



## Catholic Church and School

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Christianity teaches that there are only two paths. One that leads to friendship with God forever and one that leads to separation from God forever. The choice is ours.

Saints are people who choose to live as friends of God forever. The saints we celebrate today are nothing more than people who chose to live as friends of God on earth so much that we have no reason to doubt that they are now God's friends forever.

There are some officially recognized saints by the Church: people whose lives have been verified to be a friend of God. Some saints and their special causes are well known like St. Anthony and finding lost things, while others less well known like St. Anderlecht and the protection of outhouses.

There are too many saints to count. In fact, I could not find an exact number because some saints are honored only in particular local areas of the Church. There are somewhere over 10,000 officially recognized saints in the Church and on its yearly calendar, but the truth is that there are just too many to count.

That is what the first reading is telling us with the 144,000. It would be too hard for a person to count to 144,000. I'd probably start getting lost after about 100 or so. 144,000 means that there are "too many to count". There are many more saints that we don't officially recognize than ones that we do. There are way too many saints to put into the Church calendar with only 365 days available so all the saints, all the friends of God, are recognized today on All Saints Day.

The saints were all what we are now: living, breathing human beings.

The saints were not perfect human beings:

- St. Anthony de Padua suffered from poor health and appeared sickly to people around him.
- St. Vincent de Paul had a very bad temper.
- St. Martin de Porres was not very well liked.

The saints are what we want to become: friends of God. Saints are meant to translate for us; they speak our language. Saints are like God doing "show and tell." It is easier to understand when we can see someone doing something. The saints help translate for us teachings like the beatitudes, which are ways of happiness and friendship with God:

### Beatitudes

When we read blessed are the "poor in spirit" we may wonder "what that means". St. Anthony of Padua translates "poor in spirit" to be "poor health", and he showed us that happiness comes from focusing on others rather than feeling sorry for ourselves. When we read blessed are those "who hunger and thirst for righteousness" we may wonder "what that means". St. Vincent de Paul translates "righteousness" as controlling

his very bad temper, with the help of God, and he showed us that his happiness came from concern for the poor and hungry. When we read blessed are the "peacemakers" we may wonder "what that means". St. Martin de Porres translates "peacemaker" into not fighting back when being attacked, and he showed us that his happiness came from being a prayerful friend of God.

Saints show and tell us what it means to live Beatitudes that Jesus preaches in the Gospel and how to become friends of God.

Who do you want to become? How do you and I become friends of God? Like all things, we learn from others and follow the example of others. Saints are meant to inspire us. Who inspires you?

If I ask you who your favorite saint is do you have a ready answer? If so, have you studied the life of that saint? If I ask you who your favorite movie star or singer or sports athlete is do you have a ready answer? Do you have an answer more ready than your favorite saint? Is your favorite movie star or singer or sports athlete a friend of God?

If you wanted to become the best quarterback in the world who would inspire you? Peyton Manning or people playing touch football in the local park? If you want to be the best at something you follow the example of someone who has set the best example for you. The saints have set the best examples to inspire us to become friends of God.

This morning our 4th Graders dressed like their favorite saints. Now I'm not suggesting that you need to make a costume for your favorite saint, but I strongly encourage you to start thinking of a favorite saint and reading about that saint as a means to inspire you to be the best friend of God that you can be. Pick a saint associated with your name or a special interest or cause that you may have. Start thinking of a favorite saint right now...I may be asking for your favorite saint if I meet you after Mass!

*Fr. David Ruppert at St. Anthony de Padua Church, South Bend, Indiana  
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