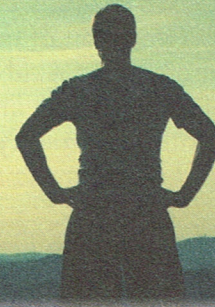


# Journey of Faith



## In Short:

- The saints are our models for faithful living.
- The communion of saints includes those in heaven, purgatory, and on earth.
- Canonization is the process used to declare someone a saint.



## The Saints

Think of someone you consider to be a faithful Christian. Much like the person who came to your mind, the saints are real people who led holy lives. You might not think of people in your life—or yourself!—as *holy*.

The truth is, we're all called to be **holy**; we're all called to be saints. Saints are role models for us. They're examples of the "poor in spirit" whose confidence is in God and who recognize their dependence on God. Jesus calls them "blessed" and promises that "theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3).

Most of us won't be officially recognized by the Church as saints, but we are all called to choose God with our lives. In other words, we must be *holy*.

*"Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love."*

St. Teresa of Calcutta

## All Are Called to Be Saints

The Russian Orthodox word for a saint, *prepodobnia*, means "very, very like." During their lives, saints become "very, very like" Jesus. We are each called to become like Jesus, too.

Maybe you don't think of yourself as holy because you haven't done anything great or are aware of your many sins. That's no excuse. Considered one of the greatest saints, Thérèse of Lisieux, a Carmelite nun who lived in a cloister and died at age twenty-four, is admired in part because of her rejection of things the world saw as important. She simply found holiness in everyday things.

Some saints struggled with their studies while some were scholars. Some saints were married, some divorced, some single, and some members of the clergy or religious communities. Some saints died at twelve years old while some lived 100 years. There are saints from all ethnic and racial backgrounds, saints with disabilities, saints who grew up homeless, and saints who grew up to be kings and queens.

*"We are all called to be saints. God expects something from each of us that no one else can do."*

Dorothy Day, founder of the Catholic Worker Movement

## How Does the Church Choose Saints?

Honoring saints has been part of Christianity from the very start. This practice came from the longstanding Jewish tradition of honoring prophets and holy people with shrines. Catholics honor Mary, the Mother of Jesus, as greatest among the saints. Many of the first saints were **martyrs**, people who were persecuted and died for their faith.

The pope and bishops oversee the process of **canonization**. The title “saint” tells us a person lived a holy life, is in heaven, and is to be honored by the universal Church. But canonization doesn’t make a person a saint; it only recognizes what God has already done. While every canonized saint is holy, not every holy person has been canonized.

The canonization process begins after the death of a Catholic who is considered holy. His or her life is examined for heroic virtue or martyrdom, faithfulness to Church teaching, and reputation for holiness. There must be evidence of miracles after the candidate’s death, resulting from a request to the saint for help. These miracles prove that the person is in heaven and can intercede for us.

### Isn’t Having Images of Saints Idolatry?

Some people think the Catholic use of images and statues of saints is idolatry. But that’s not how Catholics think of our devotion to saints. Saints serve as role models of faithful Christian living and intercede for us in prayer. We use images to remind us of their faithful example and their ongoing concern for us.

It’s similar to how people keep pictures and mementos as reminders of loved ones, yet most don’t worship the items or the individuals. Seeing a



St. Thérèse of Lisieux



St. John Bosco

statue of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, whose mother died when Thérèse was a child, might help us feel less alone when we’re grieving. A picture of St. Francis of Assisi might remind us of his love for God’s creation and make us more aware of our environment.

### Why Do Catholics Pray to Saints?

Catholics don’t pray to saints as they pray to God. Only God is worthy of worship. One definition of prayer is “earnest petition.” When Catholics pray to saints, they’re asking the saints to pray for and with them—to God.

*Have you ever asked anyone to pray for you? If so, the person was likely someone you trust, who understood your problem, or who was close to God. Those are all reasons to ask saints to pray for and with you in times of trouble.*

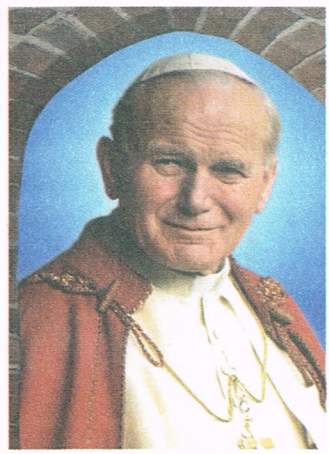
Since saints led holy lives and are close to God in heaven, their prayers are particularly effective. Catholics often ask a specific saint to pray for





Do some research on the patron saint of your occupation, hobby, or nationality. Find a saint who shares your name or whose feast day is on your birthday. Learn about this saint—his or her life, vocation or career, good works, and close companions.

- Which saint did you choose?
- What do you find inspiring about this saint?



St. John Paul II



St. Teresa of Calcutta

them if they feel he or she has a particular interest in their problem. For example, since St. Monica prayed for twenty years for her son to become a Christian, many people ask her to pray for them if they struggle to persevere in prayer. Saint Monica's prayers were eventually answered: Her son, Augustine, became a saint and a doctor of the Church.

*"Do not weep for I shall be more useful to you after my death and I shall help you then more effectively than during my life."*

St. Dominic, dying, to his brothers

## Communion of Saints

The Church is the body of Christ, united with one another and with Christ as its head. Also called the communion of saints, this assembly or communion includes all of God's holy ones—those in or on their way to heaven and those on earth who choose Christ with their lives.

*"The communion of saints is the Church."*

CCC 946

## Guided Meditation

Sit quietly with a saint, perhaps one from this lesson.

*Imagine yourself in a beautiful, peaceful setting. What do you see, hear, feel?*

*Picture a figure walking toward you. As the figure gets closer, you see it's the saint.*

*What does the saint look like? What is his or her mood or expression?*

*The saint asks, "What can I do to help?" Tell him or her something that troubles you.*

*What does the saint say in response?*

*Imagine the saint hands you a gift from God. What is it?*

*The two of you pray to God about your concern.*

*You feel the saint's ongoing love and support as you end your time together.*





Imagine yourself in a conversation with God as you share with him your answers to the following questions. Record both sides of the conversation in your journal.

Do you want to do God's will? How do you want to be transformed by God?

How can you open yourself more to this saint-making journey?

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