

G raced

E ncounters with

M ary Fabyan Windeatt's

S aints

344 Ways to Imitate the Holy
Habits of the Saints

Janet McKenzie

A RACE for Heaven Product

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Preface

This book is a compilation of all the “Growing in Holiness” sections of RACE for Heaven’s study guides for the Mary Fabyan Windeatt saint biography series. Several key practices are repeated throughout this book: the willingness to make sacrifices and do penance, cheerful dedication to our daily duty, frequent and intimate prayer, submission to God’s will, service to others, and virtuous living. Part of the beauty and wisdom of the Catholic Church lies in the diverse means and models she offers us to obtain holiness. While many saints excelled in a variety of holy habits, others are known for one particular practice or devotion that they performed to a heroic degree. When we study and imitate the saints, it is important to find the path to holiness that best suits each of us individually.

As you progress through your study of the holy habits of the saints, practice each of the models of holiness demonstrated by the twenty saints in Mary Fabyan Windeatt’s books. Try each of them on to see how they fit your own spiritual suit of armor. Then incorporate into your daily practice those aspects of the saints’ habits that seem most beneficial to your own spirituality and lifestyle.

Saint Francis de Sales, who lived over four hundred years ago, offered very practical advice to his spiritual directees—advice that is still applicable today. In his spiritual masterpiece, *Introduction to the Devout Life*, he states:

I say that devotion must be practiced in different ways by the nobleman and by the working man, by the servant and by the prince, by the widow, by the unmarried girl and by the married woman. But even this distinction is not sufficient; for the practice of

G.E.M.S.

devotion must be adapted to the strength, to the occupation and to the duties of each one in particular.

I believe it is this philosophy that lies behind Pope John Paul II's desire to elevate a multitude of people to saint status—people from a great variety of lifestyles and cultures. The 1341 beatifications and 482 canonizations of his 27-year pontificate provide a rich treasury of holy habits, practices, and dispositions from which we can draw.

Study the saints of the Catholic Church and formulate a plan for your own sanctity choosing from the many models that these saints provide for us. Remember, however, that holiness is not a matter of finding the correct combination of outward acts to perform. True devotion originates from a deep, pure love of God that permeates our hearts and infuses all our actions. As St. Therese of the Child Jesus states in Mary Fabyan Windeatt's biography,

Sanctity does not consist in the practice of certain exercises of piety but in a disposition of the heart which makes us humble and little in the arms of God, conscious of our weakness but confiding—unhesitatingly—in His Fatherly Goodness (page 157).

I pray that God will richly bless your efforts to imitate His holy saints and, more importantly, to turn your heart to His!

Janet McKenzie

24 January 2008

Feast of St. Francis de Sales

Note: Citations for the Book of Psalms are referenced to the New American translation with the Douay-Rheims translation following in parentheses.

Chapter 1

Benedict “longed for the quiet of the countryside” (page 3), seeing the “million bright stars”, hearing the wind in the grass and the calls of the birds (page 6). He wanted to see “beyond this world to the things of God.” (page 5) Take some time to be alone outside with God’s creation. Look at nature through the eyes of faith and observe all God has made. Regularly set aside time to be alone outdoors in quiet prayer and meditation.

Chapter 2

Benedict states, “I want to spend my life praying for people who don’t bother to pray for themselves.” (page 9) Begin today to pray one Our Father and one Hail Mary for all sinners, especially those who will die today.

Chapter 3

“Why should he seek for comforts when presented with a good chance to suffer for his own sins and those of men and women living in the world?” (page 20) Find at least three opportunities this week to choose sacrifice over comfort. Offer your sacrifices for someone you know who is in need of spiritual assistance.

Chapter 4

“‘It is here we try to serve God,’ the monks told Benedict.” (page 24) Benedict too was concerned about “serving God in prayer and sacrifice.” (page 28) Consider how you are serving God. Examine your commitment to increasing the virtues of humility and obedience. What could you do better? What should you do differently in order to serve God better? Offer God several small sacrifices each day.

Chapter 5

“We shall live together as monks, helping one another in prayer, in study, in work with our hands. In this way our

Saint Benedict

little family can discover what is meant by peace.” (pages 29-30) Take this quotation of Saint Benedict and apply it to your own family. Positively support each other to grow in holiness. Only in following God’s will can we find peace. God wants you to become a saint and expects you to help those around you become saints too!

Chapter 6

Benedict goes off at night to pray for his needs just as Jesus often did (page 41). Jesus states that we are not to stand on the street corner and pray but rather pray in our rooms in secret (Matthew 6:5-6). This week spend some time each day quietly praying in your room in imitation of Jesus and Saint Benedict.

Chapter 7

Remember the lesson of prompt and humble obedience. Apply it to your life. Also remember the value of praying for others. Placid was saved not only because of Maurus’ obedience but also because of Benedict’s prayers. Be generous in committing time each day to pray for the needs of others, especially those of your immediate family.

Chapter 8

“Turn away from evil and do good. Seek after peace and pursue it.” (page 59) Memorize this passage; then put it into practice. Try always to be a peacemaker. (Note: Saint Benedict’s motto is taken from Psalm 34 (33):15 if you wish to check. Perhaps there is a different verse from the Book of Psalms that you could adopt as your personal motto.)

Chapter 9

“Long ago the Abbot had taught them the value of never entering upon a piece of work without first asking God’s help.” (page 62) Each day before beginning your school-

work, a household chore, or other project (or before making any decision), take a moment to ask God to help you. Pray the Sign of the Cross over your work and ask God to bless your efforts. Remember to thank Him for His help when you are done!

Chapter 10

Benedict's monks relate that the devil tried to get Benedict's attention by calling his name; when this was unsuccessful, he tried other methods. Saint Benedict is a powerful intercessor against the devil. The Saint Benedict medal is one of the oldest and most highly honored medals of the Church. Because of the number of miracles attributed to it, it has become known as the "devil-chasing medal." These medals can be attached to a scapular or worn around the neck on a chain.

The front of the medal has Saint Benedict standing before an altar holding a cross with words in Latin that translate as, "Cross of our Father Benedict" and "May we be protected in our death by His presence." The back has the cross of Saint Benedict and numerous letters, which stand for the following: "Get thee behind me, Satan," "Persuade me not to vanity," "The cup you offer is evil," "Drink the poison yourself," "May the sacred cross be my light," and "Let not the devil be my guide." The older versions of the medal also have "That in all things God be glorified."

Memorize several of these ejaculations. Recite them when you are tempted to sin. Call on Saint Benedict to come to your aid in times of temptation.

Chapter 11

Remember the connection Benedict makes between humility and obedience, and pride and disobedience. The next time you are tempted to disobey, or complain about

Saint Benedict

obedience, or are sluggish in performing your obedience, say a prayer to your guardian angel or to Saint Benedict to help you overcome your pride and to submit to obedience. Observe this behavior in others, and pray silently for them when you see them struggle with these virtues too.

Chapter 12

The main lesson of this chapter relates to pride: Never be so proud of your standing, talents, or abilities that you feel any job is “beneath” you. Be quick to cheerfully complete all jobs asked of you and even volunteer to do the least desirable chores around the house. Two other lessons from this chapter remain. “It’s a real act of charity to keep a sick man company.” (page 82) Persevere in your daily prayer time, “Stay at [your] prayers and thus give honor to God.” (page 85) Strive to apply all three of these lessons to your daily life.

Chapter 13

The Rule of Benedict emphasizes that all guests be received as though they were Christ Himself, and no one in need must ever be turned away. Put this into practice by graciously welcoming all who come to your door. You may be like Abraham in Genesis 18:1-10 and entertain the Lord unawares! Perhaps you may entertain angels! (Hebrews 13:2)

Chapter 14

Brother Michael promises to “change my worldly ways and strive for perfection.” (page 100) Examine your daily habits, how you spend your time, your attitudes, and your actions. Change those that lean toward worldliness and away from the Kingdom of God. Strive to do everything for the glory of God!

Introduction

Remember to pray to Saint Thomas daily and ask for his help in your studies, especially your most difficult subject. You may also wish to ask him to help you as you read this book, so you may better understand his life and the lessons it can teach.

Chapter 1

Listen to a recording of Gregorian chant. If this is not possible, try to find a copy of the prayer book for the Liturgy of the Hours (Divine Office). Read some of the psalms that are read each day. Notice the various hours that the monks would gather to pray. Try to read a psalm every third hour throughout the day. Read Psalm 120 (119):164.

Chapter 2

Thomas talks about the students “paying a visit” to a church. Some time this week try to visit Jesus in the tabernacle at a church near you. Offer your prayers there for a holy soul in purgatory—perhaps the soul of someone who has recently died. If you are unable to go to church, send your guardian angel to keep Jesus company there for you.

Chapter 3

Thomas is knocked to the ground, his hands are tied, and he is placed on a horse; he is then taken against his will to his family’s castle—what he calls a “tiresome journey.” (page 26) Only when the castle is in view, does Thomas speak of anger—he speaks of how he can scarcely keep the anger out of his heart. The next time you are tempted to anger when mistreated by a brother, sister or friend, remember how poorly Thomas was treated, and yet how controlled his anger was. Ask for the grace to imitate Saint Thomas.

Chapter 4

Thomas knew the Bible very well and, in fact, had most of it memorized (page 34). Resolve to read the Bible for fifteen minutes each day. (Younger children may choose to use a story Bible with pictures.) Begin with the Book of Psalms and the New Testament. Memorize a psalm, or several passages from the Gospels.

Chapter 5

Although now considered one of the most learned men in Church history, Thomas did not feel worthy of a degree of Doctor of Theology. He viewed things with a heavenly perspective. Rather than comparing yourself to other people, compare yourself and your actions only to the perfection of God and the example He has set for us in Christ. (Note that the Bible translation used in the United States at the time of Ms. Windeatt's writing was the Douay-Rheims. The New American translation, printed in 1970, combines Psalms 9 and 10 of both the Latin Vulgate of Saint Jerome [which was the Bible translation in use during the lifetime of Saint Thomas] and the Douay-Rheims translation [first published in 1609]. This means that the chapter referred to in the Book of Psalms by Ms. Windeatt would not be the same chapter in a New American Bible. If using the New American Bible, add a chapter for any psalm after Psalm 9, which means that Psalm 103, as cited on page 51, is Psalm 104 in the New American Bible.)

Chapter 6

“There was no doubt that my friend could have produced some really beautiful prayers and hymns, if humility had not kept him from trying.” (page 59) Spend some time in prayer before a crucifix or before the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle. After asking for God's help, write your

Saint Thomas Aquinas

own prayer to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. If desired, write this prayer on decorated paper; frame it, and hang it in your bedroom or by your family prayer space. You may also wish to set this prayer to music, using a familiar hymn or a tune of your own creation.

Chapter 7

“I am waiting to be your friend.” (page 74) Remember that all the saints in heaven are our friends. They too struggled to be good while living on earth. Pray to them often to ask their help. Ask them to help you become a saint like them.

Make a cord with twenty knots on it. Use this cord to pray the Hail Mary twenty times each day in honor of the decades of the rosary. Wear this cord around your waist as Saint Thomas did (as did too the children of Fatima), or keep it by your bed to remind you to pray each night.