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# SAINTS & SILVERWARE

Identifying Saints in Medieval and  
Renaissance Art

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Tir-y-Don A&S Night  
March 11, 2021

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## **Common Saints' Attributes**

- Objects
  - Book and sword - St. Paul
  - Candle - St. Genevieve
  - Cleaver - St. Peter Martyr
  - Golden balls - St. Nicholas of Bari
  - Keys - St. Peter
  - Music - St. Cecilia
  - Pot - St. Mary Magdalene
  - Veil - St. Veronica
  - Wheel - St. Catherine of Alexandria
- Animals
  - Dragon - St. George
  - Eagle - St. John the Evangelist
  - Lamb - St. John the Baptist ("Behold the Lamb of God" John 1:36)
  - Lion - St. Jerome
- Body Parts
  - Beard - St. Wilgefortis
  - Breasts - St. Agatha
  - Eyes - St. Lucy
  - Flayed skin - St. Bartholomew the Apostle
  - Stigmata - St. Francis of Assisi
  - Tooth and pincers - St. Apollonia

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## How to Identify Saints in Artworks

1. Identify as many objects or images that appear around or on the saint as you can (attributes).
  - a. Think of synonyms for the names of these objects eg. hound = dog = canine
  - b. Pay attention to animals, flowers, unusual objects such as body parts or objects of torture, etc.
2. Look up these objects in Iconclass Online.
3. If you are looking at multiple pieces of art, make notes of attributes or names that appear over and over.
4. Look these repeated themes/objects/names up in a general art iconography book or online resource to find the biography of your saint.
5. For even more information, look your saint up in a book or online resource of Christian iconography.

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## Tools & Resources

### *Online Resources*

- [Cleavers, Poison, and Snakes: How to Spot Saints in Paintings](#). Video. The National Gallery London.
- [Getty Institute Bibliography of the History of Art](#)
- [Iconclass A-Z Indexes Online](#) - a icon and symbolism classification system for Western and Eastern Art
- [Popular Christian Saints & Attributes in Western Art Cheat Sheet](#). Art Docent Program
- [Saints' Lives](#). Internet Medieval Sourcebook.
- [Saint Symbolism](#). Wikipedia.
- [Symbols of the Saints in Art](#). Fish Eaters.
- [Who's Who: How to Recognize Saints](#). Video. SmartHistory Center for Public Art History.

### *Print Resources*

- *Handbook of Symbols in Christian Art* ISBN: 0304296783
- *How to Distinguish the Saints in Art by their Costumes, Symbols, and Attributes*. ISBN: 9781417908707
- *Oxford Dictionary of Saints*. ISBN: 9780199596607
- *Post-Biblical Saints Art Index: a Locator of Paintings, Sculptures, Mosaics, Icons, Frescoes, Manuscript Illuminations, Sketches, Woodcuts, and Engravings*. ISBN: 0899509428
- *Saints in Art*. ISBN: 0892367172

### *Library Research Guides*

- [AEAHS 5120: The Medieval Cult of Saints](#) (University of North Texas Libraries)
- [Medieval Christian Saints in Art](#) (Colorado State University Libraries)
- [Research Guide to Christianity and the Visual Arts](#). PDF (University of St. Michael's College)