

# Heroes of Faith

## *The Saints*

### What is a saint?

"Saint" comes from the biblical word meaning "holy." A saint is someone who is holy, someone who is closely united with Jesus in love. Everyone in heaven is a saint, and so we should all hope to be saints one day. But each of us is also called to be a saint right now in our daily lives, becoming holy as God is holy (1 Peter 1:15-16). If we give ourselves wholeheartedly to Jesus in love, he can slowly transform us into the saints we are meant to be, intimately united with Jesus in this life and in eternal life.

### Why are some people named saints, like Francis of Assisi?

These are Christians who lived such heroic lives of holiness that the Catholic Church holds them up as examples of faith to inspire the rest of us. Thousands of people have been officially recognized as saints in this way over the centuries, such as Saint Francis. We believe that they are with Jesus, and we want to follow their example and eventually join them in heaven, rejoicing in God's presence.



### Do Catholics worship the saints?

No, Catholics do not worship the saints. Catholics only worship the blessed Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We see the saints as our brothers and sisters in Christ, much like our brothers and sisters in faith here on earth. We honor the saints and seek to follow their example of holiness, just as Jesus and the apostles would have honored Moses and other heroes of Scripture.

### Why not focus only on Jesus?

The saints do not distract us from Jesus, but rather the opposite. They are ordinary people whose lives were transformed in amazing ways as they gave their hearts entirely to Jesus. Much as a young athlete might be inspired by a sports hero, the saints are our spiritual heroes who inspire us to give our hearts entirely to Jesus. Just as a beautiful mountain does not detract our focus from God, but leads us to praise his grandeur and power, the beautiful workings of divine grace in the saints move us to more heartfelt praise of God.

### Do the saints in heaven care about us here on earth?

Of course they do! They are not dead; they are actually more alive than we are, and closer to God. Christians have always believed that those in heaven are aware of what is going on here on earth, and that we can still talk to them as our brothers and sisters in Christ. For example, recall how Jesus spoke with Moses and Elijah at the Transfiguration (Luke 9:30), or his words about the rejoicing in heaven when a soul repents (Luke 15:7), or how those in heaven are depicted lifting up prayers to God on our behalf (Rev. 5:8, 8:4).

### Why do Catholics talk to saints?

We feel very comfortable asking them to pray for us, just as we ask each other here on earth to intercede on our behalf. For example, if your father is sick, you might ask a friend from church to pray for him. You are not worshipping your friend, but asking for her to pray to God on your father's behalf. To Catholics, it makes perfect sense that we would similarly ask those in heaven to pray for us, too, before God.

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