

FROM THE PASTOR'S OFFICE: Elizabeth of Hungary, Renewer of Society



This month we celebrate All Saints' Sunday on November 4th, and I suspect you may be aware by now that I have a healthy respect and fascination for the saints. The day of All Saints' is actually November 1st; however, each year 'the church' celebrates it on the first Sunday in November. On this day, I typically spend at least some part of the sermon trying to convince the congregation, yet again, that we all are indeed **the saints**.

I am not sure why it seems so difficult. Whenever we confess our faith in the words of the Apostles' Creed, we include the affirmation: "I believe in the communion of saints."

So what do we mean when we say that we are the saints?

According to the New Testament, the saints are not a select group of "perfect" persons with haloes around their heads. They are simply the members of the Christian fellowship, women and men **who live by faith in Jesus Christ and in whose lives the Holy Spirit is at work**. In this tradition, the New English Bible does not even use the word "saints", but replaces it with the term "God's people."

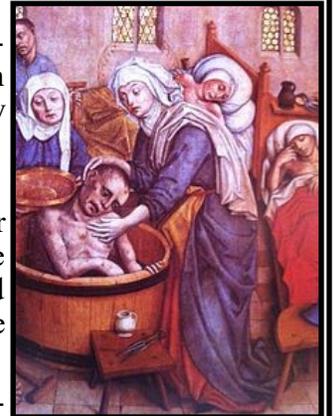
Perhaps that is one of the reasons we pause every year to remind ourselves that we are the saints. We know we are far from perfect, and it is good to be reminded that we have work to do.

As you know, there are other times during the church year that we pause to commemorate specific saints ... those men and women who have a story to tell that we might learn from or be encouraged by. This year I am going to look for women whose story inspires, starting with Elizabeth of Hungary.

According to Gail Ramshaw, in *More Days for Praise*:

"Princess Elizabeth of Hungary, refusing a monarchical lifestyle, was renowned for her simplicity of dress, her generous contributions to the poor, and her care for the sick. She accepted what has been judged excessively harsh spiritual direction from her priest, and she was rejected by the royal family for her asceticism and her identification with the poor."

It is reported that Elizabeth was married at age 14, and widowed at 20. She met her husband Ludwig on a hunting party; he was never troubled by her charity and always supported it. After his death, she was forced to send her children away; she regained her dowry, using the money to build a hospital where she herself served the sick. Elizabeth took vows similar to those of nuns, which included celibacy, even though family wished her to remarry. Elizabeth, however, remained faithful to her vows, threatening to cut off her nose so that no man would find her attractive enough to marry. She became a symbol of Christian charity after her death at the age of 24. In art, she is often shown carrying a basket of bread for the poor or tending the sick in hospitals.



"I saw the heavens open and my Lord sweet Jesus leaned toward me, consoling me about the various afflictions and tribulations that surrounded me. While I gazed at him, I was delighted and I laughed. but when he turned his face away, as if about to leave, I began to cry. He was merciful to me and again turned his most serene face toward me, saying, 'If you want to be with me, then I will be with you.' And I said, 'Lord, you want to be with me and I want to be with you and never do I want to be apart from you.'" -- Elizabeth of Hungary

In celebration of the saints this month, perhaps you too can take time to learn from one of the saints that surround on Sunday morning. Strike up a conversation. Pause for coffee and ask about someone's life...ask what inspires them? What do they hold dear? What life lessons do they live by?

May the sharing of your stories inspire joy!! *Pastor Karen*

+