

Catholic Study Guides for Mary Fabyan Windeatt's

*Saint Thomas Aquinas,
The Story of "The Dumb Ox"*

*Patron Saint of First Communicants,
The Story of Blessed Imelda Lambertini*

*Saint Catherine of Siena,
The Story of the Girl Who Saw Saints in the Sky*

*The Miraculous Medal,
The Story of Our Lady's Appearances to
Saint Catherine Labouré*

RACE for Heaven's Grades 3-4 Study Guides

Janet P. McKenzie

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info@BiblioResource.com
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Spiritual Read Aloud

Spiritual Reading

In *My Daily Bread, A Summary of the Spiritual Life* by Father Anthony Paone, S.J., Christ tells us,

My Child, reading and reflecting are a great help to your spiritual life. My doctrine is explained in many books. . . . Some of these books are written simply, and some are very profound and learned. Choose those which will help you most toward a greater understanding and appreciation of My Truth. Do not read to impress others but rather to be impressed yourself. Read so that you may learn My way of thinking and of doing things.

In her book, *Saint Dominic, Preacher of the Rosary and Founder of the Dominican Order*, Mary Fabyan Windeatt quotes St. Dominic as saying, “A little good reading, much prayer and meditation . . . and God will do the rest.” Father Peter-Thomas Rohrbach, O.C.D., states that spiritual reading is the “third essential asset for mediation” (after detachment and recollection). The great value he places on the habit of spiritual reading is expressed in his book *Conversation with Christ, An Introduction to Mental Prayer*:

We live in a world devoid, in great part, of a Christian spirit, in an atmosphere and culture estranged from God. Living in such a non-theological environment makes it difficult for us to remain in contact with the person of Christ and the true purpose of life itself. We must, if we are to remain realistically attached to Christ, combat this atmosphere and surround ourselves with a new one. Constant spiritual reading fills our minds with Christ and His doctrine—it creates this new climate for us.

In former ages, spiritual reading was not as essential for one’s prayer life. People lived in a Christian world and culture which was reflected in their laws, customs, amusements, and their very outlook on life. This situation has radically altered in the last two hundred years, and men must now compensate for this deficit through other media, principally reading. And as the de-Christianization of our world continues, the necessity for spiritual reading simultaneously increases. We stand in need of something to bridge the gap between our pagan surroundings and our conversation with Christ—spiritual reading fills this need.

There is today in our country an alarming decline in general reading of all types. It has been estimated that in 1955 an astonishing forty-eight percent of the American adult population reads *no books at all*, and only eighteen percent read from one to four books. The decline in reading is naturally reflected in religious reading as well. And, while the lack of secular reading will occasion a decrease in culture life, the decline in religious reading

will have repercussions of a more serious nature—severe detriment to one's spiritual life. Any serious attempt to better one's life spiritually should, therefore, include the resolution to engage in more spiritual reading.

If we confine our reading to non-Catholic books, magazines and newspapers, we almost automatically exclude ourselves from full development in our prayer life. The maxims and philosophy of life expressed in these avenues of communication slowly begin to seep into our lives until eventually they occupy a ruling position. We will not have surrounded ourselves with a new climate; rather, the non-Catholic climate will have engulfed us (Chapter 19).

As this decry of the “de-Christianization of our world” was written in 1956, one can safely surmise that the necessity of cultivating the habit of spiritual reading can only have grown in the past several decades.

Spiritual Read Aloud

As supported above, spiritual reading is an essential element of every Christian's life. However, as demonstrated by the ancient practice within monasteries of spiritual read-aloud, this habit is a powerful tool for shared community growth in the spiritual life. For Catholic families, the practice of reading spiritual books aloud produces four desirable effects:

- I. It reinforces the habit of spiritual reading for each member of the family and allows each member to practice this habit regardless of age.
- II. It reinforces the habit of spiritual conversation if the reading results in even a general discussion of the values and virtues being portrayed in the story.
- III. It strengthens the family as the domestic Church where members exist to learn and live the Faith together for the support and enrichment of all family members.
- IV. It allows the discussion and demonstration of the practical application of the Faith for all age levels.

The Habit of Spiritual Reading

As outlined above, establishing the habit of daily spiritual reading is essential to our spiritual growth. Through read-aloud, children can be taught at an early age that daily spiritual reading is a fun, rewarding exercise. Do make this time together pleasant by allowing the children to do crafts, draw, play quietly with puzzles, toys, etc. As long as their attention is not divided and they can participate in a discussion of the reading afterwards, allow quiet activity. One cannot expect children to sit piously with hands clasped prayerfully throughout the read-aloud session! As the children get older, encourage them to read other spiritual books, including the Bible, during a quiet time of their own. Model this habit by allowing them to observe your habit of daily spiritual reading as well. Although the family read-aloud sessions may be as long as thirty minutes, private spiritual reading times may be considerably shorter depending on the habits and temperament of each child.

The Habit of Spiritual Conversation

This habit, for many families, may begin with spiritual read-aloud. When each member of the family participates in a spiritual discussion of a religious book, the practice of discussing matters of faith and Christ-like living begins to form. If the formation of holy habits and imitation of the saints is the goal, these discussions will become commonplace in the home as each member checks the others on their actions and words. As family members become more comfortable and open about spiritual matters, this practice will soon spread into other areas of their lives. Spiritual discussions with friends and other relatives will become more natural and in fact become important topics to be discussed. Sharing one's own spirituality and encouraging others to become more open about matters of faith will then become an integral pattern of living.

Strengthening the Domestic Church

As we read more about the saints and their lives and begin to share our faith more openly with others, we realize the importance of holy companionship—living with others who share our faith ideas and supporting each other in our attempts to become more like Christ. Families begin to grow together in their knowledge of the Catholic faith and become more willing to support each other throughout the ups and downs of community living. We begin to “bear one another's burdens with peace and harmony and unselfishness.” Just as Christ has His Church to help bring salvation to all, we—as family members—have each other to provide mutual support and encouragement in our efforts to enter the narrow gate. Within our families, we can create the Catholic culture that is missing from our world's culture.

The Practical Application of the Faith for All Age Levels

When lives of the saints are read aloud in the family setting, all aged children can participate in a discussion of the imitation of the saint's virtues and holy habits. Each member can help others understand how to apply the lessons the saints teach us on a practical level. All family members can help choose a particular habit or virtue upon which to focus. A reward system can be established for virtuous behavior. A family “plan of attack” on non-virtuous habits and attitudes can be developed, implemented, checked, and revised. All members can be encouraged and taught to imitate Christ by the imitation of His saints.

Summary

Regular family read-loud sessions that center around the lives of the saints will benefit the family with an increased interest in reading—especially saintly literature, a growth in vocabulary, and an improved sense of family unity. Additionally, family members will be encouraged to develop the habit of spiritual reading on their own, will become more comfortable and experienced with spiritual conversation, and be able to apply the Truths of the Catholic faith, on a practical level, to all aspects of their lives—no matter what their age. The customs, habits, and attitudes of the family will more and more reflect those of the Catholic culture. Perseverance in this simple daily ritual will help to “bridge the gap between our pagan surroundings and our conversation with Christ.”

When Mother Reads Aloud

When Mother reads aloud the past
Seems real as every day;
I hear the tramp of armies vast,
I see the spears and lances cast,
I join the thrilling fray;
Brave knights and ladies fair and proud
I meet when Mother reads aloud.

When Mother reads aloud, far lands
Seem very near and true;
I cross the desert's gleaming sands,
Or hunt the jungle's prowling bands,
Or sail the ocean blue;

Far heights, whose peaks the cold mists
shroud,
I scale, when Mother reads aloud.

When Mother reads aloud I long
For noble deeds to do—
To help the right, redress the wrong,
It seems so easy to be strong, so simple
to be true,
O, thick and fast the visions crowd
When Mother reads aloud.

—*Anonymous*

The Reading Mother

I had a mother who read to me
Sagas of pirates who scoured the sea,
Cutlasses clenched in their yellow teeth,
“Blackbirds” stowed in the hold beneath.

I had a mother who read me plays
Of ancient and gallant and golden days
Stories of Marmion and Ivanhoe,
Which every boy has a right to know.

I had a mother who read me tales
Of Gelert, the hound of the hills of
Wales,

True to his trust till his tragic death,
Faithfulness blest with his final breath.

I had a mother who read me things
That wholesome life to the boy-heart
brings—
Stories that stir with an upward touch,
O, that each mother of boys were such.

You may have tangible wealth untold,
Caskets of jewels and coffer of gold.
Richer than I you can never be—
I had a mother who read to me.
—*Strickland Gullilan*

How to Use These Study Guides

A Word about Grade Level Work

These four books—*Saint Thomas Aquinas*, *Patron Saint of First Communicants*, *Saint Catherine*, and *The Miraculous Medal*—have been selected for the Grades 3-4 series as these books are the shortest in length of any of the Windeatt saint biographies. However, the activities within each study guide are designed for varying grade levels. Some activities, therefore, will be too difficult for third and fourth grade students to complete on their own. Use discretion when proceeding through the various exercises. Utilize only those activities that are appropriate for each student.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary words are listed at the beginning of each lesson. Words on the left are secular words and are given within the sentence structure. Allow students to guess the meaning of the italicized word before looking it up. This helps them to surmise the meaning from context, a skill that enhances reading comprehension and strengthens vocabulary. Vocabulary words listed in the right-hand column are Catholic vocabulary words. Help students identify any suffixes, prefixes or root words that might give clues to the word's meaning. To help with definitions and proper usage, use a dictionary. For Catholic vocabulary words, use a Catholic encyclopedia, dictionary, or catechism.



Comprehension Questions/Narration Prompts

These questions are appropriate for all age levels. They can be used several ways, depending on a student's ability. For students with difficulty in reading comprehension, read and briefly discuss these questions before reading the chapter. Discuss, too, the sub-title provided under each chapter heading in the study guide. The student will then know what content to watch for within the reading. If read afterward, the questions become a *test of*, rather than an *aid to*, comprehension. For students with adequate comprehension skills, use the questions for oral review after the reading to insure that important content has been absorbed.

Use these questions too as prompts for narration, which is simply the oral retelling of the story in the student's own words. It is a helpful tool to determine the level of each student's comprehension. All ages may benefit from the practice of narration. If done within a mixed age group, begin with the youngest students and have the older students add details to the already-related story.

Answers to comprehension questions are provided in the answer key.



Forming Opinions/Drawing Conclusions

More than relating events, these questions require the student to develop an opinion, or to uncover or discover material not expressly stated in the text. They are designed to develop thinking skills and do not usually require the use of any outside resources. Use this section with children grades five and up as the basis for discussion or as a writing assignment.



For Further Study

Appropriate for upper elementary through high school grades, this section requires the use of additional reference materials. These activities invite students to look more deeply at the historical events and people that shaped the times of each character. Topics in this section may be used for honing research skills, or for oral presentations and/or written reports.



Growing in Holiness

These activities are different from the others in that they do not involve discussion or study as much as personal action and interior reflection. They can perhaps be considered “conversion activities” or “life lessons.” By applying the spiritual lessons of the story to everyday life, the student is encouraged to develop habits in imitation of the saints—which is an imitation of Christ Himself. Remember to reinforce these activities with the student and to comment when they are observed in action.



Geography

The map provided with this study guide serves to orient the students with respect to space—*where* the action of the story is taking place—as well as to acquaint them with common geographical landmarks. Permission is hereby granted to photocopy maps for family or classroom use.



Timeline Work

The creation of a timeline allows students to place the story's events within a wider historical framework. Simple directions for making a timeline are included in the study guide. Students will need plain paper, colored markers, and a ruler.



Checking the Catechism

For older students, these activities require a copy of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* or its *Compendium*. The references for the more concise *Compendium* appear in parentheses after the CCC citations. Older students can read aloud—and then discuss—the stated text paragraphs with an adult.

For younger students, use any grade-appropriate catechism to review the doctrines and terms as specified. An excellent activity book for multi-grades is Ignatius Press' *100 Activities Based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church* by Ellen Rossini. Discuss together how the specific topics from the catechism are illustrated in the thoughts and actions of the characters in the book.



Searching Scripture

Familiarize the student with the inspired Word of God by studying the biblical passages provided. Strengthen these exercises by occasionally requiring memorization of the verse(s). Stress that knowledge of Scripture is an important part of our faith education.

Note that Ms. Windeatt used the Douay-Rheims translation of the Bible, which was the translation in use in the United States until 1970 when it was replaced by the New American Bible in the *Lectionary of Mass*. The Douay-Rheims translation is taken from the Latin Vulgate, whereas the New American translation comes from the original languages of Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek (as the case may be for each specific book). For this reason, some of the books' names (as well as some of the Psalms' numbers) differ between these two translations. When these differences occur in the biblical citations within this study guide, the New American references are given first with the Douay-Rheims references following in parentheses. All biblical references used in this study guide are from the New American translation.



Test

The purpose of the test is to ensure that the student has comprehended the important events in each saint's life as well as the lessons the story intends to impart. An answer key is provided for these questions.

In addition to the test, many students will benefit from the completion of a book report. See RACE for Heaven's *Alternative Book Reports for Catholic Students* for additional information on book reports specifically geared toward saint biographies. Consider requiring each student to choose one of these reports or activities upon completion of the Windeatt biography.

Warning

These study guides are comprehensive. They contain activities for a variety of age levels and areas of study. Do **not** attempt to complete every activity for every lesson. Do only those exercises that are suitable for the needs of your current situation. Resist the impulse to be so thorough that the story line of the book is lost, and the read-aloud sessions become dreaded rather than anticipated. The activities are designed to enhance your reading—not to become the dictating tyrant of your read-aloud time together. If you are using these guides for young audiences, consider just using the comprehension and opinion questions as well as the “Growing in Holiness” section; use the maps as a geographical visual aid. Re-read the books to complete the more advanced activities in later years.

Another suggestion is to use the activities designed for older students in coordination with their history, geography, writing and/or religious curriculum. Each study guide could also be used as a complete unit study for hectic times when regular school may not be in session such as Advent, times of family stress (the birth of a new sibling, for example) or over the summer months. In reading the book and completing the activities, subjects such as religion, reading, writing, geography, and history can all be easily covered.

The most important rules to the successful use of these enrichment activities are

1. Be creative rather than obsessive.
2. Be flexible rather than overly structured.
3. Enjoy!

St. Thomas Aquinas

St. Thomas Aquinas was called the “Dumb Ox”
Though it appears he was smart as a fox.
The things he did think
Were really in sync
With thoughts that the Holy Spirit unlocks.

To Monte Cassino his father did send,
The Benedictines to Thomas he did recommend.
Tom learned quite a lot,
So much that they sought
To send him to college—Naples did attend.

Then Thomas met up with the friars in white.
When he tried to join them, his family did fight.
They sent him to prison
In tower arisen
Till dropped in a basket in mid of the night.

Then to the Dominicans he did profess
And in their white habit, he proudly did dress.
He kept up his learning—
Midnight oil burning—
Till doctorate standing he came to possess.

He read from the Bible, knew most of the Book,
Had crucifix hanging from 'most every nook.
Some hymns he did write
But then caught a sight,
A vision of heaven and how it did look.

The feast of the Body and Blood of our Lord,
We owe to Saint Thomas because he explored
The need to observe—
Indeed to reserve—
A day to commemorate He who's adored.

Think what you can learn from this saint and his tale.
How you can apply it to help you prevail.
Then mold what you do
And boldly pursue
His pattern of holiness. Follow his trail.

Introduction–In Which Thomas Tells Us of His Patronage

REVIEW Vocabulary

made me *Patron* of Catholic Schools *Dominican*
 special *charge* of each Catholic student *Pope*



Comprehension Questions/Narration Prompts

1. What did Thomas feel is the least important part of a person?
2. Refer to page 76 of the Windeatt biography to determine exactly what year Saint Thomas Aquinas was declared the Patron Saint of Catholic Schools as well as Patron Saint of all universities and colleges.



Forming Opinions/Drawing Conclusions

1. Thomas Aquinas was born in 1225; about how old was he when he died?
2. State why you believe Saint Thomas Aquinas was declared the Patron Saint of Catholic Schools. Refer to the Declaration of Pope Leo XIII on page 76 in the Windeatt biography for additional information.



For Further Study

1. In Pope Leo XIII's Declaration on page 76, he refers to Saint Thomas Aquinas as the "Angelic Doctor". Research "Doctor of the Church" in a Catholic dictionary. What is necessary to be proclaimed a Doctor of the Church? Why do you think Saint Thomas Aquinas was given this honor? (See page 60 for a complete list of the Doctors of the Catholic Church.)
2. Read more about patron saints on page 13 below.



Growing in Holiness

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 thoroughly understand his life and the lessons it can teach.



Checking the Catechism

As a patron and a saint, Thomas asks you to think of him as your friend. Older students may read text paragraphs 954-963 (194-195) in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) on "The Communion of the Church of Heaven and Earth". Younger students should review the communion of saints, honoring the saints, and the intercession of the saints in their own catechisms. If desired, complete Activity #80 in *100 Activities Based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church* (100 Activities).

Chapter 1–In Which Thomas Goes to School

Review Vocabulary

I answered *meekly*

Benedictine

put in Theodora *wistfully*

Abbot



Comprehension Questions/Narration Prompts

1. How old was Thomas when he was sent away to boarding school?
2. Under what religious order was the abbey of Monte Cassino? Who was the founder of this order? What was their most important work?



Forming Opinions/Drawing Conclusions

1. Discuss how Thomas must have felt as a six-year-old boy living away from home. Remember that he did not see his family again until five years later.
2. Explain which activities of the monks at the Benedictine monastery reflected the motto of its founder Saint Benedict: *Ora et labora* (Pray and work).



For Further Study

Research Frederick Barbarossa (Red Beard), who was also known as Frederick I, including his role in the Third Crusade. Frederick was the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire from 1152 to 1190. Thomas' father was his nephew.



Growing in Holiness

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.



Timeline Work

Taping sheets of plain paper end-to-end, make a timeline representing the years from 1119 through 1340. Let three inches equal 25 years. Mark on your timeline the dates and events from 1119 through 1231, using information from page 2.



Checking the Catechism

Older students may read text paragraph 2834 in the CCC on Christian prayer and the motto of Saint Benedict.

Patron Saints

The word "saint" comes from the Latin word *sanctus*, which translates as "consecrated" or "holy". Saints are men and women who have lived their lives (and very often gave them up freely) in such a way as to be rewarded with the Kingdom of God. The road to being officially recognized by the Church as a saint is a long one. In the earliest stage, the saint-in-the-making is identified as a "Servant of God". That stage is followed by the recognition of being "Venerable" and then "Blessed" before being recognized by the Church as a saint or "Friend of God". This official recognition by the Church as a saint comes at the conclusion of the process and ceremony called "canonization". These saints, living exemplary lives, provide for us examples to follow so that we may, in turn, follow them to heaven. Based on the course of their lives and the circumstances surrounding them, some of the saints serve as "patrons" of certain peoples, places, things, and occupations, as they intercede for us before God. "Feast Days" are recognized for each saint. These feast days are very often the day of the year in which they died, especially if they gave up their lives for their faith. These special saints who gave up their lives for their faith are called "martyrs".

Patron Saints may be personal or general. A patron saint is personal for the Christian whose name he or she bears. Hence Saint Gregory the Great is a patron saint for one whose name is Gregory. A patron saint may also be general for a group of people, e.g. Saint Jerome is the Patron of Librarians while Saint Anne is the Patroness of Canada. As such a saint may be a patron or a protector for those in particular professions or occupations, or may be invoked in times of special need.

"..The Saint chosen acts in the role of sponsor for the person [people] in the courts of heaven....our patron saint follows our earthly career with more than kindly interest. Do you know the life of your patron saint? You should, because he or she is your firm friend before the throne of God." –Richard Cardinal Cushing

By taking a Christian name, we not only honor the saints who have suffered and been glorified with Christ, but we also seek from the saints the example of their lives, fellowship in their communion, and aid by their intercession. A truly spiritual property is given to the Christian. His or her saint is not just a name, but also a pledge of a lifelong patron, a special intercessor or friend in heaven.



Book Summary Test for *Saint Thomas Aquinas*

Directions: Answer in complete sentences. If necessary, use the back of the page for additional writing space. 100 possible points, 20 points for each answer.

1. What religious order did St. Thomas Aquinas' family want him to join? What religious order did he join? What happened when his family found out?

2. Name at least two hymns and one theological work that were written by St. Thomas.

3. During what century did St. Thomas live? Name at least two other people named in this book who lived in this century.

4. Name at least two cities where St. Thomas lived. State why he moved to each place.

5. St. Thomas Aquinas has been called the "greatest theologian in the Church's history". He is also a Doctor of the Church—the "Angelic Doctor". What accomplishments helped Saint Thomas to merit these titles?
