

**“Ordinary Moments, Extraordinary Lives” Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16 November 6, 2011**  
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Sainthood is a recognition of one’s unique divinity brought to bear in the world and in a special way on the hearts of individuals. Today, on this All Saints Day, I’ve asked Lisa Kopanke & David Mann to tell the story of one of their saints. I invite Lisa to come up and share followed by David.

(Lisa and David tell their stories.)

The passage in Hebrews tells the stories of heroes of our faith, some of whom did extraordinary acts, at least as we look back on how their lives unfolded. But in the broad sense of the word, saints are also those whose lives string ordinary moments together and live them with great intention, and it is these saints that I want to emphasize today.

Most of us have lives filled with ordinary moments. What can we do to channel the divine so that perhaps we might shine just a glimpse of saintliness into the world?

We can start at the beginning which is often the hardest part of a task. I’ve been reading this book by John O’Donohue, *To Bless the Space Between Us*. He tells the story of a neighbor who set out to build a new home. He had just stripped the sod off the field to begin digging out the foundation when an old man from the village happened to come by.

“He blessed the work and said, ‘You have the worst of it behind you now.’ My neighbor laughed and said, ‘But I have only just begun.’ The old man said, ‘That’s what I mean. You have begun; and to make a real beginning is the most difficult act.’ There is an old Irish proverb that says, ‘A good beginning is half the work.’” (p.3).

I can testify to how difficult beginnings are. Often by Sunday night I am dreading having to begin again another sermon. Will I have anything worth listening to? What do people need to hear? What does God want me to say? Often anxiety sets in and I think to myself that all my sermons are sounding the same. The saints described in Hebrews began a task that often required them to take a risk. We might say these kinds of beginnings take it courage or perhaps it means to feel the fear and do it anyway.

In process theology we speak of many beginnings; each moment has a beginning that is influenced by the past, the present, and by God. Inherent in each moment is a choice to be and become. And saints choose life. This doesn’t mean that death doesn’t come, but even if they lose their lives (as many martyred saints did), they have chosen life and even death does not overcome them.

Finally, saints live lives of intention. Their ordinary moments are moments focused with purpose to which ones all is given. These are probably not multitasked moments of texting while walking or driving.

Saints are people who notice; they notice suffering; they notice injustice; these people are not good at compartmentalizing and ignoring the call God places on their hearts. They have developed the habit of bringing their full attention to each ordinary moment and all these ordinary moments strung throughout a lifetime become beautiful expressions of the Divine.

Most of us will never be declared saints except perhaps by one or two people who especially love and admire us. But we can do these three things: We can begin. We can choose to do those things that give us life. And we can practice living with intention. I would like to read one of John Donohue’s short blessings; this one is entitled “For a New Beginning”:

In out-of-the-way places of the heart,  
Where your thoughts never think to wander,  
This beginning has been quietly forming,  
Waiting until you were ready to emerge.

For a long time it has watched your desire,  
Feeling the emptiness growing inside you,  
Noticing how you willed yourself on,  
Still unable to leave what you had outgrown.

It watched you play with the seduction of safety  
And the gray promises that sameness whispered,  
Heard the waves of turmoil rise and relent,  
Wondered would you always live like this.

Then the delight, when your courage kindled,  
And out you stepped onto new ground,  
Your eyes young again with energy and dream,  
A path of plentitude opening before you.

Though your destination is not yet clear  
You can trust the promise of this opening;  
Unfurl yourself into the grace of beginning  
That is at one with your life's desire.

Awaken your spirit to adventure;  
Hold nothing back learn to find ease in risk;  
Soon you will be home in a new rhythm,  
For your soul senses the world that awaits you.