

## Saints in Christ

This morning we celebrate *All Saints Day*. Historically, *All Saints Day* began as a commemoration of those who had died for their Christian faith. This view has changed over time. However, still in our days we have the tendency to think that *All Saints Day* is only about those who have died. We may think that saints can only be found in heaven. However, if we talk about saints from a Scriptural perspective, we learn that saints are not only in heaven but also on earth.

When we go to the Bible, we learn that many of the letters the apostle Paul wrote were addressed to the saints in Jerusalem and other parts of the known world at that time. The Bible refers to people breathing, feeling, and struggling as saints, just like you and I are. But here's the deal... When we hear the word saint, we not only think about those who have gone before us, we also think about perfection, awe-inspiring wisdom, and even a state of levitation.

Let us be honest, following such a way of thinking, may lead us to question our qualifications and the merits of others for sainthood. When we think about saints, many of us think, "That's not me, I am not one of them." The reason we do this is because we don't fully understand who a saint is from the perspective of the church and the Bible.

### Who are saints?

A saint is any believer who is in Christ. Those who respond to the call of God in their lives are saints. Those who trust in Jesus and have him as their Lord and Savior are saints. Saints are not people who possess exceptional qualities. Saints are people who in their brokenness and limitations allow God to possess them.

Martin Luther held that ALL Christians are, at the same time, both SINNER and SAINTS – SINNERS because of our rebellious nature ... but SAINTS because of salvation in Jesus.

As we ponder this morning on the meaning of sainthood, I want you to know this:

- If you have accepted Christ, if you live, move and have your being in the Lord, you are a saint... Christians are saints by virtue of their connection with Jesus Christ.
- Saints are not perfect people. However, they are people who are committed to being perfected. They let the Holy Spirit do the work of sanctification in their lives.
- Saints are not perfect people. Nevertheless, they don't get hung up on mistakes, they grow past them.
- Saints receive God's grace with gratitude and respond to God's love with faithfulness.

- Saints don't fall prey to the idea that they have already achieved their full potential. Saints are always pressing on to be found in Christ so that others may find Christ in them.
- Saints are the ones who do the menial chores of life with such love and dedication that through their actions the transcendence of God is manifested in our everyday experience.
- Saints are the ones who partner with God, and despite challenges and disappointments, they continue to breathe life into their families, friends, and relationships. They breathe life into a world that seems to be crashing.
- Saints get tired of injustice, violence, hunger, poverty, lack of responsibility, a sense of entitlement, unnecessary whining... the list goes on.
- Saints recognize the needs and the hurts around them. They see what is wrong in the world. From their position, they put forth efforts to eliminate anything that may be a hindrance to the abundance of life God is offering to ALL people.
- Saints give their best and leave the results up to God. They know the Lord is making all things new. They know their pain is not in vain.
- Yes, saints get physically, emotionally, and spiritually drained, yet they find rest and replenishment in God who is our strength.

This week, I came across a reflection for *All Saints' Day*. In his reflection, Rev. Dr. Allan Bevere said something like this. I am paraphrasing here....

*"The widespread assumption is that saints are very, very holy people. That they are very, very, holy people may give the impression that saints rise above all conflict and controversy. But what makes Christians saints is not that they are above conflict and controversy, but that they are in the middle of it all—working, serving, and ministering. Saints, just like the Lord they serve, are not afraid to get their hands dirty for the cause of the gospel, are not discouraged by the almost unmanageable need they see each day and will not be influenced by those who find scandalous their willingness to associate with the kinds of people Jesus spent time with in his ministry. Saints are holy because they are worldly—that is, they engage themselves in the realm God in Jesus Christ has come to redeem."* **Rev. Dr. Allan R. Bevere**

I am very thankful for the saints who with their love, service, witness and faithfulness have paved the way. I am grateful for the people who have embraced the call to be a "*chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession... [to] declare the praises of him who called [us] out of darkness into his wonderful light*" (1 Peter 2:9 NIV). I am thankful for those who have left a path to follow and also invites us, with their example, to make straight ways. I am thankful for those near and far who let the light of Christ shine in and through them.

As we go from this place, I want us to remember that “we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses [saints], [who are cheering us on to] run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith” (Hebrews 12:1-2 NIV). So, let us walk as people who are saints. Let us continually embrace the call to be saints. Let us allow God to possess us more and more every day so we grow to match our position in Christ. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, let’s “Live such good lives [that others] may see our good deeds and glorify God” (1 Peter 2:12).

Let us all be saints...