

All saints 02 11 25

From the time Jesus was around on earth there have been people recognised as having a particular faith in what Jesus taught and is. His faithful disciples are given the title Saints.

In the early church, as we heard in St Paul's prayer in the letter to the Ephesians, followers of Jesus were all known as saints.

Down the years some of these saints have been recognised as having a particular faith and have had details of their lives of faith recorded.

The majority are anonymous to us, but without them we wouldn't have the tradition of teaching that has come down to us and made it possible for us to also become saints of God.

If we look at the word Saint it comes to us in English from the Latin Sanctus or Holy, set aside for God's special purpose.

I have a book of saints containing some 1100 individuals many of whom have led lives and done things which can be an inspiration to us.

Many times over the years I have looked in here for encouragement.

Also if you have been to our Wednesday evening eucharist we often celebrate or commemorate people who's lives have been lived for God.

I am going to highlight just a few individuals who we might see as role models. Starting the early church often the names of people recorded as saints were martyrs who had been faithful to death SS **Faith** and **Agness** of Rome were martyred like hundreds of others by emperor Diocletian in the 4th C AD, Just for sticking to their faith.

Others like St **Augustin** of Hippo are commemorated for teaching and service to the worshipping community, the church. Born in north Africa about the same time as the Dioclesian martyrdoms, his mom was a Christian but his dad a pagan. He was clever and became a teacher but lost his faith, living with and having children with his mistress - bit of a naughty boy who became one of the most famous Christian thinkers and theologian of the early church. After regaining his faith influenced by another Saint, **Ambrose**, he was ordained and soon was made bishop. This turn around from bad lad to saint is not uncommon, at least with the male saints.

It seems most women didn't get to be recorded as saints unless they lived a chaste life.

If we jump forward a couple of hundred years to the year 521 and 2000m north, **Columba** is born in Ireland into a royal family, well educated and becomes a monk, founding a number of monasteries before possibly being exiled for causing a war over illegally copying a religious manuscript, again not a squeaky clean life, but his founding of a religious community on the island of Iona on the west coast of Scotland became the starting point to spread the Gospel through Scotland, the North of England and onward south.

Out of Iona came St **Aiden** to set up the community on Lindisfarne in collaboration with King and Saint **Oswald** himself martyred in a battle with the pagan king Penda of Mercia. Many saints came out of the community at Lindisfarne not Least St **Chad** who brought the Christian faith to Mercia, this part of the world, based at Lichfield and becoming the first Bishop. Also his brother St **Cedd**. Chad died in 672.



Around this time were many British saints **Etheldreda** founder and Abbess of the Abbey at Ely, **Ethelfleda** a recluse dedicating her life to prayer, who has a street in Wednesbury, named after her, Ethelfleda Terrace,. In my book are 17 English saint who's names start with Ethel – Men and Women – apparently it means Noble signifying they were often from royal households.

I have a great respect for the Saints of the latter end of the first millennium in particular the Celtic ones in what we now call the British Isles, they seem to have a down to earth faith.

Moving East a couple of thousand miles, in around 820 AD two other Saintly brothers **Cyril** and **Methodius** were born and became fellow Apostles to the Slavic countries. Based at first in modern day Turkey and travelling north to Moravia modern day Chechia, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Poland but their influence spread north and East from there. **Cyril** is famous for doing the groundwork to produce a written language developing into the Cyrillic alphabet still used today in Slav countries. He did this so that he could translate the Bible into the Slavic languages.

Into the second Millenium we start to get Saints we are probably more familiar with, like **Francis** and **Clair** of Assisi. Francis early life was one of wealth and thrill seeking, and after finding God he was still a bit of a rebel wanting to return to the austerity of Jesus teaching and away from the ostentation that had infiltrated the established church. That didn't go down well with the hierarchy who enjoyed their luxury.

Closer to home again a Lady of great faith and courage **Julian** of Norwich one of the first women in England to write about her faith and visions. She became an anchoress, like a hermit, walled up in a cell attached to St Julian's Church and was a spiritual guide for the many people who visited and spoke to her through the window.

Another Saint around this time is **Joan** of Arc, Patron Saint of France, a very unusual character who was moved to save France by the voices she heard and was martyred as a result, was charged with 70 counts, including witchcraft, heresy and dressing like a man. Different times!

The 1520s saw **William Tyndale** translate the Bible into English so that ordinary people could read it for themselves and for his trouble was also excuted.

In the latter half of the 1500's 100's of people in England and Wales were martyred by the state for holding fast to their faith. At various times Catholic and Protestant religions were outlawed.

A saint I had not come across before is **Rose Venerini** who in Italy in the 16 & 1700's worked and campaigned for the education of girls so that they could grow in a personal faith in God.

As I said, In my book of Saints there are 1100 recognized Saints so perhaps I should skip a bit into the 20th C and one of the better known saints in living memory **Maximilian Kolbe** a priest who offered himself to be killed in the Nazi death camps to save the life of a younger man.

And two people not in my boo as they are only recently given the title of saint by the church of course **Mother Theresa** of **Calcutta** recognized for her selfless devotion to God and the poor.

Finally the last I will mention who hadn't been born when this book was written.

Carlo Acutis, who died of leukemia at age 15 in 2006, referred to as "God's influencer" and the "patron saint of the internet"

As we have heard not all Saint's started off being squeaky clean, many had their demons and lived with them. What sets aside saints is their faithfulness to God. That is what we celebrate today, all those who may not be recognised in history and currently by name but lived or live their faith. We can count ourselves saints if we are also faithful to the teaching of Jesus and accept him as out Lord. Amen