



Trail Mix Activity Center

Family Handout

Families create a healthy snack while discussing the journey to sainthood.

Just as a healthy diet of food nourishes our physical well-being and gives us energy, a healthy dose of prayer and inspiration from the saints nourishes our spiritual well-being and energizes our faith. Make your own healthy snack and talk about ways to keep body, mind, heart, and soul in good shape by following the example of the saints.

- ✦ Label your snack bag with your name.
- ✦ Choose a few ingredients and scoop a bit of each into your container until it's three-quarters full.
- ✦ Seal your bag tightly and give it a few gentle shakes and turns, until the ingredients are mixed.
- ✦ Enjoy your healthy, high-energy snack!





The Trail to Sainthood

Family Handout

Have you ever wondered how the Church discerns which holy people should be elevated to sainthood?

We all know people who seem extra holy and live a good life. In the earliest days of the Christian faith, that was about all it took for someone to be called a saint. Often those saints were martyrs—people killed because of their faith. But for about 1,000 years, the rules on who could become a saint were a little fuzzy.

Some in the Church grew worried that people might be elevated to sainthood willy-nilly. In the year 993, Pope John XV became the first pope to canonize—or approve—a saint. After this, the process for deciding who became a saint grew much more official.

Today the trail to sainthood starts with a person called a “petitioner.” This petitioner is someone who knew a holy person well and writes to the local bishop asking that the holy person be considered for canonization, which means added to the list, or “canon,” of people the Catholic Church considers saints.

The bishop puts a “postulator” on the case. A postulator is a Church expert who investigates the holy person’s life. The postulator gathers any information he can about this holy person, reviews it carefully with the help of other experts, and turns it over to the bishop for consideration.

The investigation continues. The bishop’s office interviews people who have witnessed the candidate’s holiness, reads the candidate’s writings, and talks to other experts—possibly medical experts, historians, psychologists, maybe even the pope—to make sure everything about the case is accurate and true.

If the case makes it through this round, all the information (called “The Acts of the Cause”) is sent to the Vatican in Rome, where the Congregation for the Causes of Saints reviews it all yet again. If they think the candidate is worthy, he or she can now be called “venerable”—not a saint yet, but closer.

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The Trail to Sainthood

Family Handout (continued)

The Congregation really looks closely at the candidate's life now to decide whether he or she was an exceptional example of faith, hope, love, prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. The group also looks for a miracle—an honest-to-goodness, proven, without-a-doubt miracle—that happened because someone prayed to the candidate.

If the candidate passes all these checkpoints, the Congregation presents his or her case to the pope. The candidate can now be called “blessed”—not a saint yet, but even closer.

Sainthood takes several more miracles—honest-to-goodness, proven, without-a-doubt miracles—that happened because someone prayed to the candidate. If the pope finds that these miracles were the result of intercession to the candidate, he at last names that person a saint. There is a document of canonization and a ceremony, and the saint is given a feast day.

Naming someone a saint is a long and careful process. But becoming a saint begins long before that. It begins when an ordinary person opens his or her heart to the grace of God.

Adapted from *The Seeker's Guide to Saints*,
by Mitch Finley

