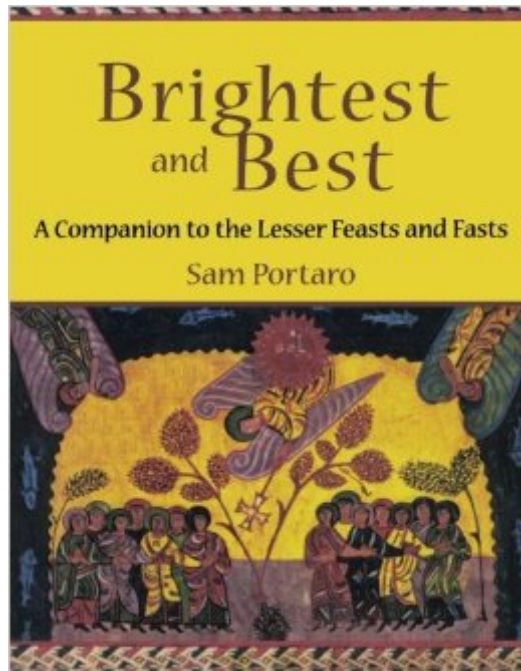


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# Brightest And Best: A Companion To The Lesser Feasts And Fasts



## Synopsis

In these meditations on the lesser feasts and fasts of the church calendar Sam Portaro asks the question, "What do these saints and commemorations have to say to Christians today?" His answers are often surprising and always thought-provoking, with fresh insights into the lives and teachings of those who have gone before us in the Christian faith. The cycle of the year begins in Advent with St. Andrew and ends in late November with Kamehameha and Emma of Hawaii. Each reflection looks at the scripture readings for the day and focuses on a distinctive attribute of the saint or feast in the light of contemporary questions of faith, mission, and community. Saints of the distant past such as Columba and Agnes, Cyprian and Augustine, Thomas Becket and Catherine of Siena are included, as well as those closer to our own day—Charles Wesley and Julia Emery, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Evelyn Underhill and Jonathan Daniels. Following the calendar provided in *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*, meditations on the holy days of the church seasons are also included, such as All Saints and the Epiphany. *Brightest and Best* is designed for a variety of Christian education purposes, including adult forums, confirmation classes, seasonal presentations, clergy groups, and groups of students and young adults. It is equally useful for individuals seeking varied and interesting devotional reading. Although based on the church year, each chapter is discrete and readers can focus on any event or person and begin at any season. Since these pieces began as homilies in a college setting, they are useful as a preaching aid and could be the basis of a homily at a midweek service.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book works best when used as exactly what it says it is-a companion to Lesser Feasts and Fasts, an Episcopal Church liturgy book which gives all the background information which Brightest and Best lacks. This book has interesting and thought-provoking meditations on how the lives of each of the Episcopal saints (many of whom are also Catholic saints) relate to life in the modern world. Some of them seem somewhat far-fetched, and the author's politics come through occasionally, but for the most part, this is a wonderful book.

Sam Portaro consistently offers a new take on old themes, making the lives of the saints - ancient and modern - alive with relevance for today. Some of the commentaries border on the whimsical and others (sometimes the same ones) are deep and profound. Having celebrated most of the Lesser Feasts and Fast days several times now as a parish priest, I find this book helping me to be excited about even some of the saints I had almost written off. Very good devotional material here for clergy and laity alike.

This volume is an invaluable resource for folks who want to celebrate each day with an awareness of a world larger than the one which often we tend to create for ourselves. These men and women and the events narrated remind us of the thin place that lies between the divine and the human - a thin place which is permeable and brings insight and grace to us as we go about our the tasks of our daily living and loving.

I have this book in paperback. I was excited to see it as an e-book. Sam Portaro is a gifted writer whose objective here is to do a little teaching on the meaning behind each of the saint's days in the BCP calendar. I know of no other book that does this as well. It is a good companion to "Holy Women, Holy Men: Celebrating the Saints."

Looking for a good gift for a friend who is being ordained as an Episcopal Priest. Give them this well written book by Sam Portaro. Some day, when they are preaching a mid-week service and feel that the "well is dry", they'll thank you.

My rating is probably based on erroneous expectations on my part. It is probably fine for what it is: personal meditations. However, it lacks two things that -- based on the subtitle -- I thought the book might provide: (a) basic information about each saint and (b) ideas about celebrating the saints'

days based on cultural and religious traditions (e.g. food, activities, artifacts). I'm offering this review just so potential buyers know what they are getting.

This book is a wonderful review of the saints of the church---well-written and insightful. Each entry includes a homily based on the appointed scriptures for the day and the life of the saint. Before I retired, I used this book for mid-week church services to educate the congregation on the heroes of our faith.

I keep this book by my bedside and read it often. It's best when you can also read Lesser Feasts and Fasts along with it. By itself, it's thought-provoking and stimulating.

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