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A
Saint Squad
FOR TEACHERS
DISCUSSION
★ GUIDE ★

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Preface

My dear fellow educators,

Thank you so much for checking out my book *A Saint Squad for Teachers: 45 Heavenly Friends to Carry You Through the School Year*. I hope you enjoy learning about these saints as much as I did.

More importantly, I pray that learning about them, their struggles, and how their faith helped them overcome the challenges of teaching, catechizing, and running schools and faith communities helps you to see how you can also depend on God when you face your own challenges at work.

I encourage you to make the reading of this book a bit of a mini retreat. Set aside time alone or with colleagues to savor each saint's story. In quiet reflection or in discussion with others, consider how these heavenly friends can become your prayer companions. When you are tempted to give in to the frustrations and roadblocks of your job, ask these holy men and women to cover you with their prayers. They have walked this way before us. May their examples guide us on our own journeys.

Your sister in Christ,
Amy

How to Use This Discussion Guide

We teachers love a good unit plan, do we not? At the same time, we hate a scripted curriculum that leaves no wiggle room for our professional judgment. Therefore, I'll suggest three options for how you can use this discussion guide with the book, and then you can use your professional wisdom to decide what works best for you.

First, you might want to read the book over the summer when you aren't so cramped for time. Then perhaps you can meet leisurely with some colleagues to discuss a few of your favorite chapters over your beverage of choice.

Second, perhaps you'll want to use this for a monthly book club. Principals may choose to use this for regular in-service days, or perhaps a group of you want to meet once a month for some out-of-school camaraderie and fellowship. If that's to your liking and time frame, here's a unit plan for you. I've left a date column on the right for you to enter dates for your group.

MONTH	CHAPTERS TO READ	DATE
AUGUST	Introduction Chapter 1: Saints Who Used Relatable and Creative Teaching Techniques	Suggested date: Opening In-Service Day before school starts
SEPTEMBER	Chapter 2: Saints Who Built Strong Relationships	
OCTOBER	Chapter 3: Saints Who Dealt with Challenging Students	
NOVEMBER	Chapter 4: Saints Who Advocated for Change	
DECEMBER	Chapter 5: Saints Who Sought Justice for Their Students	
JANUARY	Chapter 6: Saints Who Surpassed Expectations	
FEBRUARY	Chapter 7: Saints Who Taught in Times of Crisis	
MARCH	Chapter 8: Saints Who Kept Going When the Going Got Tough	
APRIL	Chapter 9: Saints Who Embraced Lifelong Learning	
MAY	Chapter 10: Saints Whose Prayer Lives Kept Them Going	
JUNE	Epilogue: Following Your Vocation Wherever It Leads	

As a final suggestion, perhaps you'll want to spread things out over the school year and discuss just one or two saints a week at the start of team meetings. (After all, the school year is busy; it can be hard to find time to run to the restroom, much less read a book!) If time is at a premium, you might find it easiest to read just one or two saints a week. With 45 saints in the book and 36 weeks in the average school year, you've got enough to carry you through the year. Here's one way to break the saints down over the course of a 36-week school year.

How to Use This Discussion Guide

WEEK	CHAPTER AND SAINTS
1	Chapter 1: Servant of God Sr. Thea Bowman
2	Chapter 1: Servant of God Antonio Cuipa and Saint Ephrem the Syrian
3	Chapter 1: Saint Philip Neri
4	Chapter 1: Saint Peter Claver
5	Chapter 2: Saint Catherine of Siena
6	Chapter 2: Saint Antoninus
7	Chapter 2: Saints Benedict and Scholastica
8	Chapter 2: Saint Marie-Eugenie de Jesus
9	Chapter 3: Saint John Bosco
10	Chapter 3: Saint Dorotheus of Gaza
11	Chapter 3: Saint Jean Baptiste de La Salle
12	Chapter 4: Blessed Marie-Anne Blondin and Saint John of Ávila
13	Chapter 4: Saint Charles Borromeo
14	Chapter 4: Saint Marguerite Bourgeoys
15	Chapter 5: Saint Charles Lwanga and Companions
16	Chapter 5: Saint Katharine Drexel and Servant of God Nicholas Black Elk
17	Chapter 5: Saint Dulce Lopes Pontes
18	Chapter 5: Venerable Mary Elizabeth Lange
19	Chapter 6: Saint Thomas Aquinas
20	Chapter 6: Saint André Bessette and Blessed Solanus Casey
21	Chapter 6: Saint Bernadette Soubirous and Blessed Carlos Manuel Rodriquez Santiago
22	Chapter 7: Blessed Miguel Pro and Blessed Peter To Rot
23	Chapter 7: Saint Gertrude the Great
24	Chapter 7: Saint Gregory the Great
25	Chapter 7: Blessed Natalia Tułasiewicz
26	Chapter 8: Saint Augustine of Hippo

How to Use This Discussion Guide

WEEK	CHAPTER AND SAINTS
27	Chapter 8: Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini
28	Chapter 8: Saint Mary MacKillop
29	Chapter 9: Saint Lawrence of Brindisi
30	Chapter 9: Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat
31	Chapter 9: Saints Andrew Kim Taegon, Paul Chong Hasang, and Companions
32	Chapter 10: Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton
33	Chapter 10: Blessed Maria Caridad Brader
34	Chapter 10: Saint Ignatius of Loyola
35	Epilogue: Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein)
36	Epilogue: Blessed Marie-Léonie Paradis and Blessed Mary Kevin

Opening Prayer for Your Book Club Discussion

Heavenly Father,

You called us to care for your children, from the tiny tots to the anxious and energetic teens and young adults. Sometimes our work as educators feels heavy and burdensome. In those times, remind us that your yoke is easy and your burden is light, and we need only hand over our concerns to you when they get to be too much for us. When our lessons run smoothly and we delight in our students' successes, remind us to give thanks so that we will never forget what a privilege it is to work with young people.

Send your Spirit upon us as we reflect on our work. Help us to see our work as you see it. Help us to care for our fellow educators and our students. Help us to share openly as we discuss today's reflection questions so that we can learn from one another. Like these saint educators who went before us, help us to see the way forward when our path looks blurry.

Grant us wisdom, grace, and fortitude to do your will today and always. We ask this in the name of the greatest of teachers, Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

Discussion Questions

INTRODUCTION

1. Even before reading this book, did any saints play a pivotal role in your decision to become an educator or catechist?

2. If you teach at a Catholic school named after a saint, what do you know about that saint? Do you regularly ask that saint to intercede for you?

Chapter 1

Saints Who Used Relatable and Creative Teaching Techniques

1. Sr. Thea Bowman and St. Philip Neri were both known for their joyful and infectious personalities. How can you bring joy into your classroom? Can you make your students's cultural diversity an integral part of your lessons?

2. Servant of God Antonio Cuipa played music and sought connection with his listeners before beginning to preach. How do you meet students where they already are when teaching?

3. St. Ephrem the Syrian adapted popular songs and turned them into teaching tools. How can you adapt things your students already enjoy so that they fit your curriculum?

4. St. Peter Claver knew that basic needs have to be met before learning can occur. When have you had to help students with needs at the bottom of Maslow's hierarchy? How can you identify when these needs are not being met?

Chapter 2

Saints Who Built Strong Relationships

1. People of all social ranks listened to St. Catherine of Siena because they trusted her. How do you build strong relationships with your students, coworkers, and administrators?

2. St. Antoninus visited the people under his care often. How do you find ways to check in with your students (or staff if you're an administrator) that is personal and not purely evaluative?

3. St. Scholastica asked St. Benedict to bend his rules so they could continue to discuss the faith. How do your classroom rules bend to meet the needs of your students?

4. St. Marie-Eugenie forged lifelong friendships with people who helped her in her ministry. Where have you found educator friends (at your own school or beyond) who inspire and support you? How do they accomplish this?

Chapter 3

Saints Who Dealt with Challenging Students

1. St. John Bosco used a *parola all'orecchio* (word in the ear) to redirect students. How would that work in your own classroom? What would you do next if those quiet words didn't have the intended effect?

2. St. Dorotheus consoled and guided St. Dositheus. How have you guided students who go to extremes and lose faith in themselves?

3. St. Jean-Baptiste de La Salle recognized students' dignity and worth. How have you done the same in your classroom?

Chapter 4

Saints Who Advocated for Change

1. Blessed Marie-Anne Blondin served humbly. When has God asked you to humble yourself in order to bring about change? What did that humility look like, and how did it affect the situation?

2. St. John of Ávila told bishops to examine themselves before requiring reform from others. What changes might you need to make before asking others to do the same?

3. St. Charles Borromeo acted firmly but gently when helping others to reform. How can you find the right balance between being firm and being gentle? Are there any specific areas of reform that you are working on right now? What does it look like to be both firm and gentle in that process?

4. St. Marguerite Bourgeoys trusted God to help her bring about change in her new community despite the challenges. When has your trust in God paid off?

Chapter 5

Saints Who Sought Justice for Their Students

1. St. Charles Lwanga protected young boys from a predator king. How can you keep a watchful eye out for students who might be suffering from abuse? We won't purge our Church, our schools, or our society from this evil without a concerted effort from everyone.

2. St. Katharine Drexel sought advice from wise counselors. When you see an injustice, whose help might you seek out?

3. Servant of God Nicholas Black Elk used cultural ties to teach the faith. How have you considered your cultural background as well as those of your students when deciding the best ways to teach?

4. St. Dulce Lopes Pontes made sure to teach the parents, too. How might supporting the educational needs of parents also support students? Does your school offer educational programs for parents, or are there community programs you can recommend?

5. Venerable Mary Elizabeth Lange didn't take no for an answer. When have you ignored the naysayers and pushed onward? What did you learn from that experience of perseverance?

Chapter 6

Saints Who Surpassed Expectations

1. St. Albert the Great saw the brilliance in St. Thomas Aquinas. How can you give your quieter students opportunities to shine?

2. St. André Bessette and Blessed Solanus Casey listened to people's needs with compassion, humility, and wisdom. How can you do the same for your students? When has exercising compassion and humility been particularly difficult, or particularly easy?

3. St. Bernadette's foster mother did not exercise patience with her language learning. How have you recognized the gifts of your English language learners while supporting their language learning efforts?

4. Blessed Carlos needed to learn in his own time and in his own way. How have some of your students needed more time or creative accommodations to meet their needs? Have you seen this as a burden or as a chance to serve humbly?

Chapter 7

Saints Who Taught in Times of Crisis

1. Blessed Miguel Pro used his acting talents to disguise himself so he could continue to preach. What gifts has God given you that have helped you be a better teacher?

2. Blessed Peter To Rot sought the help of priests even when they were in prison. What spiritual and educational advisors can you go to when you need a little help?

3. St. Gertrude the Great rewrote the works of the Church Fathers so her students could understand them. How have you adapted complex materials so that your students can attain greater knowledge and wisdom?

4. God asked St. Gregory the Great to step into leadership positions during challenging times. How is he calling you to lead?

5. Blessed Natalia continued to teach even while in a concentration camp. What obstacles have you had to overcome to continue your mission as an educator?

Chapter 8

Saints Who Kept Going When the Going Got Tough

1. St. Augustine of Hippo had an accountability partner in St. Jerome. In what ways have your coworkers held you accountable? Do you offer accountability to them?

2. St. Frances Xavier Cabrini trusted the Lord would provide her with the means necessary to do her work. How has the Lord provided for your work in unexpected ways?

3. St. Mary MacKillop avoided gossiping about the bishops who mistreated her. How do you avoid gossip in the workplace and work with proper authorities to resolve issues?

Chapter 9

Saints Who Embraced Lifelong Learning

1. St. Lawrence of Brindisi became an expert on Scripture so that he could better evangelize. What new area might you study to become a better expert on your content?

2. St. Madeleine Sophie insisted her sisters keep up with the latest pedagogical methods. How have you sought out ways to improve your teaching?

3. The early Korean martyrs dedicated themselves to learning about the faith and then sharing that knowledge with others, even at great personal risk. When was the last time you read a good book on teaching and passed it on to someone else who might benefit from it? What book was it and how did it impact you and the person with whom you shared it?

Chapter 10

Saints Whose Prayer Lives Kept Them Going

1. St. Elizabeth Ann Seton knew the benefits of devotional reading, prayer, and the sacraments. How do you engage with these practices in your own life? In addition to deepening your relationship with God, how might they affect your teaching?

2. Blessed Maria Caridad cherished her quiet time with Jesus. How might you find quiet moments with Jesus during a hectic school year? Can you find a local Eucharistic Adoration chapel and find time this week to stop by? If yes, put it in your planner or digital calendar. If you schedule it, you're more likely to do it.

3. St. Ignatius's life was changed when he studied the lives of the saints. How can you continue your study of the saints after this book? Is there a saint's shrine you can visit near you? Then it's time for your own personal field trip—no chaperoning required!

Epilogue

Following Your Vocation Wherever It Leads

1. St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross followed God's plan for her, even when it led to unexpected places. Where do you find God calling you? Where do you find consolation in the Ignatian sense?

2. Blessed Marie-Léonie Paradis sought to serve those who educate. In what ways can you do this, both inside and outside of the classroom?

3. Blessed Mary Kevin found ways to express her passion for education even when she was far away from her students. How has being an educator shaped your identity and what does that identity look like outside of the classroom?

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I love hearing from educators who have read my books. Please keep in touch via email and social media and let me know how I can help your school community further. I offer a variety of retreats and in-service day talks for educators, catechists, and faith communities.

Be sure to also check out my website for some teacher freebies! I have a free book of prayers for teachers as well as free lesson plans and free annotated bibliographies if you are looking for more books to read with students.

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