



The Church's teaching

To help understand the principles of why Saints are so relevant to the Catholic faith, we've done some of the reading and browsing for you and compiled some of the key points of the church's teaching on sainthood, mainly taken from the Catechism. It might help you prepare for looking at 'Saints and Holiness' with a youth group.

All Christians have to potential to holiness

"All Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity. All are called to holiness: 'Be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect'. Christian perfection has one limit, that of having none (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2013)."

Pope Benedict XVI expresses a similar aspect when he says: *"Holiness demands a constant effort, but it is possible for everyone because rather than a human effort, it is first and foremost a gift of God (Homily, 6th November 2006)."*

Why does the church officially recognize some people as Saints?

The Catechism sees the answer mainly in the example of holiness they give to other Christians. The Saints help us realize the ideal characteristics of Christian faith and encourage us to follow their footsteps.

"By canonizing some of the faithful (...) the church recognizes the power of the Spirit of holiness within her and sustains the hope of believers by proposing the saints to them as models and intercessors (Catechism, 828)."

"He (the Christian) discovers it (the example of holiness) in the spiritual tradition and long history of the saints who have gone before him and whom the liturgy celebrates in the rhythms of the sanctoral cycle (Catechism, 2030)."

"The Beatitudes reveal the goal of human existence, the ultimate end of human acts: God calls us to his own beatitude (Catechism, 1719)."

"The witnesses who have preceded us into the kingdom especially those whom the Church recognizes as saints, share in the living tradition of prayer by the example of their lives, the transmission of their writings and their prayer today (Catechism 2683)"

"We are looking at the shining example of the Saints to reawaken within us the great longing to be like them; happy to live near God, in his light, in the great family of God's friends. Being a Saint means living close to God, to live in his family. And this is the vocation of all of us. (Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, 6th November 2006)."

What role do Saints play for the Church?

"What is the church if not the assembly of all the Saints? 'The communion of saints is the church.' (...) there exists a communion of goods in the church. The most important member is Christ since he is the head. Therefore the riches of Christ are communicated to all the members through the sacraments (Catechism, 946)."

"In the communion of saints, many varied spiritualities have been developed throughout the history of the Churches. ...The spirit is truly the dwelling of the Saints and the Saints are for the spirit a place where he dwells as in his own home, since they offer themselves as a dwelling place for God and are called his temple (Catechism, 2684)."

"They contemplate God, praise him and constantly care for those whom they have left on earth. When they entered into the joy of their Master, they were put in charge of many things. Their intercession is their most exalted service to God's plan. We can and should ask them for us and for the whole world (Catechism, 2683)."

"The Beatitudes depict the countenance of Jesus Christ and portray his charity. They express the vocation of the faithful associated with the glory of his Passion and Resurrection, they shed light on actions and characteristics of the Christian life, they are the paradoxical promises that sustain hope in the midst of tribulations, they proclaim the blessings and rewards already secured (Catechism, 1717)."

The Intercession of Saints

Although Catholics do not worship anyone but God, they honour saints and ask them for their intercession. Scripture indicates (i.e. Rev 5:8) that the Saints in heaven are aware of our petitions and present them to God.

"Being more closely united to Christ, those who dwell in heaven fix the whole church more firmly in holiness. They do not cease to intercede with the Father for us, as they proffer the merits which they have acquired on earth through the one mediator between men and god, Christ Jesus (Catechism, 956)."