

Jesus makes the church holy, transforms sinners into saints, pope says

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While it is true that the church is made up of sinners, it is also true that Christ has made the church holy and he can make sinners holy, too, Pope Francis said.

"No one can sanctify themselves," the pope said May 9 during his early morning Mass; "there is no class for becoming a saint."

"Holiness is a gift Jesus gives the church, and so that we can see this, he chooses certain people in whom we can clearly see his sanctifying work," Pope Francis said during the Mass in his residence, the *Domus Sanctae Marthae*.

How can the church "be holy if we belong to it? We are all sinners," the pope asked during his homily. The church "is the bride of Christ and he loves her, he sanctifies her, he sanctifies her every day with the eucharistic sacrifice because he loves her so much."

And, he said, "we are sinners, but in a church that is holy. And we, too, are sanctified by belonging to the church. We are children of the church and mother church sanctifies us with her love and the sacraments."

Pointing to a whole list of Bible characters who became saints -- including Mary Magdalene, Matthew and Paul -- the pope said the one thing they had in common was their willingness to become less important and accept humiliation so that Christ's importance would shine.

"The difference between heroes and saints is witness, the imitation of Jesus Christ, following the path of Jesus Christ," which was the cross, he said. Many of the saints, he added, finish their lives in great humility. "Think of the last days of St. John Paul II. We all saw this."

The only path to holiness, he said, is the path of the cross.

"If we travel this path, we will give witness to Jesus Christ who loves us so much," the pope said, "and we will give witness that, although we are sinners, the church is holy."

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