

Saints Among Us

Dan Hardison

Is there anyone who does not recognize the name St. Patrick? Even if they do not realize St. Patrick was actually a person and not just a day on the calendar with an Irish connection. Most people can tell you that the statue of a bearded man in a monk's robe surrounded by birds and small animals so often found in gardens is that of St. Francis. And then there is St. Nick. Whether one attends church or not, everyone is familiar with a few of the saints – at least by name even if they do not know anything about the actual person.

Around the year 100 A.D., Christians began honoring those who had lived exceptional lives in their devotion to God. There are now over 10,000 named saints. We honor many of these saints as namesakes of our churches, in celebration with feast days, and in commemoration on November 1, All Saints Day. But it is important to remember that these men and women were much like you and I.

During the building of a garden by the boys at their Mission Church, a concrete statue of Mary with the infant Lord was placed behind the outdoor altar. One youth in his exuberance painted the words "I love Jesus" on the back of the statue in green paint. In telling the story, the Rev. George W. Jones said, "Sometimes patience has been at the point to break, but there has been no thought of forbearance ceasing to be a virtue. Most saints were once imps."

Saints started out living ordinary lives with the struggles and pitfalls that plague us all, but went on to live extraordinary lives. They dedicated themselves to God, unselfishly working for the good of those around them. We are all capable of saintly lives by following the example they set through their lives and their teaching. Wendy Dackson reminds us that, "Saints are people who live in the love of God, people who let the light of God's Son shine

through them. It doesn't matter if they are an Archbishop in England, a civil rights leader in the United States, or an elderly nun in India – or the woman from our church who brings flowers to our hospital room or meals to our homes. Or the man who works for a better education system or helps build low-income housing. All of them share a common vision of righteousness, mercy, and peace. The saints of God are among us. The saints of God are us."

St. Francis
Holy Trinity Episcopal Church -
Glendale Springs, North Carolina
Photo By Dan Hardison

