A guide to picking confirmation saints

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Choosing a confirmation saint is a big decision — and can be an overwhelming one! It's easy to default to one of the handfuls of saints we've heard of or to resort to Google with no real sense of direction. But if you're looking for a confirmation saint (or just searching for a saint to walk with you in this phase of your life), there are plenty of questions you can ask to help guide you to a good spiritual companion. Whether you're searching for yourself or helping someone else find a saint friend, these questions can lead you to a saint whose witness really helps you to believe in God's never-ending love for you and your call to be a saint yourself.

What are my interests, hobbies and passions?

We often assume that saints are just monks and nuns who gaze upon the Blessed Sacrament with no interest in anything else, but saints are three-dimensional people with all kinds of skills and interests. If you're an athlete, you might check out saints who played sports; if a musician, there are tons of saints who played instruments. There are scientist saints and homeschooling saints and millennial saints who used the internet. Start first with the saints who love the things you love, then dig into their lives to see if there's even more of a connection.

What are the circumstances of my life that are significant to me?

Often, the saints who resonate with us most are saints who had similar experiences to ours: saints who came from blended families; saints who survived assault; saints who had unmarried parents. Some of these might be situations that bring us great joy, like being a working mother or an adoptive parent. Others might be enormous struggles, like living with mental illness or infertility or addiction. You might look for a saint with an intellectual or physical disability like yours or a saint whose life was as out-of-control as yours. Anything that's significant to you is significant to God, and there's usually a saint for that.

What work do I feel called to do for the Lord?

For adults, this might be a question of your vocation or career (a saint who was a medical professional or a small business owner). For those who haven't yet settled into a career path (including most confirmandi), it might be better not to choose based on your hoped-for career but instead on the kind of work you want to do: fighting racism, serving refugees, working in politics or fighting abuse in the Church. As always, this connection is a jumping off point, a way to find a saint who resonates with you on more than one level.

What are the sins that most plague me?

There is nobody for whom virtue is always easy. In searching for a confirmation saint or a new saint friend, be sure to consider not just the surface level of the saints' lives but their struggles, as well. Ask yourself, what are the sins you most struggle to resist? Maybe you struggle with anger but you recognize that your passion for justice is a good thing. You might look for saints who were driven by righteous anger and ask their intercession to purify your intentions. Or you might find saints who were mild and difficult to upset and try to imitate them. You might need the encouragement of a saint who was a terrible sinner or you might need a saint who had a hard time turning all the way to the Lord but lived for many years with halfhearted faith. Often, it's the brokenness of the saints that gives us most inspiration.

What spiritual struggles am I dealing with?

You might not be fighting against persistent serious sin, but perhaps there's a spiritual struggle that seems overwhelming. Emptiness in prayer can seem like a consuming reality, for example, and a certain sign that holiness is out of reach — until you discover how many saints endured years of dry, difficult prayer. Maybe you feel like a failure and wonder how you can keep following Jesus when nothing ever goes your way; well, there are saints for that, too. And while there are many courageous saints surrounding the throne of God, there were those who struggled with fear as well. Finding saints with these struggles can shore you up against the doubt and frustration that makes perseverance in the Christian life so challenging.

What stories intrigue me?

Are you looking for an adventure story? A tale of travel? Of intrigue? Saints who fought for justice? A saint who stood up for herself? Maybe you're hoping to find a shy saint or a saint

who found holiness in a very ordinary life. Sometimes, your best bet is just to dive into the stories and see who tugs at your heart.

There's no wrong choice

Plenty of people roll their eyes at the decisions their younger selves made: they chose St. Sebastian because they played basketball in middle school or they picked their favorite singer's name or they decided on a saint whose name would give them funny initials. And while there are some pretty silly reasons to pick a saint, the Holy Spirit can work even through that. Maybe you chose St. Cecilia because you like music, but she chose you because she's been praying for you your whole life. Maybe she's a model of gentleness for you or perseverance or evangelization or maybe she's just a wonderful intercessor. Whatever your reasoning, your confirmation saint is not an accident, which means choosing one doesn't have to be fraught with anxiety.

Besides, while your confirmation saint is your saint for life, he's not your only saint. You can add saints to your crew your whole life long, collecting saints who challenge and inspire you, saints who give you hope, and saints whose friendship feels like home. The saints go before us to call us into the heart of Jesus, and what a gift that we have so very many to choose from.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE SAINTS

In 2022, Google is the first stop for most of us. And it can certainly be effective, but the internet sometimes has far too much information — and also not enough. If you're not quite sure what you're looking for, it's hard to find much. And if you know exactly what you're looking for, you still might not find just the right string of search terms. Consider grabbing a book instead.

"Modern Saints" (TAN, $24.95) by Ann Ball (volumes 1 and 2) is an entertaining collection of stories that make the saints come alive. Read through the whole thing and you'll surely come out with a few new saint friends at the end. "Saintly Solutions to Life's Common Problems" (Sophia Institute Press, $21.95) by Joseph M. Esper and its sequel, on the other hand, is organized topically, with short anecdotes and quotations that might lead you to a saint you want to research more heavily. Ronda Chervin's "Avoiding Bitterness in Suffering" ($18.95, Sophia Institute Press) takes a similar approach, organizing saints by struggles and experiences of suffering.

For other full stories, you can dig into my books. "Pray for Us: 75 Saints Who Sinned, Suffered, and Struggled on Their Way to Holiness" (Ave Maria, $18.95) tells the stories of dozens of saints you've never heard of, plus you can check out the indices in the back to look up saints by region and era and topic. "Saints Around the World" (Emmaus Road Publishing, $22.95), an international storybook for children, also has indices to help guide you, or you can just flip through the pictures to see if anyone stands out to you. You'll be surprised who you stumble across when you pick up a book instead of scrolling the internet.