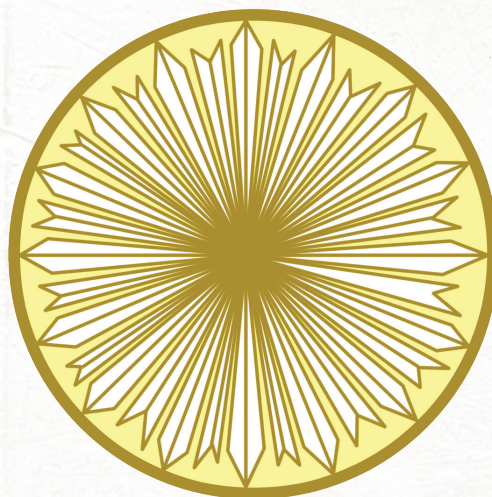


PRAY *for* US

DISCUSSION GUIDE



BY MEG HUNTER-KILMER



NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

The Saints exist to draw us to the heart of Jesus. Their stories are never meant to be an end but a means by which the Lord speaks his love and peace to us—and by which he calls us to conversion. As you read *Pray for Us*, take the time to pray with these reflection questions, whether you're reading it alone or with a group. Ask the Lord to use the witness of these Saints to make you a Saint yourself.

In Him,

Meg Hunter-Kilmer

INTRODUCTION

1. What's your general opinion of the Saints? Have you found their stories to be dull or unattainable or have they inspired you to pursue holiness?
2. Why do you think God gives us Saints? Do you understand the purpose of the Church's teaching on the Saints?
3. Have you encountered Saints who were like you in some capacity? Which Saints have you seen yourself represented in? How did that affect your spiritual life?
4. What elements of your life or personality would you like to see in the life of a Saint?
5. Are there any elements of your life or personality that you can't imagine in the life of a Saint?
6. Are there any Saints who you would consider friends? Explain what that means to you and why these Saints are important to you.

PART 1:

SAINTS WHO DEFIED EXPECTATIONS

1. Which Saint or Saints stood out to you in this section? Were there any you wanted to learn more about or develop a devotion to?
2. What expectations (from the Church, the world, your family, or your profession) have you felt unwilling or unable to live up to?
3. On page 3, Blessed Catherine Jarrige says, "The greatest sacrifice I made in my life was that of dancing." Have you ever been asked to make a "small" sacrifice that felt enormous to you?
4. Read Blessed Nicolas Steno's prayer at the top of page 8. It was an act of Divine Providence when God refused that prayer. Have you ever had a prayer whose refusal made you grateful many years later?
5. Read Blessed Sara Salkaházi's prayer on page 11. Which part of this prayer resonates the most with you?
6. Consider St. Martha Wang Luo Mande's unassuming courage. Have you known any incredibly strong Christians who you've underestimated because of their mild personalities?
7. St. Hyacintha Mariscotti gives hope not just to mean girls (and those who love them) but also to backsliders. Is there some area of your life where you've fallen away from the pursuit of holiness? How can you begin again?
8. St. Robert Southwell's masculine strength may surprise some, given his other attributes. What toxic ideas about masculinity or femininity do you need to reject in your own life so as to be the person God made you to be?
9. How have you felt your personality, life, or spirituality to be incompatible with Sainthood? Did any of this section's Saints help with that?
10. Which of these Saints do you want to share with someone in your life? Why? Can this be a moment of evangelization?

PART 2:

SAINTS WHO NEVER GAVE UP

1. Which Saint or Saints stood out to you in this section? Were there any you wanted to learn more about or develop a devotion to?
2. Have you ever had a situation where perseverance seemed impossible? What did you do?
3. In what area of your life are you really struggling to persist? What support do you need to carry on?
4. Blessed Peter Kasui Kibe's life was an epic journey filled with appalling difficulties. Which moment would have made it the hardest for you to keep going?
5. On page 28 we read, "Matt Talbot is proof that being a follower of Christ doesn't make virtue easy; it just makes it possible." How have you experienced this distinction in your life? Where has God strengthened you to pursue holiness even though he hasn't taken away your temptation?
6. Venerable Teresa Chikaba experienced inexcusable racism in the Church. Have you witnessed or experienced racism in the Church? BIPOC participants, please share your story if you're comfortable. White participants, this is an opportunity to view things with new eyes; please listen without excusing or explaining.
7. The opening description of Servant of God Ragheed Aziz Ganni shows just how ordinary and how close to our time he was. Do you know any priests who remind you of him?
8. Which of the Ugandan martyrs most intrigues you? Do some research to learn more about that person this week? (Short bios can be found by searching the author's public Facebook page.)
9. What is most impressive to you about the story of the foundation of the Church in Korea? How can this affect your own life?
10. Mother Mary's motto was, "Our sole wish is to do the will of God." Can you say this of yourself? In what areas are you more driven by some other motivation?
11. Consider Venerable Francis Xavier Nguyen Văn Thuận's attitude toward death quoted on page 48. What keeps you from being detached in this way?
12. Which of these Saints do you want to share with someone in your life? Why? Can this be a moment of evangelization?

PART 3:

SAINTS WHO HAD GREAT ADVENTURES

1. Which Saint or Saints stood out to you in this section? Were there any you wanted to learn more about or develop a devotion to?
2. St. John Paul II said, “Life with Christ is a wonderful adventure.” Has that been your experience?
3. What does the life of Blessed Maria Troncatti teach us about the role of women in the Church?
4. How does Blessed Natalia Tulasiewicz’s unexpected heroism inspire you to use your particular gifts to serve the marginalized?
5. Which of the stories about St. John Francis Regis did you find most compelling? Is there an application to your life?
6. Have you known any priests who lived spiritual fatherhood the way St. Luigi Versiglia did?
7. Which of these Saints do you want to share with someone in your life? Why? Can this be a moment of evangelization?

PART 4:

SAINTS WHO LIVED ORDINARY LIVES

1. Which Saint or Saints stood out to you in this section? Were there any you wanted to learn more about or develop a devotion to?
2. Have you felt discouraged by the seemingly ordinary call God has placed on your life? Did any of these Saints bring you hope in that discouragement?
3. It's quite possible that the entire world will be changed forever because of your daily small "yes" to God. Can you trust that God is sowing seeds through your life, just as he was through Venerable Jan Tyranowski's? Have you seen any evidence of this?
4. Reread Blessed Maria Beltrame Quattrocchi's reaction to discovering she was pregnant (at the top of page 69). Have you ever had a similar emotional reaction against a development in your life? Were you able to surrender that situation to God?
5. Which quotation from Venerable Antonietta Meo's diary do you find most touching? How can this line affect your spiritual life?
6. Does Blessed Lucien Botvasoa's conflict with his wife resonate with you? How ought he to have behaved differently? Can that inform the way you respond to someone close to you with whom you have conflict?
7. Have you ever encountered another Saint who was as pretty, popular, and fun as Venerable Teresita Quevedo? How does she change the image of holiness that you have in your mind?
8. Servant of God Antonio Cuipa used his particular gifts to bring the Gospel to many people. How can your hobbies, passions, and talents be a tool for evangelization?
9. Which part of Venerable Margaret Sinclair's life resonated most deeply with you? How can her witness call you to holiness?
10. Blessed Carlos Manuel Rodriguez Santiago's doctors refused payment because they felt he had given them so much during his time in the hospital. Have you ever known someone who suffered so beautifully? How can that affect the way you suffer?
11. Many who knew Blessed Ceferino Giménez Malla had to confront the prejudices they had against Romani people in order to reconcile his ethnicity with his obvious holiness. What prejudices do you hold that need to be transformed in your heart? (Against a certain race, members of a political party, people with a certain level of education, or devotees of a particular liturgical tradition, for example.)
12. Blessed Carlo Acutis has become very popular in recent years. What is it about him that you think appeals to people so much?
13. Which of these Saints do you want to share with someone in your life? Why? Can this be a moment of evangelization?

PART 5:

SAINTS WITH DIFFICULT FAMILIES

1. Which Saint or Saints stood out to you in this section? Were there any you wanted to learn more about or develop a devotion to?
2. If you're comfortable sharing, are there elements of your family life (either now or in the past) that made you feel ineligible for Sainthood? Did any of these Saints speak truth into that lie?
3. Do you think St. Marguerite Bays should have stayed in her family home? If so, what would it take to make this kind of situation untenable for you? If not, can you imagine a scenario where staying would have been the right choice?
4. Which element of Servant of God Rose Hawthorne Lathrop's life would have been hardest for you to move past in choosing to love and serve God?
5. On page 106, the book says that St. Marguerite d'Youville "made her suffering a springboard to serving others in pain." Is it possible to do this in a healthy way while also processing your own pain? Have you been able to do this in any situations in your life?
6. Blessed Victoire Rasoamanarivo used her privilege to serve those who were threatened. What privilege in your life might you be able to wield on behalf of a marginalized community? Make a plan for a specific action you can take in the next month.
7. Which of these Saints do you want to share with someone in your life? Why? Can this be a moment of evangelization?

PART 6:

SAINTS WHO FOUND HOLINESS THROUGH SUFFERING

1. Which Saint or Saints stood out to you in this section? Were there any you wanted to learn more about or develop a devotion to?
2. This section deals with extreme suffering. Did the stories here help you to feel less alone in your suffering? Did they help to give you perspective? Or did they make you feel that your suffering isn't big enough to count?
3. How does it feel to read about Blessed Benedetta Bianchi Porro's honest struggle balanced against her joy in the midst of suffering? Does that seem more attainable than other Saintly accounts of suffering you've encountered?
4. If you're comfortable sharing, have you struggled with mental illness? How does it feel to see how the Church loved Blessed Rutilio Grande in the midst of his mental health battles?
5. Can you imagine remaining faithful having suffered all that St. Magdalena Son So-Byok did? Does her faithfulness inspire you or make you feel that you fall short?
6. Could you have forgiven Pierce Connelly after all he did? Is there someone in your life who's played a similarly antagonistic role? Stop and pray for that person (and for Pierce).
7. Blessed Zdenka Schelingová was failed by cowardly leaders in the Church. Have you or someone you love had a similar experience? How can you ask Blessed Zdenka to pray for you?
8. Servant of God Darwin Ramos insisted that the purpose of his condition was for him to know God better and learn to trust him more. Have you ever taken that attitude to suffering? How has God shown himself to you through your pain?
9. Sts. Columba Kim Hyo-im and Agnes Kim Hyo-ju teach us to stand in solidarity with survivors of sexual assault. Take a moment to pray for all those who have suffered sexual assault, especially at the hands of priests and religious.
10. How are Sts. Timothy and Maura a model of holy marriage? If you're married, how has your experience of marriage mirrored theirs? How might they inspire you?
11. Which of these Saints do you want to share with someone in your life? Why? Can this be a moment of evangelization?

PART 7:

SAINTS WHOSE RUINED PLANS OPENED THE WAY TO MORE BEAUTIFUL THINGS

1. Which Saint or Saints stood out to you in this section? Were there any you wanted to learn more about or develop a devotion to?
2. If you're comfortable sharing, is there any part of your life that feels like it was an irreparable mistake? Have you seen any good come of it yet? Do you trust that it might?
3. Does Blessed Lindalva Justo de Oliveira's lack of direction resonate with you? How can you trust that God is present when you don't see a goal, much less a path?
4. Blessed Catalina de María Rodríguez (Saturnina) was forced into a marriage she didn't want. Have you ever had a significant choice forced upon you? Were you able to forgive the person who disrespected your free will?
5. What part of Servant of God Léonie Martin's life resonates the most strongly with you? Could you have imagined a Saint with such an experience?
6. If you had the power, what would you make Blessed Maria Guggiari Echeverría the patron Saint of?
7. St. Frances of Rome seemed to be poorly fitted to her vocation. What part of your personality just doesn't seem to work with the life you have right now? Is there a Vanozza in your life who can help you live your vocation joyfully?
8. Nothing ever seemed to go according to plan for Madre Luisita Josefa. Have you ever felt that way? How do you find hope when everything keeps going wrong?
9. Which of these Saints do you want to share with someone in your life? Why? Can this be a moment of evangelization?

PART 8:

SAINTS WHO WERE FAILURES

1. Which Saint or Saints stood out to you in this section? Were there any you wanted to learn more about or develop a devotion to?
2. What failures in your life have hurt the most? Are you able to be grateful for any of them now?
3. St. Mark Ji Tianxiang is a powerful intercessor for those living with addiction and for those who are discouraged by their inability to resist a certain sinful behavior. What encourages you most about his story?
4. What desire drives you in the way that Church unity drove St. Leopold Mandić? Can you love God if he never grants it?
5. St. Pacificus of San Severino lost everything that seemed to make him special but still remained faithful. What skill, relationship, physical ability, or element of your identity would threaten your love for God if he took it away?
6. What part of your life have people considered a waste, as some considered Venerable Maria Benvenuti Giuseppina's cloistered vocation? Are you at peace with their opinion?
7. How have you felt betrayed by Church leadership as Blessed Paul Thoj Xyooj was? Have you been able to imitate him in loving the Church just the same? What boundaries have you needed to erect to make that possible (and healthy)?
8. Blessed Charles de Foucauld said, "I would like to be so good that people say, 'If such is the servant, what must the Master be?'" How does this quotation make you feel? What's holding you back from living this way?
9. Which of these Saints do you want to share with someone in your life? Why? Can this be a moment of evangelization?

PART 9:

SAINTS WHO LIVED WITH GREAT HUMILITY

1. Which Saint or Saints stood out to you in this section? Were there any you wanted to learn more about or develop a devotion to?
2. Humility is the via media between arrogance and self-loathing. Which side of that spectrum is more tempting to you?
3. You're likely not called to serve in the specific way that St. Vitalis of Gaza did, but you can serve in his image. Are you willing to take risks to express love to wounded people? Who are you particularly called to love in this way?
4. Do you identify with St. Bertilla Boscardin in feeling rejected and unwanted? We all have that experience at times, for various reasons. Can you, like Bertilla, find peace in your identity in Christ regardless of others' opinions?
5. Blessed Francisco de Paula Victor sometimes accepted injustice and sometimes railed against it. Which of these responses makes you more uncomfortable? Can you see a call to both stances in different areas in your life?
6. Despite his many gifts, St. Hugh of Grenoble never believed himself to be adequate to the call he'd been given. Do you feel the same way? How does it affect you to see how much good St. Hugh did without realizing it?
7. Which of these Saints do you want to share with someone in your life? Why? Can this be a moment of evangelization?

PART 10:

SAINTS WHOSE GENEROSITY CHANGED THE WORLD

1. Which Saint or Saints stood out to you in this section? Were there any you wanted to learn more about or develop a devotion to?
2. Where do you find it hardest to be generous? With money? Time? Your interpretation of people's motives? Your willingness to tolerate ignorance?
3. St. Dulce Pontes was given a safe job teaching geography, but in her spare time she served so radically that her country is forever different. You might not be called to full-time service right now, but how can you serve in the margins of your full life?
4. Venerable Pierre Toussaint is a beautiful model of generosity, but his service to his former captor has been used to pressure victims of racism not to seek justice. How can we honor his choice without further wounding marginalized people?
5. Blessed Kunjachan Thevarparambil had no obvious skills with which to help the Dalit children, except a heart that was able to see them and love them as a father. What's your most underrated gift?
6. What do you find most impressive about Venerable Felix Varela y Morales's very impressive life?
7. What can Catholics who love science learn from Blessed José Gregorio?
8. Venerable Satoko Kitahara said, "I had thought I was a great Christian because I condescended to dole out some free time". How have you congratulated yourself on making a minimal effort to serve? How is God convicting you of your need to be more generous?
9. Which of these Saints do you want to share with someone in your life? Why? Can this be a moment of evangelization?

PART 11:

SAINTS WITH SINFUL PASTS

1. Which Saint or Saints stood out to you in this section? Were there any you wanted to learn more about or develop a devotion to?
2. Are their sins in your past or in the lives of others that seem insurmountable to you, after which there can be no path to Sainthood? Did the stories of these Saints help you to see otherwise?
3. Blessed Bartolo Longo fell into horrific sin because he made the wrong friends. Are there relationships in your life that pull you away from Jesus?
4. Read Luke 7:36–50 and reflect on the life of St. Mary of Egypt in the light of this story.
5. Have you had any Christians in your life who've shown you the Father's love and mercy the way St. Abraham of Kidunaia showed it to St. Mary of Edessa?
6. St. Michael Hồ Đình Hy (see page 224) was a grave sinner but his sins were washed away by the blood of Jesus. Still he struggled with scrupulosity. Has this been an issue in your life? How have you been able to rely on God's mercy rather than your strength (or weakness)?
7. Without naming names, is there a St. Brice of Tours in your life? How can you love this person like St. Martin did?
8. Servant of God Bartolomé de las Casas challenges us to examine our prejudices even if we think our work for justice puts us above reproach. What evils have you participated in or been complicit in that you need to repent of now? Does this need to be a public repentance?
9. Though you may seem faithful, is there a persistent sin or imperfection that you (like Blessed Anthony Neyrot) have allowed to take up residence at the heart of your identity, displacing God from the center of your life? What needs to happen for this to change?
10. St. Jerome's Sainthood gives hope to those of us who ought to be much better than we are. Can you live in that hope without becoming complacent about your sin?
11. St. Fabiola of Rome seems to have been well within her rights to leave her first husband; the problem wasn't her divorce but her remarriage. Is there a situation in your life that started off right but became warped? What would it take to make things right again?
12. Which of these Saints do you want to share with someone in your life? Why? Can this be a moment of evangelization?

PART 12:

SAINTS WHO WERE MERCIFUL

1. Which Saint or Saints stood out to you in this section? Were there any you wanted to learn more about or develop a devotion to?
2. Is it easier for you to offer mercy or to receive it? Is there any relationship where you're either refusing to be merciful or refusing to allow the other person to forgive you?
3. What advice would you give a woman like Servant of God Daphrose Rugamba in the midst of her unhappy marriage? End result aside, do you think Daphrose made the right choice in staying with Cyprien? How can we tell these stories without encouraging people to stay in abusive situations?
4. Servant of God Takashi Nagai taught his people to offer mercy in the face of an unspeakable horror. What evil acts do you find hard to forgive? Consider individuals who have wounded you as well as systems of abuse and exploitation or people perpetrating atrocities. How can you move toward forgiveness in one of these areas?
5. Blessed Jean-Joseph Lataste looked at convicted women and saw not their past but their eternal future. They were not their sins; they were the beloved of God. Which "undesirable" population do you struggle to love? How can you love them in a tangible way this week?
6. Do you have a Felix in your life like Servant of God Elisabeth Leseur did—someone you love deeply but who is disdainful of your faith? How can you model Christlike love and grace to that person so that he or she might come to know Jesus?
7. Which of these Saints do you want to share with someone in your life? Why? Can this be a moment of evangelization?