

A Litany of Saints

A Biblical walk of 22 women

Heart of Mary Women's
Fellowship



heartofmarywf.com

About this Study

We hope that you'll dive in, grow in the Lord, and share with others what beauty God reveals to you through it. If you are doing this study independently, know that we at HOM are here for you & that you also have a LARGE community of women through our website and social media that are participating too! You are truly never alone!

If you are completing this study in a group setting - we are excited that you have found a local community to grow with, on top of our online sisterhood. Please use this study journal for your reference, resource, and more during your meetings and the personal time leading up to it.

Looking for a group? Please visit www.heartofmarywf.com/groups to find a meet up near you.

Are you already in one but not listed on our website? Looking to start one? Please contact us for more information about our "HOM Ambassador" program. We have team members available specifically to help you grow a local group and lead other women through community, prayer, and devotion. Their support is available at all times. We also want to help you grow! We will advertise your group on our website & social media! And we have free resources for you as well. Please email us at heartofmarywf@aol.com

Note: All written content has been reviewed by a Catholic spiritual director to cross check that all statements align with the teachings and tenants of the Roman Catholic Church.

© 2016 Heart of Mary Women's Fellowship. The "Our Beginning" devotions, along with other bible studies, Marian Consecration, Catholic Talks, and other free downloads can be found at heartofmarywf.com,



A Litany of Saints Team



Mandi Chambers

Writer



Marykatherine
Deschamp

Writer



Erin Broestl

Writer



Christine Cooney

Writing Director

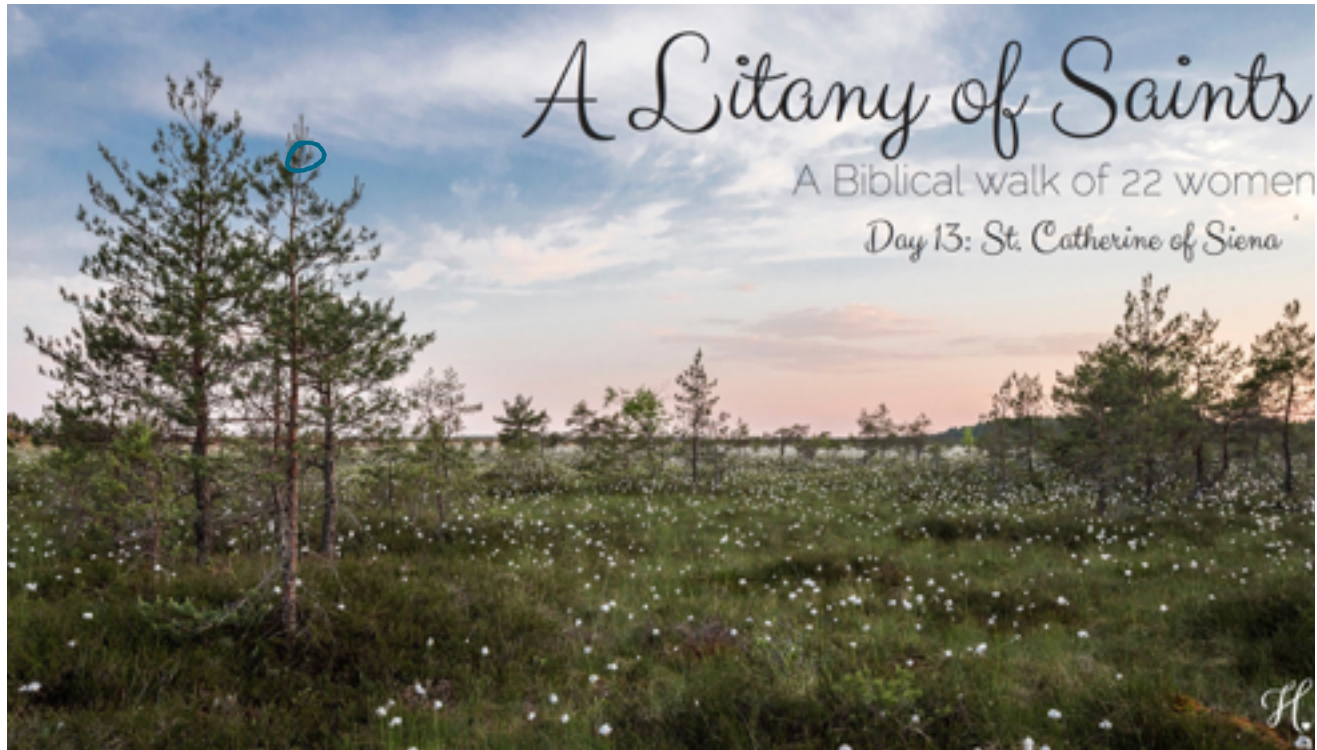


Maggie Renfro

Writer

*all imagery in this journal is is courtesy of Unspalsh.com

This journal can be printed and reproduced freely. This journal is not for sale or profit. If you would like to be an art, photography, or writing contributor, please contact us at heartofmarywf@aol.com



[John 13:34](#)

Have you ever experienced the Lord in His persistence when trying to make a message clear to you? Well, I have had this experience and it can be quite unbelievable when it is happening! I was asked to write St. Catherine of Siena's study and I excitedly agreed to it because I have always had a special place in my heart for Dominicans.

Little did I know that the Lord wanted me to write about something completely different when it came to St. Catherine of Siena. Before I begin with this message, I do think it is important to have a little background on her. St. Catherine grew up in the Italian city of Siena and even as a little girl she had a special devotion to Jesus. This love for Jesus continued to grow as she grew in years to the point of giving her life to Him and bearing the same wounds Christ has in the form of stigmata. Her love and devotion to Jesus lead the way for the holiness of many men and women after her.

This message that the Lord has asked me to write about has actually come up at multiple times in my life this past week. A bible study that I chanced on going to and my lesson to teach in faith formation both hit home on this message. Little did I know that the Lord wanted to speak to my heart the message I needed to hear the most. In John 13:34 Jesus says, *"I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another."*

In this new commandment Jesus is telling us to take our love even further than loving our neighbor as ourselves. He is commanding us to love one another as He loves us. I don't know about you, but this is not something that comes easily to me. I find myself wanting others to love me or do something for me purely because I love them or did something for them.

This love that I am talking about is a self-seeking love. It is a love that seeks to fulfill our desires and not the desires of God and others. God does not love in a self-seeking manner. Instead, He loves in a self-giving manner that loves us simply because we are who we are. This kind of love has started to manifest itself in my life and I am really struggling to love in the way God commands us to. I am a newly graduated college student who is teaching music at my first ever school. I do not exactly know why I started teaching, but I know that it is a path that the Lord has gently been leading me down. I think one of the reasons I am supposed to be a teacher is because of this kind of love.

I am challenged every single day to love as God loves me in the classroom. Every day I have to love my students without expecting anything in return. I have to love them not for what they can do for me, but simply because they are children of God. This is so hard and St. Catherine of Siena understood how hard it is to love in this way! She understood it so much that she discovered how impossible it is to love God as He loves us and to love one another as God loves us. She knew that the only way we can love in this way is if God loves our neighbor through us. We must wake up each and every day and ask God to love through us. Give Him your thoughts, words, and actions and ask Him to show you how to love as He loves us. -MaryKatherine



[Luke:9-13](#)

"For mental prayer in my opinion is nothing else than an intimate sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know loves us. The important thing is not to think much but to love much and so do that which best stirs you to love. Love is not great delight but the desire to please God in everything." – St. Teresa of Avila

St. Teresa of Avila has always been a saint that I knew of, but a not a lot about. Before this, I knew the basics; she was a Carmelite nun, doctor of the church, and writer. I have read her book *'The Interior Castle,'* and a reflection by her here and there. But other than that, St. Teresa of Avila has really been a mystery to me. I always have to laugh at God's plans, though, because the second I started digging into the life of St. Teresa of Avila, I was struck with the realization that so much about her and her life speaks to me! She was a saint who fought for reform in the church and who loved Jesus with a level of simplicity that we should all try to imitate.

What I want to focus on in today's study is looking through the practice of prayer through the eyes of St. Teresa of Avila. Above is a well known quote of hers about prayer and I think it gives us a new perspective on prayer; a perspective that is clear, simple, and focused on love. St. Teresa says that we should not think too much during prayer, but love much. It is so simple, but sometimes so hard to do! I have found myself on many occasions being completely lost in thought while praying. I can get so caught up in worrying if I am doing the Lord's will or if I am missing some message that He is trying to speak to me. The root of these worries are not inherently bad, but how much more fruitful will our prayer be if we just focus on the Lord's love?

St. Teresa spent a portion of her life not praying because she felt as though she was unworthy to pray and that she did not deserve any favors from the Lord. But her thoughts on prayer were transformed once she started to focus on the idea of love. Think about someone you truly love and ask yourself; when you spend time with them are you seeking to gain something or are you spending time with them simply because you love them? Why can't this be how we approach our time with the Lord? I think that if we truly learned to love the Lord in a pure and holy way we would stop trying to seek from the Lord and simply delight in His presence in the same way He delights in our presence. This is definitely something that is easier to say than do. It can be so much easier to talk to the Lord when we need something, but that is not how we approach our relationships in life, so why should we treat our most important relationship any different? The Lord desires you simply because He loves you. Let us learn to desire the Lord simply because we love Him.

-MaryKatherine

Reflect: What does your relationship and prayer with the Lord look like?

Reflect: Are you seeking something from the Lord at all times or do you have a relationship with Him primarily, and most importantly because you love Him?



[John 1:12](#) *"But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in his name."*

Two words come to mind when I think about the amazing life of Edith Stein: Courage and Transformation.

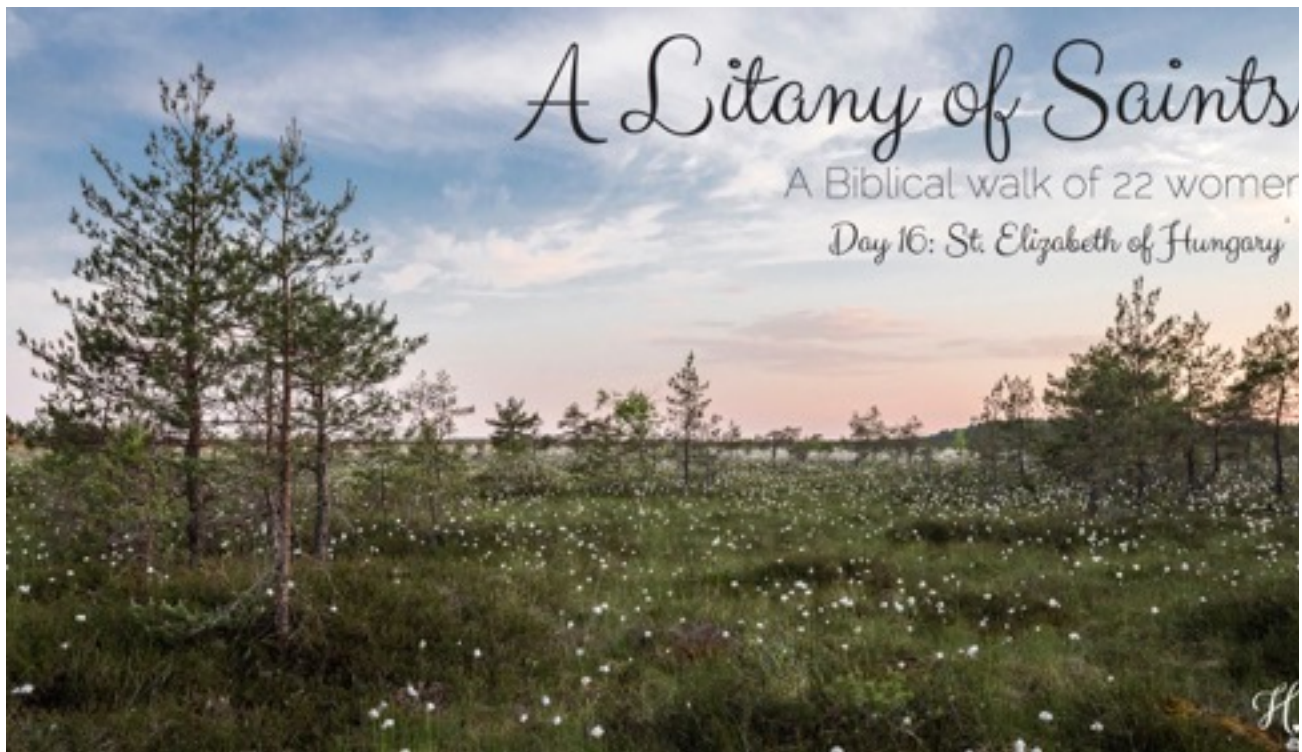
Edith Stein was born to a devout Jewish family in turn of the century Europe. Her passion for the human person led her to the study of a branch of philosophy called Phenomenology. The world was ripe for this sort of study as it taught that our subjective experience can teach us objective Truth; essentially ALL experiences can lead us to God. Stein faced many obstacles including a male dominated culture, angry feminists, and Nazi Germany. After receiving her doctorate in 1916 for writing her dissertation *On the Problem of Empathy*, she would undergo a major conversion. At the age of thirteen Stein had left religion altogether and professed herself and atheist. Her journey back to God led her to Catholicism. In 1933 Stein became a Discalced Carmelite and took the name Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. Despite the efforts of the order to protect her, on the morning of August 7, 1942, Stein

and many others including her sister, were deported to Auschwitz and died in the gas chambers. Due to an intellectually influential career the world will remember her as Edith Stein, but as Christians we have the privilege of seeing her as daughter and sister, nurse and teacher; as lover of the Eucharist. We know her as St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross.

“Christ embodies the ideal of human perfection...we are thus led through the imitation of Christ to the development of our original human vocation which is to present God’s image in ourselves.”

I think there is no greater quote that can sum up the vocation of each individual. We live in a world where we are constantly defined by what we do or accomplish. As women, there is constant pressure to put on a brave face and be perfect. The culture tells us that it is not enough to be a stay at home mom we must also have a career and make ourselves “useful,” yet the working mother often feels that she is somehow ruining her children or her family. Stein’s writings and the witness of her life teach us such an important truth: We are simply called to be ourselves.

The world does not need another Edith Stein, Teresa of Avila, or (insert person you have on a pedestal). The world needs you. You bear God’s image to the world just as you are. Edith Stein was born to a devout Jewish family and would become one of the most influential saints of the 20th century all because she gave her best daily. She even went through a period in her life where she did not believe in God. Ask yourself: Am I giving my best today? Most often our best looks like trying to get three kids out of the car so we can grocery shop so the family can eat. Our best may look like turing in C+ work in because we are juggling a job, school, and extracurricular activities. Make sure you are judging yourself by God’s standards. St. Francis of Assisi made a habit of asking God three questions multiple times a day: Who am I Lord? Who are you? What do YOU want from me? If we learn to listen to those answers and truly try to live our lives accordingly we too can be transformed. We too can become who were created to be, We too will one day be St. (Insert your name).



[John 21: 15](#)

"When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?' He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs."

[Rev. 7:17](#)

"For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

St. Elizabeth of Hungary lived an exemplary life of service to the poor. As a princess, she was married at a very young age to Ludwig IV of Thuringia (present-day Germany). They had four children, and Elizabeth had a hospital built in Wartburg Castle. She became well-known for giving alms and bread to the poor, and for attending to the sick. When Louis died in battle, Elizabeth continued her charitable works until her death at age 24.

Reading about St. Elizabeth makes me consider all that we can do for the poor. There is no shortage of people in want, and we needn't look very far to know where to help. Is anyone in your own family out of work? Are they in need of food, clothes, furniture, or anything that you can give? The truly destitute accept charity, but often it is harder to help our own family members whose stubborn pride overrides their better judgment. We can always do something though, even if it is just sending a postcard. Or, to paraphrase the words of my favorite priest, "A basket of cookies goes a long way toward reconciliation with even the most stubborn people."

There are many types of need: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. As mothers, we are literally filling all of these needs in our children every day. As women, we also serve the world at large with our unique talents and our generosity. In John 21:15, Jesus tells us to feed his lambs. He doesn't say to give them a seven-course dinner on perfect china in a neatly swept house. He exhorts Peter to just do something. Feed people. Love them where they are. Love them even when they are hard to love. If we can't feed people physically, we can feed their emotional needs with a smile, a hug, or maybe a quick text to let them know they are not forgotten.

And that brings up another point: Jesus does not say that we have to drop everything and spend 3 hours with our whiniest friend to help with her emotional drama. Sometimes the kindest thing we can do is to point people in the right direction and remind them that "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." (Rev. 7:17) We can get so wrapped up in other people's needs that we neglect our own family and ourselves. Have you ever done this?

St. Elizabeth wows us with her charity. Imagine, the hands of a princess giving out food, or wrapping bandages around someone, and doing menial tasks in the blood and dirt of a medieval hospital! And yet, we are not all called to help in the kind of squalor and despair that Elizabeth or Mother Teresa of Calcutta faced. We can fill needs right here with the people that He, in His mercy, puts in our path. Now, I'm off to send my brother some cookies. -Erin



[Luke 6:35](#)

"But rather, love your enemies and do good to them, and lend expecting nothing back; then your reward will be great and you will be children of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked."

This amazing woman was born in Darfur in 1869. Her childhood was a blessed one as her father was very prosperous. She said that she knew nothing of suffering. Sometime between the ages of seven and nine Bakhita was kidnapped by Arab slave traders. She would spend the next decade being shuffled from one slave owner to the next. Bakhita was no longer a stranger to suffering. She was once beaten for breaking a vase. The abuse was so extensive she could not get out of bed for a month. Probably the most brutal abuse she underwent was being intentionally scarred or tattooed all over her breasts, belly and right arm. The wounds were filled with salt to ensure permanent scarring.

Eventually, Bakhita was sold to a different family and would serve as their nanny for three years. They took Bakhita to Italy but when it was time to return she would not go with them. Since Italy does not recognize slavery, Bakhita was free! Two months later, she entered the Catholic Church and was Confirmed by future Pope Pius X. A few years later, she decided to enter the Canossian order. There Bakhita spoke out about her earlier years and helped prepare missionaries for evangelization in Africa.

But the real story of her heroism is found in her forgiving heart. Bakhita credits her kidnappers for her amazing faith. She said, "If I were to meet those who kidnapped me, and even those who tortured me, I would kneel and kiss their hands. For, if these things had not happened, I would not have been a Christian and a religious today."

St. John Paul II would later say of St. Bakhita, "In her we find a shining advocate of genuine emancipation."

Perhaps it is difficult for us in America to relate to such horror and torture. Yet, the story of St. Bakhita is truly one for all of us. Despite being separated from her family and brutalized for more than a decade, Bakhita still chose to love. Each of us has something that we hold on to, something that enslaves us. Unfortunately that is the reality of sin. Sin causes us to have gaping wounds that leave nasty scars. Perhaps it's not even your own sinfulness. Often times the deepest wounds in our life were blown by those closest to us. We allow those wounds to speak lies to us. We hear them say, "*you are not good enough,*" "*you deserved it,*" or "*you'll never be able to change.*" When we believe these things we become enslaved by them. Fear begins to dictate who we are and slowly we become people we were never meant to be.

Bakhita teaches us about freedom! The emancipation that St. John Paul II was getting at starts with forgiveness. It takes immense courage and daily commitment to not only forgive others who have wronged you but to take it a step further and actually thank them for it. When we do this we learn something. We all fall short. As I have been wronged so also have I wronged



[Luke 1:34](#)

There are many different stories and legends attributed to St. Lucy. From being unmovable even by a team of oxen when persecutors tried to have her defiled to having her eyes plucked out (or plucking them out herself, we don't know). One fact that we have about St Lucy is that she was a victim of that persecution along with the earlier Christians during the reign of the Roman Diocletian and was killed..

There are many legends that cannot be verified, but may be true or at least have some elements of truth.

St Lucy was said to have been so beautiful that her eyes radiated her love for Christ and she had many pagan suitors. Her father died when she was young, and her mother wanted one of the pagan suitors to marry St Lucy. They had a significant dowry, but St Lucy had begged her mother to give the dowry to the poor. Her mother became suddenly and seriously ill, so they went to the tomb of St. Agatha to pray. The legend continues to say that they fell asleep, and

Saint Agatha appeared to Lucy in her sleep to tell her that her mother had been healed.

Another legend around St Lucy is that of her rejected groom. While Lucy and her mother were grateful to God, the rejected would-be groom was deeply angered and betrayed Lucy's faith to the governor Paschasius. The governor attempted to force her into defilement at a brothel, but the guards who came to take her away were unable to move her, even after hitching her to a team of oxen.

These are lesser-known legends surrounding St Lucy, but by far the most well-known legends surrounding this dear sweet Saint of ours have to do with her eyes. It's said that they were the most beautiful eyes because they were shining with the love she had for our Lord. One such legend surrounding her eyes is that rather than accept the hand in marriage of a lover who desired her for the sake of her beautiful eyes, she plucked them out, and sent them to him with this message: *"Here hast thou what thou so much desirest; and for the rest, I beseech thee, leave me now in peace!"*

Nevertheless, as the legend expressly tells us, her sight was restored to her the next day. Lucy, whose name can mean *"light"* or *"lucid,"* is the patron saint of the blind. She is often seen with the emblem of eyes on a cup or plate. In paintings, she is often depicted with a golden plate holding her eyes and often holds a palm branch, which is a symbol of victory over evil.

St. Lucy's devotion and faith reminds me of our sweet mama Mary who remained a virgin through her entire life. They had unending faith and honor in their chastity and eternal virginity, both doing their duty to the Lord, and both having faith in His plan for them. -Mandi

Reflection 1: In what ways can you open your own eyes to the will of the Lord? He doesn't call all of us to the same life of the saints, but He does have a calling for all of us.

