

Called to Be Saints

Is being a Christian less than being a saint or are they the same thing?

As the Church began to grow through efforts of the apostles and early leaders it became a common practice to refer to the members of the believing community as saints. The word has a special meaning applicable to all Christians.

Read together from the letter of St. Paul to the Romans 1:1–7. What do you say about the saints?

Read also the following Old Testament passages and in your own words describe the qualities and deeds of the saints: Psalm 16:3; Psalm 30:4; Psalm 97:10; Psalm 116:15.



Compare these descriptions:

Mother Theresa, a religious leader who lives in India, has spent her entire life caring for the hungry, sick, and dying people of that country. She has been able to solicit adequate financial assistance from many social and religious agencies in the world to help provide the care needed by these unfortunate persons. Her charisma has attracted a multitude of volunteers who have aided her in her ministry. She has always been extolled and complimented for her work, and has answered: "It is not me, but Christ in me that makes this all happen."

St. John of Otzoon, a spiritual shepherd of the Armenian Church, served as Catholicos from 717 to 728. His pontificate was during a turbulent time of oppression by the Arab overlords. Through his efforts and charismatic ways he developed a trusting relationship with the Moslem Emir and succeeded in securing religious freedom of worship and special status for the clergy and church properties. In 718 A.D., he convened a council in Dvin where a systematic structure of church canon law was devised. He fought against many groups who refused to be obedient to the faith of Christ's Church by writing essays defining clearly the truth as taught by Christ. He wrote many prayers and hymns. He was universally proclaimed a saint by our church in the 18th century.

How did both Mother Theresa and St. John of Otzoon respond to certain authorities to achieve the results of their requests?

The Saints and Prayer

After looking through the litanies in our Divine Liturgy book on pages 2a, 32a, 33a, 35a, list the saints we remember and beseech to intercede for us.



Let Us Become Like God — Asdvadzatsoom

There is hardly a person who lives on this earth that has not asked the question, "Why am I here?"

The answer is simple: We live on earth in order to live in heaven, in order to be "divinized," in order to *become one with God*. This process is called "deification." In Armenian we say *Asdvadzatsoom*.

This showing of God through our lives is indeed a saintly virtue which can truly name one as *saint*.

Read together from the author of the teaching of "deification," St. Athanasius.

As, then, he who desires to see God who by nature is invisible and not to be beheld, may yet perceive and know him through his works, so too let him who does not see Christ with his understanding at least consider him in his bodily works and test whether they be of man or God. If they be of man, then let him scoff; but if they be of God, let him not mock at things which are no fit subject for scorn, but rather let him recognize the fact and marvel that things divine have been revealed to us by such humble means, that through death deathlessness has been made known to us, and through the Incarnation of the Word the Mind whence all things proceed has been declared, and its Agent and Ordainer, the Word of God himself. He, indeed, assumed humanity that we might become God. He manifested himself by means

of a body in order that we might perceive the Mind of the unseen Father. He endured shame from men that we might inherit immortality. He himself was unhurt by this, for he is impassible and incorruptible; but by his own impassibility he kept and healed the suffering men on whose account he thus endured. In short, such and so many are the Savior's achievements that follow from his Incarnation. (*On the Incarnation of the Word, 54*)

Now that we know what we are (human) and whom we reflect (God), we can better understand the Church's teachings on saints.

How can we become partakers of the divine nature — "become God?"

What deeds and actions can each of us do to impart saintly qualities?

How does the church perpetuate the memories of great keepers of the faith "called to be saints?"

