



## Saints

Central to the Catholic faith is the recognition and honouring of saints. These individuals are not super-humans but ordinary people who through their lives have demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to the call of discipleship. Saints are never worshiped; that honour is given to God alone. However they can be powerful role models for people seeking direction in living a life of faith.

Catholics engage with the lives of saints in three ways – **veneration**, **imitation** and **invocation**. Saints are **venerated**, or revered, due to the importance bestowed upon them. Often saints are honoured by a feast day in the Church's calendar on which Mass is celebrated commemorating the life of the saint. Many saints are patrons for schools, countries, occupations or organizations. Schools are often named after a patron saint, e.g. St Patrick's, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, St Augustine's. The patron saint of Australia is Our Lady Help of Christians and her feast day is celebrated on May 24. Various titles for Mary, Mother of God recognize her sainthood e.g. St Mary, Mater Dei, Our Lady of Lourdes.

Saints can be **imitated**, recognizing that that they can inspire people to follow the example of their lives. People of faith continually look for direction in how to live a good and holy life. The life of the saint, shaped by challenge and hardship, and often with as much doubt as certainty, can exemplify the courage needed to live a life of faith.

Finally, the tradition of the Church has promoted the **invocation** of saints as intercessors of prayer. Often Catholics will ask, in prayer, for a particular saint to pray for them e.g. St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, pray for us. It is important to note the difference between the prayer to God and the invocation of the saints. One prays to God asking for help or offering thanks; one prays to the saints asking for their assistance through their intercession with God.