

LAY SAINTS

*Martyrs*



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JOAN CARROLL CRUZ

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*This book is  
dedicated with love  
to  
The Holy Family*



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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

**A** NATIONAL Catholic magazine polled a thousand of its readers to learn what they believe about the saints. The magazine reported that while news reports on the nation's Catholics have highlighted disagreements with traditional Church teachings, sixty-seven percent of the survey's respondents said they prayed to the saints as much, or more, than they did years ago. Sixty-eight percent of the respondents said they tried to imitate the lives of the saints.

Mentioned as the four favorite saints were the Blessed Mother, St. Joseph, St. Francis of Assisi and St. Thérèse of Lisieux (the Little Flower). With the exception of the Blessed Mother and St. Joseph, who are in a unique category, we are left with a Franciscan brother and a Discalced Carmelite cloistered nun. While we can admire the virtues of St. Francis and St. Thérèse, the lifestyles of these two saints, and other saints of religious orders, are far removed, to say the least, from those of secular people.

Although the exact number of canonized saints is unknown, we know, of course, that the greater majority have been members of religious orders. We love them, we admire them, we wish to imitate them, but how can a mother with

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small children, a wife with a difficult husband, a young bride with in-law problems—how can they really relate to the nun who lived in the quiet of a cloister, the nun who lived in a community where everyone shared the work of the house? How can they relate to the saints of religious orders whose lives were arranged in an orderly manner and who had designated times for quiet prayer and who had little or no financial problems? One might wonder if these saints of the cloister would have merited their titles if they had remained in the world to face the conflicts and dangers confronted by ordinary lay people.

It is profitable, of course, for laymen to love these saints, to pray to them and to imitate their virtues as much as they are able. But it seems that laymen would draw more encouragement to advance in prayer and virtue and would derive more consolation in their trials by examining the troubles and temptations of those saints who lived and died as secular members of the Church.

St. Teresa of Avila suggests that “we need to cultivate and think upon, and seek the companionship of those saints who, though living on earth like ourselves, have accomplished such great deeds for God.” Here, then, are the lives of secular saints who have, so to speak, “lived on earth like ourselves.” Represented here are single men and women, mothers and fathers, soldiers and servants, doctors and lawyers, the humble and the noble—all who have met the difficulties and challenges of the secular life and triumphed over them. Their virtues are to be admired, but most of all imitated. May we benefit from their example and from their prayers.

—Joan Carroll Cruz

# PREFACE

## A WORD ABOUT THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

A BOOK about secular saints would be incomplete without mentioning the pre-eminent model for secular people, the Blessed Mother. But what could be said here that has not been mentioned about her already in numerous biographies and devotional works? We have only to delve into these to find a solicitous and understanding mother, a kindly and generous friend, a consoling companion, and a ready and willing intercessor with God.

Although it is known that Mary was free from sin, full of grace, blessed among women and the fairest honor of our race, yet, as we know, she was not exempt from countless trials and hardships. She, who was the model of saints throughout the ages, should be the particular ideal of secular people, since Mary was an exemplary member of our secular ranks. She was, of course, a young bride, a young mother, a housekeeper, a widow. . . .

May this Immaculate Mother pray for us, that in our imitation of the Saints, we can advance in virtue and eventually join her and her sainted children in our heavenly homeland.



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*And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying: How long, O Lord (holy and true) dost thou not judge and revenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given to every one of them one; and it was said to them, that they should rest for a little time, till their fellow servants, and their brethren, who are to be slain, even as they, should be filled up.*

—Revelation 6:9–11





ONE

# BLESSED ADRIAN FORTESCUE

D. 1539

**S**IR Adrian Fortescue was born in 1476 to an old Devonshire family which traced its ancestry to the time of the Norman Conquest. His father, Sir John, held important posts at court; his mother was Alice Boleyn, a cousin of Anne Boleyn, whose marriage to King Henry VIII was to bring about the fall of the Catholic religion in England—as well as the martyrdom of countless Catholics.

Sir Adrian's early and middle life was that of a typical country gentleman of the time. He was a serious, thrifty man, careful in business, exact in accounts and a lover of the homely wit of the day. Because his family fortunes had been secured in earlier times, he was also a man of considerable wealth. He was a justice of the peace for the county of Oxford and assisted at the royal court. In 1513 he fought in France at the Battle of the Spurs, and in 1520 he was in Queen Catherine's train when she went to Calais during the Field of the Cloth of Gold. Always a religious man, Sir Adrian was admitted in 1532 as a knight of devotion of St. John of Jerusalem (the Knights of Malta). The following year he was enrolled at Oxford as a tertiary in the Third Order of St. Dominic.

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Sir Adrian was also a married man and the father of two daughters by his first wife, Anne Stoner. Twelve years after her death, he married Anne Rede of Boarstall, who bore him three sons.

During the time that King Henry VIII was persecuting Catholics as a result of his differences with the Pope concerning his marriage to Anne Boleyn, Sir Adrian seems to have behaved with prudence. But for reasons that have not been given he was arrested on August 29, 1534 and detained in the Marshalsea prison. He was probably released in the spring of 1535, the year during which St. Thomas More and St. John Fisher were beheaded for the Faith for refusing to side with King Henry VIII in the matter of his divorce and remarriage. Because Catholics and priests were being arrested for their faith, Sir Adrian, well-known as a Catholic, must have expected the inevitable. During February of 1539, the expected occurred when he was arrested and sent to the Tower of London.

Parliament met in April, and Sir Adrian was condemned without a trial. It was claimed that he “not only most traitorously refused his duty of allegiance, which he ought to bear to Your Highness, but also hath committed divers and sundry detestable and abominable treasons, and put sedition in your realm.” The nature of these treasons was never given. Condemned at the same time were Cardinal Pole and several others because they “adhered themselves to the Bishop of Rome.” Catholic tradition has always held that Sir Adrian died for the same cause.

Bl. Adrian was beheaded with Bl. Thomas Dingley at Tower Hill on July 8, 1539. Since his death, his cultus has

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always flourished among the Knights of St. John. He was beatified by Pope Leo XIII in 1895.

In the church at Husband's Bosworth is preserved Bl. Adrian's *Book of Hours*. On the flyleaf he had written and signed a series of maxims, or rules, of the spiritual life. A few of these are the following:

Above all things, love God with thy heart.

Desire His honour more than the health of thine own soul.

Take heed with all diligence to purge and cleanse thy mind with oft confession, and raise thy desire or lust from earthly things.

Resort to God every hour.

Be pitiful unto poor folk and help them to thy power, for there you shall greatly please God.

In prosperity be meek of heart, and in adversity patient.

And pray continually to God that you may do all that is His pleasure.

If by chance you fall into sin, despair not; and if you keep these precepts, the Holy Ghost will strengthen thee in all other things necessary, and this doing you shall be with Christ in Heaven, to whom be given laud, praise and honour everlasting.

(Signed) Adrian Fortescue