

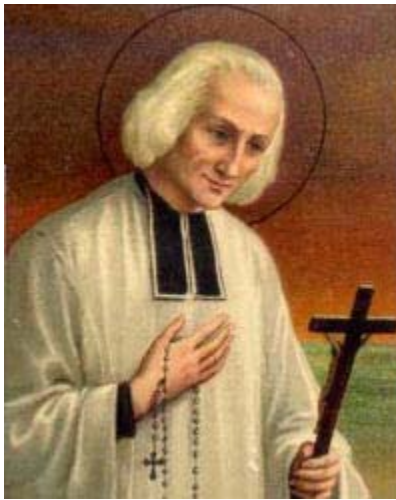
## 2016-2017 Monthly Saints of Mercy



<u>Month</u>	<u>Saint</u>
August	St. John Vianney (8/4) Counsel the Doubtful (s) /Admonish the Sinner (s)
September	St. Peter Claver (9/9) Visit the Imprisoned (c)
October	St. Francis of Assisi (10/4) Feed the Hungry (c)
November	St. Martin de Porres(11/3) Visit the Sick (c)/ Counsel the Doubtful (s)
December	St. Maximilian Kolbe (8/14) Visit the Imprisoned (c)/Bear wrongs patiently (s)
January	St. John Bosco (1/31) Instruct the Ignorant (s)/Shelter the homeless (c)
February	St. Josephine Bakhita(2/8) Bear wrongs patiently (s)
March	St. Katherine Drexel(3/3) Shelter the homeless (c)/Instruct the ignorant (s)

April	St. Louise de Marillac (3/15) Shelter the Homeless (c)/Feed the hungry (c)
May	St. Damien of Molokai (5/10) Clothe the Naked (c)/Shelter the Homeless (c)/Visit the sick(c)/Bury the Dead (c)/ Comfort the Sorrowful (s)

## August – St. John Vianney



A man with vision overcomes obstacles and performs deeds that seem impossible. John Vianney was a man with vision: He wanted to become a priest. But he had to overcome his meager formal schooling, which inadequately prepared him for seminary studies.

His failure to comprehend Latin lectures forced him to discontinue. But his vision of being a priest urged him to seek private tutoring. After a lengthy battle with the books, John was ordained.

Situations calling for “impossible” deeds followed him everywhere. As pastor of the parish at Ars, John encountered people who were indifferent and quite comfortable with their style of living. His vision led him through severe fasts and short nights of sleep. (Some devils can only be cast out by prayer and fasting.)

With Catherine Lassagne and Benedicta Lardet, he established La Providence, a home for girls. Only a man of vision could have such trust that God would provide for the spiritual and material needs of all those who came to make La Providence their home.

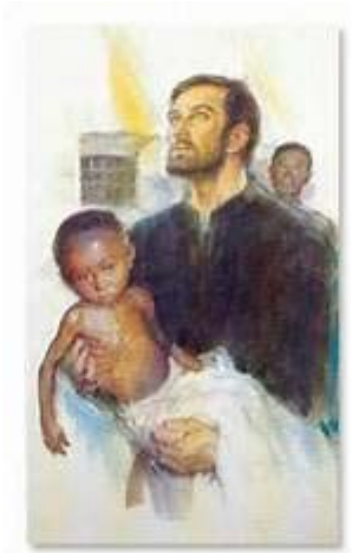
His work as a confessor is John Vianney’s most remarkable accomplishment. In the winter months he was to spend 11 to 12 hours daily reconciling people with God. In the summer months this time was increased to 16 hours. Unless a man was dedicated to his vision of a priestly vocation, he could not have endured this giving of self day after day.

Many people look forward to retirement and taking it easy, doing the things they always wanted to do but never had the time. But John Vianney had no thoughts of retirement. As his fame spread, more

hours were consumed in serving God's people. Even the few hours he would allow himself for sleep were disturbed frequently by the devil.

Who, but a man with vision, could keep going with ever-increasing strength? In 1929, Pope Pius XI named him the patron of parish priests worldwide.

## September – St. Peter Claver



A native of Spain, young Jesuit Peter Claver left his homeland forever in 1610 to be a missionary in the colonies of the New World. He sailed into Cartagena (now in Colombia), a rich port city washed by the Caribbean. He was ordained there in 1615.

By this time the slave trade had been established in the Americas for nearly 100 years, and Cartagena was a chief center for it. Ten thousand slaves poured into the port each year after crossing the Atlantic from West Africa under conditions so foul and inhuman that an estimated one-third of the passengers died in transit. Although the practice of slave-trading was condemned by Pope Paul III and later labeled "supreme villainy" by Pius IX, it continued to flourish.

Peter Claver's predecessor, Jesuit Father Alfonso de Sandoval, had devoted himself to the service of the slaves for 40 years before Claver arrived to continue his work, declaring himself "the slave of the Negroes forever."

As soon as a slave ship entered the port, Peter Claver moved into its infested hold to minister to the ill-treated and exhausted passengers. After the slaves were herded out of the ship like chained animals and shut up in nearby yards to be gazed at by the crowds, Claver plunged in among them with medicines, food, bread, brandy, lemons and tobacco. With the help of interpreters he gave basic instructions and assured his brothers and sisters of their human dignity and God's saving love. During the 40 years of his ministry, Claver instructed and baptized an estimated 300,000 slaves.

His apostolate extended beyond his care for slaves. He became a moral force, indeed, the apostle of Cartagena. He preached in the city square, gave missions to sailors and traders as

well as country missions, during which he avoided, when possible, the hospitality of the planters and owners and lodged in the slave quarters instead.

After four years of sickness which forced the saint to remain inactive and largely neglected, he died on September 8, 1654. The city magistrates, who had previously frowned at his solicitude for the black outcasts, ordered that he should be buried at public expense and with great pomp.

He was canonized in 1888, and Pope Leo XIII declared him the worldwide patron of missionary work among black slaves.

## October – St. Francis of Assisi



Francis of Assisi was a poor little man who astounded and inspired the Church by taking the gospel literally—not in a narrow fundamentalist sense, but by actually following all that Jesus said and did, joyfully, without limit and without a sense of self-importance.

Serious illness brought the young Francis to see the emptiness of his frolicking life as leader of Assisi's youth. Prayer—lengthy and difficult—led him to a self-emptying like that of Christ, climaxed by embracing a leper he met on the road. It symbolized his complete obedience to what he had heard in prayer: "Francis! Everything you have loved and desired in the flesh it is your duty to despise and hate, if you wish to know my will. And when you have begun this, all that now seems sweet and lovely to you will become intolerable and bitter, but all that you used to avoid will turn itself to great sweetness and exceeding joy."

From the cross in the neglected field-chapel of San Damiano, Christ told him, "Francis, go out and build up my house, for it is nearly falling down." Francis became the totally poor and humble workman.

He must have suspected a deeper meaning to "build up my house." But he would have been content to be for the rest of his life the poor "nothing" man actually putting brick on brick in abandoned chapels. He gave up all his possessions, piling even his clothes before his earthly father (who was demanding restitution for Francis' "gifts" to the poor) so that he would be totally free to say, "Our Father in heaven." He was, for a time, considered to be a religious fanatic, begging from door to door when he could not get money for his work, evoking sadness or disgust to the hearts of his former friends, ridicule from the unthinking.

But genuineness will tell. A few people began to realize that this man was actually trying to be Christian. He really believed what Jesus said: "Announce the kingdom! Possess no gold or silver or copper in your purses, no traveling bag, no sandals, no staff" (Luke 9:1-3).

Francis' first rule for his followers was a collection of texts from the Gospels. He had no idea of founding an order, but once it began he protected it and accepted all the legal structures needed to support it. His devotion and loyalty to the Church were absolute and highly exemplary at a time when various movements of reform tended to break the Church's unity.

He was torn between a life devoted entirely to prayer and a life of active preaching of the Good News. He decided in favor of the latter, but always returned to solitude when he could. He wanted to be a missionary in Syria or in Africa, but was prevented by shipwreck and illness in both cases. He did try to convert the sultan of Egypt during the Fifth Crusade.

During the last years of his relatively short life (he died at 44), he was half blind and seriously ill. Two years before his death, he received the stigmata, the real and painful wounds of Christ in his hands, feet and side.

On his deathbed, he said over and over again the last addition to his Canticle of the Sun, "Be praised, O Lord, for our Sister Death." He sang Psalm 141, and at the end asked his superior to have his clothes removed when the last hour came and for permission to expire lying naked on the earth, in imitation of his Lord.



## November – St. Martin de Porres



"Father unknown" is the cold legal phrase sometimes used on baptismal records. "Half-breed" or "war souvenir" is the cruel name inflicted by those of "pure" blood. Like many others, Martin might have grown to be a bitter man, but he did not. It was said that even as a child he gave his heart and his goods to the poor and despised.

He was the son of a freed woman of Panama, probably black but also possibly of Native American stock, and a Spanish grandee of Lima, Peru. His parents never married each other. Martin inherited the features and dark complexion of his mother. That irked his father, who finally acknowledged his son after eight years. After the birth of a sister, the father abandoned the family. Martin was reared in poverty, locked into a low level of Lima's society.

When he was 12, his mother apprenticed him to a barber-surgeon. He learned how to cut hair and also how to draw blood (a standard medical treatment then), care for wounds and prepare and administer medicines.

After a few years in this medical apostolate, Martin applied to the Dominicans to be a "lay helper," not feeling himself worthy to be a religious brother. After nine years, the example of his prayer and penance, charity and humility led the community to request him to make full religious profession. Many of his nights were spent in prayer and penitential practices; his days were filled with nursing the sick and caring for the poor. It was particularly impressive that he treated all people regardless of their color, race or status. He was instrumental in founding an orphanage, took care of slaves brought from Africa and managed the daily alms of the priory with practicality as well as generosity. He became the procurator for both priory and city, whether it

was a matter of "blankets, shirts, candles, candy, miracles or prayers!" When his priory was in debt, he said, "I am only a poor mulatto. Sell me. I am the property of the order. Sell me."

Side by side with his daily work in the kitchen, laundry and infirmary, Martin's life reflected God's extraordinary gifts: ecstasies that lifted him into the air, light filling the room where he prayed, bilocation, miraculous knowledge, instantaneous cures and a remarkable rapport with animals. His charity extended to beasts of the field and even to the vermin of the kitchen. He would excuse the raids of mice and rats on the grounds that they were underfed; he kept stray cats and dogs at his sister's house.

He became a formidable fundraiser, obtaining thousands of dollars for dowries for poor girls so that they could marry or enter a convent.

Many of his fellow religious took him as their spiritual director, but he continued to call himself a "poor slave." He was a good friend of another Dominican saint of Peru, Rose of Lima (August 23).

## December - St. Maximilian Kolbe



“I don’t know what’s going to become of you!” How many parents have said that? Maximilian Mary Kolbe’s reaction was, “I prayed very hard to Our Lady to tell me what would happen to me. She appeared, holding in her hands two crowns, one white, one red. She asked if I would like to have them—one was for purity, the other for martyrdom. I said, ‘I choose both.’ She smiled and disappeared.” After that he was not the same.

He entered the minor seminary of the Conventual Franciscans in Lvív (then Poland, now Ukraine), near his birthplace, and at 16 became a novice. Though he later achieved doctorates in philosophy and theology, he was deeply interested in science, even drawing plans for rocket ships.

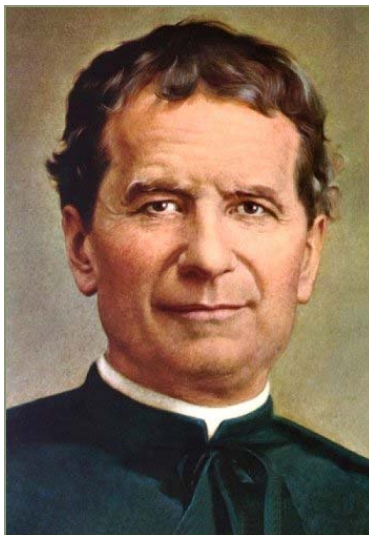
Ordained at 24, he saw religious indifference as the deadliest poison of the day. His mission was to combat it. He had already founded the Militia of the Immaculata, whose aim was to fight evil with the witness of the good life, prayer, work and suffering. He dreamed of and then founded *Knight of the Immaculata*, a religious magazine under Mary’s protection to preach the Good News to all nations. For the work of publication he established a “City of the Immaculata”—Niepokalanow—which housed 700 of his Franciscan brothers. He later founded one in Nagasaki, Japan. Both the Militia and the magazine ultimately reached the one-million mark in members and subscribers. His love of God was daily filtered through devotion to Mary.

In 1939 the Nazi panzers overran Poland with deadly speed. Niepokalanow was severely bombed. Kolbe and his friars were arrested, then released in less than three months, on the feast of the Immaculate Conception.

In 1941 he was arrested again. The Nazis’ purpose was to liquidate the select ones, the leaders. The end came quickly, in Auschwitz three months later, after terrible beatings and humiliations.

A prisoner had escaped. The commandant announced that 10 men would die. He relished walking along the ranks. "This one. That one." As they were being marched away to the starvation bunkers, Number 16670 dared to step from the line. "I would like to take that man's place. He has a wife and children." "Who are you?" "A priest." No name, no mention of fame. Silence. The commandant, dumbfounded, perhaps with a fleeting thought of history, kicked Sergeant Francis Gajowniczek out of line and ordered Father Kolbe to go with the nine. In the "block of death" they were ordered to strip naked, and their slow starvation began in darkness. But there was no screaming—the prisoners sang. By the eve of the Assumption four were left alive. The jailer came to finish Kolbe off as he sat in a corner praying. He lifted his fleshless arm to receive the bite of the hypodermic needle. It was filled with carbolic acid. They burned his body with all the others. He was beatified in 1971 and canonized in 1982.

## January – St. John Bosco



John Bosco's theory of education could well be used in today's schools. It was a preventive system, rejecting corporal punishment and placing students in surroundings removed from the likelihood of committing sin. He advocated frequent reception of the sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion. He combined catechetical training and fatherly guidance, seeking to unite the spiritual life with one's work, study and play.

Encouraged during his youth to become a priest so he could work with young boys, John was ordained in 1841. His service to young people started when he met a poor orphan and instructed him in preparation for receiving Holy Communion. He then gathered young apprentices and taught them catechism.

After serving as chaplain in a hospice for working girls, John opened the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales for boys. Several wealthy and powerful patrons contributed money, enabling him to provide two workshops for the boys, shoemaking and tailoring.

By 1856, the institution had grown to 150 boys and had added a printing press for publication of religious and catechetical pamphlets. His interest in vocational education and publishing justify him as patron of young apprentices and Catholic publishers.

John's preaching fame spread and by 1850 he had trained his own helpers because of difficulties in retaining young priests. In 1854 he and his followers informally banded together, inspired by St. Francis de Sales [January 24].

With Pope Pius IX's encouragement, John gathered 17 men and founded the Salesians in 1859. Their activity concentrated on education and mission work. Later, he organized a group of Salesian Sisters to assist girls.

## February – St. Josephine Bakhita



For many years, Josephine Bakhita was a slave but her spirit was always free and eventually that spirit prevailed.

Born in Olgossa in the Darfur region of southern Sudan, Josephine was kidnapped at the age of seven, sold into slavery and given the name Bakhita, which means *fortunate*. She was re-sold several times, finally in 1883 to Callisto Legnani, Italian consul in Khartoum, Sudan.

Two years later he took Josephine to Italy and gave her to his friend Augusto Michieli. Bakhita became babysitter to Mimmina Michieli, whom she accompanied to Venice's Institute of the Catechumens, run by the Canossian Sisters. While Mimmina was being instructed, Josephine felt drawn to the Catholic Church. She was baptized and confirmed in 1890, taking the name Josephine.

When the Michielis returned from Africa and wanted to take Mimmina and Josephine back with them, the future saint refused to go. During the ensuing court case, the Canossian sisters and the patriarch of Venice intervened on Josephine's behalf. The judge concluded that since slavery was illegal in Italy, she had actually been free since 1885.

Josephine entered the Institute of St. Magdalene of Canossa in 1893 and made her profession three years later. In 1902, she was transferred to the city of Schio (northeast of Verona), where she assisted her religious community through cooking, sewing, embroidery and welcoming

visitors at the door. She soon became well loved by the children attending the sisters' school and the local citizens. She once said, "Be good, love the Lord, pray for those who do not know Him. What a great grace it is to know God!"

The first steps toward her beatification began in 1959. She was beatified in 1992 and canonized eight years later.

## March – St. Katherine Drexel



She was born in Philadelphia in 1858. She had an excellent education and traveled widely. As a rich girl, she had a grand debut into society. But when she nursed her stepmother through a three-year terminal illness, she saw that all the Drexel money could not buy safety from pain or death, and her life took a profound turn.

She had always been interested in the plight of the Indians, having been appalled by what she read in Helen Hunt Jackson's *A Century of Dishonor*. While on a European tour, she met Pope Leo XIII and asked him to send more missionaries to Wyoming for her friend Bishop James O'Connor. The pope replied, "Why don't you become a missionary?" His answer shocked her into considering new possibilities.

Back home, Katharine visited the Dakotas, met the Sioux leader Red Cloud and began her systematic aid to Indian missions.

She could easily have married. But after much discussion with Bishop O'Connor, she wrote in 1889, "The feast of St. Joseph brought me the grace to give the remainder of my life to the Indians and the Colored." Newspaper headlines screamed "Gives Up Seven Million!"

After three and a half years of training, she and her first band of nuns (Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored) opened a boarding school in Santa Fe. A string of

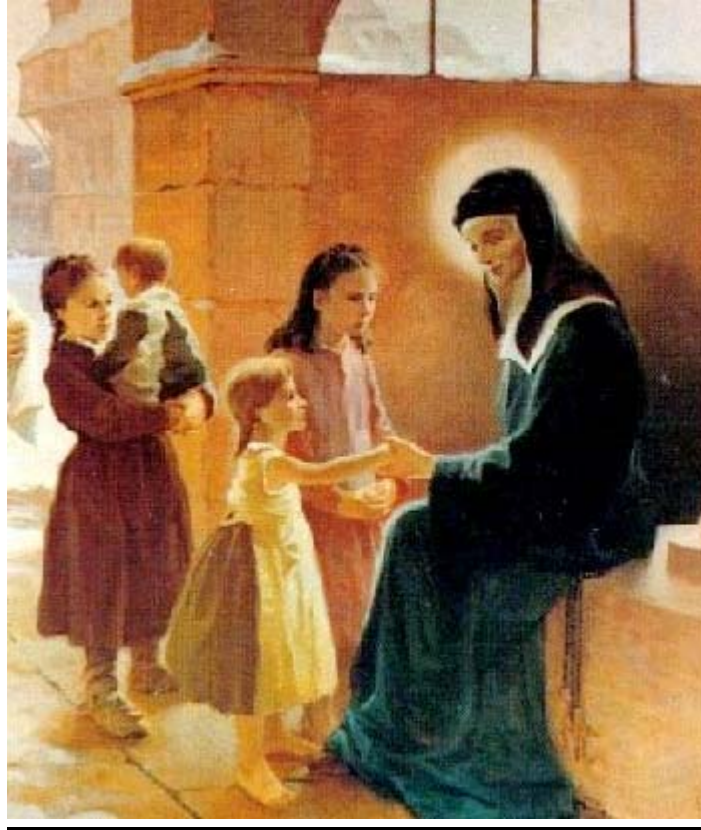


foundations followed. By 1942 she had a system of black Catholic schools in 13 states, plus 40 mission centers and 23 rural schools. Segregationists harassed her work, even burning a school in Pennsylvania. In all, she established 50 missions for Indians in 16 states.

Two saints met when Katharine was advised by Mother Cabrini about the “politics” of getting her Order’s Rule approved in Rome. Her crowning achievement was the founding of Xavier University in New Orleans, the first Catholic university in the United States for African Americans.

At 77, she suffered a heart attack and was forced to retire. Apparently her life was over. But now came almost 20 years of quiet, intense prayer from a small room overlooking the sanctuary. Small notebooks and slips of paper record her various prayers, ceaseless aspirations and meditation. She died at 96 and was canonized in 2000.

## April – St. Louise de Marillac



Louise, born near Meux, France, lost her mother when she was still a child, her beloved father when she was but 15. Her desire to become a nun was discouraged by her confessor, and a marriage was arranged. One son was born of this union. But she soon found herself nursing her beloved husband through a long illness that finally led to his death.

Louise was fortunate to have a wise and sympathetic counselor, St. Francis de Sales, and then his friend, the Bishop of Belley, France. Both of these men were available to her only periodically. But from an interior illumination she understood that she was to undertake a great work under the guidance of another person she had not yet met. This was the holy priest M. Vincent, later to be known as St. Vincent de Paul.

At first he was reluctant to be her confessor, busy as he was with his "Confraternities of Charity." Members were aristocratic ladies of charity who were helping him nurse the poor and look after neglected children, a real need of the day. But the ladies were busy with many of their own concerns and duties. His work needed many more helpers, especially ones who were peasants themselves and therefore close to the poor and could win their hearts. He also needed someone who could teach them and organize them.

Only over a long period of time, as Vincent de Paul became more acquainted with Louise, did he come to realize that she was the answer to his prayers. She was intelligent, self-effacing and had physical strength and endurance that belied her continuing feeble health. The missions he sent her on eventually led to four simple young women joining her. Her rented home in Paris became the training center for those accepted for the service of the sick and poor. Growth was rapid and soon there was need of a so-called rule of life, which Louise herself, under the guidance of Vincent, drew up for the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul (though he preferred "Daughters" of Charity).

He had always been slow and prudent in his dealings with Louise and the new group. He said that he had never had any idea of starting a new community, that it was God who did everything. "Your convent," he said, "will be the house of the sick; your cell, a hired room; your chapel, the parish church; your cloister, the streets of the city or the wards of the hospital." Their dress was to be that of the peasant women. It was not until years later that Vincent de Paul would finally permit four of the women to take annual vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. It was still more years before the company would be formally approved by Rome and placed under the direction of Vincent's own congregation of priests.

Many of the young women were illiterate and it was with reluctance that the new community undertook the care of neglected children. Louise was busy helping wherever needed despite her poor health. She traveled throughout France, establishing her community members in hospitals, orphanages and other institutions. At her death on March 15, 1660, the congregation had more than 40 houses in France. Six months later St. Vincent de Paul followed her in death.

Louise de Marillac was canonized in 1934 and declared patroness of social workers in 1960.

## May – St. Damien of Molokai



When Joseph de Veuster was born in Tremelo, Belgium, in 1840, few people in Europe had any firsthand knowledge of leprosy (Hansen's disease). By the time he died at the age of 49, people all over the world knew about this disease because of him. They knew that human compassion could soften the ravages of this disease.

Forced to quit school at age 13 to work on the family farm, Joseph entered the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary six years later, taking the name of a fourth-century physician and martyr. When his brother Pamphile, a priest in the same congregation, fell ill and was unable to go to the Hawaiian Islands as assigned, Damien quickly volunteered in his place. In May 1864, two months after arriving in his new mission, Damien was ordained a priest in Honolulu and assigned to the island of Hawaii.

In 1873, he went to the Hawaiian government's leper colony on the island of Molokai, set up seven years earlier. Part of a team of four chaplains taking that assignment for three months each year, Damien soon volunteered to remain permanently, caring for the people's physical, medical and spiritual needs. In time, he became their most effective advocate to obtain promised government support.

Soon the settlement had new houses and a new church, school and orphanage. Morale improved considerably. A few years later he succeeded in getting the Franciscan Sisters of Syracuse, led by Mother Marianne Cope (January 23), to help staff this colony in Kalaupapa.

Damien contracted Hansen's disease and died of its complications. As requested, he was buried in Kalaupapa, but in 1936 the Belgian government succeeded in having his body moved to Belgium. Part of Damien's body was returned to his beloved Hawaiian brothers and sisters after his beatification in 1995.

Damien was canonized by Pope Benedict XVI on October 11, 2009.

When Hawaii became a state in 1959, it selected Damien as one of its two representatives in the Statuary Hall at the U.S. Capitol.

\*\*information taken from AmericanCatholic.org