



Belief Brief – Are Only a few chosen to be Holy?

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Reflection

Are Only a few chosen to be Holy?

The Church teaches that we are all called to holiness, regardless of state of life.

This means that God offers the possibility of holiness to all people, not just a chosen few or members of the clergy or religious communities.

God can use our state in life – married, single, religious or clergy and the experiences associated with these states of life to keep us close to him.

God offers the grace or gift of spiritual strengthening that is needed to become holy, removing any obstacles that may keep us from growing.

Holiness involves a process and requires our response in faith, humility and cooperation.

One pastor once joked that some people want to be holy without being whole. St. Paul encourages us to be holy and whole when he said,

“May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely, and may your spirit, and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of Our Lord, Jesus Christ.”

To be sanctified means to be set apart and made holy. Once we say yes to God’s offer to sanctify us, we are set apart and the work begins. We surrender our paths to God, our sins are forgiven and we are transformed.

God leads us through stages of purification and transformation, resulting in union with God.

We know what person has encountered Christ when her life changes for the better. She’s transformed and becomes a powerful witness of God’s grace and healing love.

Have the courage to say yes to the call to holiness.

You, too, can become a Saint.

Reflection Questions

1. After reading the excerpts above, from Pope Francis, discuss or think about how you can grow in holiness.
2. Is there a saint in your life? Think of someone in your life whom you consider to be holy. What words would you use to describe him or her? Now, read the words of St. Paul on the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:17-23). Do you see some of the same words?
http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENGo839/_P105.HTM
3. Prayerfully read and reflect upon Mary's response to the angel Gabriel in Luke 1: 26-38, and to her cousin Elizabeth, in Luke 1: 39-56.
http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENGo839/___PWK.HTM

What does she teach us about the vocation to holiness?

Sources from Scripture and Tradition

1. The teachings of Jesus:
Matthew 5:3-12 http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENGo839/_PVE.HTM
25:31-46 http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENGo839/_PVY.HTM

Luke 6:20-23 http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENGo839/_PWP.HTM

Ephesians 1:4 http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENGo839/_P108.HTM
4:1-15
2. Second Vatican Council. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium) Nov. 21, 1964, Chapter 5, 'The Universal Call to Holiness in the Church, paragraphs 39-42.
http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html
3. Excerpts from Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate* from Holy Father Francis on the Call to Holiness in Today's World, **April 9, 2018**.
The document is available in English, Arabic, German, Spanish, French, Italian, Polish, and Portuguese:
http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20180319_gaudete-et-exsultate.html

14. To be holy does not require being a bishop, a priest or a religious. We are frequently tempted to think that holiness is only for those who can withdraw from ordinary

affairs to spend much time in prayer. That is not the case. We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves. Are you called to the consecrated life? Be holy by living out your commitment with joy. Are you married? Be holy by loving and caring for your husband or wife, as Christ does for the Church. Do you work for a living? Be holy by labouring with integrity and skill in the service of your brothers and sisters. Are you a parent or grandparent? Be holy by patiently teaching the little ones how to follow Jesus. Are you in a position of authority? Be holy by working for the common good and renouncing personal gain.[14]

15. Let the grace of your baptism bear fruit in a path of holiness. Let everything be open to God; turn to him in every situation. Do not be dismayed, for the power of the Holy Spirit enables you to do this, and holiness, in the end, is the fruit of the Holy Spirit in your life (cf. Gal 5:22-23).

19. A Christian cannot think of his or her mission on earth, without seeing it as a path of holiness, for “this is the will of God, your sanctification” (1 Thess 4:3). Each saint is a mission, planned by the Father to reflect and embody, at a specific moment in history, a certain aspect of the Gospel.

63. There can be any number of theories about what constitutes holiness, with various explanations and distinctions. Such reflection may be useful, but nothing is more enlightening than turning to Jesus’ words and seeing his way of teaching the truth. Jesus explained with great simplicity what it means to be holy when he gave us the Beatitudes (cf. Mt 5:3-12; Lk 6:20-23). The Beatitudes are like a Christian’s identity card. So if anyone asks: “What must one do to be a good Christian?”, the answer is clear. We have to do, each in our own way, what Jesus told us in the Sermon on the Mount.[66] In the Beatitudes, we find a portrait of the Master, which we are called to reflect in our daily lives.

96. Holiness, then, is not about swooning in mystic rapture. As Saint John Paul II said: “If we truly start out anew from the contemplation of Christ, we must learn to see him especially in the faces of those with whom he himself wished to be identified”.[79] The text of Matthew 25:35-36 is “not a simple invitation to charity: it is a page of Christology which sheds a ray of light on the mystery of Christ”.[80] In this call to recognize him in the poor and the suffering, we see revealed the very heart of Christ, his deepest feelings and choices, which every saint seeks to imitate.

Teaching from the Catechism of the Catholic Church on Holiness:

1. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraph numbers 784, 863, 1533, 2013.
<http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc/index.htm>

Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist are sacraments of Christian initiation. They ground the common vocation of all Christ's disciples, a vocation to holiness and to the mission of evangelizing the world. They confer the graces needed for the life according

to the Spirit during this life as pilgrims on the march towards the homeland.

---CCC, 1533

For Further Reading

1. Pope Francis, General Audience, St. Peter's Square, November 19, 2014.
http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20141119_udienza-generale.html
2. St. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, January 6, 2001, Paragraphs 30-31. https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/2001/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_20010106_novo-millennio-ineunte.html
3. St Therese de Liseux. *Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of Therese of Liseux*.
https://www.amazon.ca/Story-Soul-Illustrated-Therese-Liseux-ebook/dp/B005ELWN9G/ref=pd_lpo_sbs_351_t_o?encoding=UTF8&psc=1&refRID=7D432GG8DAPXF01W38B5