



Saints PowerPoint – Background Information

The PowerPoint uses a variety of quotes from different holy individuals to help us reflect on sanctity in our everyday experiences. You might like to use some of the information and questions below to encourage further discussion and exploration around the themes it presents.

SLIDE ONE - Daybreak

QUOTE: 'The future starts today, not tomorrow'

FIGURE: Servant of God, Pope John Paul II (1920 – 2005)

John Paul grew up experiencing German occupation during the Second World War, and became a well-loved and admired pope. He is best known for his belief in the universal call to holiness, his hope in the young, his devotion to Mary and his promotion of the sanctity of human life.

Are we open to being transformed by God today? Why do we put off things until tomorrow? How might God be inviting us to change the world around us?

SLIDE TWO - Sharing in food

QUOTE: 'The spirit of humility is sweeter than honey, and those who nourish themselves with this honey produce sweet fruit'

FIGURE: Saint Anthony of Padua (1195-1231)

Anthony was a well-educated and insightful young Portuguese man, who renounced his studies in order to lead a simple missionary life as a Franciscan friar. He soon became known, though, for his wisdom, and became the first theologian of the Franciscan order, writing renowned sermons that still resonate today.

What does it mean to be humble? How are people who are humble treated in today's society? What does Anthony mean about producing sweet fruit?

SLIDE THREE - Setting out on our day

QUOTE: '... and this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands' (see 2 John 1:6)

FIGURE: Saint John the Evangelist (1st century)

John was one of the apostles of Jesus, and is thought to be the writer of the 4th Gospel, as well as some New Testament letters and the book of Revelation. He conveys a deep sense of what it's like to be loved by Jesus, and of the mysterious glory of Christ in his Gospel... He is thought to have lived into old age, and we consider that he looked after Mary following Jesus' death.

What do you consider to be the essence of love? Is obedience something that we would normally associate with love? What do you think John means to say by using the term 'walk in obedience'?

SLIDE FOUR - At school or work

QUOTE: 'If you are what you should be, you will set the whole world on fire'

FIGURE: Saint Catherine of Siena (1347-1380)

Catherine was a tenacious and devoted woman who at the age of 7 decided she wanted to remain single for God, at 16, she began a period of contemplative prayer, and at the age of 19, had a significant mystical encounter with Jesus. Crucially, these interior experiences influenced her exterior life, and she helped the poor and needy around her, and was even a significant political figure, encouraging peace at a time of Italian civil war, ensuring that the pope was able to return to Rome.

Do you feel like you need to 'do' things to make a difference? How might 'being what you should be' change the world around you? Do you feel called by God in a unique way?

SLIDE FIVE - In the pressures of life

QUOTE: 'Do not worry over things that generate preoccupation and anxiety. One thing only is necessary: to lift up your spirit and love God'

FIGURE: Saint Padre Pio (1887-1968)

Pio is one of the most famous recent saints, having lived at the time when mass-communication became possible. He was a penniless monk who sought solitude, but his fame for spiritual direction and hearing confessions, where it was said he could see into people's hearts, made this nearly impossible. His mystical experiences were accompanied by other miraculous phenomena including bi-location and bearing the stigmata (the wounds of Jesus)

What kind of things cause you to worry? Do you believe that God is in charge of these pressures? What could it mean for you to 'lift up your spirit'?

SLIDE SIX - Friendships

QUOTE: 'Every time you smile at someone, it is an action of love, a gift to that person, a beautiful thing'

FIGURE: Blessed Teresa of Calcutta (1910-1997)

Mother Teresa for many symbolizes what it means to witness to your faith in the modern world. Born in Macedonia, Teresa recognized the immense poverty and suffering in the slums of Calcutta and gave her life to establishing the Missionaries of Charity who served society's poorest. She used the international spotlight her work drew to speak out on important social, spiritual and moral issues.

How do you offer gifts to your friends – in time, in actions, or in material things? How do you value friendship? Do you thank your friends for their love?

SLIDE SEVEN - The natural world

QUOTE: 'You will find something more in woods than in books. Trees and stones will teach you that which you can never learn from the masters'

FIGURE: Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153)

Bernard was a key player in a new type of prayerful monasteries at a time when some considered that monastic life had become too easy. The rigorous programme of prayer and silence helped shape Bernard into a great writer, theologian and a wise decision-maker. He sorted out political wrangling between rivals, both within the church, and attacks from outside the church. In particular, he emphasized the role of the Virgin Mary as intercessor.

Do you sometimes miss the simplest messages in everyday life? Is it easy to be constantly aware of the presence of God? What does God's care for creation speak of his relationship with humanity?

SLIDE EIGHT - Chores

QUOTE: 'If you work as you pray, you lift your heart to God with your hands' (paraphrased)

FIGURE: Saint Benedict of Nursia (c.480-c.457)

Benedict is sometimes described as the 'founder of western monasticism', meaning that he was the first European person to write down a widely-accepted set of guidelines for monks who sought to live, pray and work together. His 'rule' was composed when he was asked by the other monks to become their abbot, and still informs many religious communities today. St Benedict is also one of the patron saints of Europe, by virtue of having influenced European religious culture so much.

Do you pray in unexpected circumstances? How might being physically engaged in prayer affect the way in which you pray? Do you think Benedict is saying you don't need to pray quietly or in stillness?

SLIDE NINE - The journey home

QUOTE: 'Go forth in peace, for you have followed the good road. Go forth without fear for he who created you has made you holy, has always protected you, and loves you as a mother'

FIGURE: Saint Clare of Assisi (1194-1253)

Clare was one of the first followers of St Francis of Assisi, and established the 'Poor Ladies', which was the sister movement to the Franciscans. Clare's decision to sacrifice her riches and comfort in order to pray for and serve the poorest in society infuriated her family, but she stuck by her decision, and her courage helped reform some of the excesses in society and within the church of the day.

What makes it challenging to trust in God? Do you think that God has made you holy? Does it help you to consider God's care for you like a mother cares for her children?

SLIDE TEN - Nighttime prayer

QUOTE: 'I have been all things unholy. If God can work through me, he can work through anyone'

FIGURE: Saint Francis of Assisi (c.1181-1226)

Francis was the son of a nobleman, and lived his early years in rich celebrations before becoming a soldier. When he was in his late 20's, his life turned on its head, as he had a mystical experience where he felt God calling to him in the person of 'Lady Poverty'. From then onwards, he renounced all his wealth and power, and led a wandering life, preaching, teaching and leading a spiritual revolution that challenged the church of the day.

Do you doubt sometimes that God would want to work through you? What things do you fear might stop God from operating in your life? How does Francis' self-confession help you?

QUOTE: 'It is better to be the child of God than king of the whole world'

FIGURE: Saint Aloysius Gonzaga (1568-1591)

Aloysius was determined to become a priest, much to the disappointment of his father. He was a renowned philosopher and theologian, and joined the Jesuit order, where he was recognized for his earnest desire to remain pure for God. When plague broke out, he ministered within the hospital, caring for the sick, but contracted plague himself, dying at the age of 23.

Do you find it easy to recognize that you are a child of God? Do you find value in your status as a child of God? How might this affect the way in which you pray?

QUOTE: 'God loves each of us as if there was only one of us'

FIGURE: Saint Augustine of Hippo (354-430)

Augustine is one of the central theologians in Western Christianity, as a combination of living at one of the key times for defining Christian notions of Jesus, sin and salvation, as well as being a prolific writer and speaker. Augustine lived a bit of a playboy lifestyle before converting to Christianity later in life, when he renounced his wrongdoing, but used the language and philosophy of everyday life to demonstrate the goodness of God.

Is it sometimes easier to recognize God's love for others, rather than for yourself? Do you take time each day to listen for God's affirmation in your heart?

QUOTE: 'Here I am, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word' (Luke 1:38)

FIGURE: The Blessed Virgin Mary (1st century BC – 1st century AD)

Mary is held in special regard amongst all the key individuals that Catholics look to for inspiration and challenge. This is, in part, because of her closeness to Christ himself – nurturing him within her womb, and then during his life, death and resurrection. But she is also recognized for her profound courage in saying this 'yes' to the angel – this 'yes' changed the world, but it cost Mary her reputation, and was a massive leap of faith.

Do you recognize your close relationship to God? Are you ready to say yes to God's word? What might that mean surrendering?