

**St. Charles Borromeo**  
Feast Day – November 4

*All Saints Pilgrimage Nov/2010*  
*Linda Kehoe*



*Carlo Borromeo*, by [Giovanni Ambrogio Figino](#)  
Born 2 October 1538(1538-10-02)  
Died 3 November 1584 (aged 46)  
Beatified: 1602 Canonized: November 1610 by Paul V

The name of St. Charles Borromeo is associated with reform. He lived during the time of the Protestant Reformation, and had a hand in the reform of the whole Church during the final years of the Council of Trent.

Although he belonged to Milanese nobility and was related to the powerful Medici family, he desired to devote himself to the Church. When his uncle, Cardinal de Medici, was elected pope in 1559 as Pius IV, he made Charles cardinal-deacon and administrator of the Archdiocese of Milan while he was still a layman and a young student. Because of his intellectual qualities he was entrusted with several important offices connected with the Vatican and later appointed secretary of state with responsibility for the papal states. The untimely death of his elder brother brought Charles to a definite decision to be ordained a priest, despite relatives' insistence that he marry. Soon after he was ordained a priest at the age of 25, he was consecrated bishop of Milan.

Because of his work at the Council of Trent, he was not allowed to take up residence in Milan until the Council was over. Charles had encouraged the pope to renew the Council in 1562 after it had been suspended for 10 years. Working behind the scenes, St. Charles deserves the credit for keeping the Council in session when at several points it was on the verge of breaking up. He took upon himself the task of the entire correspondence during the final phase.

Eventually Charles was allowed to devote his time to the Archdiocese of Milan, where the religious and moral picture was far from bright. The reform needed in every phase of Catholic life among both clergy and laity was initiated at a provincial council of all the bishops under him. Specific regulations were drawn up for bishops and other clergy: If the people were to be converted to a better life, he had to be the first to give a good example and renew their apostolic spirit.

Charles took the initiative in giving good example. He allotted most of his income to charity, forbade himself all luxury and imposed severe penances upon himself. He sacrificed wealth, high honors, esteem and influence to become poor. During the plague and famine of 1576, he tried to feed 60,000 to 70,000 people daily. To do this he borrowed large sums of money that required years to repay. Whereas the civil authorities fled at the height of the plague, he stayed in the city, where he ministered to the sick and the dying, helping those in want.

Work and the heavy burdens of his high office began to affect his health. He died at the age of 46.

**Comment:**

St. Charles made his own the words of Christ: "...I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me" (Matthew 25:35-36). Charles saw Christ in his neighbor and knew that charity done for the least of his flock was charity done for Christ.

**Quote:**

"Christ summons the Church, as she goes her pilgrim way, to that continual reformation of which she always has need, insofar as she is an institution of men here on earth. Consequently, if, in various times and circumstances, there have been deficiencies in moral conduct or in Church discipline, or even in the way that Church teaching has been formulated—to be carefully distinguished from the deposit of faith itself—these should be set right at the opportune moment and in the proper way" (*Decree on Ecumenism*, 6, Austin Flannery translation).

**Patron Saint of:**

Catechists  
Catechumens  
Seminarians

From 'State of the Day' [www.americancatholic.org](http://www.americancatholic.org)

## **Prayer to Saint Charles Borromeo**

O Sainly reformer, animator of spiritual renewal of priests and religious, you organized true seminaries and wrote a standard catechism. Inspire all religious teachers and authors of catechetical books. Move them to love and transmit only that which can form true followers of the Teacher who was divine. Amen.