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What is a Saint?

All Saints Day will soon be here - November 1st. There are a number of great books and resources for children, as well as adults, to learn more about these individuals we call “saints.” According to the American Bible Society, a saint is...

“...often used to describe a person of exceptional holiness, formally recognized by the Christian Church, especially by canonization. Canonization is a solemn declaration by the pope in which a deceased member of the faithful is proposed as a model and intercessor to the Christian faithful and venerated as a saint on the basis of having lived a life of heroic virtue or having remained faithful to God through martyrdom.”

In the Bible, the word “saints” refers to holy people — holy, however, not primarily in the moral sense, but in the sense of being specially marked out as God’s people. Many of the letters of the apostle Paul (see Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians) begin with a greeting that includes the word “saints” such as, “To the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in the whole of Achaia.”

In such statements, Paul includes all believers in Christ. The saints are God’s possession (Acts 9.13) and God’s beloved (Romans 1.7). They are saints because God has called them: they owe their status to no one but God. It is in and through Jesus Christ that God has “sanctified” them (1 Corinthians 6.11), or “made them holy,” or “made them saints” (Ephesians 1.1; Philippians 4.21).

What are the Characteristics of a Saint?

Saints are characterized by faithfulness to their Lord (Ephesians 1.1; Colossians 1.2); they are called to endurance in their faith (Revelation 13.10; 14.12). To them has been revealed the mystery of the Gospel of Christ (Colossians 1:26). They are called to conform their lives to God’s holy character; i.e., to live a life that is consistent with their status as saints (Ephesians 5.3).

God ministers to the saints (Romans 8.27) and intends that they minister to one another’s

needs (Romans 12.13; 2 Corinthians 8.4 and 9.1; Ephesians 1.15, 4.12 and 6.18; Colossians 1.4; 1 Timothy 5.10). The saints will receive a glorious inheritance at Christ's return (Ephesians 1.18; Colossians 1.12; 1 Thessalonians 3.13; 2 Thessalonians 1.10).

All believers are saints because of the sanctifying work of Jesus Christ. Usually in the New Testament "saints" refers to the corporate church. While the term "saints" designates the Christians living in a certain city or town (as addressed in the greeting of Paul's letters), most often the term designates all Christians in the entire world (Romans 8.27; 1 Corinthians 6.2, 14.33; Ephesians 1.15, 18).

Books on Saints for Children

[Beckett, Wendy. *Sister Wendy's Book of Saints* \(Chicago: Loyola Press, 1998\).](#)

[Bissel, Tom. *Apostle: Travels Among the Tombs of the Twelve* \(Vintage, 2017\).](#)

[Demi. *Mother Teresa* \(Simon & Schuster, 2005\).](#)

[_____. *The Legend of Saint Nicholas* \(McElderry, 2003\).](#)

[dePaola, Tomie. *Christopher: The Holy Giant* \(Holiday House, 1994\).](#)

[_____. *Francis: The Poor Man of Assisi* \(Holiday House, 1999\).](#)

[_____. *Patrick: Patron Saint of Ireland* \(Holiday House, 1994\).](#)

[Hartman, Bob. *Early Saints of God* \(Augsburg Fortress, 1998\).](#)

[Hodges, Margaret. *Joan of Arc: The Lily Maid* \(Holiday House, 1998\).](#)

[Mayer, Marianna. *The Twelve Apostles* \(Dial, 2000\).](#)

[Norris, Kathleen. *The Holy Twins: Benedict and Scholastica* \(Penguin Putnam, 1999\).](#)

[Scott, Lesbia. *I Sing a Song of the Saints of God* \(Morehouse, 2001\).](#)

[Visconti, Guido. *Clare and Francis* \(Eerdmans, 2004\).](#)

[Wildsmith, Brian. *Mary* \(Eerdmans, 2002\).](#)

[. St. Francis \(Eerdmans, 1996\).](#)

Books on Saints for Adults, Educators, or Clergy

[Berryman, Jerome. *The Complete Guide to Godly Play, Volume 7* \(Morehouse Education Resources, 2008\).](#) These volumes offer 12 stories on a variety of saints, including one in which the child can create a story and object box for themselves or a 'saint' that they know. Accompanying artifacts for all the stories.

[Cady, G. Scott and Christopher L. Webber. *A Year With American Saints* \(Church Publishing, 2006\).](#)

[Cornwell, Hilarie and James. *Saints, Signs & Symbols: The Symbolic Language of Christian Art*, Third Edition \(Morehouse, 2009\).](#)

[Earle, Mary C. and Sylvia Maddox. *Holy Companions: Spiritual Practices from the Celtic Saints* \(Morehouse, 2004\).](#)

[Giles, Richard. *Times and Seasons: Creating Transformative Worship Throughout the Year* \(Church Publishing, 2008\).](#)

[Growing Together, Volume 1: Sacred Celebrations for Fall & Winter \(Morehouse Education Resources, 2012\).](#)

[Holy Women, Holy Men \(Church Publishing, 2010\).](#)

[Lucchese, K.M. *Folk Like Me: The Read-Aloud Book of Saints* \(Morehouse, 2008\).](#)

[Portaro, Sam. *Brightest and Best: A Companion to the Lesser Feasts and Fasts* \(Cowley Publications, 2001\).](#)

[Schlafer, David J. and Roger Alling. *Preaching Through Holy Days and Holidays* \(Morehouse, 2003\).](#)

[Wright, J. Robert, editor. *They Still Speak: Readings for the Lesser Feasts* \(Church Publishing, 2003\).](#)

[Wright, N.T. *For All Saints? Remembering the Christian Departed* \(Morehouse, 2004\).](#)

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