YoungSaints
A RESOURCE THAT TELLS THE STORIES OF YOUNG SAINTS
Using this resource

This resource accompanies the Young Saints travelling exhibition of six portable pull-up banners featuring images of six young saints. As contemporary saints, the faces of these six young people are intended to draw young people into a recognition that holy lives are lived even today, and that extraordinary sanctity may be found in the ordinariness of familiar faces.

The travelling exhibition may be booked for your parish, school or community by contacting the Archdiocesan Office for Youth at aoy@cam.org.au / 9287 5565.

This resource may be used in the following ways:

• Display the banners in your parish, school, or community on significant days e.g. World Youth Day (held on Palm Sunday annually), Vocations Sunday, All Saints Day.

• Run a youth group session featuring the banners and resource. Allocate one saint to each small group, and reflect on their life using the biography presented in this resource:
  o What challenges in this young saint’s life can you identify with?
  o How is love expressed in this young saint’s life?
  o What can you learn from this young saint’s example?

Conclude with the prayer or reflection presented with each saint’s biography.

Saints and blesseds

The Catholic Church canonises Saints who are recognised to have led holy lives and are now in heaven. Canonisation is the final step of what can be a lengthy process of inquiry before naming a Saint. The step before canonisation is Beatification which names a person as ‘Blessed’.

While Saints and Blesseds are publicly recognised by the Church, any person who is in heaven is a saint.

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Pier Giorgio Frassati

The higher we go, the better we hear the voice of Christ

1901-1925 | Beatified: 1990 | Feast day: July 4

**LIFE**

Pier Giorgio was meant to live a privileged life. His father, a newspaper baron in Turin, would have preferred that Pier Giorgio just be sensible and enter the family business. But his son, an average student at best, was occupied with other things: his engineering studies so that he could work with poor miners, the Catholic youth organisations he joined, the work he did with the poor in his town. Why did he spend so much time with the poor? He said “Jesus comes to visit me each morning in Holy Communion. I return his visit to him in the poor.”

Pier Giorgio was both devoted and outgoing. In the midst of his life of prayer and service, Pier was an adventurer. The mountains called to him. He hiked alone and with friends. “I leave my heart on the mountains” he said, “and if my studies permitted, I would spend whole days there, admiring the magnificence of God.” The allegory of the mountains inspired his spiritual life. For Pier Giorgio, the climb was all about the life lived to hear God.

At 24, Pier Giorgio died of polio, most probably contracted from a poor family he had visited. On the day of the funeral for the young man from a wealthy family, his father was stunned to see his home and the streets of Turin lined with hundreds of people – not the wealthy associates of the family, but with the town’s poor.

**PRAYER**

If we do not know the road, and if we often abandon the path, show us the way upward to heaven.

If we do not want to take the first demanding steps to set ourselves on the way, show us the way upward to heaven.

If we lack the strength to overcome the most difficult passes, show us the way upward to heaven.

If we have the strength, but prefer to use it to turn back, show us the way upward to heaven.

If we never pause to be nourished by the bread of eternal life, and if we do not quench our thirst from the fountain of prayer, show us the way upward to heaven.

When we do not know how to contemplate the beauty of the gifts we have received, show us the way upward to heaven.

If we have committed many sins, show us the way upward to heaven.

If we have lost hope, show us the way upward to heaven.

Pray for us, Pier Giorgio Frassati. Teach us how to hear the voice of Christ calling us upward to heaven and deep into the heart of God. Amen.

Prayer adapted from homily of Fr Thomas Rosica, CSB preached on 14 July 2008 during World Youth Day at the Prayer Vigil and Eucharistic Adoration with the body of Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati in St Mary’s Cathedral, Sydney, Australia.
Thérèse of Lisieux

Let us love, since that is what our hearts were made for.

1873-1897 | Canonised: 1925 | Feast day: October 1

LIFE

Thérèse was called the Little Queen by her father and sisters. She could be demanding, and she could throw tantrums, and as the youngest of four daughters, she was spoilt. Her young life was idyllic until the early death of her mother. As a child, she began to long – deeply – for heaven.

The family calendar was marked by the turning of the liturgical season, and daily life included long walks to gardens and shrines accompanied by Thérèse’s father. By the time she was a teenager, Thérèse’s demands for more became a longing for the convent. On a pilgrimage to Rome she begged the Pope to let her join the Convent of Mt Carmel in Lisieux despite being considered too young.

At 15, she was permitted to enter. Hidden in Carmel, with its strict schedule of prayer, contemplation and domestic work, Thérèse’s spiritual life blossomed. For Jesus, she wanted to perform “every kind of heroic action at once”. She wanted to be a fighter, an apostle, a doctor, a missionary, a martyr.

But the image of the garden revealed Thérèse’s true calling. She wrote “He has created the great saints who are like the lilies and the roses, but He has also created much lesser saints and they must be content to be the daisies or the violets which rejoice His eyes whenever He glances down.”

Thérèse chose to live her life “the little way”, finally recognising that her vocation was simply to love. She died at 24 from tuberculosis, unknown to the world until her journals were read and published. These journals which record her reflections in loving the little way are her treasure to the church.

PRAYER

St Thérèse, flower of love, intercede for us.

Fill our hearts with your pure love of God.

Make us aware of the goodness of God and how well He tends His garden.

Instil in us your little way of doing ordinary things with extraordinary love.

Give us the heart of a child who wonders at life and embraces everything with loving enthusiasm.

Teach us your delight in God’s ways so that love may blossom in our hearts.

Little Flower of Jesus, bring our prayers before God, our Father.

Amen.

Prayer adapted from the Feast Day Novena prayer to St Thérèse of Lisieux.
Chiara Badano

I have nothing left, but I still have my heart, and with that I can always love.

1971-1990 | Beatified: 2010 | Feast day: October 29

**Life**

Chiara was a long-awaited only child. Given the name Chiara – “light” – she was a good girl who selected her best toys to give away, spent time with elderly friends at the retirement home, and visited sick class mates. She once visited a school friend who had chicken pox. While others were too afraid to visit, Chiara wrote in her diary “I think that love is more important than fear.”

At nine years old, Chiara encountered the Focolare movement. This meeting transformed her ordinary inclination to goodness to mirror a life lived for Jesus. In a letter to the movement’s founder, Chiara Lubich, she wrote: “I’ve rediscovered the Gospel in a new light. Now I want this book to be the sole purpose of my life!” Ordinary challenges became moments to meet Jesus. After failing a year of high school she reflected “This is a very important moment for me: it is an encounter with Jesus forsaken.”

She was adventurous and outgoing. She dreamed of being a flight attendant, had many friends, and loved singing and playing sport. While playing tennis she became aware of a sharp pain in her shoulder. It was soon discovered that this was not a sports injury but a rare bone cancer.

As her illness progressed, Chiara determined that she would not miss any chance to love. She refused pain medication that would compromise her clarity of mind because “there’s only one thing I can do now: to offer my suffering to Jesus”. Despite her great pain, she spent hours walking the wards with another young depressed patient to make this girl feel better. One of her friends recalled: “At first we felt like we were going to visit [Chiara] in order to support her, but soon we noticed that whenever we went into her room, the feeling came over us that we were being projected into the splendid adventure of God’s love. And yet, Chiara didn’t say any extraordinary words, she didn’t write pages and pages of diary. She simply loved.”

When Chiara was nearing the end of her illness and she was paralysed in bed, she wrote: “I have nothing left, but I still have my heart, and with that I can always love.” She died at nineteen years of age.

**Prayer**

Lord, help me to simply love; to have an extraordinary love for others in the ordinarness of everyday. Even when I feel I have nothing left to give, help me to continue to love You and to love those around me.

Let my love for You radiate through my life. I dedicate every little thing to you, as Chiara said “For You, Jesus”.

In the face of challenges, unite my suffering to Your suffering on the Cross, and may my soul continue to sing to You.

In this way, may I come to understand Your plan for my life, as you slowly unveil it to me. I trust in You, Jesus.

Chiara Badano, pray for us.

Adapted from the words of Chiara Badano.
LIFE
Rafael was an architecture student in Madrid. He was artistic and sensitive to beauty. And he was sensitive to the silence in which he could meet God. It was on a visit to his aunt and uncle, his high-school graduation present, that he was first introduced to a community of Trappist monks. The silence of the monastery stirred the young man. The “mystery of the absolute” called out to him.

On completing his university studies, Rafael entered the Cistercian Monastery of the Strict Observance. The rhythm of Gregorian chant and the Liturgy of the Hours enchanted him. His wonder expanded. He wrote: “I wish that the whole universe, with the planets, all stars and innumerable stellar systems, is an immense expanse, polished and brilliant, in which I could write the name of God.”

But four months in, Rafael became sick with diabetes. Over the next three years, illness and the complications of the Spanish Civil War brought him in and out of the monastery. It seemed that Raphael would find it impossible to settle into the place he thought his home or to make the vows he longed to make.

On his final return to the monastery, he entered as an oblate, someone who lives in the monastery but may not make vows. The oblate was seen as someone who lives on the outer of the monastic community.

In accepting this, Rafael found freedom: “I have realized my vocation. I am not a religious. I am not a layman. I am nothing ... Blessed God, I am nothing more than a soul in love with Christ.”

Rafael died from diabetes at 27. Though his young adult life was marked by the contradiction of his longings with the reality of his illness and the conflict around him, he found peace in Jesus: “With Jesus at my side, nothing seems difficult to me.”

Two months before dying he wrote, “I was put to the window, the sun was beginning to rise. An immense peace reigned in nature. Everything was beginning to wake up, the earth, the sky, the birds. Everything, little by little, was beginning to wake up to the commandment of God. Everyone was obedient to his divine laws, without laments or sorrows, gently, with mildness, both light and darkness, both the blue sky and the hard ground covered by dew drizzle. How good is God! I thought. There is peace everywhere, except in the heart of man.”

REFLECTION
We want to seek greatness in complexity and think that only when things are difficult have they anything worthwhile to offer.

I have seen that we reach God by just the opposite. I have seen that to achieve anything in the spiritual life, I need to be free from complexity and contortion, from clever speculation and technicalities.

True knowledge of him comes through simplicity of heart and integrity.

The ways of the Lord are simplicity; his yoke is easy and his burden is light. We die to the world in order to be born to God.

God always lets his light shine on anyone who loves and seeks him in simplicity.

From the writings of St Rafael Arnaiz Baron.

All we have to do is want God
1911-1938 | Beatified 1992 | Feast day: October 27
By 1926, Mexico was the world’s most dangerous place to be Catholic. Churches had been closed. Religious vows became illegal. Every homily had to be approved by the government authorities.

For fourteen-year-old José, the churches had to open at any cost. His older brothers had already joined the Cristeros, a rebel movement resisting the religious persecution of the faith. José insisted on joining. Though he was only permitted to be a flag-bearer, he sensed that this would lead to heaven: “For Jesus Christ, I will do everything.”

After heavy fighting with government forces, José was caught and imprisoned. Under threat of death, José was commanded to renounce his faith in Christ. Knowing that refusing to obey meant death, he wrote to his mother “I believe that I am going to die very shortly, but it does not matter, Mama… I will die happy, because I die on the side of Our Lord.”

José was transferred to the sacristy of his local church – the church where he had been baptised – the church where the sanctuary had been converted into a holding pen for horses and for the deputy’s prized fighting roosters. For José, this was clear desecration. He killed the roosters, knowing this final statement in defending God’s honour would confirm his death.

As José was tortured and led through the town to the cemetery, the town people could hear him cry out “Viva Cristo Rey” – Long Live Christ the King. When he was finally shot, his last action was to draw a cross in the ground at his feet and kiss it.

**Viva Cristo Rey**

Let this be the cry of my heart as I fight the good fight in love, Help me to remain firm in my faith, with a generous and steadfast heart.

Enable me to be a person of prayer, calling out night and day to You. God. Let me not lose faith, and may Your Holy Spirit pray within me.

Help me to support others in prayer, that we may keep our arms raised in prayer until Your Victory is won.

Inspire all young people, Saint José, to be capable of giving witness to Christ in our daily lives.

Adapted from Pope Francis’ Homily at the Canonisation of St José Sánchez Del Río, 16 October 2016, and Cardinal José Saravia Martins’ Homily at St José Sánchez Del Río’s beatification at Guadalupe, 20 November 2003.
Marcel Callo could be a bit of a perfectionist. As a boy he joined the Boy Scouts, inspired by its ideals of loyalty, courage, service and purity. At 12, he left school to help his family as an apprentice in a printing shop. His co-workers made crude jokes, and Marcel was not impressed. Among the young apprentices, Marcel was something of an outcast.

Joining the Christian Young Workers Group (called the “Jocists”) changed Marcel’s life. He found friends who shared his values. Through the group, he started to lighten up. The youth group helped young people find dignity in work; it also formed them spiritually and intellectually in prayer and the social teaching of the Catholic Church. Marcel became someone capable of engaging with his co-workers in robust discussions that did not water down his strong faith. He gained the respect of his co-workers. More so, through the Jocists, Marcel found – surprisingly – love. He met Marguerite Derniux, and by 20 years old he was engaged. In the movement he had grown as a leader. With Marguerite he committed to daily Mass through their engagement.

With the Second World War unfolding around France, the Nazis took over Marcel’s home region. The Jocists were banned, but instead of disappearing, they re-formed in secret. Publicly, Marcel and his friends became a “Sports Association”. Privately they studied Church teaching, and helped refugees arriving from Eastern Europe.

They felt like the early Church in the catacombs.

Eventually, Marcel was conscripted to work in a labour camp, a huge blow to him and his fiancee. His first inclination was to flee, but he feared what this would mean to his family – especially his older brother who was a seminarian. He chose to leave for the labour camp, telling Marguerite “I am not leaving as a worker, but as a missionary in the service of my companions”. He carried his Boy Scout and Jocists badges in secret.

While his ideals were strong, the reality of life as a forced labourer was hard. There was no Catholic Church in the German town he was sent to, and he was forced to make rockets that were used against his countrymen. As each month wore on, he grew more and more depressed.

But then Marcel discovered a French priest offering monthly Mass at his barracks. After his first communion in months, he wrote to Marguerite: “Christ answered me. He told me I was not to give in to despair; that I should take care of my fellow workers – and I found joy again.”

Marcel re-dedicated himself to the prayer life he and Marguerite established before the war. With his friends in the Barracks, he organised youth group inspired activities for the workers – prayer, sports, plays. The SS sensed the change in mood and grew suspicious.

Marcel was arrested in 1944. As guards searched through his belongs, Marcel’s friends demanded to know why he was being arrested. The Commander replied: “He is too Catholic.”

Marcel was transferred to the hard labour of the Mathauhasuen Concentration Camp. His glasses were stolen, and he was sick, weak, and beaten regularly. From the camp, he wrote to his brother, now a priest, and said “Jesus is a friend who never deserts me for an instant. He supports and consoles me. With him you can bear everything... He has marked out the path for me, and now I am walking in it.” Wracked with dysentery, Marcel died on the Feast of St Joseph the Worker, just five months before the end of war.

Jesus marked out the path for me, and now I am walking in it

1921-1945 | Beatification:1987 | Feast day: March 19

In you Jesus, I want to live. With you, I want to pray. For you, I want to give all my strength and all my time in all the circumstances of my life.

Amen

Adapted from a prayer written by Marcel Callo.