

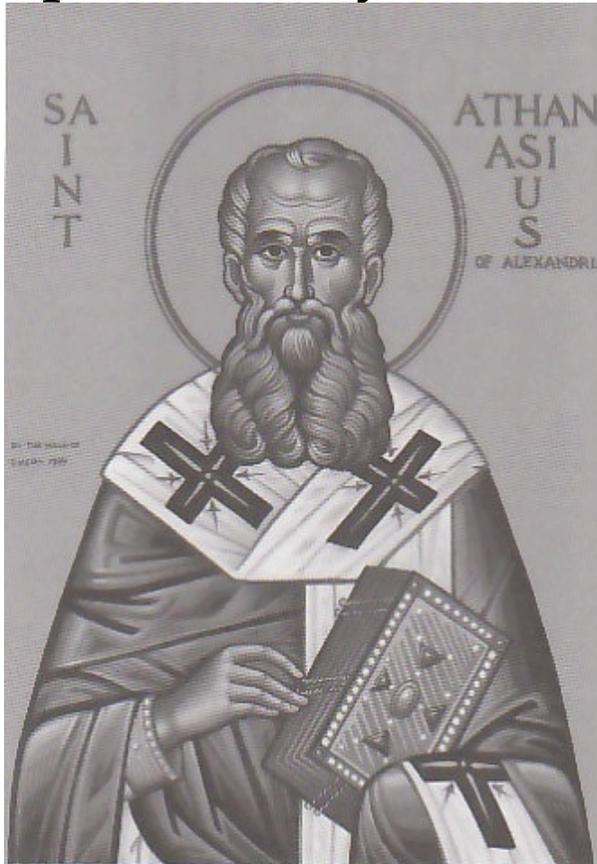
# The Doctors of the Catholic Church

An Overview

By Marilyn Hughes

*The Out-of-Body Travel Foundation!*

<http://outofbodytravel.org>



Saint Athanasius

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An Overview

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# St. Athanasius

Father of Orthodoxy 297-373

Only thirty three writers of the Roman Catholic Church were considered worthy to be given the title of 'Doctor of the Church.'

St. Athanasius became known as the Father of Orthodoxy when he attended the First Council of the Catholic Church, the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. He became highly regarded for defending the dogma regarding Christ's divinity with vigor and fury against the heresy of Arianism which purported that God was 'uncreated' and, therefore, eternal, but Christ, the Son was created, and therefore, not eternal. It was also well-known that St. Athanasius had a profound devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

## **A Well Educated Man**

The well-educated St. Athanasius was born in Alexandria and despite having a profoundly extensive education lived a very difficult life due to his life-long calling to fight against the heresy of Arianism in his time. It was Athanasius who, after fighting to disprove the heresy at the Council of Nicaea, also assisted in making sure that the very rebellious and power hungry founder of the heresy, Arius, was excommunicated. Many years went by however, wherein various intrigues and subversive activities occurred involving Arius.

## **Five Exiles in a Seventeen Year Period**

After a period of time, Athanasius was asked to readmit Arius to the faithful for which he staunchly refused. Arius's response was to kidnap a bishop and place him in hiding and accuse St. Athanasius of his murder. He was exiled five times in a seventeen year period, and as the various powers that be came in and out of power – he was favored one minute and exiled the next. He spent at least six years in the desert, which is part of the reason he became known as a Desert Father of the Church.

## **A Bishop for Forty Seven Years**

It is an interesting thing that St. Athanasius served for forty seven years as the Bishop of Alexandria, and even in such a position, he was exiled and asked to return again and again. He was persevering under severe trial and never gave up the fight for Holy Mother Church.

## **Exoneration for St. Athanasius**

It was only in his last seven years of life that he finally was able to receive complete exoneration, rebuild the Nicene Church and proclaim victory over what was considered one of the most powerful heresies in the Catholic Church, Arianism. He wrote most of his famous works while in exile except for his work on the incarnation which was written earlier. He introduced monasticism to the Western World. He died on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 373.

## **St. Athanasius's Written Works**

*Apologia to Constantius, Defense of Flight, Letter to the Monks, History of the Arians, Eleven Readings in the Liturgy of the Hours, Against the Pagans, On the Incarnation of the Word of*

*God, Discourses against the Arians, Festal Letters, Letter  
Concerning the Decrees of the Nicene Council, Athanasian  
Creed*

# St. Ephrem

Father of Hymnody 306 - 373

“O blessed doctor, light of holy Church and lover of God’s law, pray to the Son of God for us.” Antiphon recited on the Feast Day of a Doctor of the Church.

St. Ephrem was not only known in his day as the Father of Hymnody, but also as Mary’s Own Singer, the Harp of the Holy Ghost, Pillar of the Church, Doctor of the World, the Eloquent Mouth, Poet of God and Prophet of the Syrians. Apparently, he was known by so many eloquent titles because of his profound and poetic eloquence in writing on holy writ.

## **A Charitable and Miraculous Life**

Born to Christian parents, St. Ephrem served the church early in life under St. James of Nisibia, becoming head of his school. He is credited with a miracle which occurred 350 A.D. when the Nisibis were delivered from the Persians through the intercession of his prayers. It is believed that St. Ephrem was actually only a deacon – not a priest – but well known for his preaching and his introduction of the hymns into the liturgical cycles. Nisibis was eventually ceded to Persians in 363 A.D. and at that time, St. Ephrem retired to a cave and continued his apostolic work.

## **St. Ephrem’s Great Charity and Intellect**

He assisted during a devastating winter in 372 A.D. by distributing food and money to the poor. He was a

profoundly prolific writer who wrote against the Arians and the Gnostics\*, about the Last Judgment and on the spotless and sinless nature of Mary. (Gnostics were known for believing in a personal experience of God rather than an intellectual understanding. They have many different views regarding the person of God in relation to the Catholic Faith, in some sects actually believing in an evil God who created the world. Their beliefs are complex.) In fact, many of his writings were utilized during the defining of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception to back up the claim that Mary was indeed born without sin.

### **St. Ephrem Remains a Writer of Hymns**

St. Ephrem still remains best known for his hymns. He died in Edessa on June 9, 373 A.D. It was Pope Benedict XV who declared him a Doctor of the Church in 1920.

### **St. Ephrem's Written Works**

*Commentaries on all Sacred Scripture, Homilies, Hymns, Sermon on Monastic Life and Practice, Four Readings in the Revised Liturgy of the Hours* - Many of St. Ephrem's works are not preserved or not known to still remain in existence.

\*(Gnostics were known for believing in a personal experience of God rather than an intellectual understanding. They have many different views regarding the person of God in relation to the Catholic Faith, in some sects actually believing in an evil God who created the world. Their beliefs are complex.)

# St. Cyril of Jerusalem

Doctor of Catechesis 315 -386

The title of 'Doctor of the Church' has been given to only thirty three of the greatest writers on Catholic Doctrine in the history of the church.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem was the bishop of Jerusalem who apparently also grew up in the world of Christ's birth, life and death. He is known to have described the places associated with Christ's life as they appeared before Constantine rebuilt the monuments to the Christos which we see today. But it was his profound interest in catechetics and the teaching of the faith that earned him the title of Doctor of Catechesis. It is said that, as a youth, he watched many of the churches being built in and around Jerusalem.

## **A Life of Controversy**

Ordained by St. Maximus, Cyril was a great teacher and his work was with catechumens for many, many years. St. Cyril was persecuted by the Arians when they came into power much like several of his predecessors in that he was removed from the Jerusalem See for selling relics of the church to aid the poor. It was actually his opposition to Arianism, however, which prompted the charges. He went through a series of three recalls and exiles when finally St. Gregory of Nyssa was sent to investigate the continuing scandals regarding his preaching. St. Gregory's conclusions were that the Jerusalem See was corrupt and restored St. Cyril's reputation.

## **A Saint Misunderstood During his Time**

Ironically, despite so much persecution at the hands of the Arians, he spent much of his life and has been followed down through history with charges that he leaned in his views towards the Arian heresy. But modern scripture scholars dispute this now and have labeled him as completely Catholic.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem propounded in his sermons a clear understanding of the instruction expected to be given to those preparing for baptism and was known for keeping the instruction of the Gospel to neophytes simple and easy to understand. He was not impressed with theological ramblings over high issues.

### **Miracles of St. Cyril**

Two miracles have been attributed to St. Cyril. One involved a huge light in the sky in the form of a cross that could be clearly seen for hours. The second involved an attempt to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem. Controversial at the time, this attempt was looked upon by some as blasphemous because the Lord Jesus Christ had said the Temple would be destroyed and be under the control of Gentiles until end times. St. Cyril prophesied that nothing would come of the attempts. Surely enough, the work was stopped because of gases trapped in subterranean passes below the ruins which immediately ignited into flame burning the workers and all that had been done.

In 1882, Pope Leo XIII declared him a Doctor of the Church.

**St. Cyril of Jerusalem's Written Works**

*Catechetical Lectures, Sermon on the Paralytic, Theological Studies, Catechetical Instructions*

# St. Hilary of Poitiers

Preserver of Western Orthodoxy 315 -386

When a saint is given the title 'Doctor of the Church' it is the churches exhortation that their writings can be considered faithful to the Magisterium of the Church.

It was during the Arian heresy that St. Hilary of Poitiers became known as the 'Athanasius of the West' for his staunch defense of the divinity of Christ. Arianism was a heresy which propounded that Christ was created and thus, only a man - not eternal. St. Hilary became the Preserver of Western Orthodoxy by defending the teachings of the Catholic Church in that Christ is both divine and human at the same time - the two cannot be separated from one another.

## **Peaceful and Trying Times**

St. Hilary was born at Poitiers it is believed of wealthy pagan parents. There are some contradictions in the histories of his life in that one tradition very clearly states that he was happily married with a daughter whom he adored named Abra. Baptized as an adult, St. Hilary explained his conversion process in his first work *On the Trinity*.

The first years of his episcopate were peaceful and amiable as he focused much of his energies on his *Commentary on the Gospel of St. Matthew*. Times began to change for St. Hilary when he openly opposed a man named Saturninus, Bishop of Arles and staunch Arian. Again exile followed

by return and another exile occurred as the battles between the sects raged.

### **St. Hilary of Poitiers Greatest Writings During Exile**

It was during these times of exile when St. Hilary was frustrated by his inability to receive answers to letters he had sent to bishops, that he began compiling *De Synodis*, a book consisting of 92 chapters explaining in great detail the Church councils and creeds and expelling the conflicting reports about Arianism. He used his pen to fight his battle, and he won.

But it was only the death of Constantius in 364 that ended the persecution of Catholics by the Arians. And in 364, St. Hilary held a public debate with the Arian authority of the time to prove his points. St. Hilary died in the city of his birth, Poitiers, on November 1, 386 A.D.

Pope Pius IX declared St. Hilary of Poitiers a Doctor of the Church in 1851.

### **St. Hilary of Poitiers Written Works**

*Commentary on the Gospel of St. Matthew, De Synodis, De Trinitate, Twelve Books Against the Arians, On Faith, On the Trinity, Contra Auxentium, Many Hymns*

# St. Gregory Nazianzen

The Theologian 329 - 389

Doctors of the Church have been given their position because they have meditated upon the life of Christ to such a degree that their words are considered inspired of God.

St. Gregory Nazianzen became known as the Theologian in his time because of his great learning in the doctrinal sciences. He showed an interest in such matters from the time he was a young boy and was educated fiercely in the Catholic faith. Despite this, he was not baptized in infancy, but later as a youth after a close call with death at sea.

## **A Family of Saints**

St. Gregory Nazianzen came from a family of saints. His father, St. Gregory Nazianzen the Elder was from Cappadocia and involved in governmental activities. Married, his wife Nonna converted him to Christianity. They had three children and all three of them became saints. There was St. Caesarius, St. Gorgonia and St. Gregory Nazianzen. His father became the bishop of Nazianzus in about 328 A.D. but fell into error. It wasn't long before he was returned to his former faith and his son, St. Gregory Nazianzen, became a coadjutor with him in 372 A.D.

## **Layperson to Churchman**

St. Gregory Nazianzen studied in many places before joining his father back in his hometown: Caesarea,

Cappadocia, Palestine and Athens. He became a close friend of St. Basil during one of his stays in Athens, and shortly after returning to his hometown the first time, decided to leave again and join St. Basil in a river area to live a solitary life. When his father was about eighty years old, he returned to Nazianzus to become his coadjutor until his father's death. He remained in the position until a new bishop was chosen.

### **St. Hilary of Poitiers was an Eloquent Preacher**

Going to a place called Seleucia, Isauria, he was known for his eloquent preaching which brought in a great deal of converts. But with the converts, persecution returned from the remaining heretics of Arianism and Apollinus\*. Someone tried to depose him while he was ill, but he prevailed and the new Emperor Theodosius sent out a decree of orthodoxy requiring all Arians to become Orthodox or leave the city.

In order to assure peace, he resigned his position and lived a private life until his death on January 25, 389 A.D. submit or leave.

### **St. Gregory of Nazianzen's Written Works**

*De Vita Sua, 45 Orations, 400 Poems and 245 Letters*

\*Arianism believed that Jesus was only a man and not Divine. Apollinarists embraced a severely ascetic lifestyle with beliefs similar to that of Hindu Yogis

# St. Basil the Great

Father of Eastern Monasticism 329 - 379

The title of 'Doctor of the Church' was given only rarely in pre-Reformation times, but became more frequent afterwards.

One of the great writers of the *Philokalia*, a group of texts written by the Early Desert Fathers, St. Basil laid out the beginnings of monasticism which would resume throughout the centuries in monastic life. Ironically, in his own day, he often caused great controversy because of his unwillingness to adhere to the pomp and circumstance of the hierarchy of the Bishops.

## **St. Basil's Awareness of the Value of Each Man**

Stories are told of St. Basil regarding his disregard for titles of honor in this world. In one instance, he stood before the prefect who asked, "What is the meaning of this, you Basil, that you stand out against so great a prince and are self-willed when others yield?" St. Basil was being questioned by those who were in charge of the Arian heresy, like many of his predecessors. St. Basil's response to the question indicated that even though this man was Prefect, he remained a human being and was therefore no different than the rest of the people he served. When the Prefect rose in anger and shouted, "Do you have no fear of what I can do to you? My power could mean your exile, confiscation of your goods, torture or death?" St. Basil replied, "Think of something else. These have no influence on me."

## **St. Basil was Born of Ten Children**

St. Basil was one of ten children, born to St. Basil the Elder and Emmelia in Caesaria. Studying in Constantinople and Athens, he met such illustrious characters as Gregory Nazianzen and a future Emperor – Julian the Apostate. He was actually elected archbishop of Caesaria in 370, but spent many of the following years dealing with Arian bishops who would claim to his post.

But Basil was a man of great spiritual depth, and refused to be bothered with such ramblings. He spent his time doing great works for the people including aiding victims of drought, family, excommunicating those who were forcing women into the prostitution trade, etc. He was rigid when it came to the Catholic Clergy insisting on strict priestly discipline and fearlessly denouncing evil wherever it would show its head.

## **St. Basil Helped Compile the Philokalia**

*The Philokalia*, a work containing the writings of the Early Desert Fathers in which he contributed his own writings to and also helped to compile has become a core Eastern Orthodox text in the Catholic Church and is on par with the writings of the Early Church Fathers.

## **St. Basil's Written Works**

*On the Holy Spirit, Moralia, Philocalia, Parts of the Byzantine Liturgy, The Rules of St. Basil – Detailed Rules [55], Short Rules [313]* - St. Basil's work had great importance in the development of monastic life as it is known today.

# St. Ambrose

Patron of the Veneration of Mary 340 397

Many 'Doctors of the Church' were considered to have been given special graces by God which allowed them to understand God in a special way.

St. Ambrose became known as the Patron of the Veneration of Mary due primarily to his own devotion to her, but it was further enhanced by his extensive writings on the value of the celibate life and virginity. Further, St. Ambrose credited the Blessed Virgin Mary and his devotion to her for the conversion of a head of state who had previously carried out a massacre of Christians and nobles of the Catholic Church in the streets. It was the first time in the history of Christianity where a head of state bowed to a power above his own, that of God. It was considered a great miracle.

## **Defeater of the Cult of the Goddess of Victory**

Born in Germany the son of a praetorian prefect of Gaul, he was taken to Rome when his father died. Becoming a lawyer, he was well-known for his abilities to argue and debate issues of learning. He became the governor of Liguria and Aemilia. It was in this position that he would find his final and most important vocation in life, that of defeating an attempt to reinstate the Cult of the Goddess of Victory - an Arian Heretical Sect.

In 374, the bishop of Milan, Auxentius, died. And in so doing a huge uproar was again caused in the Catholic Church by an uprising of the Arian heresy - a group

determined to win their argument that Christ was not divine, but only human. Ambrose was not even baptized at the time and barely Christian.

### **St. Ambrose Position of Governor Puts him Into a Position of Bishop**

As governor, he went to the Cathedral to try to quiet all the infighting and was elected bishop of the church against his will. Even though he tried to refuse the post, the Emperor decreed that he would take it and was baptized on December 7, 374 A.D. and became bishop.

St. Ambrose took his vows seriously as he gave up all his possessions and began to study the teachings of the church and the bible under a tutor named Simplician. Embracing the life of an ascetic, he became a highly considered preacher and opponent of the very heresy which forced his hand in becoming Catholic in the first place.

### **St. Ambrose Fought the Emperor and Won**

When Quinton Aurelius Symmachus caused an uproar and tried to restore a pagan cult to the Goddess of Victory, St. Ambrose defeated his wishes even though the order to give over several churches to the cult in Milan came from the Emperor Valentinus himself. His mother, the Empress Justina, was a secret Arian.

There were many edicts that St. Ambrose flatly refused to obey which attempted to overturn Catholic worship and restore Arian reign. Many credit St. Ambrose as having more influence on the rise of Christianity during the time of the fall of the Roman empire than any other human being.

St. Ambrose baptized the famous St. Augustine, as well.

### **St. Ambrose's Written Works**

*De Virginibus and other Writings On Virginity and Consecrated Chastity* - St. Ambrose is credited with bringing liturgical hymnody into the Latin Part of the church. He is certain to have written at least four hymns: *Aeterne Rerum Conditor, Deus Creator Omnium, Jam Surgit Hora Tertia and Veni, Redemptor Omnium*- the one still most utilized today.

# St. Jerome

Father of Biblical Science 342 - 420

The science of knowing God attributed to the 'Doctors of the Church' is known as pedagogy.

It is not difficult to ascertain St. Jerome's title as Father of Biblical Science. As the original translator of the biblical texts into the Latin Vulgate Bible, he is considered the first and very possibly most important biblical scholar in the history of the Catholic Church. It would be William Tyndale, a Protestant, who would later translate that same bible into the language of the people making it possible for laymen and women along with clergy to read the word of God.

## **St. Jerome Born as Eusebius Hieronymus Sophronius**

St. Jerome was born at Strido with the name Eusebius Hieronymus Sophronius. He studied under Donatus in Rome all the great skills of his day but especially languages like Latin and Greek.

## **Profound Ascetic**

In 360 Pope Liberius baptized him and he became an ascetic. He had a profound vision of Jesus Christ wherein the Lord told him to go to Chalcis in the Syrian desert. He had this vision after suffering from a serious illness. St. Jerome was a learner, and he continued learning from the great writers of the church even in the desert. So much so that he was ordained upon his return from the desert by St. Paulinus.

## **St. Jerome a Warrior Against the Meletian Schism**

He began his fight for the church quickly when he took on the Meletian schism in a treatise title *Altercatio luciferiani et orthodoxi*. Meletius was a bishop in Lycopolis who went outside his own boundaries of reign to ordain priests which was obviously against the canons. But worse yet, Meletians were known to sometimes sacrifice to idols. The Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. attempted to suppress the Meletians through a canon, but were not completely successful.

## **Translator of the Latin Vulgate Bible**

He went through many persecutions much like many of the doctors of the church, fighting heresies and their beliefs through much of his life. In 386 A.D., he settled at Bethlehem with a group of Christians. Three convents for women were established and a monastery of which St. Jerome was the abbot. It was here that he did his work of translating the bible from the original languages into Latin, which was the only universal language of the time. This great work became known as the *Latin Vulgate Bible*.

The Apostolic Canons can be found in the eighth book of the Apostolic Constitutions.

## **St. Jerome's Written Works**

*Latin Vulgate Bible* - one of the first translations of the Bible.  
*Altercatio luciferiani et orthodoxi*, *Adversum Helvidium*, *120 Letters*, *Dialogi contra Pelagianos*, *Apologetici adversus Rufinum*, *Contra Vigilantium*, *Adversus Jovianianum*

# St. John Chrysostom

Golden Mouthed Doctor of the Eucharist 347 - 407

One of the revered 'Doctors of the Church, St. John Chrysostom was also an Early Church Father and only one of five Doctors made so without formal decree.

Saint John Chrysostom's last name is actually a title. Chrysostom means 'Golden-Mouthed.' Many consider him to be the greatest preacher in the history of the Catholic Church and his profound and limitless sermons are still left to us in posterity through *The Writings of the Early Church Fathers*. He was so good at preaching, that it was known that criminals would sometimes attend his sermons because the people were so mesmerized by his Golden Mouth that they would have their pockets picked unawares.

## **St. John Chrysostom, A No-Nonsense Honest Preacher**

St. John Chrysostom was a powerful, no-nonsense preacher who brought crowds together whenever he preached and convicted the souls so severely of those present that kings, queens, princes and princesses would have him exiled again and again for harming their conscience.

## **St. John Chrysostom was an Ascetic and Aide to the Bishop**

Born to a military officer in Antioch, he studied under Libanius and Diodorus. Baptized in 369 A.D., he became a hermit under St. Basil in 374 A.D. The severe life of

asceticism undermined his health, so he returned to regular society and became a deacon in 381 A.D. and ordained to the priesthood in 386 A.D by Bishop Flavian.

A good servant, St. John Chrysostom was content to act as helpmate to the Bishop of Antioch for twelve years, but his preaching became very well-known among the townspeople and he affected the faith of the city by a great deal.

### **St. John Chrysostom, Patriarch of Constantinople**

It was, however, after him being named as Patriarch of Constantinople that his problems began because of his immediate attempts at reform. Among the many great things that he did which would eventually begin his series of exile orders were extravagant donations to the poor, reduced pomp and luxury in the priesthood, sent missionaries to the east and he made a lot of enemies because of his public denunciations of people in power.

Empress Eudoxia, who became a lifelong rival, was criticized for her vanity, uncharitableness and inappropriateness of her dress. He attained the disdain of the leader of the army when he received retributions from St. John's mouth for defending the good name of the Empress. Many churchmen became his enemies because of his comments on their refusal to stop living extravagant lifestyles or using their power unwisely.

### **A Death in Exile**

Thirty six angry bishops ordered St. John Chrysostom's first exile in 403 A.D., but when an earthquake ensued at the time his exile it was the Empress Eudoxia who

rescinded it. But it wasn't long after that a long series of exiles began wherein St. John Chrysostom was sent further and further into the wilderness with each banishment. In his final exile to Pityus, he died during his march on foot due to the stifling heat. It was September 14, 407 A.D.

He was named Patron of Preachers and declared a Doctor of the Church by Pope Pius X in 1903 A.D.

### **St. John Chrysostom's Written Works**

*On the Priesthood, Ascetic Treatises, Innumerable Sermons,  
That None Can Harm the Man Who Does Not Injure Himself*

# St. Augustine

Doctor of Grace 354 - 430

The great sinner who became a saint, St. Augustine, not only became a 'Doctor of the Church' but was among the Early Church Fathers.

It's not difficult to ascertain how St. Augustine became known as the Doctor of Grace considering the profound conversion he had from a heathenous and sexually licentious lifestyle of thirty two years to a profound embracement of Catholicism. His huge volume of writings also donned him with the title Doctor of Doctors. A Great deal of his work was devoted to fighting heresies. He wrote against Manichaenism - which believed that evil could not harm good, Donatism - which conferred that priests who had committed sins could validly administrate sacraments and Pelagianism - which began a controversy that continues even today; the question of free will versus grace in the salvation of man. Pelagianism emphasized human freedom and will in an unsuccessful attempt to stop people from blaming their sins on the fates.

## **The Prayers of a Holy Mother**

St. Augustine was born in Africa to a pagan father and a Christian mother who would one day become a saint. St. Monica prayed for thirty two years for the conversion of her philandering son before the affects became suddenly clear in a profound conversion from a pagan lifestyle to one of the greatest Bishops and prolific defenders of the faith in Catholic History.

### **St. Augustine, a Manichaean**

Initially, Augustine devoted his studies to that of law but gave it up to pursue his writing ambition. He embraced the heresy of Manichaeism, which taught a very complex cosmology similar to Hindu ideals and traditional Persian dualities of light and dark. Some Gnostic elements were in the Manichaean belief system, including a Mother Spirit.

He took upon a mistress who bore him a son and he lived with her, unmarried, for fifteen years. A teacher for many years in universities, he gave up his position to accept another as Chair of Rhetoric in Milan. It was there that he became exposed to the preaching of such great men as St. Ambrose.

### **Baptized a Christian in 387 A.D.**

After years of study, he accepted the Christian faith and was baptized in 387 A.D. After a lifetime of prayer for the conversion of her son, St. Monica died while he was on his way home - enroute to Africa. Ordained at Hippo, he became a coadjutor in 395 to Bishop Valerius of Hippo and took over the position of Bishop in 396 upon Bishop Valerius's death.

### **A Great Intellect of the Catholic Church**

St. Augustine's works are considered second only to that of St. Thomas Aquinas, one of the greatest minds of Catholic Christian history. He fought against the heresies of Manichaeism and Pelagianism\* in many of his writings. He died during a siege of the city on August 28, 430.

**St. Augustine's Written Works**

*The Confessions of St. Augustine, The City of God, Soliloquies, Expositions on the Psalms, Christian Doctrine, On the Holy Trinity, Doctrinal Treatises, Moral Treatises, Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, Harmony of the Gospels, Homilies on the Gospels, Innumerable Sermons, Innumerable Writings Against Various Heresies*

\*Pelagians believed that God's grace was more important to salvation than free will, thus, blaming their faults on their human failing lack of God's grace than to their own free choice of will.

# St. Cyril of Alexandria

Doctor of the Incarnation 376 - 444

Pope John Paul II exhorted Catholics the world over to re-encounter Christ in the writings of the Saints and 'Doctors of the Church.

St. Cyril of Alexandria was noted as the Doctor of the Incarnation and the Seal of the Fathers primarily for his unflinching work during the Council of Ephesus in defending the integrity of the Catholic Faith. Apparently, he was also found to be the prime defender of the faith during that council against the Nestorian Heresy. The Nestorian Heresy, which believed that Christ's human nature came from his mother and his divine nature from God and therefore, Mary could not be referred to by the title of 'Mother of God;' was eventually condemned by the Council of Ephesus.

## **Nephew of Theophilus, Patriarch of Alexandria**

Born in Alexandria, Egypt, St. Cyril of Alexandria received an extensive theological education and was actually ordained by his uncle, Theophilus, Patriarch of Alexandria. In 412 A.D., when Theophilus died, St. Cyril replaced him at his post.

## **St. Cyril of Alexandria and his Controversial Expulsion of the Jews**

St. Cyril of Alexandria was involved in some controversial activity in his day, and what would be considered the same in our own. He drove the Jewish people out of the

city against the wishes of the Governor Orestes. And immediately upon becoming Patriarch, began a campaign against the Novatians, a heresy which had come about through the Roman Bishop Novatus Novatians who adhered to a stricter form of Christianity. Ironically, the Novatians were the first to be called by the name of Cathari, the Cathars who eventually became the most powerful heresy in Catholic History who eventually were slaughtered and wiped out completely by the Crusades against them in later centuries.

### **St. Cyril of Alexandria, Fighter of Heresies**

In 430 A.D., St. Cyril of Alexandria became enmeshed in another fight against the heresy of Nestorianism, which believed that Mary could not be termed the Mother of God because they believed that Christ was only a man and not divine. With the same fervor, he pursued Bishop Nestorius and his followers. Ironically, the Archbishop of Antioch arrived with supports of the Bishop Nestorius and it was Cyril that was deposed only later to be exonerated. At that time, Nestorius was forced into exile.

### **St. Cyril takes the Battle to his Pen**

It was after these battles that St. Cyril took up his pen and began writing treatises which clarified the Churches official teachings on doctrines such as the Trinity and the Incarnation which were meant to assist in the future for misunderstandings to arise.

Pope Leo XIII declared St. Cyril of Alexandria a Doctor of the Church in 1882.

**St. Cyril of Alexandria's Written Works**

*Sermons on the Old Testament, Innumerable Letters, Many Treatises Against Arianism and Nestorianism* – St. Cyril was best known for his knowledge of the Old Testament and his defense of the Blessed Virgin Mary as the Theotokos, also known as, the Mother of God.

# Pope St. Leo the Great

Doctor of the Unity of the Church 400 - 461

One of only two Popes to make the Catholic Churches list of thirty three 'Doctors of the Church,' Pope Leo the Great was known for uniting the people.

Pope St. Leo the Great has been referred to by many of his biographers as 'majestic.' He is remembered in the Catholic Church as the Doctor who believed wholeheartedly in the divine mandate to teach all men and lead all men to salvation. This was the major reason he became known as the Doctor of the Unity of the Church. Pope John XXIIIrd gave credit to Pope St. Leo the Great's witness to this great truth as being a vital element in the decision made to convene the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council.

## **St. Leo, a Tuscan**

Pope St. Leo the Great was born in 400 A.D. in Tuscany of Rome. Becoming a deacon under two popes, Celestine I and Sixtus III, he gained a reputation as a peacemaker by negotiating with two generals whose personal quarrels had created a hazardous situation in Gaul. Barbarians were openly attacking the city because of the lack of unity between the generals Aetius and Albinus.

## **St. Leo's Works of Peace Lead to His Pontificate**

Because of his work, he was elected to succeed Pope Sixtus III upon his death in 440 A.D.

## **St. Leo Uses the Written Word to Fight a String of Heresies**

Fighting heresy became a huge part of St. Leo's pontifical work, but he did it primarily through the use of his words in sermons and writings defining the faith. In his time, he fought against the heresies of Manichaeism, Pelagianism, Priscillianism, Nestorianism and Eutychian

### **Manichaeism**

Manichaeism believed in a fairly complicated cosmology similar to Gnostic and Hindu beliefs. They taught reincarnation and believed in the 'experience' of God rather than theological knowledge of God.

### **Pelagianism**

The Bishop Pelagius taught the heresy that predestination and God's grace had more impact on the destiny of souls than free will.

### **Priscillianism**

Bishop Priscillian of Avila adopted many of the doctrines of Manichaeism and after being brought before a secular court for heresy, was actually put to death. It was Maximus who insisted on bringing the issue before the court despite the pleas of St. Martin to leave well enough alone. Pope St. Leo the Great had nothing to do with this death decree as it was actually carried out before his pontificate, but the movement continued into the 5<sup>th</sup> century when St. Leo was acting as the Pope and worked to eradicate the movement.

## **Nestorianism**

Bishop Nestorius originated a heresy which claimed that the Blessed Virgin Mary could not be called the Mother of God because they believed that Jesus Christ had a human nature, rather than divine. It is said, however, that some Nestorians believed that Christ had two natures, human and divine, which is very close to the Catholic doctrine. The difference between them would be that Catholicism teaches that those two natures were one nature that acted in a unity, wherein, the Nestorians who held this view believed that these natures were entirely separate although they worked together.

## **The Eutychian Heresy**

As head of a monastery, Eutyches founded a heresy that was eventually called by the name of the Monophysite heresy, wherein the nature of Christ was considered as only one with both human and divine elements.

When you study the heresies of the Church and the great controversies and consequences that surrounded them in their day, it is sometimes hard to understand the great arguments that came about over these seemingly small doctrinal differences.

## **St. Leo Weathers a Series of Wars**

At the time of St. Leo's pontificate, many controversies erupted aside from the heretical argumentation. Bishops were often being excommunicated and then being asked back into the church and a great number of negotiations continued between Pope St. Leo and barbarian tribes to prevent attacks on the city. Although he was able to

convince Attila and the Huns from attacking, he was unsuccessful in his negotiations with Vandal Genseric, another barbarian whose group of barbarian warriors attacked Rome with great fury.

### **Pope St. Leo Rebuilds**

Ministering to the surviving people of the city who were completely devastated by the attacks, St. Leo helped rebuild both the city and the churches and sent missionaries to go to Africa to try to win back those who had been taken captive by the marauders.

### **Pope St. Leo's Gifts to the Pontificate**

Named as Doctor of the Unity of the Church in 1754, he was given this honor because of his groundbreaking work in bringing the papacy into authority in the church. St. Leo believed that divine and scriptural mandate gave the Holy See ultimate authority in human affairs and brought this to the pontificate by making it a central authority in his time.

### **Pope St. Leo the Great's Written Works**

*The Tome, A Portion of the Divine Office in the Liturgy of Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve, The Annunciation Selection in the Liturgy of the Hours, Innumerable Sermons*

# St. Peter Chrysologus

The Golden Worded 406 - 450

The title of 'Doctor of the Church' can only be attributed upon someone by the declaration of the Pope or a General Council.

St. Peter Chrysologus's name actually reflects his charism in that Chrysologus actually means 'Golden Worded.' It was his gift of words that gave him this title and he was known to have said at the beginning of some of his sermons, "May our God deign to give me the grace of speaking and you the desire of hearing."

## **Uncertain Myths**

A legend exists about St. Peter Chrysologus that he was actually named the Bishop of Ravenna by Pope Sixtus II. Although it is considered highly unlikely that these events actually took place, the myth states that the pope overturned the decision of a vote for another man to become the bishop because of a vision he had telling him to elect St. Peter Chrysologus.

## **Good Works of St. Peter Chrysologus**

St. Peter Chrysologus was known for having a great deal of energy in setting out to improve the Church. Among his many great works, he is noted for the reformation of what he perceived as laxity in the Holy See. Paganism was still prominent in the empires of his time and he is credited for completely eradicating it during his lifetime. Apparently,

he had many, many charities and, of course, his preaching was considered to be inspired of God.

### **The Empress Placidia Supports St. Peter Chrysologus**

Empress Galia Placidia loved hearing him preach so much that she funded many building projects for his innumerable charities and the church itself.

### **St. Peter Chrysologus Becomes a Doctor of the Church**

St. Peter Chrysologus died of unknown causes on July 31, 450 A.D. and it was Pope Benedict XIII who declared him a Doctor of the Church in 1729. He remains known primarily for his vast written work that still remains extant, especially his innumerable sermons.

### **St. Peter Chrysologus's Written Works**

*Innumerable Sermons, On Mildness, On Sins, On Adversity, On the Love of Christ,* - the majority of St. Peter Chrysologus's sermons are contained within the writings of the Early Church Fathers.

# Pope St. Gregory the Great

The Greatest of the Great 540 - 604

The title 'the Great' is called a sobriquet and has only been attributed to the two Popes who have been included in the eminent thirty three 'Doctors of the Church.'

Pope St. Gregory the Great received the charism of Greatest of the Great because of his profound love of the individual people. Charitable to such a high degree, he became known for his personal acts of kindness to everyone whom he considered his brothers, especially the poor and sinners. A story is related that an unknown man died forgotten of starvation in a rooming house in Rome, and the Pope felt so personally responsible for his death that refused to say Mass for several days and went into a state of deep sorrow.

## **St. Gregory Converts his Home into a Monastery**

St. Gregory the Great was born wealthy and was given a grand education in Rome. His childhood occurred during a time when invasion was a constant threat to the well-being of his world. As a result of this, he seemed attracted to the religious life from a very young age.

In 574 A.D., he converted his own home in the Monastery of St. Andrew's and became a monk there. Over the years, he founded five more monasteries in buildings from his own estates.

## **St. Gregory Embraced a Life of Seclusion**

St. Gregory the Great became the abbot of his monasteries and although completely devoted to a life of seclusion and silence, he also felt called to leave the monastery and preach in England. It was a plague that beset Rome which brought him home at the request of Pope Pelagius in 589 A.D.

Pope Pelagius died from the plague and it was then that St. Gregory was elected pope and forced to relieve himself of his previously cloistered lifestyle.

## **Why Pope St. Gregory was so Great**

Immediately upon entering office, St. Gregory brought ecclesiastical discipline back into the priesthood and papacy. He had no issue with removing corrupt priests from the episcopate and he completely abolished all fees priests were charging for burials and ordinations. Profoundly charitable, he was well-known for his skillful administration of church property, using his own money to provide ransom for people who had been taken against their will by barbarians, fed the victims of famine and disease and he was especially known for his protection of the Jewish people. He negotiated peace agreements with warring parties and is credited with the conversion of England to Christianity by sending monks from his own monastery, St. Andrew's, to teach the English people.

## **Pope St. Gregory the Great and Restoration**

During his lifetime, there were so many causes of destruction in the city of Rome. And Pope St. Gregory the Great has been historicized as being tireless in his efforts at

restoration after invasions, wars, pillages, earthquakes, plagues and famine.

He was completely intolerant of corruption and the misuse of church funds for anything but the best interests of the people of God.

### **Gregorian Chant**

The sequence of thirty Masses traditionally said for those who have died originated with St. Gregory and the use of Gregorian Chant in the liturgy is also ascribed to him.

March 12, 604 A.D., Pope St. Gregory died. And in an uncustomary action, he was immediately canonized and declared 'Great' by his contemporaries.

### **Pope St. Gregory the Great's Written Works**

*Moralia, Morals, Morals on the Book of Job* – St. Gregory is given credit for at least eight of the hymns in the Divine Office and the introduction of Gregorian Chant to the Liturgy including: *Primo Dierum omnium et Nocte surgentes vigilemus omnes, Ecce jam noctis tenuatur umbra, Lucis Creator optime, Clarum decus jeunii, Audi Benigne Conditor, Magno Salutis Gaudio* and *Rex Christi factor omnium*.

# St. Isidore of Seville

Schoolmaster of the Middle Ages 560 - 636

Many of the 'Doctors of the Church' were honored for their inexplicable teaching ability which seemed to come from the Holy Spirit.

As compiler of all secular and religious knowledge of his time, it is easy to ascertain the reasoning behind the charism of St. Isidore of Seville. His life and work as a textbook writer allowed him to have a huge influence on education as it was to spread through the Middle Ages. Apparently, this was especially so as regards the sciences.

## **St. Isidore of Seville, a Brilliant Man**

Born to Hispanic-Roman parents in Cartagena, Spain, St. Isidore shares sainthood with three siblings: St. Leander, St. Fulgentius and St. Florentina. If this isn't feat enough for such a family, St. Isidore was obsessed with obtaining knowledge - ALL knowledge. As a result, he became known as one of the most well educated men of his time writing textbooks for all of the sciences, geography, liberal arts, medicine and law.

## **St. Isidore brought Expanded Education into Seminaries**

Not satisfied with priests and clerics having only a theological education, it was St. Isidore who founded schools and seminaries that included the sciences, geography, liberal arts, medicine and law in their educational process. It was St. Isidore's view that priests could not serve men fully unless they had a more well-

rounded understanding of many walks and vocations in life.

### **St. Isidore, Presider Over Councils and Fighter of Heresy**

Most notably, St. Isidore presided over the Council of Seville in 619 A.D. and the Council of Toledo in 633 A.D. But there were more. When his brother, St. Leander, passed away, St. Isidore continued his work in fighting the remnants of the Arian Heresy among the Visigoths.

In his own time, he was remembered mostly for his severe ascetic lifestyle and the charitable works that he undertook. Canonized in 1598 A.D., he was declared a Doctor of the Church by Pope Benedict the XIV in 1722 A.D.

### **St. Isidore of Seville's Written Works**

*The Etymologies or Origins, De Viris Illustribus, A Rule for Monks, Three Books of Sentences, Summaries of the First Four Councils of the Church* - St. Isidore of Seville is credited with creating the first *Summa* of human Knowledge.

# St. Bede the Venerable

Father of English History 673 – 735

One of the three requirements for a ‘Doctor of the Church’ is eminent learning.

The council of Aix la Chapelle bestowed the title of ‘The Venerable Bede’ upon this saint and Doctor of the Church in 835. It was St. Bede the Venerable who not only categorized and began writing down some of the histories of the world, but he actually began the dating system which includes B.C. (Before Christ) and A.D. (After Death). Bede had actually taken what began as the Cycle of Dionysius and arranged it according Christ’s life and death. Making Christ the first cause of all history, he created the system and introduced it to England and other parts of the world.

## **A Religious Life from a Very Young Age**

An interesting point in the life of the Venerable St. Bede is that he was taken into a monastery in England and began his religious education at the age of three years. Born near St. Peter and St. Paul Monastery, perhaps this seemed logical at the time. Abbots Benedict Biscop and Ceolfrid were his teachers while young and remained so at least until his Ordination at the age of thirty years. Unlike a lot of the Doctors of the Church, St. Bede the Venerable truly spent the majority of his life inside a monastery, devoting himself to writing.

### **St. Bede's Title, 'The Venerable'**

The amount of writings that he accomplished in his time was profoundly prolific and very well studied. If you remember the tools of the day given to writers, to compile a history of ALL learning in the world when scribes and papyrus were still in use is astonishing. His title 'The Venerable' was given to him while still alive to acknowledge his unusual intelligence and wisdom. The Council of Aachen in 853 A.D. made the title permanent.

In 1899, St. Bede the Venerable was declared a Doctor of the Church, and was the only English Doctor up until that point in time.

### **St. Bede the Venerable's Written Works**

*The Ecclesiastical History of the English People, The Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation from the Coming of Julius Caesar into this Island in the Sixtieth Year before the Incarnation of Christ till the Year of Our Lord 731, Biographical Writings and Letters of Venerable Bede, Commentaries on Scripture.* - St. Bede wrote about music and poetry but is best known as a historian and is known to have written at least 39 works contained in 74 books.

# St. John Damascene

Doctor of Christian Art 676 - 749

One of the three requirements for a 'Doctor of the Church' is heroic sanctity.

Also known as the Doctor of the Assumption, St. John Damascene is known as the Doctor of Christian Art because of his astounding work throughout his life in the preservation and promotion of sacred images. He was the father of the religious medal, crucifixes, religious pictures, stained-glass windows, statues and all of these devotional objects which became such a huge part of the Catholic tradition until today. He was responsible for championing the line of the Apostles Creed which states 'I believe in the Communion of Saints.' In his work, *The Fount of Knowledge*, St. John Damascene travels deeply into the Incarnation, and it is this work which earned him the title also as Doctor of the Assumption.

## **St. John Damascene's Mohammedan Roots**

Probably the only Doctor of the Church to spend his entire life under the rule of Islam, St. John Damascene was born to Christian parents in Damascus and educated under Cosmas. He was captured in an Islamic raid and was purchased by Mansur, John's father. When his father passed away, he took over his position as chief revenue officer and counselor of the Caliph Abdul Malek.

### **St. John Damascene Becomes a Fighter for the Church**

Emperor Leo the Isaurian in 726 A.D. issued an edict causing the prohibition of image veneration. It was at this point that St. John Damascene found his calling. Staunchly defending the Catholic position, many people from various empires wanted to hurt or kill him, but could not because he was under the protection of the Caliph.

### **St. John Damascene Resigns and Becomes a Monk**

After his difficulties, he felt that his calling lay elsewhere. He resigned his post and joined the monastery St. Sabas Laura near Jerusalem. Denounced a few times, his reputation was eventually restored and he was ordained a priest. He spent much of his time in the monastery writing to defend the true Christian positions. He wrote the first summa, which would become a Catholic tradition with other fathers.

Pope Leo XIII made him a doctor of the Church in 1890.

### **St. John Damascene's Written Works**

*The First Summa, Sacred Parallels, De Fida Orthodoxa, The Fount of Knowledge or Fount of Wisdom, Dialectica, Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, Many Byzantine Liturgical Hymns, Innumerable Sermons*

# St. Peter Damian

Monitor of the Popes 1007 1072

One of the three requirements for a 'Doctor of the Church' is a papal or council decree.

Dedicated to the poor, St. Peter Damian was an outspoken Bishop against the opulent display and use of wealth in the church. He earned his charism as Monitor of the Popes because of his profound willingness to chastise and indict the papacy and the priesthood about laxity in their service to the church, the poor or the people. He often wrote about the lack of discipline in monasteries and became known as a great reformer in his time.

## **St. Peter Damian, the Poor Doctor**

Orphaned very young, St. Peter Damian was born poor in Ravenna, Italy and raised by his brother. During his childhood, he tended to swine to help support himself and his brother. He had another brother who was a priest. His name was also Damian. He sent him away to get an education in Faenza and Parma. Becoming a professor, he found himself disheartened with the secular life and began to practice a fairly ascetic lifestyle.

## **St. Peter Damian becomes a Benedictine Monk**

In 1035 A.D., he joined the Benedictine monks at Fonte Avellana and lived as a hermit. Becoming abbot in 1043 A.D., he founded five more hermitages. His whole life was dedicated to wiping out worldliness.

## **St. Peter Damian becomes a Cardinal-Bishop but Tries to Resign**

Named Cardinal-Bishop of Ostia by Pope Stephen IX, he tried to resign the seat. One pope refused, another acceded to his requests, but the Emperor refused him permission to do this. So he continued the life of a monk and accelerated ecclesiastical reform. He stood out very strongly against the anti-popes in his lifetime. Involved in many diplomatic ventures, he was known for having prevented King Henry IV of Germany from divorcing his wife.

A prolific writer, he was honored as a Doctor of the Church in 1828 A.D.

### **Peter Damian's Written Works**

*On the Perfection of Monks, Book of Dominus Vobiscum, On Holy Simplicity to be Placed Before Knowledge Puffing Up, On Bearing Correction with Equanimity, On the Perfect Formation of Monks, Against Sitting at Divine Office, On Refraining from Anger, On Patience in Bearing the Insults of the Wicked, About Miracles, True Happiness and Wisdom, About the Catholic Faith, About Contempt of the World, Opusculum (About Almsgiving) Liber Gomorrhianus, Liber Gratissimus, Many Letters, Innumerable Sermons*

# St. Anselm

Father of Scholasticism 1033 - 1109

St. Anselm is one of only five of the thirty three 'Doctors of the Church' who were named so without a formal decree by the pope or a council.

R. Rios in the Dublin Review of 1943 wrote about St. Anselm that "His position as a Doctor of the Church is unique, for it was he who closed the patristic period and opened the age of the Schoolmen with the golden key of his theological speculation." Though he was known for his great learning, he was remembered by those who were closest to him for his great love. Because he had experienced difficulties with over strict teachers in his youth, he became a real defender of youth and their right to learn of their faith in a respectful manner. But it was his brilliant mind and ability to state it in writing that also earned him a secondary title as Defender of the Rights of the Church.

## **St. Anselm, Not Always Headed for the Church**

Denied application into a monastery because of his father's disapproval at the age of fifteen, he led a worldly life until he left home in 1056 A.D. Studying in various schools; he became a disciple of a monk in Normandy, and joined the monastery in 1060 A.D. He excelled and advanced quickly, becoming prior three years later and abbot in 1078 A.D.

## **St. Anselm's Defense of the Church and of Schools**

His first battle began upon the death of an Archbishop. St. Anselm was put in the position of having to defend the right to spiritual independence of the Archdiocese from the King. King William II refused him and it was here where the battles began between politics and religion. The king refused him the right to call counsels or synods, and demanded extortion payments from St. Anselm who refused him for many years. The King went so far as to ask the Pope to exile Anselm, and St. Anselm submitted his resignation but the Pope refused. Ordering the King to return and reinstate St. Anselm, return all church properties and let him do his work in peace, he refused. St. Anselm only returned after the King's death.

## **St. Anselm, Defender of Slaves and Education**

In a time when such speculation was considered fruitless, St. Anselm denounced the slave trade in a profoundly vocal way. It really made him mad and it showed.

But it was his eminence in theology that earned his titles. His belief was that revelation and reason could be brought into harmony. He was the first of the Doctors to utilize the rationalism of Aristotle and introduce it into theology.

## **St. Anselm's Written Works**

*Monologion, Proslogion, Faith Seeking Understanding, Cur Deus Homo, Many Prayers and Meditations, Mariale, De fide Trinitatis, De Veritate, Liber Apologeticus pro insipiente, Cur Deus Homo*

# St. Bernard of Clairvaux

The Mellifluous Doctor 1090 - 1153

Mellifluous has the definition of being like honey – sweet and smooth.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux has been given many charisms. Among them the Mellifluous Doctor because of his gift of the word. But others that were given him which seem to speak for themselves would include Oracle of the Twelfth Century, Thaumaturgus of the West, Arbiter of Christendom and the Last of the Fathers. St. Bernard was not only eloquent in speech, but very ascetic in his monastic life. He disparaged the monks who struggled to live a life of austerity and found the weakness of the stomach and the flesh highly disagreeable. s

## **St. Bernard of Clairvaux, Born in a Castle**

Born to the daughter of the Lord of Montbard, St. Bernard of Clairvaux was born at the family castle near Burgundy. He was the third of seven children and spent his youth frivolously. Upon the death of his mother, however, he decided to look into the religious life.

## **St. Bernard, a Persuasive Youth**

Somehow, he convinced thirty one of his friends to travel to the first Cistercian monastery which followed a strict rule. In 1115 A.D., Bernard was asked to found a new Cistercian house elsewhere, so he brought twelve monks with him to Langres. This house, Vallee d’Absinthe,

became the mother house to over 68 Cistercian monasteries over time.

### **The Mellifluous Doctor**

St. Bernard's amazing capability for learning quickly brought him renown outside the monastery. He was considered to have so much wisdom and learning, he became one of the most well-known and consulted people in Europe by rulers and Popes. Miracles were attributed to him, and he was considered the greatest preacher of his time.

For this reason, he was involved in many councils and debates to present the teaching of the church, most notably, he led the verbal conquest in the Abelard questioning. St. Bernard successfully defended the teaching of the church against the 'extreme exaltation of human reason' defending faith and traditional authority.

### **St. Bernard's defeat of the Albigensian Heresy**

St. Bernard went to France to verbally combat the Albigensians, who were also known as Cathars. Cathars believed in a profound cosmology, and despite St. Bernard's great work in debating with them in his own time, the Cathars were eventually slaughtered in France in later centuries during the crusades.

Unfortunately, St. Bernard had a pretty large role in the crusades as he did preach for a crusade against the Turks and actually had a great part in igniting the fire of Europe for the Second Crusade which was a disaster. St. Bernard blamed that fate on a lack of dedication by the crusaders. It is one of the black moments in the history of the church, and the history of St. Bernard.

But shortly before his death, he used his verbal skills to negotiate a peace between nations just months before his own death.

His formal declaration as Doctor of the Church was given in 1830 A.D.

### **Bernard of Clarivaux's Written Works**

*Innumerable Letters, Concerning Meditation, The Liber Miraculorum, On the Necessity of Loving God, The Degrees of Humility, Life of St. Malachy, Eighty Six Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles, De Consideratione, Various Hymns Including Jesu dulcis memoria and the Memorare, Innumerable Sermons on Mariology*

# St. Anthony of Padua

Doctor of the Gospel 1195 - 1231

In a time when Franciscans were guarded against scholarship in order to preserve humility, it was St. Anthony of Padua who blended the two.

Emblazoned in history with several titles; Doctor of the Gospel, Hammer of Heretics and Ark of Both Covenants, it might be surprising to learn that the greatest works in St. Anthony's life were one's of profound charity. In the early days of the Franciscan order, few monks became priests because of St. Francis's concern that it would affect their ability to practice humility. But St. Anthony entered the Franciscan order after he had already become a priest in another. Over time, St. Francis realized that St. Anthony's gift of words was a blessing to the Franciscans and knew that St. Anthony had no problem maintaining his humility while utilizing this gift. It was St. Anthony who organized a group of monks to join together and work to pay off the debts of fathers and husbands who were in debtor's prisons so that they might rejoin their families.

## **The Knight who Became a Saint**

Born in Lisbon, Portugal, St. Anthony's original name was Ferdinand de Bulhoes and was born to a family of knights of the king. Early in his life, he underwent a profound experience that changed his life forever.

His best friend challenged him to a duel over a woman who loved Ferdinand, despite the love of his friend. St. Anthony did not wish to engage in the battle, but his

friend insisted and was mortally wounded. St. Anthony prayed through the night hoping for the recovery of his friend, promising God that if he were to restore him to health, that he would become a monk. His friend survived and he became a monk.

### **Canons of the Regular St. Augustine**

Joining the house of St. Augustine in 1212 he was transferred to a priory because friends would visit him including the woman who loved him and wouldn't let him go. Transferring to the Franciscan order in 1221, he took upon himself the name of Anthony and was sent to preach to the moors. But he had to return because of a profound illness.

### **Life as a Franciscan**

Known as a great preacher, St. Anthony was one of the first Franciscans to not just be a monk but a priest. After a terrible shipwreck which sent St. Anthony and a companion to Padua instead of their original destination wherein he discovered that most of the fathers and men had been taken to debtor's prisons, leaving women and children at the mercy of a band of hooligans.

St. Anthony and his brothers worked for years to pay off the debts of the fathers of families and bring families back to wholeness. In the end, he converted the man who had put all these families in such a dire situation by his unfair use of interest on money borrowed.

### **St. Anthony of Padua's Written Works**

*Sermons on the Feasts, Sunday Sermons, Sermons in Praise of the Blessed Virgin Mary, The Work of the Gospels of the Year's*

*Cycle, Sermons Against the Cathari, Oh Gloriosa Domina - a Hymn to the Blessed Virgin Mary* - A book was written about St. Anthony of Padua entitled *Dialogue Legend* which presents 46 miracles purported to have been performed through St. Anthony.

# St. Albert the Great

The Universal Doctor (Albertus Magnus) 1206 - 1280

The thirty three 'Doctors of the Church' are considered teachers with authority almost alongside the twelve apostles of Jesus.

The Universal Doctor, St. Albert the Great, was a profoundly intelligent man who wrote about every possible field of science. Because of this, he is also the Patron Saint of Scientists. It was his profound ability to utilize the sciences which he so loved and blend it with the teachings of the church which granted him his charism as 'Universal.'

## **Son of a Count**

Born in the family castle at Lauingen, Swabia, Germany, he was oldest child Count o Bollstadt. Entering into the University of Padua, he became a Dominican against the family's wishes. Becoming a teaching for many years, he had a reputation for his brilliance.

## **Regent of the Studia Generalia**

Named as head of the university in Paris in Cologne, he taught the great Thomas Aquinas. They became close friends until St. Thomas Aquinas died in 1274. He had a profound knowledge of the sciences of the time: logic, metaphysics, math, the Bible and Theology. He is crediting for creating what is now called "The Scholastic Method."

## **St. Albert the Great Accused of Magic**

Because of his great learning, people in his own time often accused him of participating in some kind of magical practice, but he never let this deter him from his vocation.

## **Personal Theologian to the Pope**

St. Albert the Great devoted himself to studying and was responsible for creating a new formation program for the Dominican order. Made a Bishop in 1260, he resigned two years later to teach again.

He died in 1280 from an illness and was Declared a Doctor of the Church by Pope Pius XI in 1931, being considered one of the greatest minds in the medieval church.

## **St. Albert the Great's Written Works**

St. Albert was a prolific writer on botany, mineralogy, astronomy, physics, chemistry, anthropology, cosmography and many other subjects in the field of the sciences. *Summa Theologiae*, *The Heavens and the Earth*, *Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke*, *Prayers for Each Sunday of the Year*, *Sacrifice of the Mass*

# St. Bonaventure

The Seraphic Doctor 1221 - 1274

The thirty three 'Doctors of the Church' are considered safe guides to Catholics as their teachings have been poured over by the Magisterium of the church.

Seraphic means 'Angelic,' and St. Bonaventure received his charism as the Seraphic Doctor because he was a profound mystic and saw into the mysteries of the Catholic Faith in a way that a doctrinal theologian never could. He was known to tell his followers that an old woman could love God much more than a master in theology. It was his own mystical experience of God which gave him this understanding. And in his day, many disagreed with him, feeling that learning had more to do with love of God than the experience of God.

## **St. Bonaventure Born Giovanni di Fidanza**

Born in Bagnorea, Italy, legend says that it was St. Francis of Assisi who gave him the name of Bonaventure after curing him of a serious and life-threatening childhood disease. In 1238, he became a Franciscan and devoted himself to teaching theology and scripture in Paris.

## **Mendicant Orders of the Time Attacked by Seculars**

St. Bonaventure continued this great work until a secular movement interrupted and tried to remove the monks and priests from the universities. A certain William of Saint Armour wrote a book entitled *The Perils of the Last Times* which St. Bonaventure refuted in a work entitled

*Concerning the Poverty of Christ*. The pope had to intervene – Pope Alexander IV – and denounce William of Saint Armour to restore the position of the mendicant orders to their teaching roles.

### **St. Bonaventure was a Mystic**

Offered the position of Archbishop of York, he refused, but was later made into a cardinal bishop in Albano. But he spent much of his time seeking the mystical life and one of his best known works today *The Journey of the Soul to God* is still used to teach mystical theology at universities.

His death occurred in 1274 and he was declared a Doctor of the Church in 1588.

### **St. Bonaventure's Written Works**

*Life of St. Francis, Commentary on the Sentences, The Art of Preaching by the Seraphic Doctor, St. Bonaventure, in which the keys of the Scriptures are given for the task of making sermons, Holiness of Life, De Perfectione Vitae ad Sorores, The Triple Way, Breviloquium, Soliloquium, The Journey of the Soul to God, Concerning the Six Wings of the Seraph, Perfection of Life for Sisters, The Wood of Life, Virtues of a Religious Superior, Three Principal Questions, Memorabilia, De Modo Vivendi, Itinerarium, Discourses on the Hexaemeron*

# St. Thomas Aquinas

The Angelic Doctor 1225 - 1274

The only 'Doctor of the Church' to bear the title of 'Doctor Angelicus,' St. Thomas Aquinas is considered to be one of the highest authorities on Catholic Theology.

Although St. Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* and *Summa Contra Gentiles* are considered even today to be among the most important works of theology of all time, it was St. Thomas Aquinas who said of them only one month before his own death that he had undergone an experience of God wherein he realized that everything he had written was as straw in comparison to the true majesty of God. He became the angelic doctor because of his unique understanding of literally hundreds of areas of theology but also because at that moment he gave up writing altogether until the day he died.

## **St. Thomas Aquinas, Relative of the Emperor and King of France**

Born in a castle, the son of a count, St. Thomas Aquinas was born in power, prestige and privilege. When he was five years old, he was sent to receive his education at Monte Cassino Monastery as an oblate. It was at the University of Naples where he completed his education and joined the Dominicans in 1244. His family was very unhappy with his decision to become a religious.

## **The Family's Attempt to get St. Thomas Aquinas Back**

In one of a series of efforts to get St. Thomas Aquinas out of the monastery, they sent a very beautiful young woman to him bringing food hoping to distract him from his vow of chastity. As the tale is told, St. Thomas would not even look at her and could not be distracted from the scriptures which held his eyes, but he did accept the food. It was known in his time that one of St. Thomas Aquinas's weaknesses was actually a gluttonous desire for food.

## **St. Thomas Aquinas's Relevance Today**

St. Thomas Aquinas taught theology, but what is remembered most about his life is the great work of the *Summa Theologica* and the *Summa Contra Gentiles* which are still considered the basis of most modern Catholic Theology. They are brilliant works written in a manner which poses questions to the reader about the reality of the world around them and then gives both the opposing view and the reasons something must be believed. Then he takes all these things into consideration and derives a theological conclusion.

## **St. Thomas Aquinas the Mystic**

Experiencing visions, ecstasies and revelations, he often experienced profound phenomena like this during the celebration of the Holy Mass. He was known for humility and holiness.

## **St. Thomas of Aquinas's Written Works**

*Summa Theologiae, Summa Contra Gentiles, Commentary on the Canticle of Canticles, Against the Errors of the Greeks, Compendium of Theology, Epistola de modo studendi, On Lots,*

*Exposition of the Hail Mary, Aeterni Patris, De coelo et mundo*  
- He wrote many hymns including *O Salutaris, Tantum*  
*Ergo, Verbum Supernum, Pange Lingua, Sacris Solemniis,*  
*Lauda Sion, Adoro Te*

# St. Catherine of Siena

The Seraphic Virgin 1347 - 1380

St. Catherine of Siena was one of the first women to be named a doctor of the church, and in her day she commanded the respect of the church and the papacy itself.

St. Catherine of Siena was given many titles; The Seraphic Virgin, Mystic of the Incarnate Word and Mystic of the Mystical Body of Christ. You only have to read her primary work, *The Dialogues of St. Catherine of Siena*, to understand the reasons for such honors. St. Catherine of Siena lived the life of a hermit from a young age and experienced a profound mystical life wherein the mysteries of God's Salvation were laid out to her in the Dialogues. She was so powerful in her visions and the knowledge contained within them that she was given a place among men in a world that had never done that before. It was Catherine of Siena who ordered the true Pope to return to Rome during the reign of a false Pope who had unlawfully taken his place. And he did.

## **St. Catherine of Siena was One of Twenty Five Children**

As the youngest daughter of twenty five children born to a family in Siena, Italy, she began having mystical experiences from the time she was about six years old, visions which would continue for the rest of her life. Her parents were opposed to her desire to become a nun and tried to force her to marry, but she refused.

## **Dominican Tertiary**

At the age of sixteen, she became a Dominican Tertiary, which is a third order level of the nuns who remain in the secular world. She ministered to the ill and was especially interested in helping those leprosy or other illnesses that others were afraid to go near. She was accused of many things in her short life including that she was faking her visions of Jesus, Mary, the saints and her spiritual warfare with diabolical spirits. But she was exonerated. When the town was stricken with plague, she took care of many people but was best known for her assistance to those who were spiritually troubled and for making peace between those who were at odds.

## **The Dialogues of St. Catherine of Siena**

One of the greatest Catholic books was written by St. Catherine of Siena. *The Dialogues of St. Catherine of Siena* was dictated to Catherine by the Father Himself, and written down by a scribe who would listen to every word she uttered in ecstasy. One has only to read a few words of this remarkable work to understand the importance and obvious inspiration from which it came.

## **Bringing the True Pope Back to Rome**

St. Catherine was so well-respected among the church as she progressed in her mystical insights, that she had an audience with many important people including the pope who had left Rome. Living during the time when an anti-pope was reigning, she urged the true pope to return and he followed her advice and deposed the anti-pope immediately.

St. Catherine of Siena became a Doctor of the Church in 1970 by Pope Paul VI.

**St. Catherine of Siena's Written Works**

*The Dialogues of St. Catherine of Siena, The Book on Divine Providence, Discretion, Prayer and Obedience, Many Letters*

# St. Teresa of Avila

Doctor of Prayer 1515 - 1582

The first woman to be named to the illustrious list of thirty three 'Doctors of the Church,' St. Teresa of Avila's writings remain popular today.

St. Teresa of Avila along with St. John of the Cross are truly the founders of the Carmelite path of spirituality. It was in her writings that St. Teresa of Avila laid out what would become the foundational teaching of the Church on Prayer in many books, but most notably *The Interior Castle*. In her time, she founded many convents and reformed the Carmelite Sisters, insisting that they go back to many of their roots which had been lost.

## **A Life During the Spanish Inquisition**

Born in Castile, Spain, St. Teresa of Avila received her education from Augustinian Nuns. Because of her illnesses, which were to last throughout her whole life, she had to leave the monastery. But she became a Carmelite in Avila in 1536. She was known to hide her favorite books which were banned by the Spanish Inquisition in a hidden hole in the wall of her cell so she wouldn't have to give them up.,

## **St. Teresa of Avila was a Profound Mystic**

Experiencing visions from an early age, St. Teresa of Avila began to keep a journal of them in what would later become *The Life of Teresa of Jesus*. This book was sent before the Spanish Inquisition, but exonerated.

### **St. Teresa of Avila Reformer**

St. Teresa took great exception to the laxity of the Carmelite order and put it through rigorous reforms to bring back the true ascetic lifestyle of mortification, penance and spiritual works of mercy and called them the Discalced Carmelites. The Calced Carmelites were very upset about her changes and she was opposed by her spiritual director, Father Ruggeo, for many years before her changes were able to take effect.

Pope Gregory XIII was responsible for recognizing the Discalced Carmelite as a separate order and giving St. Teresa of Avila a chance to continue her work. She founded many new convents.

### **St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross**

Contemporaries of one another, St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross were known to disagree on many things regarding the spiritual life. Although they were friends, they had difficulties with each other now and then which was known in their time. Still, to this day, it is these two saints who are considered to be the greatest Carmelite writers of all time and among the top written works in Mystical Theology. Their books remain in print as if timeless.

St. Teresa of Avila became a Doctor of the Church in 1970 by Pope Paul the VI, the first woman to be named as a Doctor.

**St. Teresa of Avila's Written Works**

*The Interior Castle or the Mansions, The Way of Perfection, The Life of Teresa of Jesus, Relations, The Foundations, Constitutions, Exclamations of a Soul to God, Thoughts on the Canticle of Canticles, Manner of Visiting Convents of Discalced Carmelite Nuns, Verses*

# St. Peter Canisius

Doctor of the Catechism 1521 - 1597

The thirty three 'Doctors of the Church' were passionately involved in their faith to the degree that they often shed tears over hardened souls.

St. Peter Canisius was given the charism of Doctor of the Catechism because he founded so many schools. As a Jesuit, he was the first among the order to publish books, his first being a life of St. Cyril of Alexandria. He had a major role in opening the School of the Society of the Society of Jesus at Messina, he founded the Jesuit house of studies in Cologne, a Jesuit educational Institute in Germany and the First Jesuit University at Dillingen.

## **Born at Njmegen which is now a Part of Holland**

St. Peter Canisius is a hard man to track down. Despite his honor as a Doctor of the Church, he's often not included in work on the lives of saints. St. Peter Canisius was born in 1521 on the same day that the formal beginning of the Protestant Reformation began. Martin Luther, a Catholic Monk, had placed his 99 objections to the teachings of the church at the time and had been put under the ban of an Empire through an Edict of Worms. Ironically, St. Peter Canisius would become a huge figure later in life to the Counter Reformation Movement.

## **St. Peter Canisius's Childhood**

Little is known about his childhood except that his mother died when he was a young child. Her husband, St. Peter

Canisius's father, was left to care for three small children. Peter had two sisters, Wendelina and Philippa. His father, Jakob, did remarry and have eight more children with his second wife. Apparently, St. Peter Canisius's relationship to his stepmother was not very good. In his own words he stated she "could not have been less of a stepmother to him."

### **First German Jesuit**

St. Peter Canisius joined the Jesuit order and not long into his career became the Jesuit Provincial of the Jesuits in Southern Germany. He was the first German Jesuit, the first Jesuit to publish a book, first prefect of studies at the first Jesuit University and he founded the first Jesuit German University. He was a very busy man.

Education was definitely the cornerstone of St. Peter Canisius's life.

St. Peter Canisius was made a Doctor of the Church in 1925 by Pope Pius XI.

### **St. Peter Canisius's Written Works**

*Summa of Christian Doctrine, Beati Petri Canisii Societatis Jesu Epistulae et Acta (The Acts and Letters of Blessed Peter Canisius of the Society of Jesus - 8 Volumes) 2420 Letters, Testament and Confessions, Acts, The Life of St. Fridolin, The Life of St. Beatus, The Life of St. Meinrad, The Life of St. Nicholas, The Life of St. Flue, Opus Marianum or Five Books on the Incomparable Virgin Mary and Most Holy Mother of God, A Catechism, Manual for Catholics, Testament, The Centuries of Magdeburg*

# St. Robert Bellarmine

Prince of Apologists 1542 – 1621

The ‘Doctors of the Church’ assist the Catholic Magisterium in explaining the meanings of scripture and other traditions in the church.

Also known as the Gentle Doctor of *The Controversies*, St. Robert Bellarmine became a Prince of Apologists despite his own distaste for controversy and argument. His text, *The Controversies*, became a matter of great intrigue in his day. Owning a copy of the book became punishable by death under the reign of Elizabeth I in England, although it is well known that the book sold many, many copies anyway. St. Robert Bellarmine was credited with a gift of explaining the truths of the faith, including those involving the most controversy, with an ease and simplicity that made sense to the people.

## **St. Robert Bellarmine, An Italian Jesuit**

Born in Montepulciano, Tuscany, Italy, St. Robert Bellarmine became a Jesuit father despite the fervent protests of his father. Studying at Florence and Mondovi in 1560 and continuing his education at Padua and Louvain, his ordination occurred in 1570.

## **St. Robert Bellarmine, First Jesuit Professor at Louvain**

When he received his posting as the first Jesuit Professor at the University of Louvain, he immediately began touching from St. Thomas Aquinas’s *Summa Theologica*. People at the time knew him as a great preacher, scripture scholar,

knowledgeable on the Early Church Fathers and he learned to read in Hebrew.

### **Clementine Vulgate**

St. Robert Bellarmine was a lucrative writer but among his greatest works was his contribution to the *Clementine Vulgate* which he led. Writing two Catechisms for the Catholic Church under Pope Clement VIII, he became the Pope's Theologian and was assigned position as the provincial of the Naples area Jesuits.

### **Controversy**

St. Robert Bellarmine incited the wrath of kings when he wrote *De Potestate Papae* which protested the idea of the divine right of kings. He was also a champion of the church during the Protestant Reformation writing many works and preaching many sermons in defense of the Papacy.

He was declared a Doctor of the Church in 1931.

### **St. Robert Bellarmine's Written Works**

*The Controversies, The Ascent of the Mind to God by the Ladder of Created Things, The Eternal Happiness of the Saints, The Mourning of the Dove or the Value of Tears, The Art of Dying Well, My Lady Tribulation, Commentary on the Summa Theologiae of St. Thomas Aquinas, The Autobiography of St. Robert Bellarmine, On the Transitoriness of Life and the Fleeting Passage of Time, De Potestate Papae, Clementine Vulgate*

# St. John of the Cross

Doctor of Mystical Theology 1542 - 1591

St. John of the Cross is not only one of the illustrious thirty three 'Doctors of the Church,' but remains the Father of Mystical Theology.

St. John of the Cross is only the Doctor of Mystical Theology but truly the foundation of Catholic Mystical Theology. His whole life was spent in prayer and solitude learning of the defects of the soul and their remedies. His works remain popular today and have become foundational reading for anybody pursuing the path of prayer or a spiritual path. His intensity was only overshadowed by his gentility, except in the certain cases involving priests under his directorship who sometimes claimed that his judgments could be quite severe.

## **St. John of the Cross, Son of the Spanish Inquisition**

Born in Old Castile, Spain, St. John of the Cross's father was a silk weaver. Going to Catechism Classes at Medina del Camp, the family settled there shortly after his father died not long after St. John of the Cross's birth. At the age of seventeen, he began his work in a hospital while studying under the Jesuits. But he joined the Carmelites in 1563 and it was that he took his name - St. John of the Cross, which in Spanish is Juan de Santo Matia.

## **St. John of the Cross Ordained in 1567**

St. John of the Cross met St. Teresa of Avila inadvertently while he was on his way home to visit his family. At the

time, he wanted to leave the Carmelites and join another order where he could engage in deeper contemplation and study but she convinced him to remain in the Carmelite order. St. John of the Cross helped to found the first male Carmelite houses.

### **St. John of the Cross Spends Time in Prison**

As a member of the reform movement of St. Teresa of Avila to bring austerity, penance and asceticism back to the Carmelites, St. John of the Cross was arrested by the Calced Carmelites (He was part of founding the Discalced Carmelite with St. Teresa of Avila.) and put in prison for two years between 1577 and 1579. He was subjected to tortures and great sufferings in prison and had to escape, but it was during this time that a great deal of the contemplation which led to his still widely read books on Mystical Theology being written.

### **The Frigid Battle between Calced and Discalced Carmelites**

Because of his stance, St. John of the Cross was stripped of all of his offices and sent into a sort of exile in a monastery as a simple monk for nine years. They tried to remove him from the order entirely but he contracted a fever before the issues could be resolved and died December 14, 1591. Ironically, St. John of the Cross would've been surprised to realize how much his work would affect the Universal Catholic Church in future generations and the longevity of his efforts.

He was declared a Doctor of the Church by Pope Pius XI in 1926.

**St. John of the Cross's Written Works**

*The Ascent of Mount Carmel, The Dark Night of the Soul, The Spiritual Canticle, The Living Flame of Love, The Precautions, Counsels to a Religious on How to Reach Perfection, Sayings of Light and Love, Maxims and Counsels, Censure and Opinion on the Spirit and the Attitude in Prayer of a Discalced Carmelite Nun, Innumerable Letters, Innumerable Poetry*

# St. Lawrence of Brindisi

The Apostolic Doctor 1559 - 1619

One of the jobs of the 'Doctors of the Church' is to explain to the faithful the place of Jesus and of Mary, His Mother, in Catholic Doctrine.

St. Lawrence of Brindisi held many roles in his life from missionary to diplomat. He was described as a fiery orator and he was known to have performed at least one exorcism which proved completely successful. Miracles followed him wherever he would go, and this along with his uncanny ability to preach the word caused him to be an effective teacher of the faith, thus earning him the title of Apostolic Doctor.

## **St. Lawrence of Brindisi Born as Caesare de Rossi**

Born in Naples as Caesare de Rossi, St. Lawrence of Brindisi was given what was considered at the time to be a Conventional Franciscan education. He had an uncle who also helped in his education. At sixteen, he joined the Capuchin Order of the Franciscans and then accepted his new name of Lawrence.

## **St. Lawrence was a Man of Great Learning**

He began his preaching career in Northern Italy and quickly developed a reputation for being a powerful and effective homilist. Becoming Definitor General of the Capuchins in Rome, he was sent to combat Lutheranism in Germany. But he founded many friaries, as well, in

Prague, Vienna, Gorizia, Bohemia, Austria, Madrid and Styria.

### **The Warrior Side of St. Lawrence of Brindisi**

It might seem a little odd that a Capuchin Franciscan would aid in raising an army, but St. Lawrence of Brindisi did just that. When the Turks threatened to invade all of Hungary, he gathered all the men and actually led into the battle. The victory was attributed by many to him.

He spent many of his later years as a peacemaker in his new role as Vicar General of the Capuchin Franciscans and Papal Nuncio. One of the many victories attributed to him included convincing French King Philip III to join the Catholic League and avoid another war. He prevented more than one. He averted an uprising in Spain due to his intervention with the Spanish Duke and Envoy.

St. Lawrence was proclaimed a Doctor of the Church in 1959 by Pope John XIII.

### **St. Lawrence of Brindisi's Written Works**

*Opera Omnia (Complete Works Consisting of Eighty Five Letters and St. Lawrence's Collected Sermons), The Hypotyposis of Martin Luther, The Hypotyposis of Lutheranism, The Hypotyposis of Polycarp Laiser, Lutheranismi Hypotyposis, Mariale (Consisting of 84 Sermons)*

# St. Francis de Sales

The Gentleman Doctor 1567 - 1622

One of the most recognized of the thirty three 'Doctors of the Church,' St. Francis de Sales has left behind a body of work that is unparalleled.

Called the Gentleman Doctor because of his meekness, kindness and scholarly qualities, he was also given the title of Patron of the Catholic Press and Everyman's Spiritual Director. St. Francis de Sales work *An Introduction to the Devout Life* is truly a Spiritual Director in a book, and his writings still remain today as some of the most powerful writings on the spiritual life in the Catholic Church.

## **St. Francis de Sales, the Intellectual Jesuit**

Born in a castle at Thornes, Savoy, St. Francis de Sales received his studies from the Jesuits from an early age. But he continued his education into both law and theology at the University of Padua and had a doctorate degree at the age of twenty four.

## **An Introduction to the Devout Life**

St. Francis de Sales is best known for his work *An Introduction to the Devout Life* which is a brilliant and profound treatise on the spiritual life and the process of conversion of heart. Still in print and wide use today, St. Francis de Sales will always be remembered for his profound writing skills and ability to help convert souls through those words.

## **St. Jane Francis Chantal, A Scandal Resolved**

St. Francis de Sales developed a special friendship with a laywoman by the name of St. Jane Francis Chantal. They were so close, that despite the fact that she had a husband and children, she followed him wherever he was sent and served him there. St. Francis de Sales was accused of having an inappropriate relationship with her and went through a tribunal process, but was exonerated. Apparently, despite the controversial nature of her leaving her own family to assist him in his work, they retained a pure friendship. Ironically, Jane Francis Chantal became a saint in her own right and is now known as St. Jane Francis Chantal.

The relationship between the two has been compared with that of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Clare, and others like it that have occurred throughout the many years of the church.

St. Francis de Sales was named a Doctor of the Church in 1877.

## **St. Francis de Sales's Written Works**

*Introduction to the Devout Life, A Treatise on the Love of God in Two Volumes, Meditations and Controversies, The Defense of the Standard of the True Cross of Our Saviour, Jesus Christ, Many Letters (Especially to St. Jane Francis Chantal)*

# St. Alphonsus Liguori

Prince of Moralists 1696 - 1787

The Founder of the Redemptorist Fathers, St. Alphonsus Liguori became one of the thirty three 'Doctors of the Church' because of his profound ascetical writings.

The works of St. Alphonsus Liguori take a soul to such a high level of self-scrutiny that no one else could bear the title of Prince of Moralists so well as he. Not unlike St. Francis de Sales, his body of work seems to be of divine origin and carried within it such a highly developed understanding of the purification of individual souls that he was also known as the Most Zealous Doctor and the Patron of Confessors and Moral Theologians. There wasn't a subject he was afraid to tackle and in his work *Preparation for Death* he spares no sensitivities in preparing the reader for the reality of death and the true insignificance of each of us. St. Alphonsus Liguori teaches humility like no other.

## St. Alphonsus Liguori's Early Beginnings

Born in Naples, Italy, St. Alphonsus Liguori was the son of a captain of the royal galleys. He attended the University of Naples where he received a doctorate in both canon and civil law and practiced law for eight years. After losing a case that meant a lot to him, he decided to become a priest.

## Ordained in 1726

Ordained as a priest in 1726, St. Alphonsus Liguori quickly became a profoundly prolific writer. *The Complete Ascetical*

*Works of St. Alphonsus Liguori* consists of twenty two volumes on every Catholic subject, but most notably - moral theology.

### **The Redemptorists**

Coming from the vision of a nun, Sister Mary Celeste, St. Alphonsus Liguori was given the task to decide whether or not to found a new religious order known as the Redemptorenes. He agreed with the sister's vision and they were founded in 1731.

So convinced of her vision and moved by her testimony, St. Alphonsus Liguori went on in 1732 to organize the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer which was the birth date of the Redemptorist Fathers. They devoted themselves to evangelization, missions work and hospice. For the latter, they utilized the order of the nuns to help with the execution of their mission. They went on to expand and their rule was approved by Pope Benedict XIV in 1749.

St. Alphonsus Liguori was declared a Doctor of the Church by Pope Pius IX in 1871.

### **St. Alphonsus Liguori's Written Works**

*Preparation for Death, Way of Salvation and Perfection, Great Means of Salvation and Perfection, The Incarnation, Birth and Infancy of Jesus Christ, The Passion and the Death of Jesus Christ, The Holy Eucharist, Glories of Mary, Victories of the Martyrs, The True Spouse of Jesus Christ, Dignity and Duties of the Priest, The Holy Mass, The Divine Office, Preaching, Sermons for Sundays, Miscellaneous Ascetical Works, Huge Volumes of Letters*

# St. Therese of Lisieux

Doctor of the Little Way of Spiritual Childhood 1873 - 1897

When St. Therese of Lisieux became a 'Doctor of the Church' under the pontificate of Pope John Paul II, it represented a practical theology for the faithful.

Some were surprised when Pope John Paul II declared St. Therese of Lisieux a Doctor of the Church. Ironically, it was primarily because of her charism as Doctor of the Little Way of Spiritual Childhood that it took many Catholics by surprise. Although St. Therese of Lisieux's works have always been very popular among the faithful, St. Therese is a different kind of Doctor for the Catholic Church. It is a way imbued with humility and simplicity, and her rise to the position of Doctor of the Church is a model to Catholics that following the Gospel does not require great scholarship or learning, but rather, profound love.

## **St. Therese's Unprecedented Following**

Born to two very devout Catholics in 1873, Louis Martin and Zélie Guérin, St. Therese was born with the name Marie Françoise Martin. Her father was a watchmaker by trade and both parents had entertained thoughts of being religious themselves but were unable due to health concerns. As could be expected, St. Therese's mother died from cancer when St. Therese was only four leaving her older sisters, all of whom also became nuns to care for her.

St. Therese of Lisieux lived a very short life, having died at the age of twenty four from tuberculosis, but retains a huge following in part because of her autobiography *The*

*Story of a Soul* but also her famous saying that she would do much greater work on earth once she was in heaven.

### **The Connection Between St. Therese of Lisieux and Mother Teresa of Calcutta**

A fascinating irony exists in between these two saints. St. Therese of Lisieux entered a Carmelite convent at the age of sixteen after pleading with the pope to allow her to enter early. She was initially refused, but granted entrance later. She took her name from the great Doctor of the Church, St. Teresa of Avila.

Because her wish in life was to be a missionary, being struck by illness at such a young age must have been a huge blow to St. Therese. But according to the sisters who lived with her, she bore her sufferings with great grace and was known to have visions of the Blessed Virgin Mary from time to time.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta took her name from St. Therese of Lisieux and in a way that only heaven could predict fulfilled St. Therese's desires of being a missionary in a way that she could possibly never have imagined.

St. Therese of Lisieux was made a Doctor of the Church by Pope John Paul II in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century because of the humble way to God described in her writings known as 'The Little Way.'

### **St. Therese of Lisieux's Written Works**

*The Story of a Soul, The Life of the Little Flower, The Living Sisters of the Little Flower, Our Sister is in Heaven, The Little Flower's mother, An Hour With the Little Flower, Last Conversations, The Little Way*

# St. Hildegard of Bingen

Doctor of the Living Light 1098 - 1179

When Hildegard of Bingen was declared a Doctor of the Church by Pope Benedict XVI in 2012, it represented a recognition of one of the most extraordinary women in the history of Christianity. A mystic, abbess, theologian, composer, and scientist, Hildegard's life and writings testify to the harmony between faith, reason, and the beauty of creation.

For centuries Hildegard's influence was recognized in monasteries and among scholars, but it was only in the modern era that the Church formally acknowledged the depth of her theological insight by proclaiming her a Doctor of the Church.

## **St. Hildegard's Visions and Spiritual Authority**

Born in 1098 in Bermersheim in the Rhineland of Germany, Hildegard was the tenth child of a noble family and was dedicated to the Church at a young age. She entered a Benedictine monastery where she would spend most of her life in prayer and study.

From early childhood Hildegard experienced mystical visions that she described as the "Living Light." For many years she kept these visions private, but later, under obedience to Church authorities, she began writing them down. These writings would become some of the most remarkable mystical works of the Middle Ages.

Her reputation grew so widely that popes, bishops, and even emperors sought her advice. Despite living in a time

when women rarely held positions of influence, Hildegard preached publicly and corresponded with leaders throughout Europe.

### **The Breadth of Hildegard's Genius**

What makes Hildegard unique among the Doctors of the Church is the extraordinary breadth of her work. She composed sacred music, wrote treatises on medicine and natural science, and produced theological works based on her mystical visions.

Her writings emphasize the beauty of creation as a reflection of God's glory and the importance of harmony between the human soul and the divine order. Hildegard's thought reveals a profound understanding of the relationship between spiritual health and physical well-being.

Her influence continues to grow in modern times as scholars rediscover her contributions to theology, music, and the natural sciences.

### **St. Hildegard of Bingen's Written Works**

*Scivias (Know the Ways), Liber Vitae Meritorum (Book of the Rewards of Life), Liber Divinorum Operum (Book of Divine Works), Physica, Causae et Curae, Symphonia Armoniae Celestium Revelationum*

# St. John of Ávila

Doctor of the Clergy 1499 - 1569

When John of Ávila was proclaimed a Doctor of the Church by Pope Benedict XVI in 2012, the Church recognized one of the greatest spiritual directors and reformers of the Spanish Golden Age.

Often called the “Apostle of Andalusia,” John of Ávila dedicated his life to preaching the Gospel and guiding priests and laypeople alike toward a deeper relationship with God.

## **A Great Preacher of the Spanish Church**

Born in 1499 in Almodóvar del Campo, Spain, John of Ávila came from a wealthy family but chose a life of simplicity and devotion. After studying theology and being ordained a priest, he devoted himself to missionary preaching throughout southern Spain.

His sermons attracted thousands, and his reputation as a spiritual guide grew rapidly. Many saints and religious reformers sought his counsel.

## **Spiritual Guide to Saints**

John of Ávila served as a spiritual advisor to several prominent figures of the Catholic Reformation. Among those influenced by his wisdom were:

- Teresa of Ávila
- John of the Cross

His writings focused particularly on the formation of priests and the renewal of the Church through holiness and education.

**St. John of Ávila's Written Works**

*Audi Filia (Listen, O Daughter), Spiritual Letters, Treatise on the Priesthood, Sermons and Spiritual Conferences*

# St. Gregory of Narek

Doctor of Prayer 951 – 1003

In 2015 Pope Francis declared Gregory of Narek a Doctor of the Church, making him the first Doctor from the Armenian Christian tradition.

Gregory's writings are considered among the most beautiful expressions of Christian prayer ever composed.

## **A Mystic of the Armenian Church**

Gregory was born around 951 in the Armenian kingdom of Vaspurakan. He entered the monastery of Narek, where he lived most of his life as a monk devoted to prayer, study, and writing.

Although he lived far from the centers of Western Christianity, his spiritual insight reflects the universal heart of Christian faith.

## **The Book of Lamentations**

Gregory's greatest work is a long mystical prayer known as the Book of Lamentations, sometimes called the "Book of Prayer." In it he speaks directly to God with profound humility and trust.

The text expresses the struggle of the human soul seeking forgiveness, mercy, and union with God. It remains one of the most beloved spiritual texts of the Armenian Church.

## **St. Gregory of Narek's Written Works**

*Book of Lamentations (Book of Prayer), Commentaries on the  
Song of Songs, Hymns and Odes, Panegyrics and Spiritual  
Writings*

# St. Irenaeus of Lyons

Doctor of Unity 130 - 202

In 2022 Pope Francis proclaimed Irenaeus of Lyons a Doctor of the Church, honoring one of the most important theologians of the early Christian era.

Irenaeus played a crucial role in defending the Christian faith during a time when many false teachings threatened the unity of the Church.

## **Defender of the Apostolic Faith**

Born around 130 in Asia Minor, Irenaeus was a disciple of Polycarp, who himself had known the Apostle John. Through this connection, Irenaeus served as a bridge between the apostolic age and the developing Church.

Eventually he became bishop of Lyons in Gaul, where he guided the Christian community during times of persecution.

## **Champion of Church Unity**

Irenaeus is best remembered for defending the faith against Gnostic teachings that distorted the Gospel. His theology emphasized the unity of Scripture, the goodness of creation, and the continuity of the Church's teaching through apostolic succession.

Because of his efforts to preserve unity in the early Church, he is often called the "Doctor of Unity."

## **St. Irenaeus of Lyons' Written Works**

*Against Heresies, Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching,  
Various Letters and Fragments*

# St. John Henry Newman

Doctor of the Development of Christian Doctrine 1801 –  
1890

When John Henry Newman was proclaimed a Doctor of the Church by Pope Leo XIV on November 1, 2025, the Catholic Church recognized one of the most influential theologians of the modern era. Newman's profound reflections on conscience, faith, and the development of Christian doctrine helped shape modern Catholic theology and provided an intellectual bridge between the ancient Church and the modern world.

For many years Newman had been widely regarded by scholars and theologians as one of the greatest Christian thinkers of the nineteenth century. His elevation to Doctor of the Church formally acknowledged the enduring importance of his writings and spiritual insight.

## **Newman's Journey from Anglicanism to Catholicism**

Born in London in 1801, Newman was raised in the Church of England and became one of its most brilliant young clergymen. He studied at Oxford University and eventually became a fellow of Oriel College. Newman was a leading figure in the Oxford Movement, a group of scholars who sought to renew the spiritual and sacramental life of Anglicanism by reconnecting it with the ancient traditions of the early Church.

Through his historical studies of Christianity, Newman gradually became convinced that the fullness of Christian doctrine had been preserved in the Catholic Church. After years of intense study and personal struggle, he was

received into the Catholic Church in 1845. His conversion was widely discussed and controversial at the time, but it marked the beginning of a new chapter in his spiritual and intellectual life.

### **A Defender of Faith and Reason**

Newman later founded the Oratory of St. Philip Neri in England and devoted himself to preaching, teaching, and writing. His works addressed some of the most pressing religious questions of the modern age, including the relationship between faith and reason, the role of conscience, and the development of Christian doctrine through history.

In 1879 he was made a cardinal by Pope Leo XIII in recognition of his service to the Church. Newman's writings continue to influence Catholic theology, education, and spiritual life throughout the world.

### **Newman's Enduring Legacy**

St. John Henry Newman's theology emphasized that authentic Christian doctrine grows and deepens over time while remaining faithful to the original teachings of the apostles. His famous reflections on conscience also highlighted the dignity of the human person and the importance of seeking truth with intellectual honesty and humility.

Today Newman is remembered as one of the greatest Christian intellectuals of modern history, a man whose search for truth ultimately led him into full communion with the Catholic Church.

### **St. John Henry Newman's Written Works**

*An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine, Apologia Pro Vita Sua, The Idea of a University, Grammar of Assent, Parochial and Plain Sermons, Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification*

# St. Isaac of Nineveh

Doctor of Ascetic Prayer c. 613 – c. 700

In November 2024, Pope Francis added his feast day (January 28) to the Roman Martyrology, recognizing him as a key saint in the Syro-Oriental tradition. St. Isaac of Nineveh is **not formally declared a "Doctor of the Church"** in the Roman Catholic tradition, but he is a universally revered saint, mystic, and theologian honored by Catholic, Orthodox, and Assyrian churches highlighting the profound spiritual wisdom of this great teacher of prayer and ascetic life.

Isaac's writings have long been cherished among Eastern Christians and have increasingly influenced Western spirituality as well.

## A Hermit Bishop

Isaac was born in the region of Qatar in the seventh century. After entering monastic life, he eventually became bishop of Nineveh in present-day Iraq. However, he resigned the position after only a short time in order to return to the solitude of the desert.

It was in this life of silence and prayer that Isaac composed his spiritual writings.

## Teacher of Compassion and Mercy

Isaac's writings emphasize the infinite mercy of God and the importance of humility, repentance, and contemplative prayer. He believed that the heart purified through prayer becomes capable of universal love for all creation.

His teachings on inner stillness and divine compassion have influenced Christian monasticism for centuries.

**St. Isaac of Nineveh's Written Works**

*Ascetical Homilies, Discourses on the Spiritual Life, Mystical Treatises on Prayer and Compassion*

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# The Doctors of the Catholic Church

An Overview

By Marilyn Hughes

*The Out-of-Body Travel Foundation!*

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*Understanding the 33 Doctors of the Catholic Church can require a lot of study. And even so, it is hard to get into the spirit of the teachings from the Doctors. Their lives are as varied as their accomplishments. To learn even a little bit about these unique souls who were chosen to experience and describe for the faithful the depth and interior meaning of the teachings of the Church has profound value. But it also shows the individual grandeur of these great figures in Church History. This book gives you an overview and insight into a subject otherwise only understood through lengthy study.*

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