

# Who are modern day saints and martyrs – could you be one?

**Objective:** The focus today is we must live saintly to be a saint. We will leave the topic of martyrs for another time. You might ask yourself, how could I, a flawed and broken man living in Anderson Township in the year 2023 (or 2024), ever hope to measure up with the saints of the Catholic church?

Yet Pope Francis said to his audience in St Peter's Square on Nov 19, 2014 that "We are all called to be saints." But, he said, we must remember that holiness is a gift from God - not something we can achieve on our own. Holiness is not "granted only to those who have the opportunity to break away from the ordinary tasks, to devote themselves to prayer." Rather, everyone is called to holiness in their own state of life. "Indeed," he said, "it is by living with love and offering Christian witness in our daily tasks that we are called to become saints... Always and everywhere you can become a saint, that is, by being receptive to the grace that is working in us and leads us to holiness." <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/26055>

So, it is not that the saints do particularly saintly things (like fierce penances, whole nights spent on their knees, miracles, prophecies, raptures in prayer); it is more that they do all things in a particularly saintly way—in exactly the way that they feel God wants. To them the only thing in the world that matters is God's will. They know that by doing God's will as perfectly as they can they are imitating our Lord, they are expressing charity, they are being true to the best that is in them.

**Song Suggestion:** For All the Saints (Blue 131, Red 791 verse 1,4,6)

## Bible and Catechism Readings:

### Rom 12: 12-14

Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.

### Acts 20: 17-24

Paul Speaks to the Ephesian Elders: From Miletus he sent a message to Ephesus, asking the elders of the church to meet him. When they came to him, he said to them:

"You yourselves know how I lived among you the entire time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears, enduring the trials that came to me through the plots of the Jews. I did not shrink from doing anything helpful, proclaiming the message to you and teaching you publicly and from house to house, as I testified to both Jews and Greeks about repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus. And now, as a captive to the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and persecutions are waiting for me. But I do not count my life of any value to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the good news of God's grace.

### Catechism 1694

Incorporated into Christ by Baptism, Christians are "dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" and so participate in the life of the Risen Lord. Following Christ and united with him, Christians can strive to be "imitators of God as beloved children, and walk in love" by conforming their thoughts, words and actions to the "mind . . . which is yours in Christ Jesus," and by following his example.

**Catechism 1695**

"Justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God," "sanctified . . . [and] called to be saints," Christians have become the temple of the Holy Spirit. This "Spirit of the Son" teaches them to pray to the Father and, having become their life, prompts them to act so as to bear "the fruit of the Spirit" by charity in action. Healing the wounds of sin, the Holy Spirit renews us interiorly through a spiritual transformation. He enlightens and strengthens us to live as "children of light" through "all that is good and right and true."

**Saint:** St Peter the Apostle. Peter is a great example of someone who had flaws, who seemed to stumble many times in the service of Jesus, yet Jesus thought so much of him that he built his church on earth on his shoulders. Matthew 16: 18 “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.

**Vignette:** Have you noticed that most of the people that you read of that have been canonized as saints are humble to the point of embarrassment of any recognition. They can’t see that what they do is so special that it makes others think of them as saintly. It’s because they don’t see a task or a chore in what they do for their fellow woman or man, they see the face of God in that stranger’s face. They see their work as service to God himself. They are given an inner strength to serve in the face of famine, poverty, illness, and many other maladies where without the strength from God, they would wither and fade. To be canonized as a saint, you must be found responsible for two miracles. To be a saintly person you just have to live a life that gives witness to your Christian belief, and you love your neighbor as yourself.

**Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion:**

Have you ever met someone that you think has saintly qualities? What do they do that sets them apart from other people you know?

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Can you think of a time where you were acting with the qualities of a saint? What were you doing, how did it feel? Why can’t you be that way all the time? I’m not asking you to criticize yourself with the last question, being good all of the time is HARD.

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Do you have a favorite saint that inspires you?

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**Action Plan:**

Pope Francis tells us that “When the Lord calls us to be saints, he does not call us to something hard or sad... Not at all! It is an invitation to share His joy, to live and offer every moment of our lives with joy, at the same time making it a gift of love for the people around us. If we understand this, everything changes and takes on a new meaning, a beautiful meaning - to begin with the little everyday things. An example: A lady goes to the market to shop and meets another neighbor and starts talking and then comes the gossip and this lady says, "No, no, no I will not gossip about anyone." That's one step towards holiness, this helps you to become more holy.”Plan some steps this week to take another step towards holiness:

- Spend more time with your spouse or children. Act with patience and love.
- Make an effort to help someone who is struggling. Sometimes they are right under your nose.
- Visit someone who is lonely, and be the face of God for them.

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