

Ablaze

STORIES OF
DARING
TEEN SAINTS

Colleen Swaim



Liguori
LIGUORI, MISSOURI

Imprimi Potest: Harry Grile, CSsR
Provincial, Denver Province, The Redemptorists
Published by Liguori Publications, Liguori, Missouri 63057
To order, call 800-325-9521 or visit liguori.org

Copyright © 2011 Colleen Swaim

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior written permission of Liguori Publications.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Swaim, Colleen.

Ablaze : stories of daring teen saints / Colleen Swaim.—1st ed.

p. cm.

ISBN 978-0-7648-2029-8

1. Christian saints—Biography. 2. Catholic teenagers—Religious life. I. Title. II. Title: Stories of daring teen saints.

BX4655.3.S93 2011

282.092'2—dc22

[B]

2011009120

Scripture texts in this work are taken from the *New American Bible with Revised New Testament and Revised Psalms* © 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C., and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the *New American Bible* may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

Image credits: Page 2: Salesians of Don Bosco; Page 9: Wikipedia, Page 18: teresadelosandes.org; Page 25: Wikipedia; Pages 34, 39, 40: Patty Kues; Page 37: Shutterstock; Page 46: chiaralucebadano.it; Page 47: Shutterstock; Page 53: Massimo Finizio; Page 60: Attributed to the Diocesan Museum of Milan; Pages 65-67: Wikipedia; Page 76: alphonsa.net and st-alphonsa.com; Page 79: Wikipedia; Page 82: stthomaschurch-sa.org; Page 83: Shutterstock; Page 88: Rafael del Casal; Page 89: Source unknown; Page 91: en.wikipilipinas.org; Page 92: Shutterstock; Page 93: Wikipedia; Page 104: Wikipedia/ Norbert Schnitzler; Page 106: Shutterstock; Page 108: Shutterstock; Page 113: Source unknown; Pages 126-129: Shutterstock

Printed in the United States of America

15 14 13 12 11 10 / 5 4 3 2 1

First edition

Contents

INTRODUCTION	XI
HOW TO USE THIS BOOK	XII
SAINT DOMINIC SAVIO	1
SAINT TERESA OF THE ANDES	17
SAINT KIZITO	33
BLESSED CHIARA LUCE BADANO	45
SAINT STANISLAUS KOSTKA	59
SAINT ALPHONSA OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION	75
BLESSED PEDRO CALUNGSOD	87
SAINT MARIA GORETTI	103
ADDITIONAL MATERIALS	117
SOURCES	131

Introduction

“If you are what you should be,
you will set the whole world ablaze!”

—Pope John Paul II,
paraphrasing Saint Catherine of Siena, World Youth Day 2000

We live in a world that scoffs at the foolishness of saints—those remarkable people who look beyond their own reality to that paradise set aside for us by the infinite Creator. The people profiled in this book are not the stuff of fairy tales or robots, but, amazingly, flesh-and-blood teenagers who lived in the midst of temptation and adverse world views and who did what many people twice their age cannot bring themselves to do, which is to live radically on fire for Christ. While the current age holds a new level of accessible moral dilemmas for its young people, the saints and blessed within these pages dealt with a good deal of the same struggles and consequently serve as models of right living beyond the confines of their own times.

As we see in Ecclesiastes 1:9–10, “What has been, that will be; what has been done, that will be done. Nothing is new under the sun. Even the thing of which we say, ‘See, this is new!’ has already existed in the ages that preceded us,” and so it is true of these holy ones and the daring trails they blazed—those same paths are still open more than ever to us. And so I invite you to come on a journey across time and land masses and learn a little bit about your own very real potential for true holiness, because we are all called to become ablaze with the boldness of the saints.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

You'll notice when you start to turn these pages that *Ablaze* isn't your ordinary stories-of-the-saints book. I've filled these pages with tons of extras that will bring these eight zealous young Christians to life and will inspire you to live out your faith with their same fire. The main focus of each chapter is the story of the particular saint, but as you'll see, there is so much more.

Since our Catholic faith has been practiced in so many different ways, and because the teens featured here come from a variety of times and places, you'll find info and important definitions in the boxes scattered throughout the text. Read up—you just might learn something!

To help you apply what you're reading to your own life, I've included reflection questions throughout each story to think and journal about. Journaling pages can be found at the end of each chapter.

You will also find Scripture verses, pictures, quotes, and other fun tidbits scattered throughout the stories. Take them in, write them down, think about them for awhile—they are all meant to bring the saint to life and inspire you with their holiness!

At the end of each story is a prayer, usually one that the person you've just read about said or wrote. Take a moment while you're in a thoughtful mode and inspired by these saintly stories to pray. We know that these men and women are powerful intercessors with God.

Finally, you'll find "Saintly Challenges" at the end of each chapter. These are ideas of things you can do to connect even deeper with the life of the person you've just read about. I've included everything from movie nights to journaling questions to recipes—there really is something for everyone, so dig in.

At the end of the book are some additional materials that can help you delve into the teachings from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* that connect to the stories in this book. Remember to check them out!

SAINT DOMINIC SAVIO



MISSIONARY OF
GOOD EXAMPLE,
GOOD WORDS,
AND GOOD ACTION



“Like Saint Dominic Savio,
be missionaries of good example, good words,
good action at home, with neighbors,
and colleagues at work. At every age we can and
we must bear witness to Christ! Commitment to
bear witness is permanent and daily.”

POPE JOHN PAUL II, DECEMBER 7, 1997, HOMILY

FEAST DAY: MARCH 9

PATRONAGES: THOSE FALSELY ACCUSED, CHOIRBOYS

Dominic was born on April 2, 1842, to Charles and Brigid Savio, growing up outside of Turin, Italy. Dominic's father was a blacksmith, and with ten children, they didn't have a lot of money. According to his parents, Dominic was a loving and obedient son from his early years. In fact, by age four, he was even saying his morning and bedtime prayers himself. This young child, who attended and served daily Mass by the age of five, prayed the Angelus and would even remind his family to say grace before meals. If the door to church was locked when he got there, he knelt on the ground until it was opened, even if it was snowy or dirty, and would cheerfully wave at the priest when they would meet on the street. When he was a little older, he would go out of his way to help his father with chores.

Angelus: A prayer said in celebration of God being made flesh in the person of Christ Jesus, including Mary's role in the event through her "Yes" to becoming his mother.

As a little kid, how did you live out your faith? How has that changed as you've grown older?

As Dominic grew, so did his strong faith. He consistently went to confession, even as a young child, and was permitted to receive his first Communion early, because he understood the Real Presence of the Eucharist ahead of the other children. In order to prepare himself for the sacrament, the night before his first Communion Dominic asked his mother for forgiveness for anything he had done to disappoint or hurt her, and promised not to do so again. He was genuinely sorry, cried, and was first to arrive at the church the next morning. When he made his first Communion in 1849, he made several promises, such as, "I will go to confession, and I will go to holy Communion as often as I am allowed, I will try to give Sundays

and holy days completely to God, my best friends will be Jesus and Mary, and Death, but not sin.” These would prove to be more than just words, but a living pledge that he kept until the end of his life.

Recount a special memory from your first reconciliation or first Communion.

At age ten, Dominic finished at the village school and started at the county school three miles away. Savio means “wise,” and Dominic did his best to live up to it at school. He was disciplined about working to do well at school and avoided trouble-makers’ attempts to get him to join them in their mischief. He even attempted to help those who were struggling and to reform those who misbehaved, sometimes earning him the disdain of his classmates.

Dominic was not a strong boy but was known by his teachers, schoolmates, and even his principal as a cheerful and pleasant young man. Even with his health problems, Dominic never missed a day of school. A hard worker, Dominic rose to the top of his class and was always ready to help those who weren’t as interested in their studies. His principal observed that Dominic excelled “not simply because he was clever but because he worked very hard and came to have a great love for his lessons. It was also because his studies were not simply for himself but for God.”

What motivates you to try to do well academically?

His life at school was not without challenges. One day his schoolmates blamed Dominic for cramming the classroom’s stove with trash and snow. Strangely, he did nothing to defend himself. It was not until the next day, when the truth was revealed, that the principal, Father Cugliero, realized Dominic had not been involved. When asked why he did not claim his innocence, Dominic explained that

he knew the boys who had done it would be expelled for what they had done, and he wanted to spare their punishment. "I remembered that Jesus had been blamed unjustly and had not said anything," Dominic said, "and I thought I should do the same." It was a truly selfless act that made a lasting impact on his principal, and would later make Dominic the patron saint of those falsely accused.

In 1854, Father Cugliero went to see Saint John Bosco about admitting Dominic to his school, the Oratory of Saint Francis de Sales. Attesting to Dominic's high standing in his school, both for his character and for his academics, Father Cugliero claimed, "You may have in your house boys equally good and clever, but there are none better than him." When he introduced himself to Father Bosco, Dominic told him that he'd like to be a priest. As a test of his academic skill, Bosco had him read and memorize a page of the Mass readings, intending for him to work on it overnight. Don Bosco was astounded when Dominic had memorized and could explain it within ten minutes, and he immediately decided that Dominic would attend the oratory. Joyfully, Dominic promised Don Bosco "...always to act in such a way that you will never have reason to complain of me," and accompanied him to Turin, where he would begin studies.

Dominic continued to follow the rules at school and was a good student in the classics. He sought the normal life of a student, even asking one of the teachers for guidance on how to make the best of his experience there. Others, whether they were devout or not, liked spending time with him, as he told amusing stories, enjoyed playing

The classics: The study of ancient Greek and Latin people and languages, as well their civilizations, was very popular when Saint Dominic was a teenager.

games, and avoided complaining and finding fault with things. He especially sought out boys who had no one else to be their friend, as well as those who were sick. Dominic enjoyed the normal life of a student, with all of its ups and downs, if not with a few