

The Saints: Wild Cast of Characters

If you want to be a saint, be aware of the “sort” you will be hanging out with—they seem to have a certain **wild** streak. *Free and untamed* (seemingly undomesticated by culture’s systems and life-styles; *different and odd* (as in “The truth will set you free but first it will make you odd”); *undaunted and unruly* (caring more for spirit than law: un-rule-y).

This cast of characters, this “Communion of Saints,” engage boldly in life’s great Drama. The “acts” and “conflicts” are real. The ending matters. The plot is God.

The characters (we all know people who are “characters”) are a little “off” the mainstream. Peter jumped out of the boat believing he could walk on water. Dorothy Day gave her entire life to the “undeserving poor.” Women of Asia stood before bulldozers to protect the trees. The Amish forgave the murderer of one of their children. We take pleasure in their boldness and envy their freedom. Who are these people? They are not “listening to their own drummer,” but to the great Drummer, God. That same heart-beat drumming is going on in each of us, however faint we may think it to be.

What is your “H-W.Q.”? (Holy-Wildness Quotient)?

Do you enjoy the “freedom of the children of God”?

Can you be a “fool for Christ”?

Can you be whole-hearted in your mysticism, social justice, care for the poor?

Will you, with the Spirit’s free grace, be a “friend of God, and prophets”?

Claiming your place in the wild cast of characters

In an ecumenical organization we periodically invited people to gatherings we named “*The Called and Crazy*.” To qualify you had to bring a story of how you were considered by neighbors or colleagues or friends to be “crazy” because of some things you chose to do (grow or eat “organic”, teach religion, publicly witness for peace, study world religions, reserve private time each day for prayer, have family suppers together, welcome their gay son’s partner, go away on retreats, volunteer at a homeless shelter, have an electric car, campaign for a peace candidate...). To others these were crazy (useless, misguided, old-fashioned, risky, too holy). But for the tellers—they felt “called.”

This is the story of all the saints, a certain boldness and abandon, and a lot of love. The heartbeat of God in creation, scripture, the people around us and the cries of the world are the drumming we listen to. We fall in step with the vast company, the cloud of witnesses, the saints of old and new.

Surrounded by the brave and believing, the generous and committed, the called and crazy, we are on our way: free in the grace of God, today’s communion of saints.

Send reader responses to: mbrownop@aol.com

Scroll down for book and music tips.

Recommended Books and Music

You can find these in the retreat center bookstore

All Saints: Daily Reflections on Saints, Prophets, and Witnesses for Our Time,

Robert Ellsberg, 1977

There is a saint for every day of the year, from Mary Magdalen to Mother Teresa, from Moses to Gandhi, from a Zen monk to a Quaker artist, from a desert hermit to a mystic of the Holocaust. This outstanding treasury combines traditional saints with other spiritual giants whose lives speak of holiness for our time. Joan Chittister says, "This book should be in every home, on every shelf, in every library. It raises the standard of life."

Friends of God and Prophets: A Feminist Theological Reading of the Communion of Saints, Elizabeth A. Johnson 1999

This is a scholarly, readable, stimulating book that illustrates the historical tradition of the Communion of Saints and opens it up for our times with great relevance and inclusivity. This living symbol "not only relates disparate cultural groups around the world at any one time, and women with men, and the most socially marginalized with the powerful, all within an egalitarian community of grace, but also the living with the dead and the yet to be born, all seekers of the divine."

Not in our bookstore but in most libraries and bookstores

Traveling Mercies; Plan B; Grace Eventually, Anne Lamott

Anne Lamott is an unusual contemporary writer who has "eyes to see" the workings of God in the everyday anxious episodes of her hectic life—and is unafraid to tell about it. She is a single-parent mom, a believer, collector of "best friends," comic, and five-star worrier. She will tell you about the death of a friend and the grief afterward. She will tell you "why I make Sam go to church." She will have you laughing and being deeply moved within the same paragraph. Mostly she will tell you about need and prayer, and you will watch her inner shift as she moves from frantic petition to inner readiness to catch grace in whatever surprising way it comes.

Our bookstore music picks--CD's for children

Alphabet Affirmations (ages 3-7). **Peace in Our Land** (ages 5-10).

Dream a World (ages 6-106!). Kids Creative Classics.

These three children's CD's have been big sellers in our bookstore. They are fun and upbeat with positive values tools for young people. They are recommended by both parents and teachers and have won important awards. The artists, Bunny Hull, Synthia Saint James, and Elayn J. Taylor do a great job of creating inspiring music which will help kids see the good in themselves, in life, and in our world. The songs are easy to sing and dance along with. The CD's come with full activity booklets that go with the music. Even so, they are not expensive. These would be perfect Christmas gifts for your little ones at home or in the classroom.

You can call the Retreat Center Bookstore and/or come and browse for yourself.
262-639-4100

