

["I sing a song of the saints of God,"](#) / patient and brave and true

"who toiled and fought and lived and died / for the Lord they loved and knew.

"And one was a doctor and one was a queen / and one was a man living on the green

"they were all of them saints of God / and I mean, God helping, to be one, too."

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Don't you just love that hymn? I do. All Saints Day just wouldn't be the same without our declaring, in song no less, that we all want to be saints.

Except I don't want to be a DEAD saint. Eventually, sure. Eventually I want to be one of that "great cloud of witnesses" our Prayer Book talks about. That "great cloud of witnesses" referred to by our Prayer Book are the DEAD saints, those who have lived for Christ Jesus and died in and for Christ Jesus and who are now with Christ Jesus. You know, those who were martyrs for their faith.

THOSE saints are doing whatever dead saints do. Singing praises to God, according to popular tradition; watching out for us and all of creation, according to other traditions; keeping Jimmy Stewart from ending his life prematurely and earning angel wings in the process, according to a movie TV dishes up every Christmas; "going from strength to strength" according to our last Prayer Book. (Our church erased THAT thought, you understand, lest we begin to think that saints could be made in heaven after we die. Heaven forbid we avoid church here in this life!)

Given how much I LOVE worship, for me a saint is someone who attends worship each and every time we hold worship. Not just being here, but someone who understands that our whole community of saints that is Church of the Resurrection matter, that God has given us something to do, both individually and as a whole. Otherwise, why do we exist? We'd just be, what? Breathers. People consuming food and oxygen and grabbing all we can get for ourselves and genetic heirs.

Yep, for me a saint is someone who does something I value. How do you define a saint?



*Jean Fouquet, All Saints, c. 1450, public domain image*

The Apostle Paul frequently addressed his letters to “the saints in” whichever church he happened to be writing to. He meant that everyone in that church was a saint because they were trying to live as Christ’s disciples. So, by this definition we are all saints.

Our church does define a saint in this way. *Lesser Feasts and Fasts* says, “The church is the communion of saints,” a “people made holy through their mutual participation in the mystery of Christ.”

While this is true, I dare you to go out on the street and ask them to define “saint” or “communion” or, for that matter, “holy,” much less “participation in the mystery of Christ.” I tried my own dare this week, well, a piece of it. I asked non-church people what a saint is. Here are a few of the answers I got:

- “A member of a really bad National Football League team.”
- “Someone who’s goody-goody all the time.”
- “Someone who does something I need but don’t deserve. Like, bringing me the TV remote so I don’t have to get up and get it.”
- “Someone with a church named after them.”

After that that I didn’t dare ask for a definition of “holy.” But we saints know what “holy” is:

- Something set apart for God’s purposes.
- Something filled with God’s spirit.
- Something cherished by God.

Not goody-goody. Not holier-than-thou, but humble. Because we know that we are saints, and we know that we are made holy only because we belong to God. We know that it’s not what WE do that makes us saints, or makes us holy. We know that we are good people, not because people are good, but because God is good and because we are made in the image of God.

We saints have aligned our lives with God’s purpose for us. We have learned to draw on God’s Spirit to do whatever otherwise impossible task God has given us. We know that God loves us beyond our wildest imagining. And, knowing that we are loved, we know we have plenty of God-love to give away.

As I mentioned, according to *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*, we are made holy through “mutual participation in the mystery of Christ. What this means is that we are made holy through participation in the Eucharist.

Today we are privileged to witness the making of a new saint. Today, Layson Charles Vann begins his journey of saying “yes” to God—begins his saint journey. Layson’s parents are helping their son claim and live into his God-given sainthood. Layson’s grandparents are sponsoring him in this venture

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called life, committing to teach him what being a saint is all about. And our job, as part of the still-living “great cloud of witnesses,” is to show Layson what holy love, what God-love looks and feels like in action:

- Unmerited
- Unconditional
- Absolute; and
- Unending

Why? So that, when he can, Layson will choose sainthood for himself. As a saint, Layson will become the person he was created to be, accepting whatever God has set for him to do in this life, so that he will be ready for his forever life.

And, having had the privilege of seeing a bit into Layson's soul, I know this: there will be music for him.

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