20 women Saints who made a mark on the Catholic World

**St Faustina**

Revered as the Apostle of Divine Mercy, St. Faustina first felt a religious calling at the age of seven when she attended the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. In 1924, she experienced her first vision of Jesus while at a dance with her sister Natalia, in which Jesus instructed her to leave for Warsaw immediately and join a convent.

Packing her bags and departing the following morning, Faustina was continually rejected from convents and judged on her appearance and poverty. She was eventually taken in by the mother superior for the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy on the condition that she pay for her own religious habit. Faustina began working as a housekeeper to save money and make deposits to the convent.

Her lengthy diary, which has been read all over the world by countless devotees, reveals details of locations and visions she received from Jesus about the message and image of Divine Mercy.

**St Joan of Arc**

A legendary French saint who led her people to victory during the Hundred Years War, Joan of Arc controversially claimed to receive visions from St. Michael the Archangel, St. Margaret, and St. Catherine of Alexandria. These visions led her to approach King Charles VII with the idea of leading the French Army into battle with the English.

Speaking of these visions saw her tried as a sorceress and sentenced to be burned at the stake. Becoming known as the ‘Maid of Orleans’, she was told to apostatize to be freed from her sentence but she refused, showing true courage and fortitude.

**St Katharine Drexel**

Though she grew up in wealth, St Katharine always saw her stepmother opening up their home to the poor and distributing food, clothing and rent assistance to those in need. They would also seek out and visit women you were too afraid to visit their home in order to give them charity. After becoming a sister, a suggestion which came directly from the Pope , St Katharine gave everything to God, including her entire inheritance, and spent her life educating and caring for Native and African Americans.

Upon her death, Katharine and her religious sisters had established about 50 Native American missions in the United States to help their cause.

**St Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Theresa)**

A more well-known and modern-day saint, St Theresa did amazing works through her order, The Missionaries of Charity, for over 45 years.

Recently canonized, St Teresa’s order consists of nearly 5,000 sisters from all over the world who oversee homes for people who are dying of various diseases, as well as soup kitchens, mobile clinics, counseling programs, orphanages, and schools.

As a young Loreto nun, St Theresa received ‘a call within a call’ to found the Missionaries of Charity to serve ‘the poorest of the poor’. Having obtained Indian citizenship, she underwent basic medical training to prepare her for working in the slums.

Meeting Hillary Clinton in 1994, the pair set up a centre in Washington DC where orphaned babies could be cared for and, in 1995, they founded the Mother Teresa Home for Infant Children.

Since her death, Mother Teresa has become a role model for people all over the world.

**St Elizabeth Ann Seton**

St Elizabeth Ann Seton is known for establishing the first free Catholic girls’ school and founding the religious order of ‘Sisters of Charity’.

Overcoming many obstacles in her life including the death of children, her spouse and rejection and persecution from her family and friends when she chose to convert to Catholicism from the Anglican faith, she continued to preserve to become known for her patronage of schools.

**St Rose of Lima**

A Third Order Dominican, St Rose of Lima wanted to be a nun from an early age, often praying, fasting and performing penances in secret. She was given the nickname Rose due to her great beauty, but when suitors began to call Rose chose to rub pepper on her face to make it blister and cut her hair short so as to deter them.

When she was permitted to join the Third Order of St. Dominic it is said she continued a life of extreme prayer and fasting and would even burn her own hands as a self-imposed act of penance. She was also known to wear a heavy silver crown with spikes that, at one point, became so lodged in her skull that removal of the crown proved difficult. St Rose passed away on August 25, 1617, a date which people say she accurately predicted.

**St Kateri Tekakwitha**

Born to an Algonquin-Mohawk tribe, St Kateri was the first Native American to be recognized as a saint by the Catholic Church.

Developing smallpox as a child, her face was left pock-marked and disfigured. Choosing to become Catholic at just nineteen, St Kateri chose not to marry and instead made a vow of perpetual virginity.  Though she died young, at the age of 24, it is claimed that once she passed the pock marks instantly vanished from her face.

**Ss Felicity and Perpetua**

Living during the early persecution of the Church in Africa by the Emperor Severus, Perpetua was a young noblewoman nursing a newborn and Felicity was her slave.

As two of the earliest Roman martyrs, the pair are honoured together for their heroism in the face of barbarism. The saints refused to apostatize their Christian faith despite being sentenced to death for it. Felicity gave birth to her daughter just moments before her execution during a ‘celebration games’ in honor of Roman Emperor Septimus Severus’ birthday.

**St Elizabeth of Hungary**

Born into royalty to Hungarian King Andrew II and Gertrude of Merania, St Elizabeth used her wealth to advance her charity work.

Wearing simple clothing, Elizabeth would set aside time every day to take bread to hundreds of poor people in her land. When disease and floods struck Thuringia in 1226, Elizabeth had a hospital built to care for the victims and the poor and gave away royal clothing and goods to those in need. After being widowed, Elizabeth chose to donate her entire dowry to helping the poor and joined the Third Order Franciscans where she founded a hospital in honor of St Francis and personally attended to the ill.

Dying at age 24, Elizabeth's life was consumed deeply by her devotion to God and her charitable labour.

**St Catherine of Siena**

As a mystic and Doctor of the Church, St Catherine used her gifts of philosophy and theology to encourage peace among the Italian territories of her time.

She worked tirelessly for the crusade against the Turks and for peace between Florence and the Pope and was instrumental in restoring the Papacy to Rome. She also established a monastery for women in 1377 outside of Siena.

During her time St Catherine also composed over 400 letters which became so influential that she was later declared a Doctor of the Church.

**St Bernadette**

Though she was poor and uneducated, St Bernadette talked of seeing visions of the Holy Virgin. While some in the town believed her, others felt Bernadette was mentally ill and should be put in a mental asylum.

After being interviewed by the French government and Church authorities, it was determined that her visions were true. Bernadette is also well known for the miracle she performed in producing clean water in the town’s spring which reportedly cured around 69 people.

While the water was tested by the Church through ‘extremely rigorous scientific and medical examinations’ no explanation was able to be given about why people were cured. The Lourdes Commission also ran an analysis on the water but were only able to determine it contained a high mineral content.

Bernadette asked the local priest to build a chapel at the site where she received her visions and the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes is now one of the major Catholic pilgrimage sites in the world, with many other chapels and churches built around it since.

**St Clare of Assisi**

St Clare’s riches-to-rags story is an inspiring and motivating piece for those of us living in today's consumerist society.

As one of the first followers of St Francis Assisi, St Clare was the daughter of a wealthy Italian count. Despite being born into wealth and privilege, St Clare decided to give up her high class lifestyle when she met St Francis and chose to join him in his mission.

Cutting her hair and wearing plain robes,  she founded the Order of Poor Ladies, also known as the Poor Clares, who  were a group of monastic religious sisters and wrote their Rule of Life, which was the first of monastic guidelines to ever be written by a woman.

**St Therese of Lisieux**

Also known as the ‘Little Flower’, St Therese lived a short life, dying at age 24.

During her life she was known to always be quite sick and fragile, but her will and determination to be accepted by the Church was exceptionally strong. After her death, the publication of her journal called ‘Story of a Soul’, as well as the collections of her letters and restored versions of her journal that have continued to be published, saw public admiration for St Therese become so great she was eventually  canonized.

**St Maria Goretti**

St Maria is called a martyr for her forgiveness and the miracles it produced.

When she was eleven, St Maria almost fell victim to the sexual advances of a teenage boy named Alessandro.  When she refused him, he stabbed her fourteen times, eventually killing her. Before she died, she freely and wholeheartedly forgave Alessandro, who then experienced a true conversion of heart while he was imprisoned and ultimately became a lay brother in a monastery.

**St Teresa of Avila**

Devoting her life to travelling to spread messages of love and simplicity, shortly after St Teresa became a nun she was struck down by malaria. During this period of illness, St Teresa is said to have experienced divine visions and an inner sense of peace. After she recovered, St Teresa decided to found her own order that focused on the values of poverty and simplicity. Though she was originally meet with opposition, she was eventually allowed to create her first order where she guided the nuns not just through strict disciplines, but also through the power of love and common sense. She then spent the rest of her life travelling around Spain setting up new convents based along the ancient monastic tradition.

**St Philomena**

St Philomena did not become renowned until her remains were discovered in the Catacombs of Priscilla.

Living during the reign of Diocletian, it is reported that Diocletian lusted after her beauty and wanted to take her as his wife. However she refused him as she had already taken a secret vow of perpetual virginity. As a result he had her tortured but she reportedly continued to escape death as angels would come to her side and heal her through prayer. When Diocletian eventually had her killed, it is reported she died on a Friday at three in the afternoon which is the same as Jesus.

Today she is known as a patron saint of impossible cases.

**St Edith Stein**

After leaving her Jewish faith and becoming an atheist, St Edith eventually converted to Catholicism through her discovery of the True Presence of Christ in the Eucharist and joined the Discalced Carmelites.

When the Nazis conquered Holland, St Edith and her sister were arrested and sent to the concentration camp at Auschwitz where she died in the gas chambers. St Edith is remembered for a life of dedication, consecration, prayer, fasting and penance.

**St Gianna Molla**

Receiving degrees in both medicine and surgery from the University of Pavia, St Gianna opened a medical office in Mesero near her hometown of Magenta.

St Gianna felt the field of medicine was her mission and she generously gave her service to Catholic Action, a movement of Catholics dedicated to living and spreading the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church in the broader culture, which still continues this work today.

During her pregnancy with her fourth child, Gianna developed a fibroma in her uterus. Gianna chose to have the fibroma removed which meant a high risk of complications for her but could save the life of her baby. While the baby was born without complications, Gianna passed away a few weeks later from septic peritonitis.

When Gianna was officially canonized by Pope John Paul II, her husband and their children attended the ceremony, making it the first time a husband had witnessed his wife's canonization.

**St Monica**

An early Christian saint, St Monica is remembered and honored for her outstanding Christian virtues of of grieving mothers, difficult marriages, victims of abuse and conversion of relatives. Suffering through her husband's adultery, St Monica was dedicated  to the conversion of her son which is detailed through his extensive writings in his ‘Confessions’.

When Pope Martin V order her relics be brought to Rome in 1430, it is reported that many miracles occurred during the journey.

**Mary, Mother of God**

No such list would be complete without including the ultimate saint. While all know the story of Mary, she is worshipped for her values of celibacy, motherhood, marriage, and spiritual motherhood, from the moment she was chosen to be Jesus’ mother to her assumption into Heaven, Mary was faithful and trusted in God with total surrender.