Incorruptible Bodies of the Saints

Below are specific examples of incorrupt bodies discovered over the past 2000 years (most recent listed first), most of which are still on display today.

Padre Pio - Born May 25, 1887 and died September 23, 1968, his body was exhumed nearly 40 years after his death in March 2008, and found to be incorrupt. He is the only priest known to have received the full stigmata (wounds) of Jesus Christ, and known for great miracles such as the odor of sanctity, bilocation, prophecy, conversion, reading of souls, and miraculous cures. He was known to have spoken out against the new Mass introduced by the Second Vatican Council, and never celebrated it. His body is now on
display in the church of Our Lady of Grace, in San Giovanni Rotondo, Italy.

Jacinta Marto - Jacinta Marto was one of the three original visionaries at Fatima, Portugal in 1917. She was born in 1910 and died in 1920. In both 1935 and 1951 her body was exhumed and in each instance, her body was found to be incorrupt. The Basilica of Our Lady of Fatima was built on the site where the three children first saw "a lady brighter than the sun" and Jacinta's tomb has remained there since 1951.
Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini - Also known as Mother Cabrini, she died in Chicago in 1917, and was entombed at that time in West Park, New York. In 1931 her remains were exhumed and found to be partially incorrupt. She was beatified in 1938 and in 1946 was the first US citizen to be canonized a Saint. Her partially incorrupt body covered in wax is now enshrined under the altar in the chapel at St. Francis Cabrini Shrine in New York City. See photo below.

Pope St. Pius X - Pope St. Pius X was the 257th Catholic Pope, reigning from 1903 to 1914. He passed away on August 20, 1914 and was buried in the crypt below St. Peter's Basilica. On May 19, 1944, Pope Pius X's coffin was exhumed and was taken to the Chapel of the Holy Crucifix in St. Peter's Basilica for the canonical examination. Upon opening the coffin, the examiners found the body of Pope Pius X preserved, despite the fact that he had died 30 years before and had made wishes not to be embalmed.

Following his beatification, on February 17, 1952, Pope Pius X's body was transferred from its tomb to the Vatican basilica and placed under the altar of the chapel of the Presentation. The pontiff's body lies within a glass and bronze-work sarcophagus for the faithful to see. On May 29,
1954, less than three years after his beatification, Pope St. Pius X was canonized. See photos below.

Blessed Charbel Makhlouf - Was a priest in Lebanon who spent the last 23 years of his life in a hermitage, where he lived the monastic life. He died in 1898 at the age of 70 and according to the monastic custom, was not embalmed and was consigned to the grave without a coffin. An extraordinary bright light surrounded his tomb for 45 days afterward, which prompted an exhumation of his body four months later. His body was discovered completely incorrupt and placed in a coffin inside the monastery chapel. In 1950 his coffin was reopened and body was not only still perfectly incorrupt, flexible, and lifelike, but even after 52 years, doctors confirmed sweat and blood still exuded from the body. After the exhumation of the body in 1950, within a 2-year period, over 1200 miracles were documented. After 67 years of being incorrupt, in 1965, during his beatification, it was determined the body had finally complied with the laws of nature, with only reddish-colored bones remaining.

Saint Mary Mazzarello - Died in 1881 and was later discovered incorrupt. Her incorrupt body is venerated in the Basilica of Mary Our Help, in Turin, Italy. See the photo.
Saint Bernadette Soubirous (also pictured at the top of the page) - St. Bernadette was the original visionary at Lourdes, France and died in 1879 in Nevers, France. Her body was exhumed 30 years later in 1909 and was discovered completely incorrupt and free of odor. The body was again exhumed a second time ten years later in 1919 and again in 1925 and was still incorrupt. Her body is still on display in the Chapel of St. Bernadette in Nevers, France to this day. See photos below and body examination testimony here.

Blessed Paula Frassinetti - Died in 1882 and her body was exhumed and found to be incorrupt in 1906. Her body is on display in the Chapel of the Convent of Santa Dorotea in Rome, Italy.
St. Catherine Laboure' - Died in 1876 and was exhumed and found incorrupt and completely flexible in 1933. She was a sister of the Daughters of Charity and a Marian visionary who relayed the request from the Blessed Virgin Mary to create the Miraculous Medal, which is worn by millions of Catholics and even non-Catholics today. Her body is on display under the side altar in the Chapel of Our Lady of the Sun in Paris. See photo below.

St. Jean-Marie-Baptiste Vianney (also known as St. John Vianney and the Cure' of Ars) - Died in 1859 and was exhumed and found incorrupt in 1904. His body is on display above the main altar in the Basilica at Ars in France. See photo below.
St. Vincent Pallotti - Died in 1850 and was exhumed and found incorrupt and sweetly scented in 1906 and again in 1950. His body is on display under the main altar in the Church of St. Salvatore in Onda, Italy. See picture below.

Bl. Anna Marie Taigi - Died in 1837 at the age of 64 and after 18 years her coffin was opened and body found to be incorrupt. On August 18, 1865 her body was transferred to the Church of San Crisogono in Trastevere (Rome) where it remains to the present day, still incorrupt. See actual photo below.
St. Teresa Margaret - Died in 1770 and was exhumed and found incorrupt in 1783. Her body is on display in a glass case at the Monastery of St. Teresa in Florence, Italy. See photo below.

St. Veronica Giuliani - Died in 1727 and later found incorrupt. See photo below.
St. Margaret Mary Alacoque - Died in 1690 at the age of 43. Her tomb was canonically opened 140 years later in 1830 and body found to be incorrupt. She was a French Roman Catholic nun and mystic, who promoted devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which has become popular among Catholics. The Catholic Church investigated and affirmed the credibility of her visions in 1928. Her body rests under the altar in the chapel at Paray in France. See picture below.

Ven. Mary of Agreda - Died in 1665 and was later discovered incorrupt. She is credited with authoring the "Mystical City of God" through revelation from the Blessed Virgin. Her body has been examined again in later years, including in 1909 and 1989 with no degradation to the body. Her body has remained incorrupt for over 340 years and is kept in a convent in Spain. See photo below.
St. Andrew Bobola - He was severely tortured and intentionally killed in 1657, and was thereafter buried beneath a Jesuit church at Pinsk. After 40 years his body was discovered incorrupt, despite the body's proximity to other decaying corpses and the excessive wounds on his body that normally would have fostered corruption. His body is still as flexible as a live body and is on display under the main altar in the Church of St. Andrew Bobola in Warsaw, Poland.

St. Francis Xavier - Died 1552 and was discovered incorrupt, despite the fact that lime was placed in his casket to expedite decomposition. His body was also said to have bled normally one and a half years after death during an examination by a physician. The body is now in the Basilica of Bom Jesus in Goa, where it was placed in a glass container encased in a silver casket on December 2, 1637. See photo below.
St. Angela Merici - Died in 1540 and her body remained intact for centuries. She is buried in the Church of St. Afra at Brescia. See photo below.

Bl. Osanna of Manua' - Died in 1505. Her body is on display under the altar in Our Lady of the Rosary in the Cathedral of Manua, Italy. In 1965 the relic of her body was examined in depth and still found to be well preserved (460 years old!)
St. Catherine of Bologna Died in 1463 and has been incorrupt and on display in an upright position for over 500 years. See photo below.
St. Rita of Cascia - Died in 1457. Her body kept a sweet fragrance all of these centuries and is on display in a glass case in the Basilica of St. Rita in Cascia, Italy. It is also publicly known that her body has been seen in different positions in the glass case, as well as eyes having opened and closed unaided. See photo below.

Blessed Imelda Lambertini - Known better as Blessed Imelda, she died as a young girl in 1333 and was later found incorrupt. She was beatified in 1826 and her incorrupt body is on display in the Church of San Sigismondo in Bologna, Italy. See photo below.
Blessed Margaret of Metola (Castello) - Died in 1320 and was found incorrupt in 1558. Her body is on display under the high altar of the Church of St. Domenico at Citta-di-Castello, Italy. See photo below.

St. Agnes of Montepulciano - Died in Italy in 1317 and was later found incorrupt. She remained whole and incorrupt until the 16th century when, due to excessive humidity in her tomb, some of her body decomposed. Much of her body has still remained intact for 7 centuries now, including limbs and bones, which are now enclosed in a figure of the Saint on display at the Sanctuary of St. Agnes in Montepulciano, Italy. See photo below.

St. Clare of Montefalco - Died in 1308 and though her body was embalmed, her body has still remained perfectly incorrupt (beyond what embalming can provide in over 7 centuries). Her body is still normally flexible and displayed in the church of the Augustinian nuns of Montefalco, Italy. See photo below.
St. Zita - Died in 1278 and her body is on display in a glass reliquary in the Basilica of St. Frediano in Lucca, Italy. See photo below.

St. Sperandia - Died in 1276 her body is on display in the Benedictine convent church of Cingoli, Italy. Her body was exhumed eight different times, the last in 1952. It is still incorrupt to this day and exudes a sweet fragrance.

Saint Alphege - Was Archbishop of Canterbury and was captured, put in prison, and eventually murdered by his captors in 1012. Ten years later his perfectly incorrupt body was discovered.

Saint Withburga - Died in 743 and incorrupt body was discovered 55 years later. Her remains were on display for over 300 more years thereafter until destroyed during the Reformation.
Saint Etheldreda - Died in 679 and was later found incorrupt. Her remains were intact for nearly 800 years until the Reformation when, at the orders of Henry VIII, her relics were scattered and shrine destroyed.

Saint Agatha - Died in 251 and body was discovered incorrupt in the eleventh century. Parts of her incorrupt body are still in existence today.

Saint Cecilia - Died in 177 and her body was discovered incorrupt in 1599. St. Cecilia is known to be the first saint to be incorrupt. Below is a statue of St. Cecilia created during the exhumation of her incorrupt body in 1599. The position is the same as the actual body and is believed to be the position in which she died. The statue is located in the Basilica of St. Cecilia in Rome.
Certain Saints, at the time of their death or many years later after they were exhumed, were found to be incorruptable. That is to say, their bodies did not decompose. There are more than 250 incorrupt bodies of Catholic saints.

Icon of Saint Clare courtesy of www.MonasteryIcons.com

Saint Agatha - Her body was discovered incorrupt in the eleventh century. Parts of her incorrupt body are still in existence today.

According to variations of her legend, having rejected the amorous advances of a Roman prefect, she was persecuted by him for her Christian faith. Among the tortures she underwent was the cutting off of her breasts. She is therefore often depicted iconographically carrying her excised breasts on a platter.
The shape of her amputated breasts gave rise to her attribute as patron saint of bell-founders. More recently she is venerated as patron saint of breast cancer patients.

Her scorned admirer eventually sentenced her to death by being burnt at the stake. However, she was saved from this fate by a mysterious earthquake. She later died in prison. Name Meaning good
Saint Agatha (Unknown - 251 A.D.)

Saint Catherine Laboure died on 31st December 1876. When her body was exhumed 56 years later it was unblemished. Her eyes were as blue as the day she died. Catherine Laboure is still lying in state at the right of the altar in the chapel Rue du Bac 140, in Paris and she still looks as though she only died yesterday!

Saint Catherine Laboure (1806 - 1876)

The body of Saint Bernadette Soubirous was first exhumed 30 years after her death. On September 2, 1909. Her arms and face were completely unaffected from corruption.
and had maintained their natural skin tone. The second exhumation took place at the end of the Process on April 3, 1919. The body of the Venerable was found in the same state of preservation as 10 years earlier. This sacred relic was placed in a coffin of gold and glass and can be viewed in the Chapel of Saint Bernadette at the motherhouse in Nevers (France).

Saint Bernadette Soubirous (1844 - 1879)

Saint Cecilia - The year of her birth is unknown. She died about 177 A.D. at Rome and her body was discovered incorrupt in 1599, is known to be the first saint to be incorrupt. Virgin and martyr, patroness of church music.

The statue is a copy of the famous work by Stefano Maderno (1566-1636), carried out in 1599, when there took place the recognition of her relics. The body was found in the position represented by the sculptor.
Saint Cecilia (Unknown - 177 A.D.)

Poem

Blessed Cecilia, appear in visions
To all musicians, appear and inspire:
Translated Daughter, come down and startle
Composing mortals with immortal fire.

The tomb of Saint Clare of Assisi was found in 1850. On 23 September in that year the coffin was unearthed and opened, the flesh and clothing of the saint had been reduced to dust, but the skeleton was in a perfect state of preservation. Finally, on the 29th of September, 1872, the saint's bones were transferred, with much pomp, by Archbishop Pecci, afterwards Leo XIII, to the shrine, in the crypt at Santa Chiara, erected to receive them, and where they may now be seen.
Saint Clare of Assisi (1194 - 1253)

The body of Saint Maria Goretti is interred in the church of Our Lady of Mercy in Nettuno (Italy). Her incorrupt body is there and she is absolutely beautiful.

Saint Maria Goretti (1890 - 1902)

Saint Etheldreda (also known as Audrey, Æthelthryth, Ethelreda, Edilthride, Ediltrudis, Edeltrude)

Queen of South Gyrwe, Queen of Northumbria, Abbess of Ely
Born: AD 630 at Exning, Suffolk - Died: 23rd June AD 679 at Ely Abbey, Cambridgeshire

She was the daughter of King Anna of East Anglia and Queen Hereswide of England.

17 years after her death her body was found to be incorrupt. The linen cloths in which her body was wrapped were as fresh as the day she had been buried. Her body was placed in a stone sarcophagus of Roman origin, found at Grantchester and reburied. At the Reformation, all their shrines were destroyed and the incorrupt body parts dispersed. When her shrine at Ely Cathedral was destroyed, the saintly Queen
Etheldreda’s hand was preserved by a devout Catholic family. The still incorrupt hand was enshrined, some 400 years later, when a little Catholic Church was re-established in Ely. An apocryphal story relates how the present Queen, on a tour of the cathedral, met the crusty Irish priest of the little Catholic Church. She asked him if it wouldn’t be a ‘nice gesture’ to return the hand of St Etheldreda to the cathedral; he replied that it would be a nice gesture for her to return the cathedral to the Catholic church.

St. Jean-Marie-Baptiste Vianney (Cure' of Ars) - Died in 1859 and was exhumed and found incorrupt in 1904. His body is on display above the main altar in the Basilica at Ars in France.
St. John Mary Vianney was ordained a priest in 1815. Three years later he was made parish priest of Ars, a remote French hamlet, where his reputation as a confessor and director of souls made him known throughout the Christian world. His life was one of extreme mortification.
Rita of Cascia died on May 22, 1457. The incorrupt body of this “patron saint of hopeless cases” can be seen at the Basilica of St Rita in Cascia, Italy. It is also publicly known that her body has been seen in different positions in the glass case, as well as eyes have opened and closed unaided. Her symbol is the rose petal, which she shares with St Therese of Lisieux. Rita was beatified by pope Urban VIII in 1627 and canonized on May 24, 1900 by Pope Leo XIII.
Saint Catherine of Bologna (1413-1463) - Also known as Catherine de Virgi. Feastday: March 9 - Patroness of Artist.
In Lent of 1463, Catherine became seriously ill, and she died on March 9. Buried without a coffin, her body was exhumed eighteen days later because of cures attributed to her and also because of the sweet scent coming from her grave. Her body is later enshrined in the chapel of the Poor Clares at Bologna. The flesh has grown dark, but that may well have been because of the heat and soot of the candles that were burned for years around her exposed remains. In that shrine, her body is not recumbent but seated! This was in response, it is said, to a request she made of one of her sisters to whom she appeared in a vision in 1500. She was canonized in 1712 by Pope Benedict XIII.
Saint Francis Xavier; also known as Apostle to the Far East, was born as Francisco de la Jasso y Azpilcueta, on April 7th, 1506 in the Castle of Xavier at Javier, near Sanguesa, in Navarre (Spain).

His dream was evangelizing China, but this was never realized. He fell ill of a fever within the sight of Canton. They brought him to the island of Sancian, where he died after 2 weeks, on December 2, 1552, at age 46, without having reached mainland China. He was buried in Sancian island in a wooden coffin as they used to do in China.

On December 11, 1553, Xavier’s body was shipped to Goa. Two layers of quicklime were added in order to accelerate the process of corruption, which would facilitate the transference of his bones. Two and a half months later, the coffin was unearthed. To the surprise of all present, after the lime had been removed, they found the body totally incorrupt, as if it were still alive. And a sweet fragrance is said to have issued from the coffin. After replacing the lime, the coffin was sailed to Malacca. On arrival it was opened and the body was still found to have the freshness of a living person. The body was then buried this time without a coffin.

The body, having resisted extensive decay, is now in the Basilica of Bom Jésus in Goa, where it was placed in a glass container encased in a silver casket on December 2, 1637. Francis Xavier was beatified 25 October 1619 by Pope Paul V and canonized 12 March 1622 by Pope Gregory XV.

His memorial is: 3 December
Blessed Margaret of Castello; also known as: Margaret of Citta-di-Castello; Margaret of Metola.
She died on April 13, 1320 at the age of 33. When she died, the townspeople thronged to her funeral and demanded that “the saint” be buried in a tomb inside the church. The priest protested, but when a crippled girl was miraculously cured at the funeral, the people had their way. More than 200 miracles have been credited to her intercession after her death.
In 1558, her remains were transferred because her coffin was rotten. Her clothes were also rotten, but her body was preserved. She was beatified on October 19, 1609 by Pope Paul V and awaits canonization as a Saint. Thus the daughter that nobody wanted is one of the glories of the Church. God has given to us an illustration of how handicapped persons fit in with His eternal plan. Take courage, then, you who are handicapped. God loves you doubly! Till today the body of Blessed Margaret is still incorrupt.
Teresa of Avila; also known as: Theresa of Avila; The Roving Nun; Teresa de Avila.

Teresa of Avila was born as Teresa Ali Fatim Corella Sanchez de Capeda y Ahumada in Avila, Spain, on March 28, 1515. She was a daughter of Don Alonso Sanchez de Cepeda, a son of a Toledan merchant, and Doña Beatriz Davila y Ahumada, originally from Tordesillas. She died in 1582. Her body was exhumed several times after her death, and each time found sweet-smelling, firm, and incorrupt. Her heart, hands, right foot, right arm, left eye and part of her jaw are on display in various sites around the world.
Saint Catherine of Siëna; also known as Catharine of Siena - Memorial: 29 April; (formerly 30 April)

Catherine died on April 29th in 1380 of a mysterious and painful illness that came on without notice, and was never properly diagnosed. She was Thirty-three years old. About fifty years after she died, her body was found to be incorrupt. Pope Pius II canonized Catherine in 1461. Her feast day is 29 April. In 1866 she became co-patron saint of Rome. Since 1939 she is the patron saint of Italy together with Francis of Assisi. Of all the spiritual stars, Catherine of Siena is one of the very greatest. Catherine is the only woman other than Saint Teresa of Avila, who was declared a Doctor of the Church on October 4, 1970 by pope Paul VI. Further she got the title co-patronship of Europe by John Paul II in 1999.
Saint John of God; also known as: Juan de Dios (Spanish); João de Deus (Portuguese)

Saint John of God was born Juan Ciudad on March 8th, 1495 at Montemoro Novo, Evora, Portugal, of poor but very devout Christian parents. At the age of eight he left home and worked as a shepherd for a farmer, who was very pleased with him. John had an offer to marry the farmer's daughter and become heir to the property; but he refused because he wanted to pursue a spiritual life.

Before he died on 8 March 1550 at Granada, Spain, his selfless dedication to the sick brought him to be known as "John of God". By faithfully following his example, the Order of Brothers formed after the death of St. John of God has passed on John's way of serving for those in need. It is called "Hospitality" and after five centuries it remains the charism of the Hospitaller Order of St. John of God.

In 1570 the fragrant body of the Saint was found entire, except for the tip of the nose. The relics are kept in a chest of beautiful wood in the Basilica of Saint John of God in Granada.
Saint John of God (1495 - 1550)

Saint Rose of Lima was born on April 20, 1586 at Lima, Peru, of a Spaniard, Gaspar de Flores, and Maria d'Olivia, as one of ten children. She received from baptism the name of Isabel Flores de Oliva. At three months old Isabella was in her cradle as her mother and several other women were sitting around it there suddenly appeared in the air a beautiful rose; which gently touched the face of the baby and then vanished; and from that day on Maria called her Rose. Despite her family’s attempt to have her marry, Rose took a vow of virginity.

She began to tell of visions, revelations, visitations and voices as they deplored her penitential practices more than ever. She took the name of Rose at her confirmation in 1597. She received Holy Communion daily, and was conferred the habit of the third order of Saint Dominic in 1606, at the age of 20. Rose increased the already extreme penances. She helped the sick and hungry around her community. She would bring them to her home and take care of them.

She died August 25, 1617 at the age of 31. As she had requested, her body was buried in the cloister of St. Dominic's church, where it was found in 1630 in a very good condition. The relics of the Saint are now conserved in two locations; in the Dominican Church of Santo Domingo. The rest of her relics are kept in the neighborhood in a small church, which was built on the ground where Rose lived. Many miracles followed her death. Each year the devout make a pilgrimage to the chapel in Santa Rosa de Quives where she lived and worshipped. Saint Rose of Lima
was beatified April, 15, 1668 by Pope Clement IX and canonized April 2, 1671 by Pope Clement X. She is represented wearing a crown of roses.

Saint Rose of Lima (1586 - 1617)

Feastday: September 23

Padre Pio was born in Pietralcina, Italy, on May 25, 1887. The 4th child of Grazio Maria Forgione and Maria Giuseppa De Nunzio, he was given the name Francesco, after a brother who died shortly after birth. From the time he was very young, it was
his desire to join the Monks at the Monastery who "wore the beard". His dream to join the Catholic Capuchin Order of Friars Minor was realized in 1903 when he was admitted at the Friary of Morcone in the Province of Foggia. In 1916, struggling with ill health, he transferred to the Friary of Our Lady of Grace in San Giovanni Rotondo and there he remained. This humble Capuchin Priest from San Giovanni Rotondo, Italy, was blessed by God in many wonderful and mysterious ways. He became famous for his stigmata.

Early in the morning of September 23, 1968, Padre Pio made his last confession and renewed his Franciscan vows. As was customary, he had his rosary in his hands, though he did not have the strength to say the Hail Marys aloud. Till the end, he repeated the words "Gesù, Maria" (Jesus, Mary). At around 2:30am, he said, "I see two mothers" (taken to mean his mother and Mary). At 2:30 a.m. he breathed his last in his cell in San Giovanni Rotondo with his last breath whispering, "Maria!"

Pio, which is purported to be incorrupt. The body was exhumed in early March 2008 and since its exhumation has been viewed by over 7,000 pilgrims a day. As we can see from these shots, the body is obviously in a remarkable state of preservation. Take a look:
Incorrupt Bodies

Of the Saints

"You will not allow your holy one to see corruption" - Ps 15.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Brief Introduction.
Saint Silvan, Martyr.
Saint Clare of Assisi.
Saint Zita.
Saint Clare of Montefalco.
Saint Agnes of Montepulciano
Blessed Margaret of Castello.
Blessed Imelda Lambertini.
Saint Rita of Cascia.
Saint Catherine of Bologna.
Saint Germaine Cousin.
Saint Vincent De Paul.
Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque.
Saint Veronica Giuliani.
Saint Theresa Margaret.
Saint Jean Marie Vianney.
Saint Catherine Labouré.
Saint Bernadette Soubirous.
Saint Maria Mazzarello.
Saint John Bosco.
Saint Maria Goretti.

Brief Introduction

The incorrupt bodies of these saints are simply a living witness or proof to the truth of the Catholic religion as the one true faith from God, who has confirmed the testimony of the Church in the great miracles he has worked through it's saints.

The Council of Trent:

"The bodies of holy martyrs and others now living with Christ, bodies which were His members and temples of the Holy Spirit, which one day are to be raised up by Him and made glorious in everlasting life, are to be venerated by the faithful; God gives men many benefits through them."

The Bodies of the saints for us are like great and holy relics, which move us to honor the saints who God has chosen to honor by preserving them incorrupt.

In scripture we read that the use of the bones of Elisha brought a dead man to life: "So Elisha died, and they buried him. Now bands of Moabites used to invade the land in the spring of the year. And as a man was being buried, lo, a marauding band was seen and the man was cast into the grave of Elisha; and as soon as the man touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood on his feet." (2 Kgs. 13:20-21).

A woman was cured of a hemorrhage by touching the hem of Christ's cloak (Matt. 9:20-22). The sick were healed when Peter's shadow passed over them (Acts 5:15-16). "And God did extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that handkerchiefs or aprons were carried away from his body to the sick, and diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them" (Acts 19:11-12).
The Power of the relics to work miracles doesn't come from the object itself but from God, who confirms the faith of the person who is healed by means of them as to testify to the holiness of His saints.

Saint Silvan, Martyr

Not much is known about this beautiful saint except that he was martyred in the fourth century. Look closely at the picture and you can see a large slice in his neck, an obvious clue to his martyrdom. Also you can see an embroidered cross on the front of his garment indicating that he may have been a priest or some other cleric. St Silvan’s magnificently incorrupt body can be viewed in the Church of St. Blaise at Dubrovnik, Croatia.
St. Clare was the Co-founder of the Order of Poor Clares and the first Abbess of San Damiano. She was born at Assisi, Italy, on the 16th of July in the year 1194, the eldest daughter of a rich family. At an early age she gained a great distaste for worldly affairs; and when she was eighteen years of age, greatly encouraged and aided by the great St. Francis of Assisi, she decided to leave the world and join a convent. Late at night, on the 20th of March in the year 1212, Clare left for the monastery without her parents’ permission. St. Francis and his disciples met her with lighted candles in their hands. Clare then laid aside her rich dress; and St. Francis, having cut off her hair, clothed her in a rough tunic and a thick veil. In this way the young heroine vowed herself to the service of Jesus Christ. When her parents discovered her departure, her father, in a violent effort to bring her home, immediately followed her to the monastery. But Clare refused to return to the worldly life from which she had just departed.

Clare first joined the Benedictines, but later she and other fugitives from the world began the order of the Poor Clares in a rude dwelling adjoining the chapel of San Damiano.

In 1234, when the army of Frederick II was devastating the valley of Spoleto, the soldiers made an assault upon Assisi. They scaled the walls of San Damiano by night, spreading terror among the community. Calmly rising from her bed, Clare took the ciborium from the little chapel adjoining her cell and proceeded to face the invaders at an open window against which they had already placed a ladder. As she raised the Blessed Sacrament on high, the soldiers who were about to enter the monastery fell backward as if dazzled; and the others who were ready to attack took flight.
St. Clare died in Assisi on the 11th of August in the year 1253. On September 23, 1850, her coffin was unearthed and opened. The flesh and clothing of the saint had been reduced to dust, but the skeleton was perfectly incorrupt. Her bones may be seen in the crypt at Santa Chiara, Italy.
Zita was born in the beginning of the thirteenth century at Montsegradi, a village near Lucca, Italy. Her mother raised her with the fear and love of the Lord, and at an early age she was very devoted to prayers and self-mortifications. She did all with the intention of honoring the good God that created her.

When Zita was still young, she went to Lucca to work as a maid for a rich family. She would awaken early in the morning and give herself to prayer; and before it was time for work, she would hurry to attend daily Mass. For her, God always came first. During her day of work, amidst trials and tribulations, there was never heard any complaint from her lips.

Her fellow servants became very jealous of her and were mean to her at every opportunity. Because she would not complain to her master, the other servants tormented her even more cruelly. But God greatly rewarded Zita’s daily offerings of humility.

Zita died on the 27th of April in the year 1272, being sixty years old. One hundred and fifty miracles that were wrought in behalf of those who had recourse to her intercession have been juridically proved.

Her body was found, whole and entire, in 1580; and it is kept with great respect and is richly enshrined in St. Frediano’s Church in Lucca, Italy, next to the Fatinelli house where she worked for forty-eight years. Her face and hands, uncovered, can be viewed through the crystal glass. Pope Leo X granted an office in her honour, and the city of Lucca pays a singular veneration to her memory.
Saint Clare of Montefalco

Born in 1268 into a wealthy family in Montefalco, Italy, Clare was a lively, sincere, and intelligent child. While still very young, she chose Christ as her one true love. Following her elder sister Joan’s example, Clare began the demanding practice of religious self-denial; and the two young women spent days in prolonged sessions of prayer and exceptional mortification of the flesh. Clare’s parents permitted her to live with Joan in a hermitage not far from their home. In June of the year 1290, this hermitage was declared a monastery to be governed by the Rule of St. Augustine.

Clare was chosen to be the monastery’s abbess; and for sixteen years she served as mother, teacher, and spiritual director of her nuns. Soon Clare’s reputation for holiness and wisdom attracted many visitors to the monastery. Clare, gifted with the spirit of prophecy and the grace of working miracles, frequently conversed with Our Lord. In 1294, at the age of twenty-six, Clare asked Christ, “Where are You going, Lord?” He answered, “I have been searching the whole world over for a strong place to plant My Cross, but I have found none.” Later He told her, “Clare, I have finally found a place for My Cross. I shall place it in your heart.” And from that day on, Clare’s whole body ached with acute pain. Once she said to her sisters, “If you seek the Cross of Christ, take my heart; there you will find the suffering Lord.” By July of the year 1308, Clare’s illness had become so severe that she was bedridden. On August 17, after confessing her sins to the monastery chaplain, she died.

After her death her heart was removed from her body; and a cross and the other instruments of Christ’s passion were found, clearly imprinted on the cardiac tissue (see picture below). The incorrupt body of St. Clare is preserved together with her heart with the miraculous imprints at the Church of the Holy Cross in Montefalco, Italy.
Agnes was born in 1268; and at the age of nine, she entered the monastery of Montepulciano. Four years later, the pope requested that she assist in establishing a new convent in Procena; and at the age of fifteen, she became the superior of the convent. St. Agnes, blessed with many visions, received the Holy Eucharist from an angel and held the Infant Jesus in her arms. She died in the year 1317, and her body was incorrupt for nearly 300 years. Parts of the remains of her body are now enclosed in a figure, but her visible hands and feet are still incorrupt and can be viewed at the Church of St. Agnes in Montepulciano, Italy.
Blessed Margaret (1287-1320) was born a hunchback, a midget, blind, lame, and unattractive according to the world. When she was six years of age, her proud, noble parents walled her up in a room beside a chapel. She could not escape, but could attend daily Mass and receive the sacraments.

After fourteen years of imprisonment, she was taken to a shrine by her parents who were hoping for Margaret’s cure. But when no cure was forthcoming, they abandoned her. Margaret then became a lay Dominican and spent the rest of her life in prayer and works of mercy. When she died at age thirty-three, the townspeople thronged to her funeral and demanded that “the saint” be buried in a tomb inside the church. The priest protested; but when a crippled girl was miraculously cured at the funeral, the people’s demand was granted. Blessed Margaret’s body is still incorrupt and lies under the main altar in the Church of St. Domenico at Citta-di-Castello, Italy.
Blessed Imelda Lambertini

Imelda, daughter of Count Egano Lambertini and Castora Galuzzi, was born in the year 1322 at Bologna, Italy. At an early age Imelda’s heart was turned toward God. Even though she lived in the days when it was not permitted to receive the Holy Eucharist until the age of fourteen, young Imelda’s greatest desire was to receive Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. Oh how she longed and longed to receive Our Lord! When Imelda was under ten years old, she begged her father to allow her to enter the Dominican convent; and after much pleading, he finally consented to her desire.

Once in the convent, she again began to plead to receive Communion. Time and time again she received the same disappointment. “No, Sister Imelda, you are too young…” At the convent she took on many odd jobs. She attended the gate for the poor, she scrubbed the floors, and she did all that was asked of her—all for the honor and glory of almighty God.

On the 12th of May in the year 1333, when attending Mass with all of her Sisters, Imelda had the strongest desire to receive Our Lord. At the end of Mass, when all of the Sisters were leaving, they noticed Sister Imelda lovingly gazing toward the locked tabernacle. Some of the nuns looked at Imelda and noticed something white hovering above her. It was a Host.

The nuns immediately notified the priest, who hurriedly came and carefully took the Host out of the air and placed It on a paten. Then he had no choice but to give the Host to Imelda. It was obviously God’s Will that she receive her first holy Communion. This first reception also proved to be her last; the rapture with which she received Our Lord was so great that it burst her heart. Imelda sank to the ground, unconscious. And when loving hands upraised her, it was found that she was dead. Blessed Imelda is the Patroness of First Communicants; and her beautifully
incorrupt body can be seen in the Church of St. Sigismund at Bologna, Italy.
Rita was born in the year 1381. When Rita was fifteen, her parents, against her wishes to become a nun, chose a fiancé for her; and Rita unhappily consented to marriage. Her husband was a cruel and heartless man who often beat her, and their two sons soon learned many of their father’s wicked ways. Rita’s husband died a violent death but lived long enough to repent before he died, thanks to her fervent prayers. Her two sons died at an early age, but not before they repented and received the Last Sacraments, again thanks to Rita’s prayers.

Now that she was free to do with her life what she had always wanted, she became an Augustinian nun. At the age of sixty years old, when she was praying before a Crucifix, a small wound appeared on her forehead as though a thorn from Christ’s crown of thorns had penetrated her own flesh. For the last 16 years of her life, Rita bore her external and painful sign of stigmata, her union with Christ. She died on May 22, 1457.

Her body has been beautifully incorrupt for more than five hundred years. Recently the caretakers of her body were forced to lightly wax part of her face, but this did not change the beauty of this great miracle from God. Her body can be seen in the Basilica of St. Rita in Cascia, Italy.
St. Catherine of Bologna was born on March 9th in the year 1413. She was born as Catherine de Vigri, the daughter of a diplomatic agent of the Marquis of Ferrara. At the age of eleven, she was appointed “maid of honor” to the daughter of the Marquis and shared in her training and education. When the Marquis’ daughter eventually married, she wanted Catherine to remain in her service; but Catherine, at the age of fourteen, left the court and became a Franciscan Tertiary.

Catherine, who had determined to live a life of perfection, was greatly admired for her holiness. Eventually her Community became part of the Poor Clares. She soon began to experience visions of Christ and of Satan and wrote of her experiences, one of which occurred on Christmas day. Through her efforts with Pope Nicholas V, the Poor Clare convent at Ferrara erected an enclosure; and Catherine was then appointed Superioress. The Community’s reputation for its holiness and austerity became widespread, and thus Catherine was later appointed Superioress of a new convent in Bologna.

In Lent of the year 1463, Catherine became seriously ill and died on March 9th. Buried without a coffin, her body was exhumed eighteen days later because of cures attributed to her and because of the sweet scent coming from her grave. Her body was found to be incorrupt and remains so today in the Church of the Poor Clare convent in Bologna. Catherine was canonized in the year 1712. Several years after her death, Catherine appeared to a nun at the convent with the request that her incorrupt body
be placed in a sitting position. Her body has now grown dark due to the lighted candles that once surrounded her body.
Saint Germaine Cousin

Germaine was born in the year 1579 in a tiny French town called Pibrac. From her birth she seemed marked for suffering, having come into the world with a deformed hand and the disease of scrofula. While yet an infant, Germaine lost her mother; but her father soon remarried. Under the pretense of saving the other children from the contagion of scrofula, his second wife persuaded the father to keep Germaine away from the homestead; and thus the child was employed as a shepherdess, making her home in the stable with the animals.

Germaine learned to practice humility and patience and was gifted with a marvelous sense of the presence of God and of spiritual things. To poverty, bodily infirmity, the rigors of the seasons, and the lack of affection from those in her own home, she added voluntary mortifications and austerities, making bread and water her daily food. Because of her great love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, she assisted daily at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass; and Germaine’s flocks, left to the care of Providence while she was away, suffered no harm from the wolves in the forest nearby.

The Rosary was her only book, and her devotion to the Blessed Virgin was so great that Germaine would fall on her knees at the first sound of the Angelus bell. On several occasions when Germaine crossed the river to attend Mass at the village church, the swollen waters opened and afforded her passage without wetting her garments. Her father, at last coming to a sense of duty, forbade his wife to treat Germaine harshly and offered the young shepherdess a place in their home with the other children—an offer Germaine humbly refused. Early one morning in the summer of 1601, her father found that she had not risen at the usual hour. When he went to call her, he discovered her dead body lying on her pallet of vine-twigs; Germaine was dead at the age of twenty-two. She was buried in front of the pulpit in the parish church of Pibrac.
In 1644, when her grave was opened to receive one of her deceased relatives, the body of Germaine was discovered fresh and perfectly preserved. Her body was then exposed for public view until a noble lady presented the church a casket of lead to hold the remains of the young saint. This lady was immediately cured of a serious ailment, this being the first of a long series of wonderful cures wrought at Germaine's relics. The leaden casket was placed in the sacristy; and in 1661 and again in 1700, the remains of this saint were viewed and found to be fresh and intact by the vicars-general of Toulouse. Expert medical evidence declared that the body had not been embalmed, and experimental tests showed that the preservation was not due to any property inherent in the soil. In 1793 a Revolutionary tinsmith and his three accomplices, desecrating Germaine’s casket and taking out her remains, buried them in the sacristy and threw quicklime and water on them. Even after the Revolution, Germaine’s body was found to be intact except where the quicklime had done its work. Although Satan tried to destroy God’s miracle, Germaine’s body still remains incorrupt and can be seen in the Church of Pibrac, France.

Saint Vincent De Paul

St. Vincent de Paul was born of a peasant family at Pouy, Gascony, France, in 1580, and worked as a shepherd boy on his father’s farm. At a young age Vincent had a great desire to become a priest; and after completing his studies for the priesthood, he was ordained in 1600 and remained in the vicinity of Toulouse, acting as a tutor while continuing his own studies.

Having traveled to Marseilles for an inheritance and sailing home to Toulouse, Vincent was captured by Turkish pirates in the year 1605 and was taken to Tunis. He was maltreated and eventually sold as a slave; but he escaped two years later with his master, a renegade whom he eventually converted to Catholicism. Upon his escape from the Turkish pirates, Vincent immediately dedicated his life to the practice of spiritual
and corporal works of charity. He set up many poor houses for the crippled and sick and personally cared for the patients who had the most contagious diseases. He would dress their wounds and nurse them back to health; indeed there wasn’t a poor man that didn’t know of Vincent’s kindness.

On the 27th of September in the year 1660, Vincent died at the age of eighty, having faithfully served God throughout his whole life. On August 13, 1729, Vincent was declared a Blessed by Benedict XIII; and on June 16, 1737, he was canonized by Clement XII. St. Vincent’s bones and heart are perfectly incorrupt and have been placed inside a wax figure of his body. His relics can be seen in the Church of St. Vincent de Paul in Paris.
Margaret Mary Alacoque was born on the 22nd of July in the year of 1647 at L'Hautecourt, Burgundy, in France. When she was young, Margaret was healed from a crippling disorder by a vision of the Blessed Virgin, which prompted her to give her life to God. In 1671, after receiving a vision of Christ fresh from the Scourging, she was moved to join the Order of the Visitation at Paray-le-Monial, France.

Margaret received many revelations from our Lord during her lifetime, and one of these revelations included 12 promises for those who practice a true devotion to His Sacred Heart. The devotion encountered violent opposition, especially in Jansenist areas, but has now become widespread and popular.

St. Margaret Mary Alacoque is the patroness of devotees to the Sacred Heart, patron saint of polio patients, and patroness in the case of the loss of parents. Her incorrupt heart and brain have been preserved in a wax and metal figurine of her body and can be seen in the convent chapel of the Order of the Visitation at Paray, France.
Saint Veronica Giuliani

Veronica, named Ursula at her baptism, was born at Mercatello in the Duchy of Urbino, Italy, in the year of 1660. At a young age she showed marvelous signs of sanctity; and when only eighteen months old, she uttered her first words to upbraid a shop man who was serving a false measure of oil, saying distinctly: “Do justice, God sees you.” At the age of three years, she began to be favored with Divine communications. And as a young girl, showing great compassion for the poor, she would set apart a portion of her food for them and was even willing to part with her clothes when she met a poor child scantily clad.

When she became of age, her father urged her to marry and found several suitors for her; but Ursula desired to become a nun instead. Because of her father’s opposition to her desire to enter a convent, Ursula fell ill and only recovered when he gave his consent. In 1677 she was received into the convent of the Capuchin Poor Clares in Citt` di Castello, taking the name of Veronica in memory of the Passion. At the conclusion of the ceremony of her reception, the bishop said to the abbess: “I commend this new daughter to your special care, for she will one day be a great saint.” Veronica became absolutely submissive to the will of her directors, though her novitiate was marked by extraordinary interior trials and temptations to return to the world.

During the time of her temptations and interior trials, Veronica had a vision of Christ bearing His cross and henceforth suffered an acute physical pain in her heart. In 1693 she entered upon a new phase in her spiritual life when she had a vision of the chalice, symbolizing the Divine Passion which was to be re-enacted in her own soul. At first she shrunk from accepting this cross, and only by great effort did she eventually submit. She then began to endure intense spiritual and physical suffering.
In 1694 she received the impression of the Crown of Thorns, the wounds being visible and the pain permanent. By order of the bishop she submitted to medical treatment, but obtained no relief.

For thirty-four years she was novice-mistress and guided the novices with great prudence. In 1716 she was elected abbess; and while holding that office, she enlarged the convent. After her death the figure of the cross was found impressed upon her heart. She was canonized in 1839 by Gregory XVI. Her body remains beautifully incorrupt and can be seen at the Monastery of St. Veronica Giuliani in Città di Castello, Italy.

Saint Theresa Margaret

Teresa Margaret, born of the noble Redi family in Arezzo in Tuscany, Italy, in 1747, entered the Discalced Carmelites at Florence while she was yet quite young. She was given a special contemplative experience concerning the words of St John, “God is love”; and thus she deeply felt that her vocation was to live a hidden life of love and self-sacrifice. This vocation, confirmed by her heroic exercise of fraternal charity, was soon completed when she died in 1770 at the young age of twenty-three.

Immediately after her death, her body began to decompose. In a very short time her whole complexion had turned to a dreadful green color. The nuns in the convent hurriedly prepared Teresa Margaret’s body for
burial; but as they were preparing to put her body into the ground, the green color miraculously was changed to her original skin coloring. She looked as though she had died only seconds before! Her body is still incorrupt and can be seen in the nuns’ choir in the Convent of Carmel in Florence, Italy.
Jean Marie Vianney was born in France on the 8th of May in the year 1786. His godly mother raised him with the fear and love of the Lord. Having been raised during the French Revolution, Jean was deeply impressed with the bravery of the Catholic priests that would disguise themselves to give the sacraments to their little flocks. He had a very special devotion to Our Blessed Mother and begged her to one day help him become a priest. As Jean Marie grew in age, his desire to become a priest also grew more and more. Every day Jean and his mother would pray that God would give him the graces to be His servant, and every day the Devil would stand in the way of Jean’s future vocation. But in the end, God always triumphs. After many trying studies, Jean Marie Vianney finally became “Father Vianney.”

But still, the Devil had to put his filthy paws in the way. Father Vianney was not able to hear confessions because the authorities said that he was too “stupid” to give advice to anyone. Finally, after Jean’s many prayers and sacrifices, the authorities gave him permission to perform all of the functions of a priest. And as a priest he could finally save souls by giving them loving but firm guidance in the confessional.

It was soon decided that Father Vianney would be sent to a tiny French town called Ars, a town so small that no one had heard much about it. The new Curé of Ars, Jean Marie Vianney, saved many souls in Ars and won many hardened souls for Christ. People from all over Europe came to Ars just to have him hear their confessions, causing Father Vianney to
frequently spend up to sixteen hours daily in the confessional. For many years Father Vianney toiled for Our Lord with the special aid of his heavenly assistant St. Philomena, working with his God-given gift of performing miracles. Then, on the 4th of August in the year of 1859, God called Jean to Himself. Europe was in mourning, knowing that they had lost one of the best confessors of all time. Jean Marie Vianney’s body was exhumed in 1904 and was found to be incorrupt. It is now in the basilica at Ars and can be viewed by the public.
Saint Catherine Laboure

As the evening Angelus bell sounded, Catherine was born of Peter and Louise Laboure on May 2, 1806, the ninth child of a family of eleven. Fifteen minutes after Catherine’s birth, her name was entered on the city records. She was baptized on the following day on the feast of the Finding of the True Cross. It surely was God’s design that Catherine, a saint who was to be so highly favored by the Blessed Virgin, was born at the ringing of the bell for Our Lady’s Angelus.

When Catherine was nine years old, her saintly mother died. After the burial service, little Catherine retired to her room and, standing on a chair, took our Lady’s statue from the shelf, kissed it, and said: “Now, dear Lady, you are to be my mother.”

When Catherine was very young, she had a vision of St. Vincent de Paul and was thus persuaded to enter a convent. She entered the Daughters of Charity and was a very holy and cheerful nun; all of the sick people loved her company. Sister Catherine was very privileged, having received many apparitions from St. Vincent de Paul and, more importantly, from the Blessed Virgin Mary. One day the Blessed Mother chose to reveal to her a secret—Catherine Laboure’s heavenly mission was to create and propagate the Miraculous Medal. When the Mother of God gave Sr. Catherine the instructions for the medal, she said: “Have a medal struck as I have shown you. All who wear it will receive great graces.”

Soon people were wearing the medals and miracles began to take place; thus the medal came to be known as the “Miraculous Medal.” Many wicked men and women were converted through the graces provided by the Mother of God. In no time at all, Miraculous Medals were propagated everywhere.
Catherine died on the 31st of December in 1876; and when her body was exhumed in 1933, it was found as fresh as it was on the day it was buried. Although she had been in the grave for fifty-seven years, her eyes remained very blue and beautiful; and in death her arms and legs were as supple as if she were asleep. Her incorrupt body is encased in glass beneath the side altar at the chapel of the Daughters of Charity at 140 Rue de Bac in Paris, France, beneath one of the sites where our Lady appeared to her.
Bernadette, born in 1844 of very poor parents in the town of Lourdes, France, spent most of her childhood in poor health. As she grew older, she was very slow at her studies and lost much school time due to severe asthma attacks. On February 11, 1858, when Bernadette was sent with her younger sister and a friend to gather firewood, she saw a very beautiful Lady standing above a rose bush in a grotto at Massabielle. The lovely Lady, dressed in blue and white, smiled at Bernadette and then made the sign of the cross with a rosary of ivory and gold. Bernadette fell on her knees, took out her own rosary, and began to pray. The beautiful Lady was God’s Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary. She appeared to Bernadette during seventeen other apparitions; and during one of the last of these appearances, she instructed Bernadette to go further into the grotto and begin digging in the dirt with her hands. At first nothing happened; but soon the miraculous fountain, now known as the “Fountain of Lourdes,” began to flow forth from the ground where Bernadette had dug.

At the age of twenty-two, Bernadette became a Sister of Charity at Nevers, France. Although besieged by many of the faithful, she sought God in the silence of the cloister, serving Him in humility under the vows of her profession as a Sister of Charity. She lived in the convent for thirteen years, spending a large portion of this time ill in the infirmary. When a fellow nun accused her of being a “lazybones,” Bernadette said, “My job is to be ill.”

Sister Bernadette died on the 16th of April in 1879. On the feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 1933, Bernadette was canonized, thus fulfilling the promise that the Blessed Mother had made to her in 1858: “I do not promise to bring you happiness in this world, but in the next.”

St. Bernadette’s body, which to this day has never corrupted, lies in St. Gildard Convent in Nevers, France. After having been exhumed three times, her body was discovered to have slightly discolored in places; and in 1925 an extremely light wax covering was made for her face and hands.
Maria Domenica was born on May 9, 1837, in Mornese (Alessandria). When she was young, she developed a solid piety and an outstanding common sense and depth of judgement that would show later in life as Congregational Leader.

At the age of fifteen, she joined the Association of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate and began her apostolate among the young people of her village. When Maria was twenty-three, a serious attack of typhoid had a profound spiritual effect on her. The experience of her own physical fragility deepened her abandonment to God and encouraged her to open a sewing school to educate the girls in work, prayer, and love of God.

Thanks to her intense sacramental life and the wise guidance of Fr. Pestarino, Maria made great progress in the spiritual life. On the occasion of Don Bosco’s visit to Mornese (October 8, 1864) she said: “Don Bosco is a saint and I feel it.” In 1872 Don Bosco chose her to begin the Institute of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians (the Salesian Sisters).

As Congregational Leader she proved to be a capable teacher of spiritual life, involving other young people in her dedication to the education of women. Maria was cheerful and serene, spreading peace and radiating joy wherever she went.

The Institute developed rapidly. At her death she left her Daughters an educational tradition permeated by Gospel values: “the search for God, Whom we come to know through enlightened catechesis and ardent love, responsibility in work, sincerity and humility, austerity of life and joyful self-giving.”

Maria Domenica died in Nizza, Monferrato, on May 14, 1881. Her incorrupt body is venerated in the Basilica of Mary Our Help, in Turin,
Italy. Her feast day is celebrated on May 13th.
John Bosco was born in Becchi, a hillside hamlet near Castelnuovo, Piedmont, Italy, on the 16th of August in the year 1815. When John was barely two years old, his father died and left the support of three boys to the mother, Margaret Bosco. John’s early years were spent as a shepherd, and he received his first instruction at the hands of the parish priest. John possessed a ready wit and a retentive memory; and as years passed, his appetite for study grew stronger. Because of the poverty of the home, he was often obliged to turn from his books to the field; however, the desire for the religious training that he had given up never left him.

In 1835 he entered the seminary at Chieri. And after six years of study, on the eve of Trinity Sunday, Don Bosco was ordained priest by Archbishop Franzoni of Turin. Leaving the seminary, Don Bosco went to Turin where he entered zealously upon his priestly labors. It was here that the real field of charity that would be his calling until death opened up to him.

One of his duties was to accompany Don Cafasso upon his visits to the prisons of the city. The children who were confined in these places and abandoned to the most evil influences, with little before them but the gallows, made such an indelible impression upon Don Bosco’s mind that he resolved to devote his life to the rescue of these unfortunate outcasts.
On one occasion, when Don Bosco was vesting for Mass, he overheard the sacristan driving away a ragged urchin. Don called the young boy back to the church, and immediately a friendship was struck that would be the first of thousands for Don Bosco. Soon all of the young boys from the village knew that they could find a loving and trusting friend in the good priest. More and more young boys without homes began flocking to Don Bosco’s church; and in February of 1842, the “oratory” (as it had come to be called) numbered twenty boys. In March of the same year, the oratory numbered thirty; and in March of the year 1846, four hundred. Don Bosco soon had to find more room for all of these homeless boys and obtained one building after another in an effort to keep them off the street.

God called Don Bosco to Heaven on the 31st of January in the year of 1888. St. John Bosco’s incorrupt body lies in the Basilica of Mary Our Help, in Turin, Italy, next to the incorrupt body of St. Maria Mazzarello.

Saint Maria Goretti

Maria Goretti was born on October 16, 1890. Her parents were sharecroppers; and in 1899 they moved to Ferrire, Italy, her father thinking that he had a better chance to find work there. Her father met the Serenelli family and made a deal in which the Goretti family could live with them.

Maria matured quite early, complained seldom, and helped her family daily with chores. Growing in her spirituality as well, Maria was very anxious to receive her First Holy Communion because of her immense love of God. She could only imagine how wonderful it would be to receive Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist!

However, the Serenelli’s nineteen-year-old son, Alessandro, had other plans. He cared nothing for God and receiving Holy Communion. He was possessed by the Demon of Lust and wanted to carry out his lustful plans
with Maria. Several times he approached her with his sinful ideas, but every time Maria reprimanded him and told him it is a sin to be impure.

Then one day, July 5th of the year 1902, Alessandro made a sinful decision. On the morning of that fateful day, Maria had been very sick. Even so, she begged her mother to allow her to go to the fields to work. Maria knew that if she were to remain at home, Alessandro would be alone with her; but her mother insisted that she remain at home to rest. Poor Maria! She was very frightened but decided that she would be obedient to her mother’s wish instead of persisting.

As soon as her family had left, Alessandro, realizing that he and Maria were alone, raced into her room and tried to rape her. Maria resisted, all the while telling him that he was sinning and would surely go to Hell. Alessandro gave up his dirty plans of the rape and instead pulled a long, sharp knife out of his belt and stabbed Maria fourteen times.

She sank to the floor, crying, “Mamma! Mamma!” Alessandro dropped his dagger and fled from the room just before his father entered. Maria was immediately taken to the hospital. She lived for only one hour; but before she died, a priest came and heard her confession. He asked her, “Do you forgive your murderer?” Maria answered, “I forgive him with all of my heart, and I want him to come to heaven!” While gazing at a picture of Our Blessed Mother, Maria soon after expired.

Less than fifty years later, Maria Goretti was declared a saint and martyr. Both Maria’s mother and Alessandro, who had completed a thirty-year imprisonment for his crime, attended her canonization. The beautiful, incorrupt body of Saint Maria Goretti has been placed in the Church of Our Lady of Mercy in Nettuno, Italy.
Some others:

St. Cecilia, born in Rome, died in 177 A.D. at Rome; her body was found incorrupt in 1599. She is known as the first incorrupt saint, and her incorrupt body was found in the position represented by the sculptor.

St. Agatha, born in a prison, died in 250 A.D. at Catania, Sicily. She was martyred by being rolled on coals.

St. John of the Cross, born at Hontoveros, Old Castile, on the 24th of June in the year 1542, died at Ubeda, Andalusia, on the 14th of December, 1591.
What is perhaps one of the most unusual phenomenon regarding the bodies of Saints is that of the miraculous preservation of a great number of them after being interred for years in conditions that normally should have provoked their destruction according to the laws of nature, and even more so because in almost every case of incorruption in the lives of the Saints the bodies were not embalmed or preserved in any way. Yet in spite of not being embalmed or treated in any fashion, the bodies of "the incorruptables" as they are called, have remained lifelike, flexible and often sweetly scented many years after their death. Many are now displayed under altars in glass-fronted reliquaries, to the admiration and wonder of countless people.

Human remains decompose according to natural laws, and moisture in the body along with the environment of the tomb in which the remains are placed is the primary factors that influence the decomposition of the body. Regardless of these influences, the body will begin decomposition immediately after death, and will continue to decompose in the days, weeks and months afterwards, regardless of the preservation methods (or lack thereof) that are used, although those preserved will normally decompose at a slower rate. Nevertheless decomposition cannot normally be completely inhibited, regardless of the preservation methods used.

Nevertheless, the bodies of numerous Saints have survived decomposition for decades and even centuries. Even more remarkably, there are even a couple of circumstances where the holy remains were subjected not only
to normal conditions of burial, but to the application of quicklime, and even one’s whose mutilated body was subjected to torturous conditions which in reality should have hastened the body’s destruction.

There are, in fact, several hundred confirmed and documented cases of incorruption in the Catholic church. Many are canonized Saints or Blessed, however some are simply considered holy persons. Lists of many of these can be found on the internet. What will be presented here is a very recent and well documented case of incorruption that occurred in modern times concerning the holy Catholic monk of the Maronite rite, St. Charbel Makhlouf (1828-1898).

Charbel Makhlouf (sometimes spelled Sharbel) was born on May 8, 1828, in the village of Biqa-Kafra in the high mountains of Northern Lebanon. He was given the name of Joseph at his baptism, and he was the last of the five children born to very poor but religious parents. From early childhood he showed a strong attraction to prayer and solitude, and at age 23 he left home to become a monk in the Monastery of St. Maroun at Annaya. After being received into the novitiate, he was given the name Charbel, the name of an early martyr.

After the usual theological and secular studies, he was ordained a priest on July 23, 1859 and was assigned to the Monastery of St. Maroun, where he spent sixteen years with his fellow brethren, living a communal life of
prayer and devotion to God. In 1875 he received the permission of his superiors to live alone in a private hermitage named Saints Peter and Paul, which was not far from the monastery, and which was used by the priests during days of quiet personal retreat. It was a rugged and simple cabin, with poor heat and the bare necessities of life. It was in this secluded sanctuary that he spent the remaining twenty-three years of his life in the practice of severe sacrifices and mortification. It is recorded by his companions that he often wore a hair shirt, slept on the hard ground, and ate only one meal a day.

During his lifetime he was most notable for his remarkable devotion to the Holy Eucharist and his preference for saying daily Mass at 11:00 a.m., so he could spend almost all the morning in preparation for the Mass, and the rest of the day in thanksgiving afterwards.

After 23 years of daily sacrifice in such a meager existence, in 1898 he suffered a seizure while saying Mass, and a priest assisting at the Holy Sacrifice was forced to pry the Holy Eucharist from his grasp. The holy monk died eight days later on Christmas Eve at the age of seventy. He was buried very simply in the monastery cemetery where so many saintly monks before him had been buried. According to monastic custom, the body, which was not embalmed, was dressed in the full habit of the Order and was placed into the ground without a coffin.

A miraculous light appears above his tomb
Given such a hidden existence, he would most certainly have been forgotten had not a most extraordinary phenomenon occurred at his grave in the form of an extraordinary bright light, which surrounded his tomb for forty-five nights following the interment. Countless local townspeople saw the miraculous light and because of it and the enthusiasm of the many witnesses of this prodigy, the officials of the monastery requested permission from the ecclesiastical authorities to exhume the body four months after the saint's death.

On the day of the exhumation, his grave was opened in the presence of the superiors of the Order, the monks of the monastery, and many villagers, the body was miraculously found in perfect condition to the amazement of everyone, even though, as the result of frequent rains which had inundated the cemetery several times since the burial, the body was found floating on mud in a flooded grave. Given that St Charbel was buried in the ground without a casket and in very wet conditions,
such circumstances certainly should have expedited decomposition.

After being cleansed and reclothed in fresh garments, the body was reverently laid in a wooden coffin and placed in a corner of the private chapel of the monastery for the admiration and contemplation of the monks and the faithful.

Additionally, a remarkable phenomenon accompanied this exhumation; from the pores of the body there exuded a liquid described as perspiration and blood, which had the distinct odor of blood. As a result of this transpiration, the blood-stained clothing upon his person was changed twice a week. Small pieces of this cloth soaked in this mysterious fluid are distributed as relics and these have been said to effect cures.

Among the men of medicine who examined the body was Dr. Elias Elonaissi who declared on November 16, 1921:
"I observed that the pores emitted a matter like sweat; a strange and inexplicable thing according to the laws of nature, for this body that has been dead for so many years. I have renewed the same examination many times, at different periods; the phenomenon has always been the same."

Another physician, Dr. George Choukrallah, examined the body a total of 24 times during 17 years and declared:
"I have always been astonished at its state of preservation and especially this reddish liquid exuded by it. ... My personal opinion based on study and experience, is that this body is preserved by a supernatural power."

The phenomenon is more astounding when one considers that in 1918, following a simple autopsy, the body was exposed on the terrace during the heat of summer for three months without the body decomposing and without drying up the source of the fluid.
On July 24, 1927, after the body of Father Charbel was minutely examined by two physicians of the French Medical Institute at Beirut, it was clothed in sacerdotal garments and was placed in a new coffin of wood covered with zinc. Various documents drawn up by the physicians, the Judge of the Ecclesiastical Commission, the Defender of the Faith, a notary and superiors of the Order, were placed in a zinc tube, which was firmly closed and placed beside the body.

Then, after it was sealed with the episcopal crest of the Commission, the coffin was placed in a new tomb especially prepared in the wall of an oratory. The coffin was placed on two stones to prevent contact with the dampness of the soil, and after being carefully sealed with masonry, the tomb was left undisturbed for twenty-three years.

On February 25 of the Holy Year 1950, pilgrims to the shrine noticed a liquid seeping from a corner of the tomb and flowing onto the floor of the oratory. The father superior of the monastery, on examining the liquid and fearing damage to the contents of the tomb, had it opened in the presence of the assembled community. The tomb was found dry and the coffin in the same condition as when it was placed in position, except that a reddish colored liquid was seen dripping through a crack in the foot of the casket.

Permission to examine the contents of the sealed casket was obtained,
and in the presence of many ecclesiastical authorities, officials of the Order and attending physicians, the seal was broken on April 22, 1950. The body was once again found completely free of any trace of corruption and was perfectly flexible and lifelike. The sweat of liquid and blood continued to exude from the body, and the garments were found stained with blood, the white content of the fluid having collected on the body in an almost solidified condition. Part of the chasuble had rotted and the zinc tube containing the official documents was covered with corrosion.

And so it was for 67 years in modern times that the body of Saint Charbel remained perfectly preserved, the case itself be thoroughly documented and examined by medical professionals and described by all accounts as being supernaturally sustained during this 67 year period. For reasons known only to Himself, God chose not to continue the miracle, and at the time of the beatification in 1965, the body was found to have finally complied with the laws of nature. Today, only his bones remain, and these are of a red color, and the discharge of the fluid has ceased.