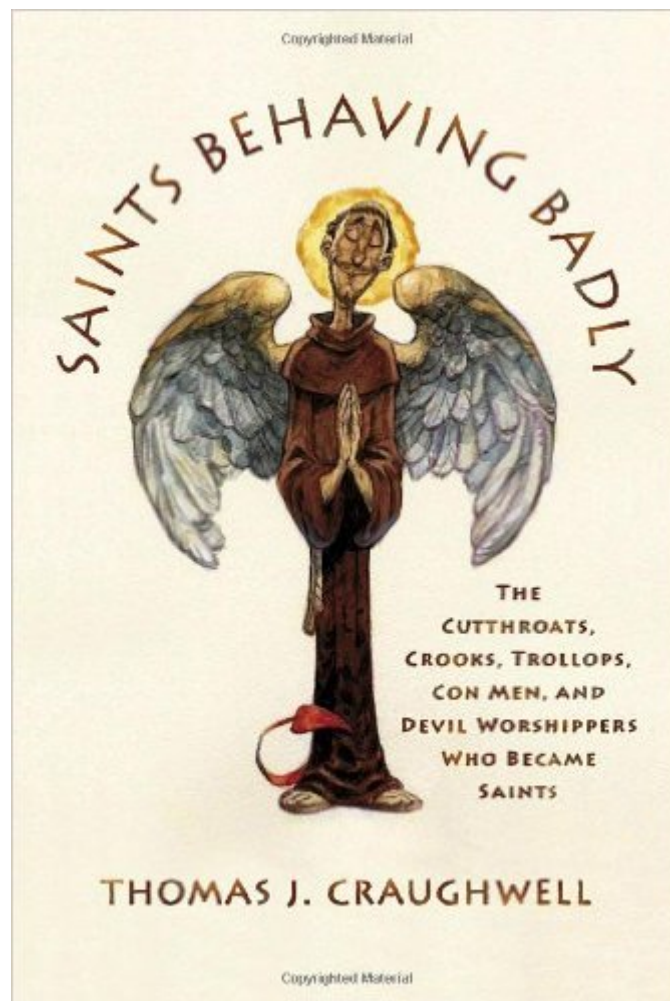


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Saints Behaving Badly: The Cutthroats, Crooks, Trollops, Con Men, And Devil-Worshippers Who Became Saints



Synopsis

Saints are not born, they are made. And many, as *Saints Behaving Badly* reveals, were made of very rough materials indeed. The first book to lay bare the less than saintly behavior of thirty-two venerated holy men and women, it presents the scandalous, spicy, and sleazy detours they took on the road to sainthood. In nineteenth- and twentieth-century writings about the lives of the saints, authors tended to go out of their way to sanitize their stories, often glossing over the more embarrassing cases with phrases such as, "he/she was once a great sinner." In the early centuries of the Church and throughout the Middle Ages, however, writers took a more candid and spirited approach to portraying the saints. Exploring sources from a wide range of periods and places, Thomas Craughwell discovered a veritable rogues gallery of sinners-turned-saint. There's St. Olga, who unleashed a bloodbath on her husband's assassins; St. Mary of Egypt, who trolled the streets looking for new sexual conquests; and Thomas Becket, who despite his vast riches refused to give his cloak to a man freezing to death in the street. Written with wit and respect (each profile ends with what inspired the saint to give up his or her wicked ways) and illustrated with amusing caricatures, *Saints Behaving Badly* will entertain, inform, and even inspire Catholic readers across America.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Tom Craughwell gives hope to all of us--who as we alone know are the worst of sinners, that there is still a chance that if we turn to God we can be saints! I know what you're thinking, "How could I ever be a saint?" Or maybe you're thinking "How could he ever be a saint?" Good questions. In

Saints Behaving Badly: The Cutthroats, Crooks, Trollops, Con Men, and Devil-Worshippers Who Became Saints, just published by Doubleday, Tom Craughwell gives the answers. The list of the evils that some saints engaged in before their conversion is long: thievery, embezzling, satanists, promiscuity, idolatry, drunkenness and even anti-popery. The list brings to mind St. Paul "Know you not that the unjust shall not possess the kingdom of God? Do not err: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, Nor the effeminate, nor liars with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor railers, nor extortioners, shall possess the kingdom of God" and what follows "And such some of you were; but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6: 9-11). Indeed! Craughwell's book is filled with both the well known (Augustine, Patrick, Francis of Assisi, Ignatius of Loyola) and the lesser known (Callixtus, Pelagia, Genesius, Fabiola). From the latter group is the story of St. Pelagia, an actress who before her conversion lived a life of rather loose morals. One can readily think of a number of similar actors, actresses, rock stars, politicians who might be the Pelagia's of today--whose popularity is matched by the wanton lifestyle they lead--leading others down a path of self-destruction.

There's a lot of truth in the statement that evil, badness, and imperfection are more interesting than goodness and perfection. While it's of course inspiring to read about exemplary people, saints or not, doesn't it get boring to read about someone who supposedly was flaw-free and always squeaky-clean, ultra-moral, and basically just unrealistically good? Flaws make a person more interesting, multi-faceted, and human. (And the reason why oft-times sin is so sweet and seductive in the beginning is because the Devil himself is said to be so charismatic and physically attractive.) This book proves that theory by presenting the lives of 25 saints (and two not-quite-saints with the title "Blessed" and another with the title "Venerable") who weren't always very nice people or leading very upright lives. They're presented warts and all, whatever their vices were (alcoholism, being a mass murderer, being a con man, gambling, hedonism, egotism, et al), along with the accounts of how they came to turn their lives around and the good deeds they did after their conversions or returning to their former faith. A few of them had to go through the process of repentance more than once, since the first conversion didn't always take, as in cases like St. Olaf and St. Alipius. (St. Olaf, it is mentioned, probably wouldn't have made the cut had he not lived in the 11th century, as back then a bishop was allowed to canonise people from his own diocese, to kind of give the people their own local saint, someone who really spoke to them as St. Olaf did to the Norse.) This book also clears up the misinformation a lot of people have about St. Christopher; until I read this book, I too

had believed that he had never existed and was one of the made-up saints who got expunged from the calendar after 1969.

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