
Holy Hands

Cooking and Crafting with the Saints

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The Authors

Dessi Jackson



My name is Dessi, and it's no coincidence that my name rhymes with "messy." My life is full of beautiful messes: I have 6 beautiful children. Every day is full of books, toys, food, pets, our garden, chickens, and ourselves. To anyone else, it might look like a mess, but to me it is a beautiful mess. I'm an immigrant from Bulgaria, in Eastern Europe, but now live in the countryside of Indiana.

I enjoy the homeschooling lifestyle because it keeps us together between school and play. I like knitting, cooking, reading, gardening, and sewing. (As I was dictating to my husband who is typing this, my son said, "Then why don't you sew the holes in my pants?" I'll get to that soon.)

Best of all, I like occupying my home. All these things are done quite comically and imperfectly in my large family life. My children tell me that I should write a book. It's been on my to-do list, right after patching up Peter's pants.

I blog at www.setonmagazine.com/dessi-jackson

Lynne Wardach



There are many things I love about being a Byzantine Catholic homeschool mom, here in northeast Pennsylvania. One of the things I love to do is to be still, and think. This is hard for me, as my vocation as a wife and the mother of our five teenage children is always filled with things like frantic hockey schedules, finding missing socks, and sewing like crazy long into the night to fill orders for my scapular business. Then I must correct their tests and essays, can the pickles and tomatoes, and prepare to host the rosary group! Whew!

Yes, these are rather boisterous but necessary details of life here at the Wardach household! Yet, one of those "details of life" and the most important part of my motherly vocation amid all this noise is to try to digest the fullness of the Faith and reiterate it in a way that my little disciples can understand. I want them to integrate it into their consciousness, feel it in their bones, so to speak.

So we pray, and we cook, and we craft, and we listen and learn together. And then, when they're all asleep, I write it all down, so we will remember. Hopefully, they will do the same in their own domestic churches someday and remember their lessons well!

I blog at www.buildingupthebyzantinefamily.blogspot.com



Maria Jackson

I am a 13-year-old homeschooler who roams the wild countryside of Indiana searching my way to Gondolin. I love to read and write. I love all things historical, old time fashion and stories full of charm and enchanting words. My favorite authors are Chesterton and Tolkien, and I also enjoy Shakespeare and listening to opera. I love playing on the piano and learning new languages, although I prefer to make my own languages and letters.

January 1

STORY

St. Emilia, Mother of Five Saints

IN THE KITCHEN

St. Emilia's Crockpot Fondue

FOR OUR NEIGHBOR

Make a Rosary Basket

JANUARY 1

STORY

St. Emilia, Mother of Five Saints

Long ago there lived a very pious mother. Her name was Emilia. Along with her saintly husband, Basil the Elder, she raised ten beautiful and holy children. Every day the holy mother would wake up her children with prayers, and with more prayers she would proceed to work throughout the day. There were many clothes to be washed. There was food to be cooked and babies to be played with.

Emilia would care for her family with such zeal and holiness that it left a deep impression on her children. She taught them their catechism while she was mending little Basil's torn pants. She spoke to them about God and His Holy Mother while they picked berries to make jam. If one of her children pulled the hair of another, she would sit them all down and tell them a story of one of the saints to show them there is a better way to love one another.

Life passed. And her children grew up among the laundry baskets and the floury mess on the table for their bread, soaked with their mother's never-ending prayers. Soon there was no one left to care for, for they had all grown up and left the sweet home of their childhood. Emilia's daughter Macrina persuaded her mother to forsake the world and join her in the monastic life.

Emilia divided her property among the other children. With few earthly possessions, the mother and daughter withdrew themselves from the world. They moved to a secluded plot of land in Pontus, not far from where her son Basil lived in his hermitage.

Soon more women came to join them and a convent was formed. These Christian women lived in common, ate in common, and prayed in common.

Day after day they worked and offered their prayers to God. That is how this sweet and holy mother spent many more years until she reached old age.

JANUARY 1

IN THE KITCHEN

St. Emilia's Crockpot Fondue

St. Emilia was a very busy mommy! She raised ten holy children, five of whom became great saints in the Church! She must have spent a lot of time with them, talking about God and life and exactly what was expected of them as God's servants. Mealtime is a wonderful time to talk with your family. This crock pot meal is perfect for snowy evenings, when a family can just gather around the table and enjoy being together in their little domestic church.

3 cups dry white wine

1 ½ lbs cheese, shredded (use your family's favorite blend, or a traditional mixture of Gruyere, Swiss and/or Jack cheeses)

2 Tbsp flour

2 Tbsp butter

3 cloves garlic, peeled and crushed

½ tsp Worcestershire sauce

2-3 drops of your favorite hot sauce (optional)

Dipping things: bread, soft pretzels, apple/pear slices, ham, blanched broccoli, cauliflower florets, potatoes, asparagus, baby carrots

Shred all the cheeses directly into your crock-pot and set aside. Then, in a skillet over medium heat, melt your butter slowly. Toss in the crushed garlic cloves and allow them to get toasty and lightly browned, and then remove them from the pan. Add your flour and whisk to make a roux.

Once this is heated through, add the wine, Worcestershire sauce, and hot sauce and simmer until lightly thickened. Pour this hot mixture over the shredded cheese in the crock-pot, stir to combine, and bring the temperature up to a higher heat, only until the cheese is melted, then turn it to low until your family is ready to gather around for dinner.

In the meanwhile, you can prepare things to dip into your fondue. Squares of good bread or soft pretzels work nicely. Apple or pear slices and chunks of ham are favorites too. You can also lightly blanch some broccoli and cauliflower florets, asparagus spears, baby carrots or new potatoes for dipping.

When mealtime arrives, everyone can gather around the pot, grab their own fork and dip whatever they like into our St. Emilia's Crockpot Fondue, and enjoy some good conversation and fun while they enjoy their meal.



JANUARY 1

FOR OUR NEIGHBOR

Make a Rosary Basket

No doubt, St. Emilia taught her little ones the importance of family prayer. Do we pray together as a family? Sometimes it's difficult for our little brothers and sisters to remain peaceful enough to complete a rosary with the family. Wouldn't it be nice to give them something to do to keep them occupied, yet still include them in the family prayer?

Felt (green, red, rose colors)

Fabric glue

A little basket

Paper

Chalk

Dowel/drinking straw

Let's make them something to help them to help the family, a rosary basket just for them. We'll need some felt and some glue for this project as well as a little basket to keep it in when it's completed.

We're making 10 little fabric roses, and one great big one, perhaps of another color, for our little saint to drop into the basket as a gift for Our Blessed Mother, each time the family says a Hail Mary. The larger rose will be for the Our Father prayer. At the end of each decade, at the Gloria, he gets to dump them all out and start all over again.

Begin by making a photocopy of the template provided and cut out the flower, being sure to cut along the inside spiral as well. Using chalk, trace the entire outline, including the spiral onto a piece of felt, in the color of your choice.

To make each rose, begin to wrap the inside piece of the spiral around a dowel (a drinking straw works perfectly) and continue wrapping round and round until a rosette forms. Remove the straw, and place a dot of fabric glue at the base to secure it on both the inside and the outside.

Cut out a leaf shape from some green felt and glue this to the bottom to hide the glued edge, and your rose is complete. Be sure to make nine more of these and one rose of a different shade, or slightly larger than the others, for the Our Father!

Make a set for your home, and one for another Catholic family you may know who has a little saint who wants to pray the rosary, but needs something to help him focus too.



December 7

STORY

St. Ambrose

IN THE KITCHEN

Medovnický for St. Ambrose Day

FOR OUR NEIGHBOR

St. Ambrose Honey Lip Balm

Inside are twelve short, mysterious and delightful stories of the Saints, accompanied by delicious recipes and crafts that will fill your home with fun, fragrance and good food!

These hands-on family activities are designed to provide beautiful teaching opportunities about the lives of these lesser-known saints, and the important message that their holiness and example should permeate our lives. Dessi Jackson, an immigrant from Bulgaria and mother of six has collaborated with her daughter, Maria, to produce the stories. Lynne Wardach, a Byzantine Catholic and mother of five teens, created the accompanying crafts.

These authors present a fun, creative and inspiring collection of activities to bring your family together. You are encouraged to gather your children around you and read aloud the Saint story, and then work together to make St. Mamma's Homemade Cheese, or the Seven Sleepers' Pot Pies. And then, to teach children the beauty of sharing, create a St. Rita of Cascia Rose-Petal Rosary or assemble the amazing Magdalene's Aromatic Foot Scrub.

Each saint story comes with a related recipe and craft, so that each month you and your family can come together and incarnate the sweet sanctity of the saints in your homes!

61 pages. Color photos.

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