

**NEW**

from THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA PRESS

## A SAINT OF OUR OWN

*How the Quest for a Holy Hero Helped Catholics Become American*

**Kathleen Sprows Cummings**

What drove U.S. Catholics in their arduous quest, full of twists and turns over more than a century, to win an American saint? The absence of American names in the canon of the saints had left many of the faithful feeling spiritually unmoored. But while canonization may be fundamentally about holiness, it is never only about holiness, reveals Kathleen Sprows Cummings in this panoramic, passionate chronicle of American sanctity. Catholics had another reason for petitioning the Vatican to acknowledge an American holy hero.

A home-grown saint would serve as a mediator between heaven and earth, yes, but also between Catholicism and American culture. Throughout much of U.S. history, the making of a saint was also about the ways in which the members of a minority religious group defined, defended, and celebrated their identities as Americans. Their fascinatingly diverse causes for canonization—from Kateri Tekakwitha and Elizabeth Ann Seton to many others that are failed, forgotten, or still under way—represented evolving national values as Catholics made themselves at home. Cummings's vision of American sanctity shows just how much Catholics had at stake in cultivating devotion to men and women perched at the nexus of holiness and American history—until they finally felt little need to prove that they belonged.

A nationally recognized expert on Pope Francis and Catholicism, **KATHLEEN SPROWS CUMMINGS**, author of *New Women of the Old Faith*, is associate professor of American studies and history and William W. and Anna Jean Cushwa Director of the Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism at the University of Notre Dame.

"A superb book: deeply researched, consistently interesting, and beautifully written. Kathleen Sprows Cummings makes history come alive with sparkling prose and surprising insights. Her fascinating study of the lives of some of the most remarkable Catholics in history, and the (often labyrinthine) stories of their canonizations, is a must for every American Catholic—and anyone interested in religion in America."

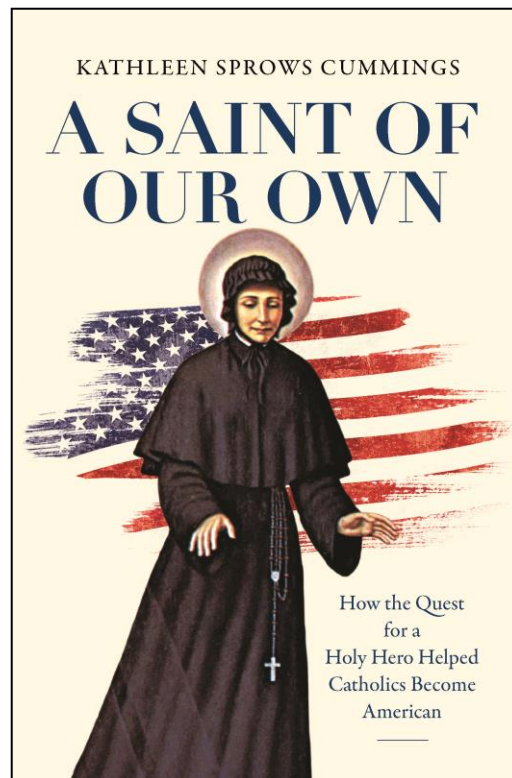
—**James Martin, SJ**, author of *Jesus: A Pilgrimage* and *The Jesuit Guide*

"U.S. Catholics know very little of their own story. Kathleen Sprows Cummings's fascinating account of a largely unexplored facet of American Catholic history, full of wonderful stories, helps remedy that self-imposed amnesia, even as it breaks new ground in the social history of the United States."

—**George Weigel**, Distinguished Senior Fellow and William E. Simon Chair in Catholic Studies, Ethics and Public Policy Center

"I could not put *A Saint of Our Own* down. In this brilliant history of saint-seeking among American Catholics, Kathleen Sprows Cummings illuminates with wit and learning all the ironies and contradictions of U.S. Catholic history. As Cummings traces in thrilling detail, the intricacies of saint-making were as much a matter of politics and prestige—of who knew whom in Rome, who was in and who was out—as of holiness. Sanctity was forever a moving target, tensely poised between heaven and earth. What did not change, though, was the determination of American Catholics to make their values, struggles, and achievements more visible in the modern world by having them officially represented and recognized in the communion of saints in heaven. This is a great book."

—**Robert A. Orsi**, author of *History and Presence*



Available April 2018    336 pages  
978-1-4696-4947-4    \$28.00 hardcover

To order this book, visit [www.uncpress.org](http://www.uncpress.org) or call 1-800-848-6224.  
**To receive a 40% discount, enter code 01DAH40 during checkout or mention while ordering.**  
For information about exam copies, visit [www.uncpress.org](http://www.uncpress.org) and see **FOR EDUCATORS**.