

## Let the Saints lead the way!

Last month, we learned how the Liturgical Year helps us keep Jesus at the forefront of our lives. On the Church Calendar, in addition to the Holy Days of Obligation that directly relate to Christ's life, death and resurrection and to His Mother, the Church includes the lives of Saints who give us good example of how to follow Christ in true relationship, even in the face of hardship and persecution.

Here are the saints we celebrate during the Christmas season and a few interesting facts about them. You might want to pray with each of them on their feast day and ask them to help your family develop the same close relationship they had with Jesus! [Click here](#) to play a wordsearch with their names.

*December 26:*

**ST. STEPHEN**, the first deacon and first martyr. His martyrdom account can be found in the Bible, in the book the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 7. He was stoned to death by the Jews for testifying that Jesus was the Son of God, the Savior promised to their ancestors. St. Paul witnessed the stoning and approved of it... this was before Jesus knocked him off his horse and helped him to see the light! (see the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 9)

*December 27:*

**ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST**, one of the original 12 Apostles, who is attributed with writing the fourth Gospel as well as three Epistles (letters) and the Book of Revelation. The Gospel of John refers to him as the "disciple whom Jesus loved".

*December 28:*

**FEAST OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS**, remembering the young male children ordered murdered in Bethlehem by King Herod, according to the Gospel of Matthew. These young souls are considered martyrs by the church.

*December 29:*

**ST. THOMAS BECKET**, who engaged in conflict with Henry II of England over the rights and privileges of the Church and was murdered by followers of the king in Canterbury Cathedral for standing up for the Church's position.

*December 31:*

**POPE ST. SYLVESTER I**, a fourth-century pope who survived the terrible persecution of Emperor Diocletian and called the first Council of Nicaea.

*January 2:*

**ST. BASIL THE GREAT AND ST. GREGORY NAZIANZEN**, two friends, scholars and hermits born in modern-day Turkey who, as bishops, fought the Arian heresy that denied that Jesus is God.

*January 4:*

**ST. ELIZABETH ANN SETON**, the first American saint. She established the first Catholic school in the nation, at Emmitsburg, Maryland.

*January 5:*

**ST. JOHN NEUMANN**, the first American bishop to be canonized. While Bishop of Philadelphia, St. John Neumann founded the first Catholic diocesan school system in the United States.

*January 6:*

**ST. ANDRE BESSETTE**, who because of his chronic illness never learned to read or write and could do nothing more for his religious order than man the door at a school for boys. By the grace of God, however, his ministry provided him the opportunity to minister to the sick and promote devotion to St. Joseph, whom he loved so much. With donations of mere nickels and dimes he eventually built a spectacular shrine to St. Joseph.