

transforming generosity

'I Sing a Song of the Saints of God'

ALL SAINTS DAY

BY MARY M. MACGREGOR



Thursday mornings in my childhood were very special. That was the time my elementary day school class at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Houston would go to chapel. This routine that lasted for seven years of my life shaped my young faith. Participating in this child-centric worship filled my heart with joy. We would exuberantly sing as our recessional the classic children's hymn, "I Sing a Song of the Saints of God." I doubt that the mother of three young children and wife of an Anglican priest who wrote this simple hymn had any idea how popular it would become, even jumping the Atlantic to become a favorite hymn of countless Episcopalians. Lesbia Scott wrote this memorable hymn in 1929 and specifically created it for All Saints Day. The lyrics stress that saints not only lived in the past but live and work today as people go about their everyday lives. "You can meet them in school, or in lanes or at sea, in a church or in trains, or in shops, or at tea. For the saints of God are just folks like me and I want to be one too."

As I sat in that chapel as a little girl my image of saints flowed through the brilliant stained glass windows that adorned St. Stephen's. I would hear the Bible stories of the disciples who became saints and grew to understand their devotion to God and the sacrifices they made. Yet this simple song reminded me that everyday people could end up being saints too. As I grew older and committed my life as a follower of Jesus, it became easier for me to see the everyday saints I encountered and the saints who have played significant roles in my life. They do share some similar characteristics: a remarkable devotion to God and, to a person, exemplary sacrifice in their lives and ministries. I always see Christ in them. Sometimes I experience a glimpse of a saintly moment. Sometimes I see years and years of an unbelievable witness to their love for God, giving of themselves while asking nothing in return. Sometimes I observe an extraordinary act of courage for God's sake. And I have lost so many of them. Whether through moving far away, or the drift that can happen in a friendship over time, or losing them to death as they meet Jesus face to face, I see them as saints.

Who are the everyday saints in your life? As we set aside November 1 as a day to remember the saints of old or the saints we actively encounter in our everyday lives, let us thank God that they all show us a glimpse of how the Holy Spirit can work in and through us, simple folks just like you and me.

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For reflection ...

- ❖ Who are the everyday saints in your life?
- ❖ What makes them saints for you?

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