

St. Dominic Savio • Saints for kids

Do you think you're too young to be a saint? Dominic Savio (April 2, 1842-March 9, 1857) is the youngest person that the Catholic Church has ever declared to be a saint on the basis of his heroic virtue alone—that is, his exceptional goodness. Dominic's life shows that no one is ever too young to grow close to God.

Dominic was the son of poor working class folks; his father was a blacksmith, and both of his parents taught him about Jesus, Mary, and the saints, and how to pray. Dominic loved God very much. Once, on the long, three-mile walk to school, an elderly man asked him whether he was afraid to walk alone so far. Dominic answered that he was not, because his guardian angel went with him.

When he received his First Communion, Dominic made a private vow to befriend Jesus and Mary, to receive Communion and the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation as often as possible, and to prefer death over sin.

Dominic loved to play sports, and was well-liked by his schoolmates. He showed leadership skills from a young age, and used those skills to encourage his friends to holiness. As we'll see in the story below, he once risked his own safety to stop a fight between two of his friends. Another time, a boy who had misbehaved in school blamed Dominic. Instead of defending himself, Dominic remained silent as he was scolded in front of the entire class. Later, he explained that he had remained silent in order to spare the guilty boy from being expelled from school.

At the age of twelve, Dominic met a priest who would himself become a saint, St. John Bosco, and asked to attend the

Oratory of St. Francis De Sales, a school, youth center and hospice that Don Bosco had begun as part of his work with young boys. Don Bosco agreed, and the oratory became Dominic's home for the rest of his short life.

Dominic deeply impressed Don Bosco with his desire to become a saint—so much so that the priest began to keep notes about the exceptional young boy. These notes would later become the basis of a biography about Dominic.

Don Bosco helped his young charge grow in holiness. At first, Dominic thought that being a saint meant being very serious and doing many penances for his sins. But Don Bosco taught him that the best way to be a saint is to do ordinary things every day with extraordinary zeal, and especially to be cheerful.

Dominic, who had always been prone to illness, died at home at the age of fourteen, possibly from a lung ailment. His last words were: "Goodbye, Dad, goodbye . . . what was it the parish priest suggested to me ... I don't seem to remember . . . Oh, what wonderful things I see..."

A Story about St. Dominic Savio

by Maria LaVoy

From [*Living Sparks of God: Stories of Saints for Kids to Color*](#)

The boy's blood boiled as he prepared to fight his opponent. He held a sharp, heavy stone in one hand, as did the other boy . . . the scoundrel who had insulted his family! He couldn't wait to hurl his rock and split open the other boy's head.

But now their good friend Dominic stepped between the two boys. What did Dominic think he was doing? He had already tried to stop the fight once, but the boys had refused to listen.

"Before the fight begins, I have one condition you must follow," Dominic declared with great

conviction, "Do you promise?"

"If it gets you out of our way, yes!" the first boy shouted impatiently. The other also agreed to follow Dominic's condition.

Dominic held up a crucifix. "Look at this crucifix and say, 'Jesus was innocent and He died forgiving those who hated him rather than seeking vengeance!'"

Then Dominic walked over to the first boy and said, "Now, throw the first stone at me!"

"Why would I do that? You are my friend!" the boy replied, shaken.

Dominic ran to the other angry boy and demanded the same thing.

"Never!" cried the other boy.

"Why would you want to hurt God and not me?" Dominic asked them.

The boy's stone dropped from his hand. An icy chill ran down his spine. He hated himself. He had been willing to commit a sin instead of forgiving, and Dominic's heroic action had saved him from making a grave error.

More to the story!

St. Dominic attended the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales run by St. Don Bosco. This incident is one of many in which he modeled great virtue and demonstrated his motto, "Death, but not sin!"

[Read an even more detailed story of St. Dominic Savio's life from the Salesians.](#)

More about St. Dominic Savio

Born	April 2, 1842 San Giovanni, a <i>frazione</i> of Riva presso Chieri, Piedmont, Italy
Died	March 9, 1857 (aged 14) Mondonio, a <i>frazione</i> of Castelnuovo d'Asti (today Castelnuovo Don Bosco), Piedmont, Italy
Beatified	5 March 1950, Rome by Pope Pius XII
Canonized	12 June 1954, Rome by Pope Pius XII
Major shrine	The Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin (his tomb)
Feast	6 May (formerly 9 March)
Patronage	choirboys, falsely accused people, juvenile delinquents