

Saint Augustine of Hippo is a loveable saint because, like lots of people, he learned some things the hard way. For one thing, he loved to party. Luckily, God gave him people in his life to help him turn things around. Two of these people are now saints. St. Monica was Augustine's mom, and she prayed for him...a lot! He moved to Italy and met Bishop Ambrose, whose kindness impressed Augustine. Finally, he gave up his old life-style. Augustine became a priest and then a bishop, started religious communities, and is famous for his writing. On the wall of his room was the saying, "Here we do not speak evil of anyone."

St. Benedict the Moor lived in the 1500's. Since his parents were slaves, he too grew up working as a slave. Fortunately, his master freed him when he turned 18. As he earned money, he gladly shared with the poor and also helped care for sick people. Soon people called him by the nickname "il moro santo," which means "the black saint." Later he joined a group of hermits and became their leader, but the Pope told the hermits that they should join established religious communities. Benedict joined the Order of Friars Minor, and he often served as the cook for his community. People visited him because they wanted healing, prayers, or advice. Several years after his death, his body was undecayed and even smelled unusually good. He is the patron saint of African-Americans.

St. Martin de Porres is the patron saint of social justice. At age 12, he began learning how to be a barber and surgeon. (Can you imagine having your tonsils taken out by a barber?) When he was 15, he joined the Dominican Friary at Lima, Peru. His dream was to travel as a missionary and die for his faith as a martyr. Those wishes never came true. He did lots of penance. He loved people and animals. He even had an animal hospital at his sister's house. He started an orphanage, schools, and hospital. People rich and poor came to him for healing. His mother was a freed slave, but his father was a Spaniard. Because of his heritage, some call him the patron saint for mixed-race people.

St. Catherine of Alexandria had a vision in which Christ placed a ring on her finger. Actually, could have had a royal marriage here on earth if she would deny that she believed the ideas of her Christian faith. She refused the deal and was thrown into prison. From there, while the emperor was away, she converted his wife and about 200 soldiers. All of them were put to death. When it was Catherine's turn to die, the spiked wheel that was supposed to kill her miraculously broke. Then she was beheaded. She is the patron saint of young girls and people who work with wheels.