

# A Month of CONVERT SAINTS

*As with so many months on the calendar, July has some incredible feasts to celebrate for those of us who love to hear the conversion stories of the holy men and women in the communion of saints! Here are a few of the ones we'll encounter through the course of this month.*



**JULY 9**  
**ST. AUGUSTINE ZHAO RONG**

In the late 1700s, China was very much closed off to the West. So when French missionary Gabriel Taurin-Dufresse went to preach there, he ended up being arrested and detained. One of the soldiers assigned to his guard was Augustine Zhao Rong, who was moved by the witness of Msgr. Dufresse, and asked to become a Christian.

Augustine went on to discern a vocation to the priesthood, and in 1815, became the first native-born Chinese priest to suffer martyrdom. His witness of conversion and perseverance under persecution reminds us of the many Chinese Catholics through the centuries whose sufferings remain hidden under the oppressive tactics and policies of the Chinese government. ●



**JULY 14**  
**ST. KATERI TEKAKWITHA**

Kateri was born in what would become Upstate New York, and her Mohawk community was devastated by an epidemic of smallpox that would leave Kateri herself nearly blind. She converted to Catholicism through the witness of Jesuit missionaries, but this led to her being rejected and abused by her family, so she fled some 200 miles through the wilderness to

find a Christian community to call home. Her heroic commitment to conversion despite resistance from her family is an encouragement to all of us whose desire to become Catholic has caused conflict among our loved ones. ●



**JULY 18**  
**ST. CAMILLUS DE LELLIS**

The life of St. Camillus reads like a novel! At 6'6" and physically impressive, he found early work fighting as a mercenary for various armies in Italy. However, he was also a gambling addict, and found himself destitute despite his success as a soldier for hire. Looking for work, he found a construction job at a Capuchin monastery, and was converted by the witness of the

friars he met. Too old to join them, he decided to found his own religious order, devoted to caring for the sick. Today, that order continues to carry out the vision of St. Camillus throughout the world. ●



**JULY 22**  
**ST. MARY MAGDALENE**

Mary Magdalene may be one of the most famous converts in the history of the Church! Scripture gives us very little information about her life before meeting Jesus, other than telling us that He cast seven demons out of her. What we do know is that after she left everything to follow Christ, she was there for some of the most important moments in salvation history:

not merely the crucifixion and burial of Jesus, but also, as John's Gospel tells us, Mary was there at the empty tomb on Easter morning, as one of the first witnesses of the glorious news that the Lord had truly risen from the dead. ●



**JULY 31**  
**ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA**

Vain, selfish, and with no thought of God, Ignatius was an accomplished soldier in 16th century Spain until he was wounded in the leg by a cannonball in 1521, an injury that would remain with him for the rest of his life. While recovering, he began to read about Christ and the lives of the saints, and his heart began to change. He

had a radical conversion, and the fruits of that would later lead him to form what we now know as the Society of Jesus, the Jesuits. The ripple effects of the conversion of St. Ignatius would reverberate through the centuries, and he is considered one of the greatest saints of the Counter-Reformation, who built up the life of the Church during the very time when the Reformation was fracturing Christianity. ●

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