

Saints & Sainthood

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Saints are called, not made

This essay arises from a conversation with a Catholic bishop. This is not written to be critical or accusing, but as an opportunity to present what the Bible says on the subject. The bishop was asked if Pope Paul II could be made a saint in a short time. Or, would it be necessary first to verify some bona fide miracle he had performed. Or, would the especially good life he lived substitute for the miracle?

Saints are called

Paul addresses 1 Corinthians "unto the church of God which is at Corinth, even them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, their Lord and ours" (1 Cor. 1: 2).^{*} The second letter is addressed "unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints that are in the whole of Achaia" (2 Cor. 1:1b).

The Greek word for saints is *hagios*, which is used 229 times in the New Testament and is most often translated holy and frequently saints. So, saints are holy ones. The word for sanctified in 1 Cor. 1:2 is *hagiadzo*, which is the verb form of *hagios*. People are called by God to be saints or to be sanctified (Rom. 1:7; 1 Thes. 5:23; Jude 1). In Rom. 15:16, Paul speaks of being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. No man, nor group of men, can make people saints or declare them to be saints.

Called to be saints by the truth

Jesus called upon the Father to sanctify the apostles in his word, which is the truth (John 17:17, 19). In the New Testament no meat is to be considered unclean as was true in the Old Testament. Paul says, "For every creature of God is good and nothing to be rejected, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified through the word of God and prayer" (1 Tim. 4:4-5). With respect to people, sanctification has to do with their lifestyle or being set apart for God's service. With respect to inanimate objects, it has only the latter connotation, of course. In any case, even inanimate objects are sanctified through the word of God.

All Christians are saints

In Rom. 1:6-7, Paul equates those who are "called to be Jesus Christ's" with those in Rome, "***beloved of God, called to be saints.***" On down in Rom. 8:27, it is said that the Holy Spirit "maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."

We read such scriptures as the following, as samples of many others. "***For this cause I also, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which is among you, and the love which ye show toward all the saints.***" "***Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi.***" Paul addressed his letter to the Colossians "***to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ that are at Colossae.***" There is no passage in the New Testament epistles, which speaks of saints in any place that would not include all the Christians in that place. We can become saints only when we are alive. There

is no such thing as being made a saint after death. If one is not a saint when he dies, he will never be a saint.

Being a saint is a state

One's being a citizen of a country is his state or his standing. Being married is one's state in family life. Another form of the word hagios is hagasmos, which is translated sanctification or holiness. We become a saint or sanctified at the time of our conversion. We enter the state of being a saint or sanctified. We have been set apart for a holy purpose – God's purpose! Valid conversion includes repentance, which means we have decided (made a clear and determined change of mind) to live a new life in Christ. That arises out of the faith we have developed from evidence that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Once we have repented, our sins are washed away at baptism, which God made known to us in numerous places in the New Testament. That is the time in which our state has been changed, with respect to salvation.

Sanctification also refers to our continued growth in Christ as long as we live. Our state is not changing; our development in that state is changing. We ought to grow in being better husbands and wives, but our married state does not change.

We only develop in that. If we did not develop in our married state it would be our loss. If we do not grow in our sanctification in the Lord it will be to both our present and eternal loss. But we become Christians and saints at the same time.

* All scripture quotations are from the ASV, 1901.