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There Should Have Been a St. Webster

(A Glossary of Terms)

When it comes to generalized information, people are pretty familiar with the saints of Christian history. St. Francis? The guy with the birds. St. Anthony of Padua? The one you dial up when you lose your wallet. St. Florian? Patron saint of soap-boilers. Pretty basic stuff.

But when it comes to the specifics of sainthood—the nitty-gritty details of the saints' lives and teachings and devotional peculiarities—well, things can get confusing in a holy jiffy. What's the difference between a **Dominican** and a **Franciscan**? Is **beatification** a good thing? Isn't a **Carmelite** one of those crunchy little candy treats you mix into ice cream?

Good questions. Clearly, sainthood is a complicated subject, saturated with cryptic terms and churchy phrases and old-fashioned words that, let's face it, probably contain way more letters than are necessary to get the point across (**concupiscense**, the *Pocket Guide* is totally on to you). Sure, the guys wearing the vestments probably know what it all means, but what about the regular folks? What about the common, mass-attending, rosary-praying Catholics? For the love of Little Benedict the Bridge-Builder,¹ what about those poor, sad Protestants who don't know a **mendicant** from a **mystic**?

The *Pocket Guide* is here to help. To minimize confusion and maximize your reading pleasure, this book kicks off with a handy glossary of saint-related terms. These are the words and phrases you need to know to fully appreciate the pages to come. So button up those **hair shirts**, kids, and let's get pious!



ANCHORITE

A special kind of **hermit** who dedicated himself or herself (in which case she was called an *anchoress*) to a life of solitude, prayer, and **asceticism**. But instead of living in caves or the desert, anchorites preferred cozier confines: they walled themselves into a wee little room attached to a local church. Once the cell was ready, the anchorite would enter it in a somber ceremony—*somber* does seem like an accurate way to describe it—and the local bishop would then permanently brick up the door, sealing the man or woman inside. Afterwards, the anchorite's only exposure to the outside world would be through a small window for the passage of food and water.

The renowned fourteenth-century devotional writer, Julian of Norwich, was an anchoress. She was also quite pasty.

1. A twelfth-century French shepherd and saint of minor consequence, used here only because of the awesome nickname.

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE OR TWO: Known for their great spirituality and wisdom, anchorites often dispensed advice through their tiny windows. Because if there's anyone who ought to be telling you how to get along in the world, it's someone who has willingly reduced their world to a closet.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED
WITH: *Hermits*, otherwise known as free-range anchorites.

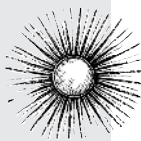


ASCETIC

A religious person who voluntarily gives up worldly pursuits out of spiritual motives. By the third and fourth centuries, a few countercultural Christians started thinking the whole following-Jesus thing had become too easy, especially in the cities, so they abandoned modern conveniences and started hanging out in the deserts of Egypt and Palestine. These **hermits** generally combined self-denial—in the form of sexual abstinence, fasting, and avoidance of any of life's comforts—with intense prayer and meditation on the Scriptures. It was spectacular! Out in the desert, they were no longer

FUN RELATED FACT

The *Ancren Riwele*, a thirteenth-century manual for anchoresses, lists eight reasons to retire from the world. These include everything from security issues ("If a raging lion were running along the street, would not a wise person shut herself in?")² to protecting one's virginity ("... this precious balsam in this brittle vessel is virginity . . . more brittle than any glass; which, if ye were in the world's crowd, ye might . . . lose entirely").³ It's quite convincing.



2. *The Ancren Riwele: A Treatise on the Rules and Duties of Monastic Life*, James Morton, B.D., trans. (Camden Society, London: 1853), p. 165.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 167.

tempted by societal evils like companionship or the lack of sand. Nope. It was just them and God. And scorpions. And, um, all the other hermits, because asceticism got really popular. Eventually, all the ascetics organized into clubs and monasticism was born.

See also: *Hermit*.

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE: When Chip stopped wearing his Bluetooth headset I thought he was becoming all ascetic and stuff,

but it turns out he just had an ear infection.

FUN RELATED FACT

The sixth-century ascetic St. Emilianus spent so much time kneeling in prayer that her calloused elbows and knees were said to have felt as hard as “the hide of a camel.”⁴



NOT TO BE CONFUSED

WITH: *Aesthetics*. Because you totally don’t want a third-century hermit lecturing you on the *feng shui* of your living-room furniture.



BEATIFICATION

The next-to-last step in the process of getting that coveted “St.” in front of your name. Beatification is something the pope does to officially recognize that a certain person (1) is dead, (2) has gotten into heaven, and (3) gets to participate in the intercession of saints—that is, the beatified dead person is allowed to use his or her heavenly clout to ask God for stuff on behalf of those of us who aren’t dead yet. Or holy enough. Or a combination thereof. (See **Communion of Saints**.)

According to **Canon Law**, beatification isn’t allowed until the saint-to-be is credited with at least one **miracle**, which means

4. Baring-Gould, Rev. S. *The Lives of the Saints* (London: John Hodges, 1877), p. 273.

someone praying in the person's name or visiting the person's grave or riding in a taxi with the person's bobblehead on the dash has to get healed or experience something that is spiritually significant and unexplainable. This condition doesn't apply, however, if the saint-to-be died a **martyr**. Martyrdom requires no miracle at all. On the road to canonization, martyrdom is the HOV lane.

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE OR TWO: Pope John Paul II was a beatification machine, giving that honor to 1,340 people during his reign. Which is one way to make sure your "Welcome to Heaven" party is well-attended.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: *Beatty-fication*, which is the process of adding a Beatty (preferably Warren, though Ned will do in a pinch) to one's motion picture in order to increase its box-office appeal. Though a popular term in the '80s and early '90s, Beatty-fication is hardly remembered, much less practiced, in today's cinema culture.



BENEDICTINE

A member of the religious order founded by St. Benedict of Nursia in the sixth century. Benedictines live according to the Rule of St. Benedict, a highly influential document detailing the ins and outs of monastic life. How influential was it? Until the eleventh century, almost all monks and nuns were Benedictines, until a few competing orders like the **Carmelites**, **Dominicans**, and **Franciscans** began to crop up. Life as a Benedictine was devoted to prayer, scholarship, and charity, and members were required to take vows of poverty, **chastity**, and obedience.

Until the late nineteenth century, Benedictine communities were independent of each other. Now they're organized into a confederation called the Order of Saint Benedict, and Benedictines identify

themselves by placing the initials O.S.B. after their names. They take great care not to transpose those letters, as it can have disastrous (yet hilarious) results.

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE: Kenny was fully prepared to take his Benedictine vow until he got to the part about living at St. Meinrad until death, and he wasn't sure he could do without World of Warcraft for that long.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: *Benediction*, a short blessing or prayer at the end of a church service. You might think the word is related to St. Benedict, but it's not. Both the word and the name come from the Latin words *bene* (well) and *dicere* (to speak). And, for the record, the decadent breakfast dish Eggs Benedict isn't named after the saint either. Its nomenclature comes from the last name of the person who first developed the recipe, probably in the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries.⁵



CANON LAW

The extensive legal system of the Roman Catholic Church, complete with courts, judges, lawyers, and dusty rooms full of thick, ancient books. It involves a lot of different categories of rules, which include (but aren't limited to) regulations pertaining to Church authorities, the rights and duties of Church members, and the step-by-step process of attaining sainthood. In the mid-thirteenth century, the Church realized its collection of laws was becoming unwieldy, so authorities set about the task of organizing them into a final

5. There are at least three different origin stories for Eggs Benedict, all involving different people with the last name of Benedict. And though interesting, they are essentially unrelated to the topic of sainthood, so you'll just have to look them up on your own.

document. This process was completed nearly six hundred years later, in 1917, with the publication of *Codex Juris Canonici* (“Code of Canon Law”). Apparently some deadlines were missed.

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE: When the professor began his lecture with the phrase, “In accordance with canon 361.5 of the Code of Canon Law . . .” at least four students plunged immediately into a catatonic state.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: *Jude Law*. While a recognized authority on certain matters involving movie stardom, Academy Award nominations, and relationships with beautiful women, Mr. Law carries very little clout, if any, within the Vatican’s judicial system.



CANONIZATION

The formal process by which a regular person with a pious résumé morphs into a full-fledged saint. The upside? You get added to the long list (or “canon”) of official saints, and you get special influence when it comes to bringing prayers to the throne of God. The downside? People won’t leave your gravesite alone.

The canonization process (detailed exhaustively in Chapter 5) culminates in a decision by the pope, who has the final authority to declare someone a saint. It should be noted, of course, that canonization doesn’t exactly *make* a person a saint. It only recognizes the fact that someone *was already* a saint. Which means there are some pre-canonization saints just walking around and going to church and shopping at Home Depot—and they don’t even know how special they are! It’s all very optimistic and up-with-people-ish. Except for the part about Home Depot.

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE: Ever the scrapbooker, Darla spent most of the last decade preparing a binder in bold anticipation of her own canonization, complete with church attendance records,

photographic demonstrations of heroic virtues, and blood samples from what she claimed was a case of **stigmata** but what was really a case of carelessness while slicing a bagel.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: *Ionization*, the process of changing a molecule into an ion by adding or subtracting electrons. Ionization is totally different from the sainthood thing because it actually *transforms* an atom into an ion rather than just lamely *recognizing* that it's already an ion. Or, you know, whatever.



CARMELITE

A member of the religious order founded in the twelfth century on Mount Carmel in Israel. Its founder may have been St. Bertold, a former Crusader who got disillusioned with crusading after he had a vision in which Jesus was less than delighted by all the forced conversions. But Bertold's connection to the order's founding is only traditional. When asked about their founder, early Carmelites would attribute the order's origins to Elijah or the Virgin Mary, which was *so* not very helpful. Even today, no one really knows where the Carmelites came from. Except Jesus, and apparently he has declined comment.

Officially, the Carmelite order is known as the Order of the Brothers of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Its monks and nuns are strongly devoted to Mary and focus on contemplative (and occasionally mystical) prayer. Back in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, there were a succession of reforms among Carmelite communities that involved a level of piety tied very closely to whether its nuns or monks could wear shoes. Calced Carmelites wore shoes. Discalced Carmelites went barefoot. The turf wars were brutal.⁶

6. For more about these reforms, read the biographical entries, in Chapter 3, on St. John of the Cross (p. 84) and St. Teresa of Ávila (p. 100).

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE: People grew less convinced about Jessica's desire to become a Carmelite nun when she revealed that the discalced Carmelites were her preference because she loved pedicures, and that kind of life required a *lot* of them.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: *Carmel-by-the-Sea*, a California community of writers, poets, and painters, where you'll find plenty of people walking around barefoot and having visions. But rarely is Jesus involved.



CHASTITY

Most commonly, the abstention from sex and the pursuit of purity for religious reasons, or as part of a religious vow. Chastity is one of the Seven Holy Virtues in Catholicism, along with temperance, charity, diligence, kindness, patience, and humility.

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE: In what was either an act of unbridled optimism or a sad commentary on her vocabulary skills, teenage mom Heather gave her newborn daughter—her third child since making that virginity pledge as a fourteen-year-old at youth camp—the name Chastity.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: *Chastity belt*, the intricate, locked medieval device intended to prevent medieval hanky-panky. It was discovered to be much more effective than simply *naming* a girl Chastity.

FUN RELATED FACT

In the seventh century, St. Bertilia married the love of her life. Then she and her groom took vows of chastity and remained virgins until they died. True love waits. And waits.





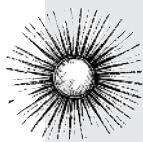
CISTERCIAN

A member of the religious order originally founded in 1098 by St. Robert of Molesme at Cîteaux Abbey⁷ in France. The Cistercians grew out of the Benedictine tradition but were based on a movement to return to the original monastic austerity of St. Benedict—as opposed to, say, the opulent worldliness of eleventh-century Benedictine abbeys, what with their wild manuscript-copying parties and decadent stained-glass-making. Cistercians tried to reproduce life as Benedict would have known it, so they became super **ascetic**, returned to an emphasis on manual labor in the form of farming and fieldwork, and added a strict observance of silence to the requirements for membership.

The Cistercian order spread wildly in the twelfth century due to the influence of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, which is why Cistercians were sometimes called Bernardines. These days, thanks to some seventeenth-century reforms related to the French abbey of La

FUN RELATED FACT

Due to all the farming, Cistercians were widely recognized as the go-to agriculturists, cattle breeders, and hydrological engineers of the Middle Ages.



Trappe, Cistercians are more popularly known by the nickname Trappists. So you can pretty much call them whatever you want, as long as it's not "**Benedictines.**"

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE: A lazy, talkative person would likely make a poor Cistercian.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: *Benedictines*. Pay attention.

7. The Latin name for Cîteaux is *Cistercium*.



COMMUNION OF SAINTS

The all-encompassing fellowship of believers in heaven (including **canonized** saints and plain-jane citizens of glory), on earth, and even in purgatory, bound together as a single body by the glue of the Holy Spirit.⁸ The phrase “communion of saints” is most famously included in the Apostle’s Creed, which is often recited in the liturgy or catechism of Christian churches.

Belief in the communion of saints led to the Catholic practice of offering prayers to saints—usually a patron saint—who might then intercede on one’s behalf before God. Because who is God more likely to listen to? One of his dead-but-purified saints living in a heavenly mansion and sporting a sweet golden halo? Or some living-but-sin-stained waitress shackled up in a trailer park and wearing sweatpants and a Black Crowes tee?

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE: I used to believe in the communion of saints until I asked St. Bona of Pisa to get me that flight attendant’s job, and she totally forgot to warn me about the psychological testing.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: *Communion* (1989), a UFO-abduction film starring Christopher Walken, in which the aliens are discovered to be friendly.⁹ But not so friendly as to help Walken out by asking God for stuff on his behalf.

8. The writer of Hebrews in the New Testament vividly describes this as a “great cloud of witnesses” (Hebrews 12:1, NIV).

9. Based on a book of the same name by Whitley Strieber, who swears the entire story was true, except for the part about it happening to Christopher Walken.



CONCUPISCENCE

In theology, the innate appetite of humans for things contrary to the will of God; the inclination toward sin and evil. It is often used with a sexual connotation, especially when someone wants to use a really long, impressive-sounding, four-syllable word instead of, for instance, just saying *lust*. Regardless, concupiscence was a good reason for saints to flagellate themselves in an act of **mortification**.

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE: Back in the day, Catholic theologians used to fight with reformers like Martin Luther about the true meaning of *concupiscence*, but it was sort of a dorky fight.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: *Concubine*, a secondary semi-wife in biblical times, often for the purpose of childbearing. Of course, someone with a natural “inclination toward sin and evil” may very well also have a natural “inclination toward having more than one cohabiting sexual partner.”



CONFESSOR

In the days of the early Church—when Christians could expect to be imprisoned, tortured, exiled, or otherwise humiliated for their faith—some believers went through the inconvenience of being persecuted but were never actually put to death. Martyrdom being the fast-track to **canonization**, this lesser form of suffering wasn’t always greeted with enthusiasm, so the Church created a category for these pitiable, persecuted-but-not-dead saints: confessors. You may also have heard them referred to as “white martyrs,” which totally sounds like the name of a skinhead metal band but probably isn’t.

The term *confessor* eventually broadened to include any faithful person who exhibited heroic virtue, with or without persecution. Which, if you ask the *Pocket Guide*, is sort of like receiving an

honorary doctorate for being famous and then making everyone call you “Doctor.” Dude, you’ve got to *earn* the title.

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE: After having his eyes gouged out and his tongue burned off, Milo stopped hoping he’d end up a confessor, because martyrdom had begun to look pretty good.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: *Confessor*, a priest who has been given the authority to hear confessions. Your confessor may have been mocked a time or two for his faith, or at least for his goofy collar, but he most likely is not a white martyr (unless he’s in the band).



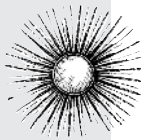
DOCTORS OF THE CHURCH

Roman Catholicism’s Dream Team, the roster of which is stacked with a select group of canonized saints, identified for having displayed excessive virtue, wisdom, and the ability to teach mankind a thing or two about God. Due to that description, you would think it was a pretty exclusive club with only three or four members. But it turns out you’re wrong; there are thirty-three of them, one Doctor of the Church for each year Jesus lived on Earth. Happy coincidence? Divine plan? It’s a mystery, but you can blame the last official Doctor, St. Thérèse of Lisieux, for the numerical convenience.

The list includes saintly heavyweights like Ambrose, Athanasius, Augustine, Basil the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Catherine of Siena, Jerome, John of the Cross, and Gregory the Great.

FUN RELATED FACT

The confessor (and shepherd!) St. Quadragesimus isn’t just known for his impossible-to-spell name. He’s remembered for having once raised a dead man to life by rubbing dust in his face.



PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE OR TWO: When Deacon Hitchens fell to the floor with an apparent heart attack, Father Daniel called out, “Are there any doctors of the church? Any doctors of the church?” Needless to say, we were quite surprised when St. John Chrysostom strode down the aisle and resuscitated the deacon with a technically perfect demonstration of rescue breathing and CPR.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: *Hectors of the Church*, a less exclusive and considerably less influential organization “for Catholics named Hector,” as stated by the group’s by-laws. Chartered by one Hector J. Camarillo of Scottsdale, Arizona, the club claims 396 members worldwide.



DOMINICAN

A member of the Dominican religious order, founded in the thirteenth century by St. Dominic to preach the Gospel and fight heresy. Dominicans were usually known for their towering intellect, their hard-core obedience, and the black cloaks they wore over their white habits. (This earned them the nickname “Blackfriars,” which was way more intimidating than their other nickname, “The Order of Preachers.”) The most famous Dominican was Thomas Aquinas.

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE OR TWO: Dominicans often identify themselves with an “O.P.” after their names. (O.P. is an abbreviation of “Order of Preachers.”) They’d rather go with a designation related to “Blackfriar,” but B.F. sounds too much like something a twelve-year-old girl would text message.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: *The Dominican Republic*, whose citizens are too caught up in being baseball prodigies to worry themselves about fighting heresy.



DULIA

See *Veneration*.



FEAST DAY

A day set aside to honor a particular saint. In most cases, a saint's feast day coincides with the anniversary of his or her death—having first begun as a way to remember the deaths of **martyrs**—and, as such, is a celebration of the saint's passage through the heavenly turnstiles. Due to the large number of saints, almost every day is a feast day, often commemorating more than a dozen different saints. Which is why piety is often associated with obesity.

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE: The most popular feast day is probably St.Valentine's Day (February 14), because nothing says "I love you" like remembering a martyr who was beaten with clubs and then beheaded in the third century for refusing to renounce his faith (see p. 107) for more on St.Valentine).

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: *Thursday*.



FOURTEEN HOLY HELPERS

A collection of saints known to be especially powerful when prayed to for protection against (and recovery from) nasty diseases. This particular devotion is thought to have developed in Germany during the fourteenth century, when holy help was needed to fight the bubonic plague.

The Fourteen Holy Helpers include Acacius (invoked against headaches), Barbara (invoked against fever), Catherine of Alexandria (invoked against sudden death), Erasmus (invoked against intestinal sickness), and Margaret of Antioch (invoked against the odor should Erasmus not pull his weight).

Also known as:
Helpers in Need.

**PLEASE USE IT
IN A SENTENCE OR**

TWO: When Doug got sick, he called on the Fourteen Holy Helpers to heal him. In turn, they informed Dr. Goldstein that a heavy dose of antibiotics would do the trick.

**NOT TO BE
CONFUSED WITH:**
The Twelve Apostles,
the misfit collection
of followers chosen by
Jesus at the beginning
of his ministry,
including early

luminaries like Sts. Peter, Andrew, James, and John. Upon sending the Twelve out to proclaim the kingdom of God, Jesus actually did encourage them to “heal the sick.”¹⁰ But their assignment was focused more on preaching the Gospel, as Jesus failed to mention intestinal ailments, headaches, or the bubonic plague.



10. Matthew 10:8. They were also to “raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, and drive out demons.”



FRANCISCAN

A member of the religious order founded by St. Francis of Assisi. Officially, they're called the Order of Friars Minor, and members identify themselves with an "O.F.M." after their names. Franciscan friars dedicate themselves to a **mendicant** life of preaching, prayer, and penance. They adhere to the Rule of St. Francis, which focuses on the ideals of poverty, humility, and servanthood. Franciscans can be divided into three

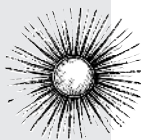
distinct orders: the First Order (priests and lay brothers), the Second Order (cloistered nuns known as Poor Clares), and the Third Order (laypersons or married people who observe Franciscan principles in their daily lives).

The most famous Franciscans include St. Anthony of Padua, St. Bonaventure, and the philosopher Duns Scotus.¹¹

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE OR TWO: Instead of locking themselves up in a monastery, the Franciscans were free to go wandering around, preaching and begging, but in a cheerful

FUN RELATED FACT

Holy Helper St. Barbara's wealthy, cruel father was enraged when she converted to Christianity in the third century. When he attempted to kill her, she ran from him and hid in the mountains of Asia Minor. A local shepherd ratted her out, and she was captured, tortured, and eventually killed for her faith. But not before Barbara cursed the shepherd by turning him into a stone statue and his sheep into grasshoppers.



11. For the record, the *Pocket Guide* believes there is no cooler name in religious history than that of Duns Scotus.

way. So if you see a panhandler who smiles a lot, he's probably a Franciscan. Or he's high.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: A *San Franciscan*. Actually, don't worry about it. You won't confuse the two.



GOLDEN LEGEND, THE

See *Hagiography*.



HAGIOGRAPHY

A biography of a saint, especially one that seems to be overly reverent, admiring, or idealistic. From the early years of the Church into the Middle Ages, hagiographies were intensely popular inspirational stories and gave us most of the bizarre legends involving particular saints, including the one about Saint Margaret of Antioch (third century) who was once eaten by a dragon that was really Satan in disguise. She didn't stay swallowed, though. She escaped because the cross she was wearing made the demon-dragon's stomach explode in a pretty serious case of religious indigestion.¹² Thanks, hagiographies!

The best-known collection of hagiographies was *The Golden Legend*, a thirteenth-century best seller about the lives of the saints. Most of the really weird, supernatural stories about dragons and **miracles** and dubious saintly occurrences, including the St. Barbara/grasshoppers story in the "Fourteen Holy Helpers" entry, come from this book.¹³ Five stars.

12. More about this story on p. 88 in Chapter 3.

13. And guess what? Even *The Golden Legend* doubts the whole Margaret and the Dragon story, which is really saying something.

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE OR TWO: That book you have about Saddam Hussein that keeps talking about how he used to spend time at orphanages knitting clothes for the children's dolls? I think it's probably a hagiography.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: *John Hagee*, the popular Christian televangelist who is known for being overly reverent, admiring, and idealistic toward the state of Israel.



HALO

A radiant ring of light shown to encircle the head of a holy person, especially in Christian iconography. Traditional religious art tends to apply haloes within specific categories. For instance, members of the Trinity (God the Father, Jesus the Son, the Holy Spirit) wear haloes bisected by a cross. Beatified people who have not yet been officially canonized are often depicted with light rays exploding behind their heads, but without a defined circle. Regular saints—from the Virgin Mary to the Old Testament prophets to garden-variety holyfolk—have plain, clean, round haloes.

Although some saints developed a reputation for physically glowing at times, most people don't actually believe the saints walked around with yellow discs floating behind their heads. Instead, it is understood that haloes are merely symbolic indicators of closeness with God, spiritual transcendence, and intermittent weirdness.

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE: It would be awesome if there had been a saint with a saw-toothed halo, because he totally could have then ripped it off his head and used it like a huge Chinese throwing star to fight evil persecutors, and he would have been like, "Martyr *this*, buttmunch!"

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: *J-Lo*, née Jennifer Lopez, the patron saint of singing actors, acting singers, ambitious celebrities, and caboosees.¹⁴



HAIR SHIRT

A coarse garment, typically made from goats' hair, which people occasionally wore as a way to do penance for their sins by bodily mortification. Because hair shirts are itchy. And scratchy. And not very fashionable.

Hair shirts were especially popular in the Middle Ages, and a variety of saints—from St. Francis of Assisi to St. Thomas More—were said to have worn them, usually as undergarments beneath finer clothing. They're similar to the "sackcloth and ashes" worn by penitent characters in the Bible.¹⁵

See also: *Mortification*.

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE OR TWO: Knowing it would cause him discomfort, Sheldon intended to wear a hair shirt during Lent until his goat-dander allergies made this impossible. So instead he wore a Bon Jovi shirt.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: *Robin Williams*, topless.



HERMIT

A person who, in order to devote him- or herself more fully to worship and prayer, embraces a life of solitude away from the endless hustle-and-bustle of the surrounding culture. (And the fourth

14. Admit it: You totally thought the *Pocket Guide* was going to mention the wildly popular videogame series Halo for the not-to-be-confused bit. Ha! Looks like you're wrong, Master Chief.

15. See Daniel 9:3 (NIV).

century, as you might imagine, was overflowing with both hustle *and* bustle.) Early hermits like St. Anthony of Egypt tended to renounce or give away their wealth before abandoning the city for seclusion in the desert. But deserts can be lonely places—which was kind of the point—so various hermits eventually found each other and lived their lives of “solitude” in small communities.¹⁶ That’s right: communities of hermits. Chew on that for awhile.

See also: *Ascetic*.

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE OR TWO: The most popular hermits were revered for their great wisdom and, as a result, attracted large numbers of disciples. This made solitude increasingly difficult. This also explains why most hermits look fairly irritated in their icons.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: *Anchorites*, or *Ascetics*, or *Stylites*—all of which are particular kinds of hermits, just like Bluetooth Guy, Wears-Sunglasses-Indoors Guy, and Guy Who Has No Business Turning His Ball Cap Backwards are all particular kinds of tools.

FUN RELATED FACT

St. Mary of Egypt became a hermit at the end of the fourth century after a disembodied voice told her that she’d “find glorious rest” if she were to cross the Jordan River. So the next morning, she crossed, taking with her only three loaves of bread. Once those were gone, she lived only on what she could scrounge up out of the desert. Yes . . . that *does* seem gloriously restful, as the habit of eating can be a serious energy drain. (See p. 92 for more about Mary of Egypt.)



16. These desert communities eventually led to monasticism.



HEROIC VIRTUE

One of the primary requirements for **beatification** as a saint. A saint or **martyr** who exhibits heroic virtue is considered a model of spiritual living—the kind of person who practices good deeds and displays piety as if it were second nature. The term was first applied by Augustine of Hippo to early Christian martyrs. It then expanded to include everyone whose spirituality was so extraordinary it tended to make normal people look like Pol Pot.

Heroic virtue is sometimes defined within the Roman Catholic Church as consisting of the four cardinal virtues (Prudence, Fortitude, Justice, Temperance) and the three theological virtues (Faith, Hope, and Love).¹⁷

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE: I'm pretty sure I could be a saint, but only if my ability to travel long distances without having to use the restroom is considered a heroic virtue.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: *Heroic measures*, which are those last-minute medical treatments applied in order to save a person's life during times of extreme injury or illness. Thankfully, the ability to perform an emergency tracheotomy with a butter knife and a drinking straw is not one of the requirements for beatification. Chrysostom excluded, most of the Doctors of the Church would struggle to pull that off.



ICON

A two-dimensional, stylized illustration of Jesus, Mary, a saint, a martyr, or other biblical figures. In the Eastern Church, these sacred images—from the Greek word *eikon*, which means “image” or

17. Note that these add up to seven heroic virtues, to counteract the seven deadly sins. Brilliant!

“likeness”—are venerated by worshipers and used to educate and inform churchgoers. Often, worshipers will kiss an icon, believing that any honor paid to the image is passed along to the original. So, by kissing an icon, you’re kissing Jesus. Which is worshipful, and not weird at all.

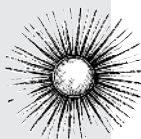
Icons are highly symbolic and tend to follow particular rules. Colors always have deeper meanings (gold = heaven; red = divinity; blue = human life). Angels always have wings. Saints always have haloes. Jesus always has sort of a constipated look on his face and makes odd hand gestures which may or may not be the equivalent of heavenly gang signs.

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE OR TWO: I know they’re holy and everything, but those icons of Mary holding Baby Jesus where he’s not really a baby but like this scary miniature person standing in her lap? Super creepy.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: A *computer icon*, the little graphical representation of an application or document on your PC. If you kiss these, it’s like kissing Bill Gates or Steve Jobs—depending on your operating system—and no one wants that.

FUN RELATED FACT

Some icons, known by the Greek word *Acheiropoieta* (literally, “not-handmade”), are thought to have come into existence miraculously. Because they originate from the heavenly realm, these “icons not made by hands” are supposed to be the most accurate depictions of what the subject looked like. So, according to the Lateran Palace Image in Rome—an icon said to have been sketched out by St. Luke and completed by angels—the real Jesus had cartoonishly large eyes.





INCORRUPT

Describing a body—usually that of a saint—that does not decompose, decay, stink, or otherwise perform as expected after death. A remarkable number of saints' corpses are believed to be incorrupt and are often on display at their shrines. According to the Roman Catholic Church, a body only qualifies as incorrupt if it remains flexible (stiff corpses need not apply) and if it hasn't been embalmed. Which means the faces of a lot of Hollywood-dwellers probably couldn't be described as *incorrupt* even now, while they're still alive.

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE: Instead of exhuming Grandma to see if she's incorrupt, how about we just remember her good deeds and not have to mess with that whole shrine-building thing?

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: *Mummies.*



LAY BROTHER

A member of a religious order who lived and worked within a monastery, often performing manual-labor-type jobs like cooking, cleaning, or gardening, but who wasn't required to adhere to the intense prayer and study schedules of "official" monks. In the Middle Ages, these were generally pious but poorly educated men (and women: *lay sisters*) who wanted to serve God within the rule of a monastery but couldn't read or write well enough to become one of the fancy white-collar monks. Nope, lay brothers were blue-collar and proud of it.

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE OR TWO: St. Martin de Porres, the famous Dominican lay brother, is often shown with a broom, due to his fondness for manual labor. He also appears with a dog, a cat, a mouse, and a bird—all of whom are eating from a dish at his feet—but that's the result of a whole different fondness.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: One of those sissy real monks with all their praying and studying and book-learnin'.



MARTYR

One who gets killed or executed for his or her beliefs (*martyr* is Greek for “witness”). In the early days of the Church, almost all the saints were martyrs. Why? Because most of the world was under Roman rule during those first few centuries

of Christianity. And the famously peaceful *Pax Romana* was a great law and everything, except for the part where you had to love and support the empire by loving and supporting the Roman deities. Christians, being less than thrilled about this—and being fairly public about their less-than-thrilledness—didn’t find it too difficult to get into trouble.

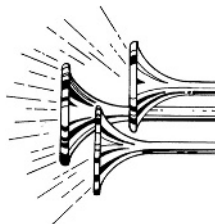
Back then, death via martyrdom might have included stoning, bludgeoning, crucifixion, beheading, hanging, burning at the stake, and being torn apart by lions. It was creative but horrible.

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE: Linda thought she could have been a martyr if they could figure out a way to make it quick, painless, and not at all scary.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: *Justin Martyr*, a second-century Christian apologist and saint who, it turns out, didn’t just have a cool name but actually was martyred for his faith. It’s believed that Justin, who originally was known by the less heroic moniker “Justin

NOT-SO-FUN RELATED FACT

St. Cassian of Imola was arrested in the third century for refusing to sacrifice to pagan Roman gods. Cassian, a teacher, was tied to a stake and given over to his students, who were encouraged to stab him to death with their little writing utensils. Being kids, they weren’t strong or accurate enough to make a quick job of it, so St. Cassian’s martyrdom was a particularly nasty one.



of Ceasarea,” was scourged and beheaded while trying to debate pagan philosophers during the reign of Marcus Aurelius. Let this be a lesson to you, kids: keep your distance from pagan philosophers.



MENDICANT

A member of a religious order who has taken a vow of poverty in order to better serve the poor, preach the Gospel, and follow God. Mendicants were expected to renounce their worldly possessions and live solely on begging or charitable donations. The best-known mendicant order in the Middle Ages was likely the **Franciscans**. Other mendicant orders included **Carmelites** and **Dominicans**. Suffice it to say, most of the beggars back in those days were professional Christians.

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE OR TWO: Stan eventually withdrew his application to become a mendicant friar, because who knew it would involve such a freaking huge amount of begging? So demeaning. Also, they wouldn't let him keep his gun cabinet.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: *Mindy Cohn*, who played “Natalie” in the long-running 1980s sitcom *The Facts of Life*. Such a mistake can be forgiven, though, given the unexpected nickname of St. “Tootie” Francis.



MIRACLE

An action performed by God (either directly or through humans) that temporarily overrules the normal workings of the universe and therefore causes wonder and amazement. Most miracles tend to involve healing from sickness or disease. The **beatification** process requires at least one miracle to be directly attributed to any non-martyr applying to the sainthood. **Canonization** requires yet

another miracle. This keeps recreational saints from diluting the system.

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE: I may have experienced a miracle during my pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes, because after visiting the shrine I tried to find that scab on my elbow from when I slid into second base in the church softball game, and it was totally not there!

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: *Magic.* It is a miracle when you visit a shrine and your grapefruit-sized tumor suddenly and totally disappears. It is not a miracle when Criss Angel levitates above the Luxor Hotel.



MONASTICISM

What happens when **asceticism** becomes so accepted a part of religious life that it switches from something oddballs do out in the desert to an official institution of the Church. Monasticism is practiced in many religious settings, including Buddhism and Hinduism, but in the Christian tradition, monastics (whether monks or nuns) are required to take vows of poverty (keeping earthly possessions to a minimum), chastity (keeping physical pleasure to a minimum), and obedience (keeping selfish behavior to a minimum). Monastics are also required to remove themselves from society, whether that means living as **hermits** or within the community of a monastery. And in movies, they are required to have weird haircuts and wear ugly brown robes.

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE: I would be really into monasticism if not for all the praying and silence and the abbots' apparent refusal to install plasma TVs in residences.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: *New Monasticism*, a recent movement within Protestant Evangelical communities in which

believers share possessions, practice hospitality, live in deliberate community, maintain close contact with the poor, and bathe irregularly.



MORTIFICATION

The physical act of “putting to death” the sinful desires of the flesh, often appropriated by **mystics, ascetics, hermits**, and hard-core monks and nuns, based on no less than the biblical example

of the Apostle Paul, who wrote, “No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize” (1 Cor. 9:27, NIV).¹⁸ In its most extreme forms, this bodily slave-making involves self-inflicted injury or discomfort, typically through

FUN RELATED FACT

St. Theophanes, in the ninth century, practiced mortification by using a rock for a pillow, surviving on nothing but crusty bread and water, and refusing to treat the intestinal pains that plagued him much of his life.



flagellation, cutting, or piercing—all for the purpose of spiritual growth.

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE OR TWO: Throughout history, numerous saints have practiced mortification by fasting, wearing **hair shirts**, whipping themselves, draping themselves in iron chains, and watching David Lynch films. But not necessarily at the same time.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: *Mortification*, the mid-’90s Christian extreme metal band. Though it could be argued that

18. See also Romans 8:13 (NIV), Galatians 5:24 (NIV), and Colossians 3:5 (NIV).

repeated listens to their 1992 album, *Scrolls of the Megilloth*, may be considered a mild form of self-punishment.



MYSTIC

A person who regularly has direct and intense spiritual experiences with God, often occurring during times of deep prayer, meditation, or fasting. For example, the Spanish mystic Teresa of Ávila regularly experienced periods of levitation-inducing religious ecstasy. These incidents culminated in a two-year period, beginning in 1559, during which she maintained that Jesus (who, conveniently, had made himself invisible) was appearing to her in bodily form. Not long after, an angel showed up and stabbed her through the heart multiple times with a flaming golden spear. Not only did it hurt her physically, but it hurt spiritually, too. Which was fine, because she could then meditate on the suffering. That's how mystics roll.

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE OR TWO: You know how Kevin always sits in the back of the class with his eyes closed? I'm pretty sure that's because he's a mystic. Or a narcoleptic.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: *Mystic, Iowa*, a small town in Appanoose County, with a population around six hundred people. Some believe Jesus has appeared there in bodily form, but like happened with Teresa, he was invisible at the time. So who can say for sure?



ODOR OF SANCTITY

A pleasing aroma—typically compared to a floral scent—that may emanate from the body of a dead saint, from the area around the saint's grave, or from the wounds of the **stigmata**. Like an incorruptible corpse, the odor of sanctity has often been permitted as

one of the **miracles** required before a person is canonized. It's proof of a person's sainthood. Or, at least, proof of attention to personal hygiene.

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE: Aunt Lydia always tried to pass it off as “odor of sanctity,” but we were all pretty sure it was just gas.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: *Air freshener*



PATRON SAINT

A saint with a special fondness and/or protective relationship with a certain geographical location, church, diocese, occupation, health problem, or individual sharing the saint's name. Thanks to the whole **communion-of-saints** scenario, religious people sometimes feel their prayers are more effective if delivered to God via their patron saint, as opposed to coming from a generally unimpressive human. Back in ye olden tymes, powerful figures entered into protective relationships with certain followers. It's the same today, only these powerful figures are dead, and the “certain followers” have been replaced by, at least in the case of St. James the Great, people who suffer from rheumatoid arthritis.

See also: *Chapter 4 for a whole lot more about patron saints.*

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE: In a last-ditch attempt to sell more cookies than that tramp Ashley, little Madison hoisted her box of Thin Mints to the sky and prayed to Agnes of Rome, patron saint of the Girl Scouts, for confidence, luck, and sales that would make Ashley cry.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: *Patrón Tequila*, an ultrapremium adult beverage produced in Las Vegas and known for its numerous shout-outs in rap lyrics. The use of Patrón may make your rheumatoid arthritis feel better, but its effect on the sale of Girl Scout cookies is considerably less positive.



PILLAR-SAINTS

See: *Stylites*.



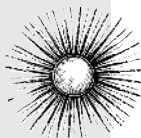
RELICS

Objects of religious significance—including, on occasion, body parts—left over from **canonized** saints. In some circles, relics are thought to have spiritual power (as in Acts 19 when aprons that touched the Apostle Paul were useful in healing the sick and driving out demons¹⁹). This belief led to a whole lot of virtuous creepiness over the years, as churches began to gather things like bones or teeth or limbs of dead saints—for instance, the forearm of St. Stephen of Hungary. These prized relics were then put on display to attract spiritual pilgrims.

Relics are assigned to three categories. *First-class relics* are either objects directly associated with Jesus (a piece of the cross or manger)

FUN RELATED FACT

Throughout Christian history, up to eighteen different abbeys, churches, and cities have claimed to possess the divine foreskin of Jesus, otherwise known as the Holy Prepuce. For an embarrassingly long time, the Christian faith endured a lot of name-calling and hurt feelings, thanks to arguments over whose amputated foreskin truly belonged to little Baby Jesus, until the Church announced in 1900 that anyone speaking or writing about that kind of thing would be immediately excommunicated. Good call, Church.



19. See Acts 19:11–12 (NIV). And it wasn't just aprons, but handkerchiefs, too. Who knew Paul was such a dandy?

or a saint's physical remains (hair, teeth, umbilical cord). *Second-class relics* are objects worn or owned by a saint (like the famed "chains of St. Peter" on display in San Pietro in Rome). *Third-class relics* include anything that has touched a first- or second-class relic and are hardly worth mentioning, because wouldn't a **shrine** displaying a relic then become a relic itself? And wouldn't that third-class relic then need its own shrine? And wouldn't the very concept of an "enshrined shrine" cause some sort of intergalactic meta-quake, ripping a hole in the very fabric of the space-time continuum? Leave it to the *Pocket Guide* to pose the questions no one wants to ask.

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE: While you might refer to it as "a disgusting jar of fingernail clippings," my cousin Henry calls it "a potential goldmine of first-class relics."

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: *Trash*



ROSARY

The Catholic devotional practice that uses a string of fifty beads, in groups of ten, to count recited prayers. These prayers typically include the Lord's Prayer ("Our Father in heaven . . ."), the Hail Mary ("Hail, Mary, full of grace . . ."), and a wrap-up prayer called the *Gloria Patri* ("Glory be to the Father . . ."). The prayers are arranged into five sequences called *decades*, and each decade corresponds to a specific mystery of redemption. Which sounds simple enough, except there are several categories of mysteries to be contemplated, from Joyful Mysteries to Sorrowful Mysteries to Luminous Mysteries. Sadly, Hardy Boys Mysteries are not permissible.

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE OR TWO: Father Ken told Jill to say two rosaries as penance for engaging in premarital sex. But since she had another date with Seth tonight, and since he was borrowing his older brother's Camaro, she planned ahead and recited four.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED

WITH: *Prayer beads, prayer ropes, prayer cards, prayer chains, prayer wheels, or prayer aids* of any other type. These are nice and everything, but were they actually hand-delivered to mankind by the Virgin Mary herself? No? OK, then.²⁰

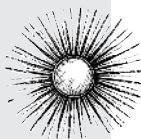


SAINT

Originally a term used to describe any follower of Jesus, from the Latin word *sanctus*, which means “holy” or “consecrated.”²¹ But for most of Christian history (and for the purposes of this book) *saint* has been used to describe a righteous person who has been officially recognized by the Church (via the process of **canonization**) for his or her heroic virtue and exemplary devotion. In the Roman Catholic and Orthodox branches of the faith, saints are believed to perform **miracles**; watch over the cities, churches, occupations, and maladies over whom they are **patrons**; and assist living humans in

FUN RELATED FACT

Around the twelfth century, monks used to pray all 150 of the Psalms on a daily basis. Average churchgoers were illiterate, though, and had trouble learning that many passages of Scripture. So they began repeating the “Our Father” or “Hail, Mary” prayers anywhere from 50 to 150 times a day. It’s thought that the rosary developed from this practice. Unless, of course, you buy into Footnote 20.



20. According to legend, the Blessed Virgin Mary revealed the rosary to St. Dominic, the founder of the Dominican religious order. She told him to use it to spread devotion to Christ. But today people use them to pray to Mary. For a monk, Dominic sure sucked at obedience.

21. See Romans 1:7 (NIV): “To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints . . .”

getting prayers delivered to God. Since an official saint is presumed to be doing these things from a comfortable seat in heaven, a candidate for sainthood must also be dead. Patience, friends.

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE: Yo mamma must be a saint, because it takes **heroic virtue** to deal with the likes of you. Hey-o!

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: *The New Orleans Saints* of the National Football League, who have occasionally displayed heroic virtue and been asked to perform **miracles**, but who are not, in fact, dead.



SANTINO

An Italian word meaning “little saint,” which refers to the pocket-sized holy cards bearing illustrations of specific saints. Devout Catholics often carry them in their wallets or purses, or insert

them into their luggage, or tape them to the dashboards of their vehicles. This helps them remember to enlist the prayers of a certain **patron saint**—for instance, St. Christopher, patron of travelers—while going about their daily lives.

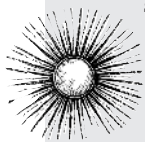
Also known as: *Prayer Cards*.

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE OR TWO: While on a pilgrimage to Rome,

Maria picked up a beautiful *santino* of St. Camillus de Lellis, patron of doctors, to keep her safe and well on her journeys. She was

FUN RELATED FACT

In 2007, an Italian company began selling traditional *santino* images in a digital format, which could be downloaded to a cell phone, bypassing the easily wrinkled paper versions. Depending on who you asked—and his or her age—this was either wonderful news or outright sacrilege.



understandably disappointed when she mishandled the card and got a nasty paper cut, which then became infected.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: *The Great Santini*, a novel published in 1978 by Pat Conroy. The paperback edition will probably fit in your luggage or purse, but you'd need a whole lot of tape to affix it to your dashboard.



SHRINE

In its broadest sense, a shrine is a sacred destination for pilgrims who seek to show devotion to a particular saint—for instance, the Shrine of St. Edward the Confessor at Westminster Abbey in London. These shrines may be described as “national,” in which case they require the approval of a conference of bishops, or “international,” in which they require the stamp of approval from the pope.

More narrowly speaking, a shrine is a small container or alcove within a church, used to contain and/or display saintly relics. Interestingly, something used “to contain and/or display saintly relics” is a pretty good way to describe more than a few churches.

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE: If saints are supposed to be super-virtuous, and if humility is an important virtue, then the mother of Jesus must feel downright icky about being referred to as “Mary, Queen of the Universe” by her shrine in Orlando.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: *Yard shrines*, those cute little hand-painted Mary and/or Jesus statues—complete with lovely floral accents and the porcelain protection of a half-submerged bathtub²²—on the lawns of devout Catholics.

22. For this reason, such yard shrines are nicknamed “Bathtub Madonnas.” Cool.



STIGMATA

The physical appearance of the Five Holy Wounds—the nailed hands, nailed feet, and spear-in-the-side inflicted upon Jesus during the crucifixion—on a person who is not actually Jesus. And not actually being crucified. The wounds of the stigmata, said to have miraculously manifested themselves upon certain saints throughout the centuries, are considered to be God-given memorials to the wounds of Christ. St. Francis of Assisi is perhaps history's most famous stigmatic.

FUN RELATED FACT

The most recent official stigmatic—and the first priest to be so afflicted—was Padre Pio, an ordained Italian who first received the marks of the crucifixion in 1918. The blood was said to have smelled like flowers, though some skeptics attributed this to self-administered cologne. Anyway, Pope John Paul II canonized him in 2002. (See p. 98 for more Padre Pio fun.)



Catherine of Siena also claimed to have experienced the stigmata, only her wounds were invisible. So, um, pretty much her hands, feet, and side weren't exactly bleeding or anything, but boy, did they hurt a lot.

Based on Catherine's affliction, the *Pocket Guide's* grandmother may be a stigmatic, too!

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE OR TWO: Saints experiencing the stigmata

have claimed that the blood issuing from their hands, feet, and sides has a pleasing smell (the already introduced **Odor of Sanctity**), never clots, and prevents the wound from getting infected. These characteristics make stigmatics popular with blood banks.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: Actual injuries to the hands, feet, and/or side.



STYLITES

A special breed of **ascetic** who thought normal ascetics were great and everything, but to really practice **mortification**, they needed to be doing all that self-deprivation and fasting and praying while perched on a pillar. Way up in the air. For a really long time. The granddaddy of stylites (which comes from the Greek word for “pillar”) is St. Simeon Stylites, who hoisted himself up onto a platform at the top of a pillar in 423 and didn’t come down until he died thirty-seven years later.²³

Also known as: *Pillar-saints*.

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE OR TWO: When Dad climbed that ladder, I thought perhaps he was going to subject himself to bodily austerity and, of all things, become a stylite. But it turns out he was just changing a lightbulb.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: *David Blaine*, the illusionist/attention-hound who performed a stylite-inspired stunt back in 2002, standing on a pillar 105 feet above New York City for thirty-five hours. Unfortunately, his legs got tired, and he had to jump down. He was a mere 13,504 days shy of St. Simeon’s record.



VENERATION

The special honor given to a saint (or, by proxy, a saint’s **icon**) in recognition of God’s presence in their lives and actions. Often veneration is conferred by kissing an icon or statue, making the sign of the cross, or bowing to it—that is, bowing to it in a “recognizing

23. For the record, he was lowered down by his disciples after he died, as opposed to dying and then toppling off his perch as a result of being dead. Because you were totally thinking that, right?

God's presence" kind of way, as opposed to a "worshipping the golden calf" kind of way.

Also known as: *Dulia*.

PLEASE USE IT IN A SENTENCE: Thinking he was engaging in an act of veneration to a statue of some weird-looking saint, Greg bent over and knocked heads with old Mr. Jenkins—who, in Greg's defense, *was* looking a bit pale.

NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH: *Genuflection*, which is the act of falling onto a knee as an act of devotion in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. It's a similar mind-set—and the blessedness is a shared trait—but the Sacrament isn't a saint. It's Jesus.²⁴

24. This applies to Catholics only. For other Christians, the Sacrament is just a symbol of Jesus, not the Real Thing. And yes, from the outside looking in, it seems very weird.

