

***“Simul iustus et Peccator,” -- Simultaneously Saint & Sinner***

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(So then) with my mind I am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin." Romans 7:25b

This is what's referred to as St. Paul's 'inner conflict' and, for us Lutherans, it is highlighted by Martin Luther as "Simul iustus et Peccator," which means simultaneously saint and sinner. It is such a Lutheran thing that OldLutheran.com sells t-shirts, hoodies, and other items with a graphic that, depicts this saying, and depending on who's looking, says either "saint" or "sinner." You might have seen it at a youth gathering or see one of our youth (or me) wearing it.

One day when I was wearing my Sinner/Saint t-shirt someone asked me what it meant. "Well it depends on your perspective," I said. "From one perspective it says 'Saint' but from another it says 'Sinner'." When you are wearing the shirt, from your perspective it reads "sinner," and from someone else's perspective it reads "saint." As I reflected on this design I noticed something. For me this t-shirt reflects how often in life it can feel like other people see us as "saints" or they only seem to see us possessing "saintly" qualities. On the other hand, we often see only our flaws, mistakes and sins, and stew on those. Thus seeing ourselves as "sinners."

I often struggle with this myself. At times, it can be hard to see the saints that we are inside. To see ourselves through the eyes and the love of God. But it is an important part of who we are to see the "saint" within ourselves. It can be challenging and takes practice to recognize the "saintly" qualities within ourselves, but it is a gift to be able to see and name our gifts.

The flip side of this "simultaneously saint and sinner" conversation is that sometimes there are those we often label as sinners. Those who it is hard for us to see the "saintly" qualities in, because of how our society and systems have pushed them to the side and labeled them for us. And just like it is important for use to see and recognize the "saint" in ourselves it is equally important that we see the "saint" within the other.

May we all grow in our recognition of the fact that we are all simultaneously "saints" and "sinners" and the challenge and gift that that is.

Lord, please help us to see you in ourselves so that we may see the saint that we are even when we feel completely a sinner. And let us also see you in others, so we are able to see the saint in them.  
Amen.

Blessings,  
Pr. Sara