

## Good Books for Catholics to Read

Recommendations for all ages

### Children's Books

Some of the children's books that are recommended below are difficult to find, because they are out of print. They may be found on Ebay, Abebooks, Thriftbooks, and other websites that sell old books. The age groups are simply approximations and can be intermixed. We hope to continue looking for and analyzing good (or bad) books so that this list can be expanded. The books listed are those we are confident about recommending.

#### For Ages 1-5:

This category contains picture books that use simple words or nursery rhymes to introduce the child to word meaning.

- *Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes*
  - *The Real Mother Goose* by Blanche Fisher Wright
  - *Mother Goose* by Tasha Tudor
  - *The Jessie Wilcox Smith Mother Goose* by Jessie Wilcox Smith
  - *Book of Nursery and Mother Goose Rhymes* by Marguerite de Angeli
- Other Nursery Rhyme Books
  - *Nursery Friends From France* by Olive Beaupre Miller (My Travelship series published by The Book House for Children)
  - *When We Were Very Young* by A. A. Milne
  - *My Very First Winnie-the-Pooh Padded Board Book* by A.A. Milne
  - *Little Book of Old Rhymes* by Cicely Mary Barker
  - *Under the Window* by Kate Greenaway
  - *And So My Garden Grows* by Peter Spier
  - *London Bridge is Falling Down* by Peter Spier
  - Books illustrated by Randolph Caldecott
    - *The House that Jack Built*
    - *Ride A-Cock Horse to Branbury Cross & A Farmer went Trotting Upon his Grey Mare*
    - *The Farmer's Boy*
    - *Babes in the Woods*
    - *The Three Jovial Huntsmen*
    - *John Gilpin*
    - *Sing a Song for Sixpence*
    - *The Queen of Hearts*
    - *Hey-Diddle-Diddle and Baby Bunting*
    - *A Frog He Would A-Wooing Go*

- Beatrix Potter
  - *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*
  - *The Tale of Benjamin Bunny*
  - *The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin*
  - *The Tale of Jemima Puddle-Duck*
  - *The Tale of Johnny Town-Mouse*
  - *The Tale of Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle*
  - *The Tale of Jeremy Fisher*
  - *The Tale of Two Bad Mice*
- Alphabet Books
  - *I is One* by Tasha Tudor
  - *A is for Annabelle: A Doll's Alphabet* by Tasha Tudor
  - *A Apple Pie* by Gennady Spirin
- Days of the Year
  - *Pelle's New Suit* by Elsa Beskow
  - *Around the Year* by Tasha Tudor
  - *The Twelve Days of Christmas* by Gennady Spirin
- Short Stories
  - [\*The Little Red Hen\*](#) illustrated by Paul Galdone, an American fable
  - *The Tale of the Little, Little Old Woman* by Elsa Beskow

### For Ages 5-8:

This category contains picture books with more words and longer stories to further the child's comprehension of literature.

- *A Child's Garden of Verses* by Robert Louis Stevenson
  - Jessie Wilcox Smith's illustrations
  - Tasha Tudor's illustrations
- *Now We Are Six* by A.A. Milne
- Picture Books
  - *Ox-Cart Man* by Donald Hall
  - *The Big Snow* by Berta and Elmer Hader
  - *Chanticleer and the Fox* by Barbara Cooney
- Picture Books by Jan Brett
  - Jan Brett's books are beautifully illustrated with talking animals and people dressed in folk costumes. Although the prose is not the most eloquent, the illustrations alone make her books worth the read. However, not all of Jan Brett's books can be recommended, because sometimes she illustrates little girls in pants.
  - *Berlioz the Bear*

- *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*
- *The Easter Egg*
- *Town Mouse, Country Mouse*
- *The Mitten*
- *The Owl and the Pussycat*
- *The Three Little Dassies*
- *Gingerbread Baby*
- *The Twelve Days of Christmas*
- Aesop's Fables
  - *The Aesop for Children* by Milo Winter
  - *Animal Fables from Aesop* by Barbara McClintock
  - *Aesop's Fables* by Michael Hague
  - *Medieval Fables* by Marie de France (translated by Jeanette Beer)
- Fairy Tales
  - *King Midas and the Golden Touch* illustrated by K. Y. Craft
  - *The Adventures of Tom Thumb* illustrated by K. Y. Craft
  - *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa the Brave* illustrated by K. Y. Craft
  - *The Frog Princess* illustrated by Gennady Spirin
  - *The White Cat* illustrated by Gennady Spirin
  - *Jack and the Beanstalk* illustrated by Gennady Spirin
  - *Thumbelina* by Hans Christian Andersen
  - *The Ugly Duckling* by Hans Christian Andersen
  - *The Snow Queen* by Hans Christian Andersen
  - *The Little Mermaid* by Hans Christian Andersen
  - *The Nightingale* by Hans Christian Andersen
  - *The Emperor's New Clothes* by Hans Christian Andersen
  - *The Princess and the Pea* by Hans Christian Andersen
  - Charles Perrault's Fairy Tales (collected from France)
    - *Little Red Riding Hood*
    - *Puss in Boots*
    - *Sleeping Beauty*
  - Grimm's Fairy Tales (collected from Germany)
    - *Hansel and Gretel*
      - Paul Zelinsky's illustrations
    - *Rumpelstiltskin*
      - Paul Zelinsky's illustrations
    - *Cinderella*
    - *Little Brother and Little Sister*
    - *King Thrushbeard*
    - *The Goose Girl*

- *Snow White and Rose Red*
  - *Our Lady's Child*
- *The Blue Fairy Book* by Andrew Lang
  - *Beauty and the Beast*
  - *East of the Sun and West of the Moon*
- *One Thousand and One Nights* – Arab folk tales
- *Polish Fairy Tales* by A.J. Glinski
- *Russian Fairy Tales: Palekh, Mstiora, Kholui* by Mednyy Vsadnik
- Folk Tales
  - *Little Pictures of Japan* by Olive Beaupre Miller (My Travelship series published by The Book House for Children)
  - *The Crane Wife* by Odds Bodkin, illustrated by Gennady Spirin (Japan)
  - *Scottish Folk and Fairy Tales* by Sir George Douglas
  - *Tales Told in Holland* by Olive Beaupre Miller (My Travelship series)
  - *The Boy Who Held Back the Sea* by Lenny Hort (Holland)
  - *Old Polish Legends* by F. C. Anstruther
- *The Velveteen Rabbit* by Margery Williams
- Saint Stories and Holy Books
  - *Little Nellie of Holy God* by Sister John Vianney
  - *The Child To Whom Nobody Was Kind* by Father Faber
  - *A Child's Rule of Life* by Robert Hugh Benson
  - *Old Testament Rhymes* by Robert Hugh Benson

## For Ages 8-12:

- *The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh* by A. A. Milne
- *The Selfish Giant* by Oscar Wilde
- *The Happy Prince* by Oscar Wilde
- *The Princess and the Goblin* by George MacDonald
  - Jessie Wilcox Smith's illustrations
- *Treasure Island* by Robert Louis Stevenson
  - N. C. Wyeth's illustrations
- *Kidnapped* by Robert Louis Stevenson
  - N. C. Wyeth's illustrations
- *The Chestry Oak* by Kate Seredy
- *Rikki-Tikki Tavi* by Rudyard Kipling
- *The Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame
  - E. H. Shepard - the original illustrator
- *The Adventures of Pinocchio* by Carlo Collodi
  - Roberto Innocenti's illustrations

- *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien
- *Hans Brinker, or The Silver Skates* by Mary Mapes Dodge
- *The Art-Literature Readers* by Eulalie Osgood Grover (reprinted by Lepanto Press)
- Saint Stories and Holy Books:
  - *The Life of Dominic Savio* by John Bosco
  - *Mamma Margartia: St. John Bosco's Mother* by Marieli and Rita Benziger
  - *Rose of the Andes* by Rev. Paul Aronica
  - *A Flower of Fatima* by Reverend Galamba De Oliveira
  - *Little Therese* by Pere Carbonel, S.J. (reprinted by Lepanto Press)
  - *King of the Golden City* by Mother Mary Loyola
  - *The Rhymed Life of St. Patrick* by Katharine Tynan

### For Ages 13-15 (and all ages):

- *Beowulf* - an Anglo-Saxon epic poem
- *The Song of Roland*
- *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien
- *The White Stag* by Kate Seredy (An old legend of Hungary)
- *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* by Washington Irving
- *The Nutcracker* by Alexandre Dumas
- *The Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens
- Saint Stories and Holy Books:
  - *The Catholic Girl's Guide* by Father Lasance
  - *The Young Man's Guide* by Father Lasance (All chapters are excellent except Chapter 16, which seems to promote the modernist idea that most men are saved)
  - *The Golden Legend* by Jacobus de Voragine
  - *Beasts and Saints* tr. by Helen Waddell
  - *The Little Flowers of St. Francis* tr. by W. Heywood
  - *Legends of Saint Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church*
  - *The Real St. Nicholas : Tales of Generosity and Hope from Around the World* by Louise Carus
  - [Under Angel Wings: The True Story of a Young Girl and Her Guardian Angel](#), The autobiography of Sister Maria Antonia, tr. by Fr. Conall O'Leary

## For Ages 15- up: Novels and Stories

When discerning which novels to read, Catholics should take the advice of Mother Mary Loyola:

*“Remember that, like other forms of recreation, [books] must not become the occupation of life, but be used as a means to an end. It is a wise counsel to read no novels in the morning. Keep your mind for serious reading whilst it is fresh. Have a fixed time in the afternoon that you will give to lighter reading, and show your self-control by closing your book at an exciting part when the right moment comes.*

*Don’t let yourself be the slave of any book. Watch its influence upon your mind. If, when you put it down, you turn to your daily life again with a disgust for its commonplace scenes and humdrum duties, with feelings of pity for yourself and of irritation with others, be quite sure that book is doing you harm. Instead of invigorating your mind by a wholesome change of scenery, and sending you back to work refreshed and braced, it is making you discontented, feeble, selfish. Put it away.”* (pgs. 227-228, *Home for Good* by Mother Mary Loyola, published by Augustine Academy Press, 2012)

- *Everyman* – 15<sup>th</sup> Century morality play
- *Lord of the World* by Robert Hugh Benson
- *By What Authority* by Robert Hugh Benson
- *Come Rack, Come Rope* by Robert Hugh Benson
- *The Song at the Scaffold* by Gertrud von Le Fort
- *The Avengers of the King* by Jean Drault
- *The Song of Bernadette* by Franz Werfel
- *Maria Chapdelaine* by Louis Hemon

## “Great Books” to Read

In the past, the following books would be read with an instructor and were studied mainly by boys and men in the universities. We do not recommend every person to read classical works, only if it is necessary for one’s education and if one has proper guidance. Catholics should first have a deep understanding of their faith before reading the “Great Books”, and should be acquainted with St. Thomas Aquinas before reading any of the Greek or Roman classical works.

- *Ethics* by Aristotle
- *Republic* by Plato
- *The Odyssey* and *The Illiad* by Homer
  - However, these should be read with caution as some scenes are indecent.
- *The Aeneid* by Virgil
- *Oedipus the King* by Sophocles
  - As with Homer’s works, a young adult should not read this alone. With a guided reading, it is a good example of a Greek tragedy that formed the mindset of the Greeks.
- *The Divine Comedy* by Dante Alighieri
- *Confessions* by St. Augustine
- *City of God* by St. Augustine
- *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer
  - Some of these tales present indecent or immoral scenarios, so a careful perusal of the stories is necessary to discern which stories are acceptable to read. The impure tales such as “The Miller’s Tale” and “The Shipman’s Tale”, as well as the vulgar tales such as “The Summoner’s Tale” should be avoided.
  - Tales that we can recommend are “The Pardoners Tale”, “The Clerk’s Tale”, “The Prioress’ Tale”, “The Second Nun’s Tale”, “The Nun’s Priest’s Tale”, “The Parson’s Tale”.
- *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare
  - For all of the Shakespeare plays, we advise against watching live performances of them, because the actors tend to overemphasize the raunchy jokes and insinuendos. When reading the play, one can often overpass the vulgar parts without realizing what was said. The plays we recommend are the least vulgar of them all.
- *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* by William Shakespeare
- *King Lear* by William Shakespeare
- *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare
- *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare
- *Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare

## “Great Books” to Avoid

We advise Catholics to seriously consider this decree from the Index of Forbidden Books of 1963 before attempting to read books dangerous to faith and morals:

**“VII: Books which professedly deal with, narrate, or teach things lascivious or obscene are absolutely prohibited, since not only the matter of faith but also that of morals, which are usually easily corrupted through the reading of such books, must be taken into consideration, and those who possess them are to be severely punished by the bishops. Ancient books written by heathens may by reason of their elegance and quality of style be permitted but may by no means be read to children.**

**VIII: Books whose chief contents are good but in which some things have incidentally been inserted which have reference to heresy, ungodliness, divination, or superstition, may be permitted if by the authority of the general inquisition they have been purged by Catholic theologians. . . All the faithful are commanded not to presume to read or possess any books contrary to the prescriptions of these rules or the prohibition of this list. . .”**

- *Faust* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe
- *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen
  - Although this book - and others of Jane Austen's - can be read to better understand and critically analyze her times, she promotes romanticism in addition to semi-feminist ideas. Ladies should especially be cautious if they read Austen's works, because they can easily fall into the trap of sentimentalism.
- *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott
  - For reasons why this book is not recommended, [see here](#).
- *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe
- *The Red Badge of Courage* by Stephen Crane
  - This book can be read to analyze the Northern soldiers of the Civil War; however, it is very dark, vulgar, and depressing. It does not present the noble ideal of a soldier that should be instilled in young men, even if it is a realistic portrayal of many of the Civil War soldier's attitudes towards the war.
- *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald
- *Brideshead Revisited* by Evelyn Waugh
  - For reasons why this book is not recommended, [see here](#).
- *The Mists of Avalon* by Marion Zimmer Bradley
- *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift
- *The Time Machine* by H. G. Wells
- *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley
  - This book has many detailed impure scenes, which cause it to fall under the condemnation of the Index listed above and constitute an occasion of sin.

However, if a man is analyzing it to better understand modern society, it is a thought-provoking read.

- *1984* by George Orwell
  - The same criteria for the above book applies here.

### **The following were on the Index of Forbidden Books:**

- *Les Misérable* and *Notre Dame de Paris* by Victor Hugo
  - These books were on the Index until 1959, when they were removed most likely due to Modernist reasons.
- All romance novels of Alexandre Dumas (although not specifically condemned, *The Three Muskateers* could easily be classified as a romance novel and should be avoided)
- *Candide* by Voltaire
- *Paradise Lost* by John Milton
- All of Thomas Hobbes' works
- All of David Hume's works
- *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* by John Locke
- *Critique of Pure Reason* by Immanuel Kant
- *Meditations* by René Descartes
- *The Praise of Folly* by Erasmus
- *The Prince* by Machiavelli

## General Book Recommendations

### History Books (see [here](#))

#### Medieval

- *The Glory of the Medieval World* by Régine Pernoud
- *The Medieval Mind* by Henry Osborn Taylor
- *Chivalry* by Leon Gautier
- *The 13th - The Greatest of Centuries* by James Joseph Walsh
- *The Renaissance of the 12th Century* by Charles Homer Haskins
- *Why Apologize for the Spanish Inquisition?* by Frs. Alphonsus Maria Duran and Paul Mary Vota
- *The Medieval Inquisition* by Bernard Hamilton
- *The Black Legends and the Catholic Hispanic Culture* by Antonio Caponnetto
- *Christ the King: Lord of History* by Anne Carroll
- *Life of Charlemagne* by Einhard
- *The Travels of Marco Polo* by Marco Polo

#### Spain and Portugal

- [\*The Legend of Don Pelayo\*](#) by Marian Horvat, Phd.
- *El Cid God's Own Champion* by James Fitzhenry
- *The Life of the Very Noble King of Castile and Leon, St Ferdinand III* by C. Fernandez de Castro
- *Isabella of Spain: The Last Crusader* by William T. Walsh
- *The Land of Prester John: A Chronicle of Portuguese Exploration* (Byways of History) by Elaine Sanceau
- *Henry the Navigator* by Elaine Sanceau
- *Good Hope: The Voyage of Vasco da Gama* by Elaine Sanceau
- *Captains of Brazil* by Elaine Sanceau

#### British Isles

- *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* by St. Bede
- *The Voyage of St. Brendan the Navigator* - a saga in Latin that has been translated into English by many writers
- *Life of St. Margaret, Queen of Scotland* by Bishop Turgot of Durham
- *The Life of the Princess Margaret, Queen of Scotland* by Samuel Cowan J.P.

## **Italy**

- *Catherine of Siena* by Sigrid Undset
- *A Compendium of Italian History from the Fall of the Roman Empire* by St. John Bosco

## **France**

- *A Family of Brigands in 1793* by Marie de Sainte-Hermine;
- [Trianon, A Novel of Royal France](#) by Elena Maria Vidal
- *To Quell the Terror: The True Story of the Carmelite Martyrs of Compiègne* by William Bush
- [The French Revolution](#) by Pierre Gaxote

## **Germany**

- *The Life of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, Duchess of Thuringia* by Count De Montalembert
- [Holding the Stirrup: The Memoirs of Baroness Elizabeth von Guttenberg](#)

## **Poland**

- [With Fire and Sword, The Deluge and Pan Michael](#) by Henryk Sienkiewica

## **America**

- [The Journal of Christopher Columbus](#)
- *Discovering A Lost Heritage: The Catholic Origins of America* By Adam S. Miller
- *Glory of the Mohawks: the Life of the Venerable Catherine Tekakwitha* by Rev. Edward Lecompte
- [Ven. Mary of Agreda in America](#) by Margaret Galitzin
- [Discovering Our Lady of Bethlehem: Her Journey with Fr. Serra](#) by Marian Horvat and Judith Mead
- *Palou's Life of Fray Junipero Serra*
- [The North & The South and Secession: An Examination of Cause and Right](#), Book I by Adam Miller
- [The North, The South & Slavery](#), Book II by Adam Miller
- [The North, the South and Lincoln's War Policies](#), Book III by Adam Miller
- [United States History from a Traditional Catholic Perspective](#) by Christ the King Books
- *Puritan's Progress (A Catholic Perspective) Vol 1 1492-1770 Europe Crosses the Water*
- *Puritan's Progress (A Catholic Perspective) Vol 2 1771 - 1848: A New Constellation*

- *Puritan's Progress (A Catholic Perspective) Vol 3 1849 - 1921: Revolution for Export*
- *Puritans' Progress (A Catholic Perspective) Vol 4 1922-1941: The End of the Beginning*
- *Puritans' Progress (A Catholic Perspective) Vol 5 1942 - 1969: Determining the Future*

### **Central and South America**

- *The Admirable Life of Mother Mariana, Volumes I and II* by Manual Sousa Pereira
- *Gabriel Garcia Moreno, Regenerator of Ecuador* by Mary Monica Maxwell-Scott;
- *Garcia Moreno* by Rev. Fr. Augustine Berthe.

## **Marriage and Family Life Book Recommendations:**

- *Popular Instructions on Marriage* by V. Rev. Ferreol Girardey, C.S.S.R.;
- *True Men as We Need Them* by Rev. Bernard O'Reilly.
- *The Mirror of True Womanhood* by Rev. Bernard O'Reilly;
- *The Valiant Woman* by Msgr. Landriot
- *Catholic Manual of Civility* by Marian T. Horvat
- *Courtesy Calls Again* by Marian Horvat and Judith Mead
- *Restoring the Family* by Marian Horvat
- *American Catholic Etiquette* by Kay Toy Fenner
- *The Rules of Christian Decorum and Civility* by Saint John Baptist de La Salle
- *Catholic Practice at Church and at Home: the Parishioner's Little Rule-book; a Guide for Catholics in the External Practice of Their Holy Religion* by Alexander L.A. Klauder

## **Catechism Book Recommendations:**

- *Roman Catechism or Catechism of Trent*
- *Catechism of Pope St. Pius X*
- *The Catechism Explained: An Exhaustive Exposition of the Christian Religion, with Special Reference to the Present State of Society and the Spirit of the Age* by Francis Spirago and Richard Clark
- *Baltimore Catechism* (4 volumes - 1933)
- *I Teach Catechism* (3 volumes – 1945)
- *The Catechism in Examples* by Rev. D. Chisholm (5 volumes)
- *The Catechist* by Rev. Canon Howe

## Traditional Catholic Book Recommendations:

- *Revolution and Counter-revolution* by Plinio Correa de Oliveira
- *Liberalism Is a Sin* by Fr. Felix Sarda y Salvany
- [The Theological Analysis of the New Ordo Missae](#) by Arnaldo Xavier da Silveira
- [The Hypothesis of a Heretic Pope](#) by Arnaldo Xavier da Silveira
- *The Permanent Instruction of the Alta Vendita: A Masonic Blueprint for the Subversion of the Catholic Church* by John Vennari
- *The Undermining of the Catholic Church* by Mary Ball Martinez
- *The End of This Present World and the Mysteries of the Life to Come* by Fr. Charles Arminjon
- *The Soul of the Apostolate* by Dom J. B. Chautard
- *Religious Instructions and Exercises of Piety for Christian Schools* by St. John Baptiste de La Salle
- *Explanation of the Prayers and Ceremonies of Holy Mass* by Dom Prosper Gueranger
- *The Liturgical Year* by Dom Prosper Guéranger
- *Explanation of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass* by Fr. Martin Cochem
- *Love, Peace and Joy: A Month of the Sacred Heart According to St. Gertrude* by Rev. Fr. Andre Prevot
- [The Prodigal Son, or the Sinner's Return to God](#) by Michael Müller
- *Guide for Catholic Young Women* by Fr. G. Deshon
- *Bethlehem* by Fr. Frederick Faber

## Marian Devotion

- *The Life of Mary* by D. Roberto, Hermit of Monte Corona
- *Mary's Immaculate Heart: The Meaning of the Devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary* by Rev. Fr. John P. Murphy

## **Songbooks:**

Traditional Catholic hymns can be found online at [hymnary.org](http://hymnary.org), where the following recommended old hymnals are available. By searching the internet for these hymnals, it is also easy to find full PDF copies of them.

- *The St. Gregory Hymnal*
- *The Pius X Hymnal* (1953)
- *Laudate Hymnal* (1942)
- *St. Basil's Hymnal* (1953)

Many folk songs from around the world are innocent and melodious. However, they should be sung with discretion, for some are over-romantic and sensual, while others praise drunkenness or other vices.

Below are a few songbook recommendations (all in English):

- *The Golden Book of Favorite Songs* by the Hall & McCreary Company
- *Music Near and Far* by Silver Burdett Company
- *American Folk Songs for Children* by Ruth Crawford Singer
- *The Fireside Book of Children's Songs* by Simon and Schuster
- *The Follett Book of Cradle Songs: Lullabies from around the world* by Lynne Knudsen
- *The Oxford Book of Carols*

There are also two websites where sheet music for folk songs is available without cost:

[Mama Lisa's World](http://mamalisa.com) and [Beth's Notes](http://bethsnotes.com)