



To become a “saint” in the Catholic Church you have to meet three requirements. First, you have to be dead. Second, you have to be so well behaved that you have done more good than God required of you (not sure how that’s possible). Third, you have to perform at least two miracles.

Sounds difficult.

In the Bible, God says there is only one requirement for saint-hood: Faith in Jesus as your Savior from sin.

Our Bible readings for today are all about saints.

1

In our first reading we hear about, **“The Love of the Saints.”**

Hebrews 13:1-9 (EHV)

13 Continue to show brotherly love. ²Do not fail to show love to strangers, for by doing this some have welcomed angels without realizing it. ³Remember those in prison, as if you were fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated, as if you yourselves were also suffering bodily.

⁴Marriage is to be held in honor by all, and the marriage bed is to be kept undefiled, for God will judge sexually immoral people and adulterers. ⁵Keep your life free from the love of money, and be content with what you have. For God has said:

I will never leave you,
and I will never forsake you.

⁶So then we say with confidence:

The Lord is my helper, and I will not be afraid.
What will man do to me?

⁷Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Carefully consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. ⁸Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. ⁹Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. For it is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which are of no help to those who make them a way of life.



If God is love, and that’s what the Bible says—then it makes sense that he’s going to teach us how to love like he does.

Listen to what it says in **1 John 4:7-11...**

⁷“Dear friends, let us love one another, because love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸The one who does not love has not known God, because God is love. ⁹This is how God’s love for us was revealed: God has sent his only-begotten Son into the world so that we may live through him. ¹⁰This is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹Dear friends, if God loved us so much, we also should love one another” (1 John 4:7-11 EHV).

First God redeemed us by his love.

Now, God would teach us to love like he does.

But those are hard lessons for us to learn, because even though God has declared us “saints” through faith in Jesus, we still have a sinful nature inside us that fights against God.

This sinful nature doesn’t want us to change.

And so, we “saints” need encouragement from God, and a few tricks.

We’re to love each other with a “brotherly” love. That’s the first trick.

Family love is different than other friendships, isn’t it? It’s supposed to be. We might become best friends with someone in high school, but then drift apart as things change in our lives. Or we might have a falling out and decide to part ways with some friend forever.

But a family member? It’s harder to part ways with a family member.

God says, as you love one another, love each other like you’re family. For indeed, you are.

“...you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:26 EHV).

God directs us...

Love, like he’s your brother.

Love, like she’s your sister.



But it isn’t just our fellow Christians that God directs us to love. God also directs us to love STRANGERS through our hospitality to them.

To help us do this, God reminds us that there have been times when Christians have hosted strangers who turned out to be God’s own messengers!

Wouldn’t that change the way you put dinner on the table if you thought your guests just might be from heaven? **That’s another trick God gives us to help us love like we should.**

God says...

Show hospitality, like it’s God’s messengers you’re serving.

[PAUSE]



Jesus once summarized commandments 4-10 by saying,

“Love your neighbor as yourself” (**Mark 12:31** EHV).

Listen to what C.S. Lewis wrote about this verse...

“You are told to love your neighbor as yourself. How do you love yourself? When I look into my own mind, I find that I do not love myself by thinking myself a dear old chap or having affectionate feelings. I do not think that I love myself because I am particularly good, but just because I am myself and quite apart from my character. I might detest something which I have done. Nevertheless, I do not cease to love myself. In other words, that definite distinction that Christians make between hating sin and loving the sinner is one that you have been making in your own case since you were born. You dislike what you have done, but you don't cease to love yourself. You may even think that you ought to be hanged. You may even think that you ought to go to the Police and own up and be hanged. Love is not affectionate feeling, but a steady wish for the loved person's ultimate good as far as it can be obtained” (**C.S. Lewis**).

So, when Jesus says, “Love your neighbor as yourself” he’s really saying,

*“You know that way you’ve always wanted the best for yourself? **Start learning how to put that on other people.***

*Naturally you’ve always wanted the best for yourself, now **turn that outward and start wanting the best for the people outside yourself.***

That’s how to keep all those commandments about other people.”

So God says here in **Hebrews 13**,

“Remember those in prison, as if you were fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated, as if you yourselves were also suffering bodily” (**Hebrews 13:3** EHV).

Put yourself in their shoes. Feel what they feel. And then you’ll be able to see more clearly, what actions to take, to love them best.

[PAUSE]



Because we are both saints, and sinners, at the same time—sometimes we need the threat of God’s judgment to help us keep away from sin. **Verse 4** says...

“⁴Marriage is to be held in honor by all, and the marriage bed is to be kept undefiled, for God will judge sexually immoral people and adulterers” (**Hebrews 13:4** EHV).

The threat of God’s judgment is clear.



But God also calls us back to holy living by reminding us of his promises, like he does in **verse 5**...

“⁵Keep your life free from the love of money, and be content with what you have. For God has said:

I will never leave you,
and I will never forsake you.

⁶So then we say with confidence:

The Lord is my helper, and I will not be afraid.
What will man do to me?" (**Hebrews 13:5-6 EHV**).



If God promises not to leave me, I don't need to fear poverty.
He will provide. I don't need to put my trust in money. He is far more powerful than money.

[PAUSE]

In the Bible we find many bad examples to avoid, and many good examples to imitate.

But here in **Hebrews 13** God also tells us to look to the Christian examples who we've actually met. Parents perhaps. Or grandparents. Professors maybe. Old pastors. Or just old friends.

We're told to remember them.
To think about their lives.
To consider how their life turned out, and to imitate their faith.

Who comes to mind for you?

I'd suggest a little exercise this week. Take some time, sit down, away from distractions, and think about that Christian role model. Think about their life. Maybe call them, if you still can, and ask to know more. And ponder how to live more like they did.

[PAUSE]

In our day and age, I think Christians pray less. Why? Because we're all being endlessly entertained by our phones. What used to be space to think, or just be, is now filled with funny images or endless new methods to eat healthier, or live longer, or accomplish some other goal.

But you know what? When it comes to spiritual things,

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (**Hebrews 13:8 EHV**).

There's a lot of helpful stuff on the internet, but most of the Ted Talks, life-hacks, and Tik-Toks that we watch aren't going to make us wise for salvation. **Only Jesus does that.**

The collective knowledge of mankind with its computers and artificial intelligence will never come close to providing what Jesus has given us.

Forgiveness.
Healing. Love.
Eternal life with God.

Make that your goal. Not to live a comfortable, entertained life. Instead, learn to live a life of love, honoring the God who has rescued you.

WS 767:1-3

In our second reading we hear about, **“Heavenly Priorities vs. Earthly Priorities.”**

Luke 9:57-62 (EHV)

⁵⁷As they went on the way, a man said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” ⁵⁸Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.” ⁵⁹He said to another man, “Follow me!” But he said, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” ⁶⁰Jesus told him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” ⁶¹Another man also said, “I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say good-bye to those at my home.” ⁶²Jesus told him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”



Three men talk to Jesus here. And each exchange teaches us something about what it means to follow Jesus.

The first man is excited to follow Jesus.

But judging by Jesus’ response, this man might not have fully understood what following Jesus would mean.

If you read a book about Seal Team Six or some other military division, you could get excited about being part of such a team.

But if you actually enlisted, things would get real, real fast. You’d get a taste of what it actually means to train so hard it could kill you. You’d learn to understand cold. And hunger. And sleeplessness. Maybe there would be glory EVENTUALLY, but there’d be a whole lot of BOREDOM AND SUFFERING along the way.

What did this man think following Jesus would get him? Did he think that if he followed Jesus, he’d get something here on earth? Money? Power? Glory?

Jesus helps him understand. He says, *“I don’t even have a home to rest in here on earth! The foxes do. The birds do. But not the Son of Man.”*

Following Jesus wasn’t an investment that would cash out here on earth.

Like Jesus told Pontius Pilate,

“My kingdom is not of this world” (**John 18:36 EHV**).

The sure hope that Jesus provides is a life after this one, lived in the presence of God.

[PAUSE]

The second man apparently knew Jesus’ message well enough. Jesus calls him to follow. And to proclaim the message of salvation to others.

But this man has apparently just received word that his father had died. And he wishes to go see about burying him first.

At that time and place, burial typically happened right away. On the same day that a person died. Or at least by the following day.

It’s not like this was going to take a long time.

But Jesus' response shows that this man didn't understand the precious nature of what he had been called to do.

Think about it like this....

A man is mowing his lawn. His name's Joe. He's almost done, when his neighbor bursts into his yard, panting like he's just been sprinting. And he says, "Joe! I know you're not going to believe me, but BELIEVE ME! Just down the road a door opened up—to heaven. And if you step through now, you get to live with God forever!"

And Joe says, "Wow! That's amazing!! I'm definitely coming with you. But, give me a few minutes. I've only got a few more passes and the lawn will be all finished."

The man Jesus called to follow, acted like Joe.

His father was gone. He couldn't do anything to help his soul anymore. But he could help others to know their Savior.

He needed to learn that following Jesus would mean a sense of URGENCY to proclaim the message of the kingdom.

[PAUSE]

The third man is similar. He doesn't have a dead father to bury, he has family to say good-bye to.

It won't take long Jesus. I'll be coming along real quick here, but first...

But first...

Those words betray what this man would **PUT first**.

And Jesus says,

"No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God" (**Luke 9:62** EHV).

The picture that Jesus paints is this. This is a person who has never plowed before. He's putting his hand to the plow for the first time. And immediately he makes a joke of himself by attempting to plow in one direction, while staring off in opposite direction!

It doesn't even matter what he's looking at! Just the fact that he's looking backward is enough. He can't ever learn how to plow like this.

Following Jesus means a new focus. ONE priority that bumps everything else aside. WHAT MY SAVIOR WANTS, that's what I want.

The Apostle Paul wrote about this. He said...

"...there is one thing I do: Forgetting the things that are behind and straining toward the things that are ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal, for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (**Philippians 3:13-14** EHV).



To follow Jesus means letting go of earthly things.

It means a sense of urgency to speak the Gospel.

It means echoing his prayer, saying, “Not my will, Lord, but yours be done.”

TLH 407:1-3

3

In our third reading we hear, “**The Righteous and the Wicked Compared.**”

Proverbs 24:13-20 (EHV)

¹³My son, eat honey, because it is good. Flowing honey is sweet on your palate. ¹⁴Know also that wisdom is sweet for your soul. If you find it, then there is a future for you, and your hope will never be cut off. ¹⁵Do not be like the wicked who attack the home of the righteous. Do not destroy his resting place, ¹⁶because a righteous person may fall seven times, but he will get up, while wicked people will stumble into misfortune. ¹⁷Do not be happy when your enemy falls. Do not let your heart celebrate when he stumbles. ¹⁸If you do, the LORD will see it and consider it evil, and he will turn his anger away from him. ¹⁹Do not fret about evildoers. Do not be jealous of wicked people, ²⁰because an evil person has no future. The lamp of the wicked will be put out.



Here Solomon compares the Righteous and the Wicked.

And the first thing we see is obvious:

- A Wicked person, does wicked things.
- A Righteous person, does righteous things.

The Wicked attack the innocent. Why would you do that?

The wicked are happy when their enemy falls down. They laugh and celebrate when bad things happen to the people they don't like.

But the wicked have no future.

In time, God will snuff them out.

Now, when we see the wicked in the world it might seem like they're happy. Maybe they have money, or fame. Maybe it seems like they have everything. And we're tempted to envy them.

But God says, “Don't envy them. They have no future.”

In **Ecclesiastes 2** Solomon writes,

“²⁶To the person who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God” (Ecclesiastes 2:26a NIV84).



Of course, when Solomon compares the “Righteous” and the “Wicked” he’s really comparing those who trust in the LORD, and those who don’t.

God is the source of all goodness, so it makes sense that if you’re connected to God by faith, his goodness is going to flow into you.

Like Jesus said,

“I am the Vine, you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him is the one who bears much fruit, because without me you can do nothing” (**John 15:5 EHV**).

The vine takes the nutrients from the ground and sends them to the branches. And then through the branches the vine creates good things.

Things like Solomon mentions here...

The Righteous don’t attack the innocent.

The Righteous seek wisdom.

The Righteous are content with what God gives them.

The Righteous seek to do good things.

[PAUSE]



Of course, sometimes as we hear God speaking to us through his word, he shows us stuff in our hearts that shouldn’t be there.

As we read from Proverbs, maybe you thought, “Well, sometimes I do smile when people I don’t like stumble.”

And that’s why Solomon is teaching his son. His son needs to LEARN how to live God’s way. And we need the SAME lessons.

Thankfully, all along this journey of learning, God provides forgiveness for all our sinful failures—through his Son.

[PAUSE]

You know, in a lot of ways, the Wicked and the Righteous are different. But Solomon talks about one way that they are the same. **They both have problems.**

But when the Righteous fall down, God is there to stand him back up again.

Like it says in **Isaiah 40**,

“Those who wait for the LORD will receive new strength.

They will lift up their wings and soar like eagles.

They will run and not become weary.

They will walk and not become tired” (**Isaiah 40:31 EHV**).

Amen.