

FIRST AND CENTER

Pastor's Blog

November 1, 2017 ~ All Saints Day

In Medieval times, when veneration of the Saints flourished, the stories of their lives were taught so that others could learn from them and grow to live like them. The stories told of honor, faith, sacrifice, generosity, and love, the kind of character traits Christians should exhibit. As a much later hymn put it, *"There's not any reason, no not the least, why I shouldn't be one, too!"*



While pondering the saints who formed my faith today, I read on Facebook the story of a young woman at the University of Hartford, and couldn't help but wonder whose stories shaped her character. As a freshman, this white young woman was assigned a black roommate. Apparently, their racial diversity proved so abhorrent to her that she secretly put her own bodily fluids of all kinds on her roommate's toothbrush and other belongings, resulting in puzzling illnesses. The black young woman discovered what had been going on through her white roommate's Instagram posts. Her roommate has been arrested and charged with misdemeanors. She has left the University.

As a parent of college age children, I wonder what the parents of the perpetrator of such crimes think? I wonder what influences formed this woman, such that she could imagine, let alone carry out, such assaults? What depth of hate has been shaped in a 19-year-old, and by whom, to result in this? And if anyone says the words "mentally ill" instead of "racist," I will puke.

Where does it stop? How does it stop? How am I, as a white woman, complicit in a society that grows so much hate? I don't know all the answers. But I know that we in the church need to be asking these questions of one another and engaging in more direct and uncomfortable conversations about such things. We need to double down on teaching our children and youth of all races both how to call out such injustice, and not to engage in any way in behavior that creates such injustice on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity, *or any other perceived "difference."* In the current climate in our country, where this sort of behavior is publicly deemed acceptable in some circles, our need to keep this conversation alive is crucial. Stay tuned over the next few months for opportunities for us at Center Church to engage these issues, and make an effort to participate, but also to think about your own place in our society today.

~ Rev. Shelly Stackhouse,
Pastor