

## What Kind of People are Saints?

We, along with churches around the world are celebrating All Saints Day. This year we will celebrate on November 5<sup>th</sup>. All Saints Day is always on November 1, but we adapt and celebrate it on the Sunday after Reformation. Did you ever wonder: "What kind of people are saints"? The church does refer to certain people as saints, like St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Paul, St. Peter, and so on. These are writers of the New Testament of the Bible. The Roman Catholic Church even elevates some people to a special status of sainthood; with qualifications they say are required to become a saint. That said, was there something special about these people that made them saints? The answer to that question is yes and no. The first people I mentioned all wrote parts of the New Testament, so they are special to the church. We thank God for them and praise them for the gifts that they have given to the Church. These are people that God worked through in order to bring His Word to all people to tell the Good News of Jesus. We call them saints because God has done a holy work through them.

Does that mean the saints themselves are holy? Well, yes and no. Yes, saints are holy. No, saints are not perfect. They are sinners just like all of us. Saints are holy. That's what the word saint means. The Greek word used for that is "The holy ones." So, a saint is literally a holy person. But, from the Bible's point of view, it is not that they are holy because they are perfect or holy because of the things they do. The Bible is clear when it teaches that all people are sinners. So then how can a person be a saint when they sin just like the rest of us?

People are saints when they are DECLARED HOLY or made holy, sanctified by God! People are saints because God has forgiven their sins through the death and resurrection of Jesus. From the Bible's point, saints are forgiven sinners. All forgiven sinners are saints. When God forgives our sins, we are holy in His sight because He covers our sins, and by faith God gives us gifts and He gifts us with the holiness of Jesus. That's what it means to be holy. Therefore, all believers are saints. St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians 1:1 says that Paul sent a letter for all the saints in Ephesus. He wasn't writing to a certain select group of holy people in the church. He wrote to all the people in the church at Ephesus, and called all believers saints. That makes us saints too. All who believe in Jesus are saints. We are holy in God's sight by faith in the work and the person of Jesus Christ.

While we call St. Matthew, St. Mark, or the other saints, we agree that there is something special *about* them, but nothing special *in* them that qualifies them to be holy. That's God's doing. But we do honor them as special because of what God accomplished through them. When we refer to people as Saint somebody, we are really praising God for His work through them.

Some denominations elevate saints to a status in which they are prayed to. We as Lutherans don't pray to them, but rather we *honor* them because of what God did for them and does through them. We pray to Jesus, we honor saints. So, we are graciously invited by God to pray directly to Him again through Jesus Christ, but, we can certainly model the behavior of the saints. In fact, they demonstrate a trust in God for all things and that's something from which we can all learn. In fact, their prayer life to Jesus is a great example to start to follow. God worked through them to accomplish His will and to show His love to everyone. Also, the saints who went before us serve as examples of how to live and to persevere in the faith. And think about this. We have Christians in our lives presently that God is working through, and whose example we should follow in faith.

So, on All Saints Day we can praise God for all His saints ... both those who have gone before and those who are in our lives now, even as we strive in God's grace to be saints for those we love.

That's the View from Here.

Pastor Bill Winter