Are We Saints?

"I'm no saint," some Christians say. What do they mean? Do they realize what they are saying? Sadly, due to misunderstandings of "sainthood," many have lost sight of what it means to be a saint.

The Roman Catholic church has altered the view of sainthood. Though recognizing that their present definition of "saint" is not what the term has always meant, they claim, "In the course of Church history the word 'saint' has become more and more restricted to those who show especially clearly to what holiness of life they aspire in virtue under the influence of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Because their form of *following Christ* is an example…they are honoured as Saints" (*Credo: A Catholic Catechism*, German Catechetical Association, tr. Sister Benedict Davies OSU, London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1983, p 128, 21.2). This definition is further explained by saying that saints are "Christians whose lives were recognized as a special way of following Christ and who were therefore honoured." (*Credo*, p 243, 36.3). The formal declaration of this special kind of sainthood is called Canonization, defined as "A solemn declaration on the part of the Church that a dead person may lawfully be honoured as a saint and therefore his intercession may be asked in public. Through this declaration he is inscribed in the register of saints…" (*Credo*, p 243, 36.3).

Certainly, the Bible asks us to take special note of and "keep your eyes on" those who are walking by the example that Paul set and taught (**Philippians 3:17**). However, does this make them any more a saint than others? Consider who the saints are in the Bible.

Romans 1:6-7 demonstrates that all those who belong to Christ are saints. **I Corinthians 1:2** says the saints are all those who "call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (ESV). **Ephesians 1:1** says the saints are those who are faithful in Christ Jesus. **Ephesians 2:19** assures all Christians that they are saints when they are members of God's household. Interestingly, Paul calls himself the very least of all saints in **Ephesians 3:8**. That seems to fly in the face of the modern concepts of "Sainthood" since that concept teaches sainthood itself means to be better than others. **Colossians 1:2** says the saints are the faithful brethren in Christ. Of course, since every Christian is a saint, they are expected to live as saints (**Ephesians 5:3**).

Indeed, as noted above, the Roman Catholic Church recognizes that this is the earliest and truest definition of saint. Yet, their historically developed process of canonization and special honor to "special" Christians as saints has muddied the waters, causing even faithful Christians to claim, "I'm no saint." Perhaps you mean you are not perfect. Join the club; even Paul said that (**Philippians 3:12**). Perhaps you mean you are not better than any other Christian. Again, join the club; Paul noted that about himself in **Ephesians 3:8**.

But if you are in Christ Jesus you are a saint. You have been sanctified by Jesus Christ. You are set apart for His holy service. You are a saint and you need to live like it.

—**Edwin L. Crozier**