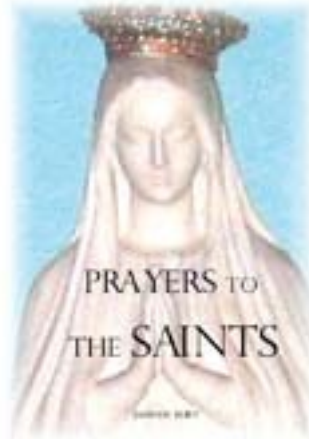


# Book Review

## Prayers to the Saints



By James H. Kurt

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James H. Kurt's book, *Prayers to the Saints*, is a collection of about 212 prayers dedicated to the holy ones of God. The book follows the Church calendar of the United States and includes prayers to known saints, others of recent canonization, and others not so well known. The prayers are written with an eloquent and poetic language describing the life of the saints and echoing the psalms of David. This glimpse into the lives of the saints will make you curious and will encourage you to further investigate the cause of their martyrdom and/or their holy lives.

Now let us reflect on the meaning of prayer. According to [dictionary.com](http://dictionary.com), a prayer is a "spiritual communion with God or an object of worship, as in supplication, thanksgiving, adoration, or confession." However, our Catholic dogma gives us a more profound meaning of prayer. The Catholic on-line encyclopedia, [newadvent.org](http://newadvent.org), defines prayer as "an act of the virtue of religion which consists in asking proper gifts or graces from God. This may be done by acts of praise and thanksgiving, but petition is the principal act of prayer." Both definitions have a common purpose, "spiritual communion with God." These petitions could be done by asking God directly or by seeking the assistance of the holy ones. As per

newadvent.org, “we pray to the holy angels and to men not that God may learn our petition through them, but that by their prayers and merits our prayers may be efficacious.”

I chose to showcase some saints and martyrs of the cause of Christ who gave their lives for the goodness of God kingdom in far away places such as Europe, Korea, Uganda, and Vietnam. Since I live in Germany I decided to start with three known saints here.

**St. Apollinaris - Vienna**, d.453-520 - (p.110) - Feast Day:July 20. At age thirty-three he was made Bishop of See of Valence, Italy. His cloak brought health back to King Gondebaud. After a savage beating by pagans at Classis, a suburb of Ravenna, he died at age sixty-seven. During the sixth century, a basilica was built in his honor in Ravenna.

**St. Hedwig - Bavaria**, 1174-1243 - (p. 180) - Feast Day: October 16. She was the daughter of the Duke of Croatia and the maternal aunt of St. Elizabeth of Hungary. St. Hedwig led a life of piety and solicitude for the sick and poor, including their religious education. She was the founder of the Order of the Cistercian nuns at Trebnitz. St. Hedwig died on October 15, 1243 and is venerated as patroness of Poland.

**Pope St. Sylvester I - Rome**, 314-335 - (p. 227) - Feast Day: December 31. According to a legend he is the man who healed from leprosy and baptized the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great. He was responsible for the building of many churches, such as the Basilica of St. Peter and the Basilica of St. John Lateran. St. Sylvester died in 335. He was buried in a church which he himself had built over the Catacomb of Priscilla on the Via Salaria. The New Year celebration in Germany is known as “Sylvester Partie.”

**Seven Founders of the Order of Servites - Florence** (p. 29) - Feast Day: February 17. Seven noblemen of Florence abandoned their prominent lives and withdrew to Monte Senario for prayers and direct service of God. They promised to follow Christ and witness his gospel. They took the Blessed Virgin as their Lady and they lived communal lives according to the Rule of St. Augustine. This order spread around the world and in 1852 members of the community came to the United States and settled in New York and Philadelphia. In Wisconsin, 1870, Father Austin Morini was a crucial figure in the development of these two communities. Pope Leo XIII canonized the founders as the Seven Founders of the Servite Order in 1888.

**Sts. Andrew Kim Taegon, Paul Chong Hasang, and Companions – Korea** - (p. 159) - Feast Day: September 20 - In the 17th Century began the evangelization of Korea by a group of lay persons from the Paris Foreign Mission Society. During the terrible persecutions of the 19th century (in 1839, 1866, and 1867), a community of one hundred and three Christians under the care of the first Korean priest and pastor, Andrew Kim Taegon, and the lay apostle, Paul Chong Hasang gave their lives as martyrs. On May 6, 1984, during his trip to Korea, Pope John Paul II canonized these martyrs and inserted their feast to the Calendar of the Universal Church.

**St. Charles Lwanga and Companions (The 22 Martyrs of Uganda -Uganda –** (p. 84) - Feast Day: June 3 Charles was the first of the group to convert from paganism into Catholicism. He was the chief of pages of King Mwanga. He was a moral leader, an excellent athlete and the most handsome man of the kingdom. He instructed, baptized, inspired, and encouraged his friends ages 13-30 to remain faithful to God. King Mwanga, a pagan king, sentenced Charles to be burned slowly to death. Charles happily accepted his death for the True Faith and even arranged the stick before laying down over them. His only words of comforts and consolation were "Kotanda! which means "O my God!" On June 22, 1964 Pope Paul VI canonized Charles and his companions. Charles is the Patron of the African Youth of Catholic Action.

**St. Andrew Dung-Lac and Companions – Vietnam-** (p. 206) - Feast Day:November 24. He was one of 117 martyrs who died in Vietnam between 1820 and 1862. The Jesuits from Portugal were the first to open a permanent mission at Da Nang in 1615. They ministered to Japanese Catholics who had been driven from Japan. After 1820 between 100,000 and 300,000 Catholics were killed or subjected to great hardship. The first martyrs were foreign missionaries, including priests of the Paris Mission Society, and Spanish Dominican priests and tertiaries. During the Vietnamese war many Catholics suffered in the North, and moved to the South in great numbers. Now the country is ruled by the Communist. Between 1900 and 1951 in four different occasions all the members of this group were beatified. They were all canonized by Pope John Paul II.

The book cover shows an image of crowned Mary praying and inviting us to pray in solidarity with those martyrs of the church who have gone before us to rest and await the return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ.

This collection of prayers is an excellent tool for parents, youth ministers, and lay persons working with youth. It could be used to introduce the youth to poetry, prayer, and to the lives of the saints, all included in one prayer. It is also a great way to meditate on the saints and martyrs of the Church and keep praying for the persecuted church in other countries.



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