

SAINTS OF THE CHURCH



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Cross Year—Primary, Unit IV
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CHAPTER 1

Agnes of Rome

Agnes was a young girl of thirteen. She lived in Rome where she was born, late in the third century. Her family was wealthy. In those days, teenage girls were expected to get married soon. Because Agnes was very beautiful, many young men in Rome hoped to be her husband.

Agnes decided not to marry. She said she belonged to God and wanted to devote her life to serving Christ. This made the young men angry. What could they do?

Now the city of Rome was ruled by a powerful emperor. The people worshiped him, along with many other gods.

Everyone knew that Christians worshiped only one God. They believed in Jesus Christ and the teachings of the apostles. When people turned to Jesus and were baptized, the Roman government was against them. The emperor and his followers thought the Christians were the source of many problems. They said Christians caused fires and floods.

Christians like Agnes were persecuted. They could

not worship in the open. They gathered secretly in the underground catacombs of the city. They were hunted down and killed. Their houses were destroyed. Still, more and more people became Christians.

The angry young men said, "Let us report Agnes to the emperor's government. That will make her change her mind! She will listen to us."

When the officials heard about Agnes, they commanded her to stop praying to God. She must worship the Roman emperor.

Agnes said, "No!" again and again. "God will protect me," she insisted.

Finally, the Roman governor told her she would die if she did not stop being a Christian. Agnes refused.

She was put to death by the sword. She became a martyr—a person who gives up life to serve God.

Agnes' family was very sad. To offer comfort, Agnes appeared to them in a vision. She was happy, smiling, and holding a small white lamb in her arms. Agnes means "lamb" in Latin and "pure" in Greek. This beautiful young girl who gave her life for Jesus became the special saint of other young girls. Her symbol is a lamb.

Agnes of Rome: Died 304 CE
Church Calendar, January 21

CHAPTER 2

Athanasius of Alexandria

Athanasius grew up in Alexandria, Egypt. His family was Christian, and he worshiped God with his parents. They wanted to keep him safe from others who hated the followers of Jesus Christ.

As a boy, Athanasius went to school and learned to read and write. Then he was sent into the desert to stay with a monk named Anthony.

By the time Athanasius grew up, Constantine had become the new emperor of Rome. He changed everything and made it legal for people to be Christians.

Athanasius became a deacon when he was twenty-four years old. He was a good writer and speaker. The Bishop of Alexandria asked Athanasius to become his secretary.

Arius, a priest of Alexandria, began to tell people that Jesus was not really God. He said Jesus was just a special person created by God. Many people believed his teaching.

Athanasius thought Arius was wrong. He believed Jesus was human and also God. He told many people what he believed and why.

The different views of Arius and Athanasius caused many arguments in the Church. The Emperor Constantine did not like all the quarreling and fighting among Christians. So, in 325 CE, he asked all the Church's bishops to hold a Council. They would meet in Nicaea, a town in Bithynia (now Turkey).

The emperor said he would come to the Council himself. He would be in charge. Together the group would decide what was right.

Athanasius went to Nicaea with his bishop. He told the bishops and the emperor that he believed Jesus was an equal Person in the Trinity of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

The Council concluded that Athanasius was right. They decided against Arius. Then they began to write down what the Church believed. Their work, called the Nicene Creed, was written with Athanasius' help.

After the Council, Athanasius went back to Egypt. He became the Bishop of Alexandria in 328 CE. He truly believed in God, and he shared his beliefs with others.

We can still read some of Athanasius' many books, sermons, and letters. He wrote the story of his friend, Anthony, who is also a Saint of the Church.

Athanasius of Alexandria: Died in 373 CE
Church Calendar, May 2



Athanasius helped to write the Nicene Creed.

CHAPTER 3

Patrick of Ireland

Patrick was born in Britain. His father was a Roman official and a deacon in the Christian church.

When he was sixteen, he went one day for a walk on the beach. Three men captured him. They took him to Ireland and sold him as a slave.

Patrick was very unhappy. He missed his family. Life was hard. He spent many lonely days caring for sheep.

Patrick prayed with deep faith, every day. One night, a voice spoke to him, saying: "A ship is coming. It will take you home, and you will be free."

Patrick believed the voice. That night, he ran away from his master. He traveled two hundred miles to find the ship. At first, the sailors sent him away. Patrick prayed to God. The sailors changed their minds and took him to France. From there, Patrick found his way home to Britain. His family was very glad to see him. Patrick never wanted to go back to Ireland.

Patrick decided to study to be a priest. He went to France where he later became a bishop.

One night, Patrick heard another voice. It said,

"Come again, holy boy, come and walk again in the midst of us." Patrick knew he would return to Ireland. This time he went as a missionary. He would tell the Irish people the story of Jesus.

Patrick stayed in Ireland for the rest of his life. He baptized new Christians, told kings about Jesus, built churches, and taught school. He helped all of Ireland to become Christian.

Today, Patrick is called the patron saint of Ireland. Many stories are told about the things he did.

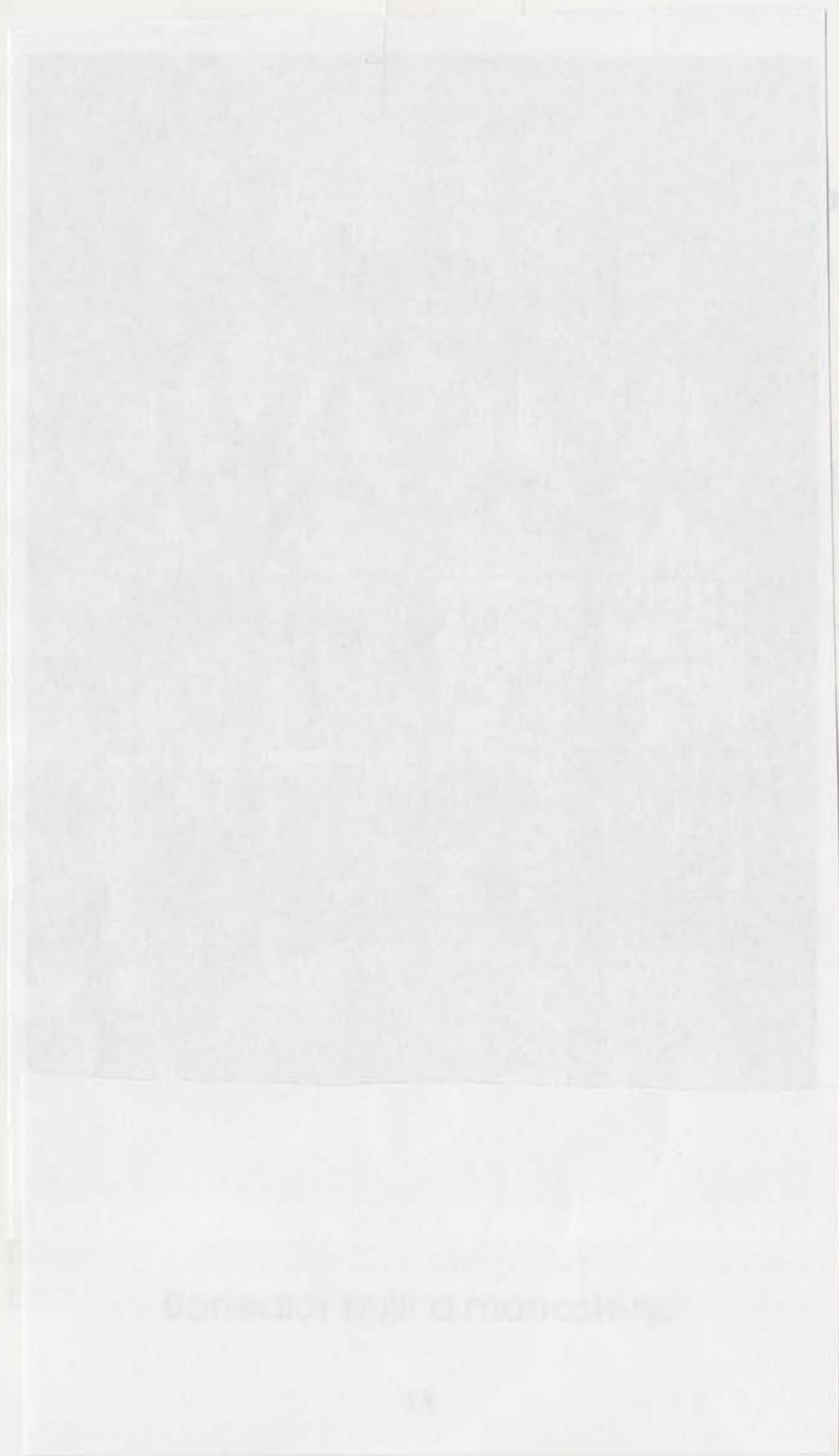
According to one legend, Ireland was covered with snakes. The people could not go out of their homes. Patrick walked among the snakes and spoke to them. They began to follow him. He led them to the beach and into the sea. They all drowned. Now, there are no snakes in Ireland.

Another legend says Patrick was teaching people about the Trinity. They still did not understand. Nearby, Patrick saw a shamrock—a plant that grows in Ireland. He picked a leaf from one and said, "See how the three leaves are on one stem? That is the way it is with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They are Three-in-One."

Patrick of Ireland: Died 461 CE
Church Calendar, March 17



Patrick was a missionary to Ireland.



CHAPTER 4

Benedict of Nursia

Benedict was born in Nursia, Italy, in 480 CE. He had a twin sister named Scholastica.

When he was old enough, he was sent to school in Rome. He did not like living there. He thought the people were rude. They wasted food and money.

He ran away to the mountains where he met a monk named Romanus, who lived by himself. Romanus found Benedict a cave to live in.

He stayed in the cave for three years. He ate the bread Romanus brought, along with wild nuts and berries. Soon, other people learned about Benedict and wanted to join him. He gathered them into a community of twelve houses, with a monk in each one. Benedict helped them to pray and to live each day in a simple manner.

When this community grew too large, Benedict moved to a place called Monte Cassino. There he built a famous monastery—a place where monks live together in prayer and dedication to God. Benedict's sister established a convent nearby in Monte Cassino.

Benedict wrote a Rule to teach the monks who

lived with him. During each day, they would spend four hours in prayer and worship. Five hours were given to reading Scripture or other spiritual books.

For six hours, the monks worked. They did jobs like growing vegetables and herbs. They took care of the farm animals, milking the cows, feeding the chickens, and tending the sheep and goats. They cooked the food and cleaned the rooms. They did all the work necessary to run the monastery. Benedict allowed one hour for meals and eight hours for sleep.

Once a year, Benedict visited his sister, Scholastica. They talked about God and heaven. When Scholastica died, Benedict saw her soul go to heaven in the shape of a dove.

Benedict learned in a dream when he would die. He told the other monks. When the time came for his death, he was carried into the chapel where he had spent many hours praying. The monks helped him stand before the altar and raise his hands toward heaven.

Benedict and his sister are buried before the altar at Monte Cassino.

There are still many monks and nuns today who live in communities that follow Benedict's Rule. They are called "Benedictines."

Benedict of Nursia: Died around 540 CE.

Church Calendar, July 11



Hilda gave advice to people.

CHAPTER 5

Hilda of Whitby

Hilda grew up in the northern part of England where her family had always lived. Her uncle was a king. She did many of the things young ladies of her day enjoyed—riding horses, sewing, and listening to stories.

Hilda's family became Christians. She studied the Gospels and learned about the Church. When she was thirteen, Hilda was baptized.

She continued to live among the people of the king's court. She was loved and respected. She worshiped God and prayed daily.

After twenty years at court, Hilda decided to become a nun. She wanted to join a convent in France. But the bishop did not want her to go. He said to her, "You are a very holy person. Please live near your home where others can be with you. You can go on devoting yourself to God."

So Hilda stayed in England. Some years later, she organized an Abbey at Whitby. An Abbey is a place where people who dedicate their lives to God can live as a community. In Hilda's Abbey, both men and women worshiped and studied together.

All people—kings, queens, and ordinary farmers—loved and respected Abbess Hilda. They thought she was wise, fair, kind, and practical. Many persons told Hilda about their problems. She listened carefully and gave advice.

In the year 663, the leaders of the Church had to make an important decision. When would they celebrate Easter? The Christians in northern England, Scotland, and Ireland had been deciding on the date of Easter in one way. The Christians in southern England, France, and Rome were deciding in another way.

The leaders gathered at Whitby. They wanted Hilda to give them her advice. The decision was made to celebrate Easter with the Church in southern England, France, and Rome.

Hilda helped people to offer gifts to God. She heard of a young servant who sang songs to God in English. This was very strange because people praised God only in Latin, the language of the Church. Hilda encouraged the boy, Caedmon, to become a monk and to continue writing his English songs of praise.

When Hilda died, many who loved her said they saw her body being carried to heaven by angels.

Hilda of Whitby: Died 680 CE
Church Calendar, November 18

CHAPTER 6

Francis of Assisi

Everyone loved Francis. He cared about people, especially the poor. He loved animals and birds. He spent most of his time praising God and God's creation.

Francis gave away all his possessions. He put on old clothes with patches and wore sandals on his feet. He ate food others gave him. He shared all that he had with people who had less.

At first, Francis lived alone as a hermit. Then he began to travel around the countryside to tell others about the love of Jesus. Soon he was joined by a small band of brothers, and they began a life of wandering and preaching. They worked, and they begged for the poor. Before long, the number of Francis' followers began to grow.

He was called by God to rebuild a ruined church. He worked with his hands to replace the stones and build the roof. Others were impressed by his example, and they joined him in this effort. Francis rebuilt other ruined churches in this way.

These stories about Francis are told over and over:

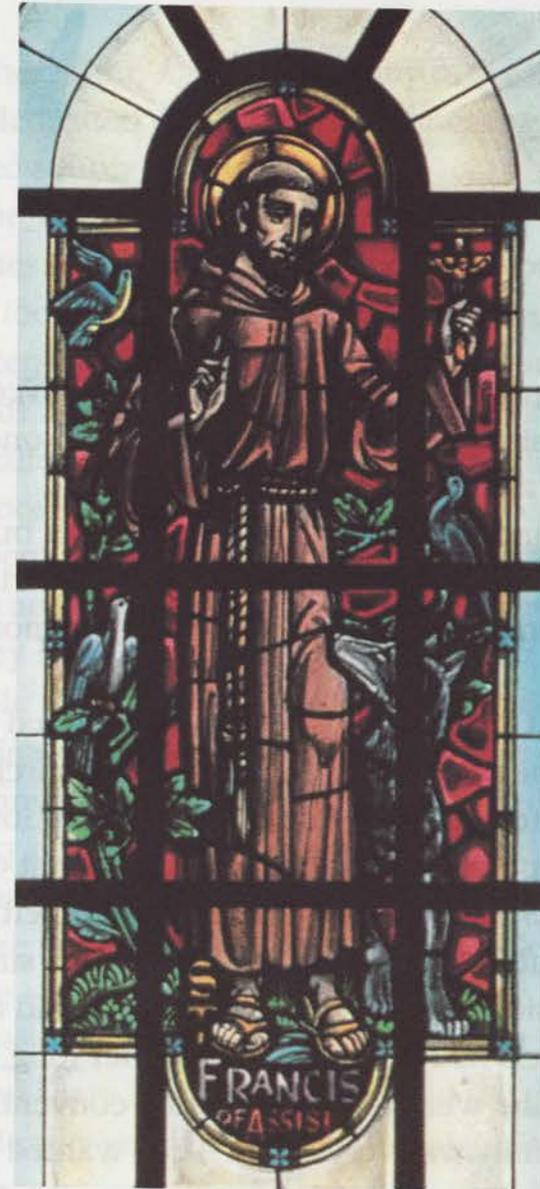
- In the town of Gubbio, a fierce wolf was scaring the people and the other animals. Francis went into the forest to talk to the wolf. He told this animal that he must stop frightening the people in the town. Francis promised the wolf that the people of Gubbio would bring him food if he would promise to be kind to them. The wolf became tame and never hurt anyone again.

- Another time, Francis was walking along a road when he came upon a large flock of all kinds of birds. He stopped and began to preach to them. He told them how lucky they were to have such beautiful feathers, wings, and the clear blue sky to fly in. He said they should praise God who had given them all these things. The birds listened carefully and did not fly away until Francis had given them his blessing.

- One Christmas, Francis wanted to help the people of the village to celebrate in a special way. He found a cave nearby where he laid some hay and brought several animals. On Christmas Eve, he gathered the people around the cave and worshiped the Christ Child in a setting like the manger in Bethlehem. From that time until today, people have had manger scenes in churches and homes.

Francis of Assisi: Died 1226

Church Calendar, October 4



Francis lived a simple life.

CHAPTER 7

Clare of Assisi

A beautiful young woman named Clare lived in the town of Assisi. Her name meant “the clear one.” She grew up in a wealthy but holy family.

Many young men wished to marry Clare, but she refused. Privately, she devoted herself to Christ. She prayed often with other women and gave money to the poor.

One day, Clare had a visitor—a man named Francis who lived nearby while rebuilding the Church of San Damiano. He had heard about Clare’s devotion to God. They prayed together and talked about Christ.

On Palm Sunday in the year 1212, Clare left her home for the last time and met Francis at a small chapel outside of Assisi. Here she put on old clothes, just as Francis had done. She cut off her long, blond hair. Then she went to a Benedictine convent.

Clare’s family was very angry. They wanted her to come home. Clare remained strong. She said she would not be taken away from service to her Lord Christ.

Later, Clare returned to the Church of San Damiano.

She and her sister, Agnes, and many other noble women dedicated themselves to Francis’ way of life. They lived simply among the poor.

This community of women called themselves the Poor Ladies. Later they were known as Poor Clares. They ate food that others obtained from begging. They fasted often, wore simple clothing, and worked with their hands. Sometimes they did not have shoes to wear.

Clare called the others “sisters.” They made clothing for the poor and altar cloths for local churches. The sisters spent many hours in prayer.

Francis and Clare remained friends throughout their lives. They met often for spiritual sharing. Clare had one simple wish. She wanted to have a meal with Francis. Francis always refused. Finally, the other monks convinced Francis to do this. Clare came to Saint Mary of the Angels where Francis had prepared a meal and spread it on the ground. While they ate, they spoke softly and wonderfully about God. A divine fire surrounded them.

When Francis died, his body was carried past the convent so Clare and her sisters could say goodbye. Clare died many years later in the Church of San Damiano.

Clare of Assisi: Died 1253

Church Calendar, August 11



Clare chose to serve the poor.

CHAPTER 8

Julian of Norwich

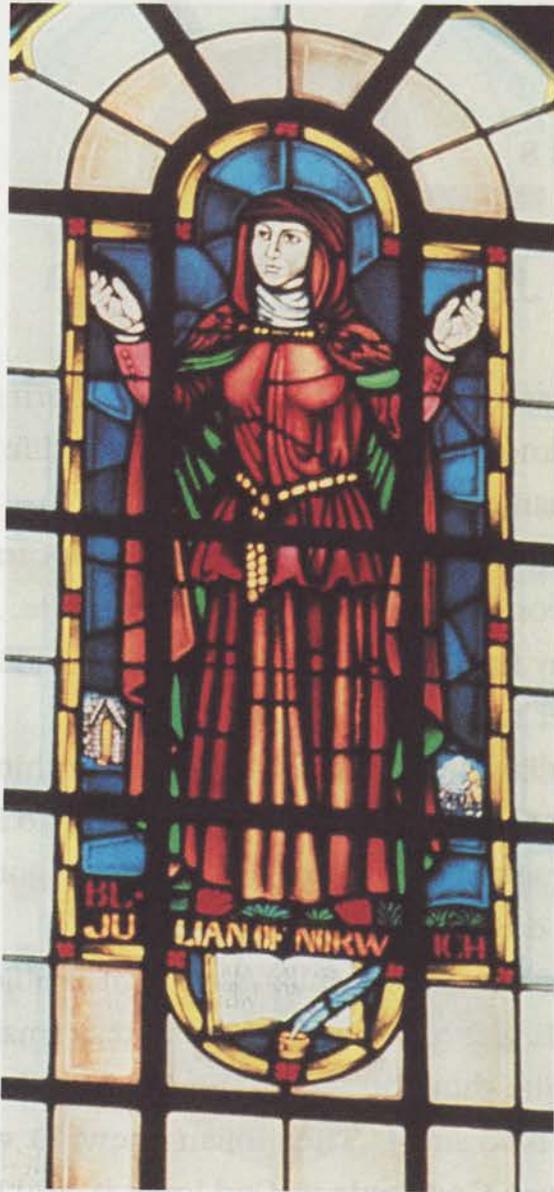
Lady Julian of Norwich, England, was born about 1342. We know very little about her early life, not even her name.

When Julian was thirty years old, she became very sick. Everyone thought she was going to die. A priest came to say final prayers. He held up a crucifix in front of her face.

When Julian saw this cross, an amazing thing happened. She began to have visions sent to her by God. After sixteen different visions, Julian got well. She wrote down what she had seen.

In one of her visions, Julian saw a small object in her hand. It was as round as a ball and as small as a hazelnut. She thought, "What this be? It will disappear because it is so small." Then Julian knew, "It will be all right because God made it, God loves it, and God protects it."

Julian became an anchoress. An anchoress was a



Julian saw visions from God.

woman who lived in a room attached to a church. The church was St. Julian's. Lady Julian took the name of the church.

The room she lived in probably had two windows. One of these looked into the church. From this window, Julian could participate in the worship held there.

The other window looked out on the street. When Julian sat there, people would come by and talk to her about their problems. She would pray for them and give them advice. Sometimes priests and deacons would come to receive her wise words.

After twenty years, Julian wrote down again what she had seen from God when she was ill. She called her book *Revelations of Divine Love*. It described her "showings" and what she thought God was saying to her. In each vision, God was telling about love.

Julian believed that God wanted to share love with all people. She also said that God wanted us to return that love. She helped many people learn to love God. People today are still reading her book. She is always pictured with a yellow cat.

Julian of Norwich: Died around 1417 CE
Church Calendar, May 8

CHAPTER 9

The Church's First Saints

At the Feast of Pentecost each year we celebrate a great event in the lives of the Church's first Saints. They are Apostles: Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the Lesser, Simon the Zealot, and Jude.

Seven weeks after Jesus' resurrection, his disciples were gathered in an upstairs room. They were confused and wondering what would happen next. The risen Lord had ascended into heaven. He had promised to send them a Comforter.

Who would this Comforter be? How long would they need to wait?

Suddenly the room was filled with the sound of a mighty rushing wind. Tongues of fire appeared over everyone's head. The disciples knew this was what they had been waiting for. They were filled with the Holy Spirit. This power told them they could do everything that Jesus asked of them. Their Comforter was now with them, and they were to be Apostles.

The eleven men walked out on the roof and began to speak to the crowd gathered below. The people were from many different countries. They spoke many different languages. Yet, when the Apostles spoke, they could be understood by everyone.

Members of the crowd said, "What does mean?"

Peter raised his voice and answered, "What you are hearing was described by the prophet Joel long ago. The Spirit of God is being poured out upon God's people."

Peter preached a sermon of great power. He told about Jesus of Nazareth. He shared the story of Jesus' crucifixion and death. He proclaimed the good news of the resurrection.

The people in the crowd asked, "What should we do?"

Peter told them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Three thousand people were baptized on that day. We can read this story in *Acts, ch. 2*.

The Feast Days of the Apostles are listed in the Calendar of Saints of *The Book of Common Prayer*. Their days are printed in bold black letters. The Church celebrates Holy Eucharist on these days.

Cross Year—Primary, Unit IV

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p. 12 *St. Patrick* (window). Church of the Ascension,
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p. 16 *St. Hilda* (window). Church of the Ascension,
Knoxville, TN

p. 21 and cover *St. Francis* (window). Church of the Ascension,
Knoxville, TN

p. 24 and cover *St. Clare* (window). Church of the Ascension,
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p. 26 *Julian of Norwich* (window). Church of the Ascension,
Knoxville, TN

p. 30 *Pentecost* (window). Church of Sts. Peter and Paul,
West Chester, PA