

Are All Believers Saints?

I was raised Catholic, attended parochial school, participated in the sacraments and served as an altar boy. During that phase of my life, the concept of “saints” was a very familiar and intriguing subject. I never questioned if the practices of “canonizing saints” and “praying to the saints” were correct. I just accepted those ideas because they were established church traditions.

Then at 19, during the Jesus Revolution, I was born again and filled with the Spirit. At that pivotal time, I decided any belief worth harboring in my heart and mind had to align with God’s Word. That’s when I subjected the Catholic concept of “saints” to critical thinking, and it failed the test in several important areas.

Receiving the Status

According to the Catholic standard, only those who attain a high degree of piety can ever achieve the exalted status of sainthood. Any proposed candidate must pass through three stages: veneration, beatification and canonization (a process overseen by the pope).

Once a candidate is declared to have lived life with heroic virtue, he may be declared Venerable. The next step is beatification. A martyr may be beatified and declared “Blessed” by virtue of martyrdom itself. Otherwise, the candidate must be credited with a miracle. In verifying the miracle, the Church looks at whether God truly performed a miracle and whether the miracle was in response to the intercession of the candidate saint. Once beatified, the candidate saint may be venerated but with restriction to a city, diocese, region, or religious family. Accordingly, the Pope would authorize a special prayer, Mass, or proper Divine Office honoring the Blessed. After beatification, another

miracle is needed for canonization and the formal declaration of sainthood. ("The Process of Becoming a Saint," Catholic Education Resource Center)

"As with the beatification, the ceremonies of canonization normally take place in Rome at St. Peter's basilica within a Pontifical Mass" ("Canonization of Saints: History and Procedure,").

The first occurrence of canonization was 993 A.D. when Ulrich of Augsburg was formally acknowledged as a saint by Pope John XV, almost a thousand years after the birth of Christianity. If it took that long for such a belief to emerge, shouldn't its legitimacy be seriously questioned?

The Biblical Requirements

The true biblical requirements for sainthood are much different, throwing the gate of this status wide open to *all* who sincerely love the true God. Even during the Old Testament era, all God's people bore this title, as the following two verses indicate:

– "Sing to the Lord, O you *saints* of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness" (Ps. 30:4, MEV. emphasis added).

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– "Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song, And His praise in *the assembly of saints*" (Ps. 149:1, NKJV).

In the New Testament, all followers of Jesus are given this status as well, proven by the following three verses:

– Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, To the *saints* who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus" (Eph.

1:1, emphasis added).

– To the *saints* and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Col. 1:2, emphasis added).

– “To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, *called to be saints*, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours” (1 Cor. 1:2).

In this last verse, three simple New Testament criteria are offered for “sainthood”:

1. **Belonging to “the church of God.”** The word “church” is from the Greek *ekklesia*, meaning “called out ones.” The true church is comprised of all who respond to God’s call to come out of sin into a life of consecration to God through the gospel.
2. **Calling on “the name of Jesus.”** The simple requirement for sainthood is calling on the name of Jesus for salvation.
3. **Being “sanctified in Christ Jesus.”** The word “sanctified” has a triune meaning: first, being cleansed from the defilement of sin; second, being made holy by God; and third, being consecrated to His purposes.

Any Christian who can be described these three ways qualifies as a “saint” in the sight of heaven.

Inheriting the Calling

So, a “saint” is simply someone who has been “sanctified.” This impartation comes initially as a gift. The moment we confess Jesus as Savior, eight “sanctifying” influences work together to present us “holy” to the Lord. At that moment of spiritual rebirth, we are:

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- “Sanctified by the truth” (John 17:19b).
- “Sanctified by faith” (Acts 26:18c).
- “Sanctified ... in the name of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor. 6:11b).
- “Sanctified by the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 15:16b).
- “Sanctified ... by God the Father” (Jude 1:1).
- “Sanctified” by the blood of Jesus (see Heb. 13:12).
- “Sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb. 10:10b).
- “Sanctified by the word of God and prayer” (1 Tim. 4:5b). Like food, it works for us too.

All born-again believers are now included in the “assembly of the saints”—whether they reside in earth or in heaven (Ps. 89:5b). What a revolutionary revelation!

Manifesting the Calling

Claiming the status of sainthood and truly manifesting a saintly nature are two different things. This calling is both an immediate inheritance and the journey of a lifetime. An acorn has the identity of being an oak tree, but must fall “into the ground and die,” then spend a lengthy season growing, to reach its full potential (John 12:24b). So it is with God’s saints.

All true believers have this identity from the moment of surrendering to Jesus’ lordship, but to be saints in a demonstrative way (awakening this inner potential), we must die—to self, to the world and to sin. Then we must spend our

lives growing in God, yielding to His nature and fulfilling His will. By these things, we take on the image of the “King of saints” Himself (Rev. 15:3). That should be our goal, every single day.

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