

Saints are models of faithful discipleship

Who is your favourite saint? Do you know something about the life of the saint?

One of the popular celebrations in the liturgical year is All Saints' Day on Nov. 1. The celebration honours our departed brothers and sisters, children and adults whom we believe are with God in Heaven. Scriptures describe the saints as "people from every nation, tribe and language standing in front of the throne of God and before the Lamb Jesus Christ offering praise and thanksgiving" (see Revelation 7).

We revere the saints. Our parishes and schools are named after them and some countries do have saints as their patrons — St. Joseph for Canada. We also have patron saints for the sick, the dying and health care workers, for example, St. Luke, St. Agatha, St. Martin de Porres, St. Camellus De Lellis and St. John Leonardi.

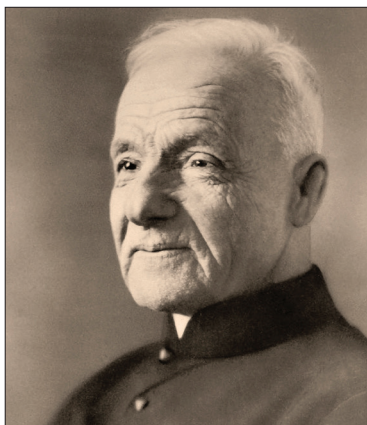
We may wonder how the lives of saints relate to our lives and our circumstances today. There is, in fact, a surprising connection with the first Bishop of Toronto, Michael Power, whose selfless care for others prompted the Archdiocese of Toronto to announce in 2017 that it is initiating Bishop Power's case for canonization as a Martyr of Charity.

Like us, Bishop Power had to deal with an epidemic. In his book *Extraordinary Ordinaries*, Fr. Seamus Hogan, an assistant professor of Church history at St. Augustine's Seminary in Toronto, gives an account of the typhus epidemic in North America that killed more than 20,000 people in Canada, mainly newly-arrived Irish immigrants. While serving the sick, Bishop Power contracted the disease and died on Oct. 1, 1847, just a couple of weeks before his 43rd birthday.

So, who are the saints? We marvel at the lives of the saints and we might even have a tendency to think that the saints were some "extraordinary" human beings who were different from us. We might wonder if it could be possible to follow in their footsteps. However, over the past 40 years the declaration of many men and women as saints — people like Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Gianna Beretta Molla of Italy, Brother André of Canada, Josephine Bhakita of Sudan and the Native American Kateri Tekakwitha



On Nov. 1, All Saints' Day, we celebrate saints like (from top left) St. Kateri Tekakwitha, Mother Teresa and Canada's own St. Brother André Bessette. We can only hope to emulate their faithfulness in our own lives, says Fr. Yaw Acheampong. (CNS photos)



FR. YAW ACHEAMPONG

— have helped us to have some insight into the way the saints have lived among us.

The saints share with us one baptism and one faith in Jesus Christ. They lived lives of fidelity to God even if that life meant death. The stories about the lives of the saints inform us that they witnessed to God in their own circumstances and situations — by serving others with the gifts entrusted to them — a life of faithful discipleship.

In his apostolic exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate* ("Rejoice and Be Glad"), Pope Francis writes: "The powerful witness of the saints is revealed in their lives, shaped by the Beatitudes and the criterion of the final judgment" (109).

By living out the Beatitudes the saints lived the Gospel with total dedication and love of God and neighbour.

Our celebration of All Saints' Day reminds us that the saints were ordinary people — young, adult, lay men and women, clergy and religious — who responded to the call of Jesus "to take up their cross to follow Him." According to St. Paul, by virtue of our baptism

in Christ we are all called to be saints — called to embrace a life of holiness (I Cor. 1:1-2). On this special occasion, perhaps we need to reflect on a couple of questions. In what ways are we living as people called to be saints? How do we relate to our favourite saints?

During this COVID-19 pandemic we have heard amazing stories of people who have served others with acts of selflessness and the love for the other. This year's celebration of All Saints' Day should also include our prayers of thanks for those among us who have acted in such extraordinary ways.

The celebration reminds us that as Christians we are to develop an attitude similar to that of the saints. It is at a time like this that we need to show a greater concern for the other to help bring the love of God to all though our actions based on our faith. The saints' love for God is what inspired them to serve others and made them move closer to God on Earth and now in Heaven.

We can relate to the saints when we strive to follow in their footsteps. Through the intercession of "so great a cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12), may God guide us to imitate the faithfulness of the saints in our service to God's people.

Have a happy All Saints' Day.
(Fr. Acheampong is pastor at Our Lady of Peace Parish in Toronto.)

Rosary CD aims to lead people to healing, peace

BY WENDY-ANN CLARKE
The Catholic Register

Over the past year, musician and composer Maryana Erzinger has been on a creative spiritual journey she hopes will inspire the world through song.

Beginning with a single Hail Mary, the consecrated lay woman of the Madonna House Apostolate in Combermere, Ont., recorded *The Complete Rosary, Divine Mercy Chaplet & Jesus Prayer: Original Music for Contemplative Prayer*, released through Madonna House Publications.

"Many, many months before the COVID-19 virus hit, I was

inspired to write music for the Hail Mary," said Erzinger. "I ended up composing a couple different musical settings. Then I sang and recorded them and played it for a friend who said it brought Our Lady's presence to her. She encouraged me to write music for *The Complete Rosary*."

The album, which features keyboard and vocals, like Erzinger's other compositions arose from a deep listening to the Spirit, she said. Little did she know that a few months after being inspired to create it, the world's need for prayer would escalate dramatically.

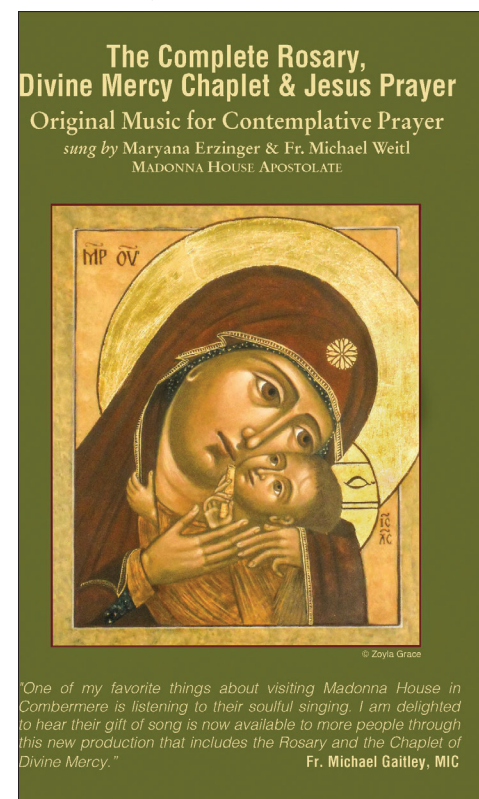
"The rosary, along with the Divine Mercy Chaplet and Jesus Prayer, are some of the most powerful and beloved prayers that are said outside of the Mass," said Erzinger. "God gave me a gift for music, and I knew that people could pray these prayers at home in their daily lives or wherever they might be."

The vocals, including those for

The Chaplet of the Divine Mercy and the Jesus Prayer, are sung in unison by Erzinger and Fr. Michael Weigl, a priest of Madonna House.

"We relied on the Holy Spirit to pray in and through us as we sang," said Weigl, currently serving at the Madonna House in North Yorkshire, England.

"We sang with the intention that this music will lead people to experience the healing, truth and peace of God through a personal encounter with Him. I believe that music, the universal language, has the power to dispose the soul to receive God in an often more intimate and direct way than words can reach."



"One of my favorite things about visiting Madonna House in Combermere is listening to their soulful singing. I am delighted to hear their gift of song is now available to more people through this new production that includes the Rosary and the Chaplet of Divine Mercy."
Fr. Michael Gaitley, MIC

Before coming to Madonna House in the late 1980s, Erzinger was a professional musician and holds a Bachelor of Music degree in performance violin from the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, N.Y.

Her gift for composition

has flourished in the community, providing many new hymns especially suited for the blend of male and female voices, and appreciated by visitors to the community.

Daily you will find Erzinger at the St. Mary's community of Madonna House in Combermere. Among her many tasks as head of the housekeeping department, you will find her sweeping stairwells, refilling soap containers and praying her way through each day.

The Complete Rosary, Divine Mercy Chaplet & Jesus Prayer: Original Music for Contemplative Prayer, is available at www.madonnahouse.org/publications.

(With files from Patricia Lawton of Madonna House Apostolate.)