

■ ESSAY

DIVINE INSPIRATION

Sure, a successful writing career is based mostly on talent and persistence. But I'm starting to think we may get a little help from above. At least, that's how I rationalize the plastic statue of Francis de Sales on top of my computer.

Francis de Sales is the patron saint of writers. My mom gave me the statue when I first started freelancing full time. It came with a prayer card that reads, "Oh, most loving and lovable Saint! May the editors of *Family Circle* like my query and assign the article at \$2 a word. Amen."

OK, so it doesn't say exactly that. But I confess, I do pray to saints. It's cheaper than therapy, it makes my mother happy and, well, you never know, do you? If you could use some divine help, here's a list of other saints related to writers:

- **Saint Catherine of Alexandria**, who watches over scholars and teachers, can help you lead your writing workshops.
- **Saint Clare** is the patron saint of TV writers—a good choice for the producers of the proposed Bobby Brown/Whitney Houston reality series (which, so far, hasn't been picked up by a network).
- **Saint Jude** is the patron saint of lost causes—perfect for writer's block.
- Looking for your next assignment? Try calling on **Saint Joseph**, the patron saint of workers.
- Copywriters can pray to **Saint Bernadine of Siena**, the patron saint of advertisers, advertising and PR.
- Want your book to have good placement at Barnes & Noble? Try **Saint James Duckett**—he guides booksellers.
- **Saint Cajetan** is the patron saint of the unemployed (also known as the "starving artist" saint).
- **Saint Agricola of Avignon** is the patron saint against misfortune. Of course, in his time, this had to do with droughts and floods, but a "drought" during a writer's career is an appropriate metaphor.
- Are you an isolated writer? Pray to **Saint Rita of Cascia**, the patron saint against loneliness, to stave off the blues.

—E.T. ROBBINS

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■ QUOTES

There is no perfect time to write.
There is only now.

—Barbara Kingsolver

No iron can pierce the heart with such force as a period put at the right place.

—Isaac Babel

Being a writer is like having homework for the rest of your life.

—Lawrence Kasdan