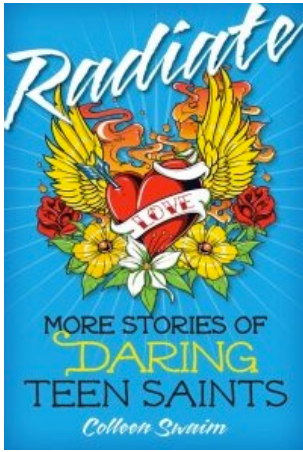
For our older crowd, ages 13 and up, try “[Ablaze: Stories of Daring Teen Saints](#).” The saints included were chosen for the pre-teen to teenage audience as all of them found their way to heaven within those years. There are eight saints showcased, four boys and four girls, and with 10 or so pages dedicated to each one, this book offers a deeper look into their lives than most compilations.

There are little pauses in the stories with questions encouraging reflection and connection with the teenage saint. Definition and information bubbles throughout make it easy to get clarification and understanding without the extra hassle. After each story there is a prayer, memory verse, challenges, and a space for journaling.



Bonus materials at the end of the book include brief topics on the Catechism of the Catholic Church, recipes related to some of the saints, and a brief guide to lectio divina. These make me even more compelled to recommend “Ablaze” as a part of confirmation prep or a confirmation gift.

Because some of the stories describe details of martyrdom and a couple deal with issues of challenges to purity, I would caution against younger readers reading this book, at least without a parent there to help them understand and process those events.



“Ablaze” has a follow up titled “[Radiate](#)” by the same author. They are very similar in layout with a few exceptions. In “Radiate,” the journal pages seem to be replaced with lines added after each reflection question throughout the story and a few prayers replace the catechism, recipes and lectio divina as the bonus materials. While “Ablaze” seemed to focus on modern-day teenage saints, “Radiate” seems to focus on saints who lived in earlier times.

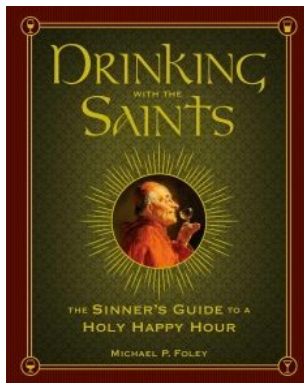
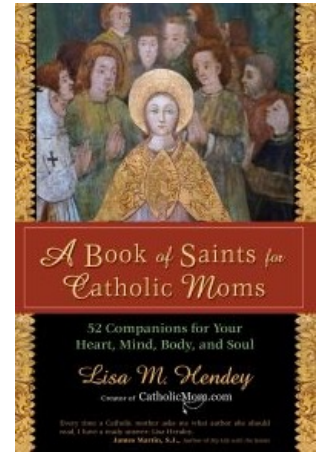
Saints Cards by the Williams Family

While not technically a book, I have to mention one of the best ways I have seen to learn about our heavenly predecessors: [SaintCards](#)! Recently funded through a Kickstarter campaign, the idea was birthed when the Williams family, recently converted, wanted to become more intimately acquainted with the saints. I know there is no All Saints’ Day gift tradition like for the feast of St. Nicholas, but how great would it be to wake up to a deck of SaintCards sitting on the table?



Books for Adult Readers

And, for us older folk, there are some great daily devotionals to connect us with multiple saints throughout the year. "[A Book of Saints for Catholic Moms](#)" by Lisa Hendly offers 52 different saints, one for each week of the year, to guide you on your journey of motherhood.



And "[Drinking with the Saints](#)" by Michael Foley matches feast days and liturgical seasons with appropriate adult drinks.

Who are your favorite saints? Tell us in the comments below!