Saints Behaving Badly: The Cutthroats, Crooks, Trollops, Con Men, and Devil-Worshippers Who Became Saints by Thomas J. Craughwell

A Great Read

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.

**Personal Review:** *Saints Behaving Badly: The Cutthroats, Crooks, Trollops, Con Men, and Devil-Worshippers Who Became Saints* by Thomas J. Craughwell

I was hoping to have this book as bedside reading for awhile. However, Craughwell’s writing style is so engaging that I kept finding excuses to keep reading, and I finished the book over the course of just a few days. The saints featured in this book range from those that are well known such as St. Matthew and St. Francis, to those that are somewhat more obscure such as St. Genesius and St. Fabiola. The profiles are arranged chronologically. The stories vary widely, sometimes the saint’s life was indeed very sinful and colorful, other times it was more a matter of small but persistent flaws which needed to be overcome. In many cases, Craughwell couched placed the saint in his or her historical context, and this really helps the reader to gain a fuller picture of the situation. Craughwell really makes these men and women come alive, and he makes them easy to relate to. Oftentimes people think that saints are rarefied individuals which are scarcely human, and that sanctity is something only a select few can aspire to. This book shows just how human the saints are and gives us hope that we can all aspire to follow in their footsteps towards the life of grace.

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