

# 'You're a Saint'

There is so much goodness in the average person that I'm always tempted to say "you're a saint and you don't know it," a remark that almost always produces embarrassed laughter and a sharp denial. People don't think of themselves as saints, especially those who truly are.



Leon Bloy wrote, "the greatest sadness is not to be a saint" and he was right. But this kind of sadness is not a bad thing. We can live with it, and even put it to work for us. Think about it: when you are sad about disappointing God it's a sure sign that you are deeply in love with Him. This is a holy sadness which can purify your soul. It leads to a passionate desire to be more perfectly united with your Maker.

Sooner or later the fire of God's love will turn your soul to flame. St. Augustine wrote: "One loving Spirit sets another loving spirit on fire." Augustine knew from experience that the fire of God's love eventually consumes the beloved. Therefore, when you find yourself overwhelmed by sadness, guilt or remorse, try to remember that God's life is a furnace of Unchanging Love and try to remain as quiet as possible. Accept your bad feelings and wait for them to pass. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.

Evelyn Underhill (1875-1941), an expert in mysticism wrote: "Quietly dealing with one's own uncontrolled thoughts and desires is infinitely more humbling than any sort of deliberate austerity (like fasting) which only makes one feel one has done something." Underhill said that

most of your transgressions which trigger feelings of sadness are, in her words, "more temperamental sufferings than sins; and because they are a form of suffering you can always accept them and add them to the cross. The root principle is that God is all that matters in religion and because of this, there is never anything to be afraid of, in spite of your illusions to the contrary. A Christian can always do something with suffering. Simply offer it up to God."

The saints offered their sufferings in many ways. They believed that we can ransom someone from danger or misery simply by offering our sufferings to God in their behalf. The highest goal is the cheerful acceptance of suffering as a sign of God's permissive will. Few can attain that level of acquiescence. "If this is my cross, Lord, I shall bear it. Please give me the courage to be brave and not complain."

In times of sadness it's a good idea to imitate the Arab in a sand storm; lie down and remain motionless until the storm passes. A storm cannot be resisted, so you are wise to wait. Whether in a storm of pain or in a sunburst of elation, remain quiet, and turn to God. In the end all will be well.

Patience is the sign of holiness. It's never easy to be patient. Sometimes it can be a crucifixion. In either case God is never absent. The Holy Spirit uses both our agony and our ecstasy to come closer to us. Through it all, He remains Unchanging Love.

*[For a free copy of the Christopher News Note, Patience, write to The Christophers, 12 E. 48th St., New York, N.Y. 10017.]*