Notes for Saints at the River 4/22/10
What are the themes of the novel?
   How do I figure that out?
You notice motifs ideas, events, sayings, etc. that repeat throughout the book.
   • Conflict
      o Environmentalists vs. humanists
      o Locals vs. outsiders
      o Inner conflict:
         ▪ Mag
            • guilt
         ▪ Allen
            • guilt
         ▪ Mag’s dad
            • guilt
         ▪ Luke
            • Loving ONLY nature and hating MAN
            • guilt
         ▪ Ruth’s mom
            • Guilt
         ▪ Ronny
            • Guilt

Many characters have inner conflicts dealing with guilt.
   • Wrongdoing-confession-forgiveness-reconciliation
   • OR REDEMPTION

If we have lost things, lost relationships, then we need to redeem them. How do we do that? Crucifixion:
If we have a Cross then we have a Crucifixion.
If we have a Crucifixion, then we have to have:
Original sin=Curiosity
Eve=Ruth
Jesus=Christ-figure: someone who sacrifices himself for the greater good—Randy sacrifices himself to save Ruth—he redeems her body and soul
Cross=Ellen
Judas=Maggie
30 pcs of silver=fame and possibly fortune gained from the picture
Disciples=the locals
Tomb=undercut where Ruth’s body
Stone=hydraulic
Resurrection:
   Earthquake=dynamite
   Stone rolled away=hydraulic’s being disrupted by the concussion created by the dynamite
   Resurrection=Release of bodies

All these daddies have broken relationships with their children and they have guilt. They try their hardest to make it right, but they can’t. The only one who can make it right is THE GOOD FATHER—Randy.
This is significant because man in the Old Testament tried to make scarifies to atone for sin, and to follow The Law in order to avoid sin, but they couldn’t which is why we need the New Testament sacrifice, the perfect sacrifice, Christ’s Crucifixion.

SO WHAT????What is Ron Rash trying to tell us about relationships and redemption through this Biblical allusion? Leave space.
   Why couldn’t we let Ronny go in?
      Because then there would be no daddy-figure left to help take care of that family.
   Why did Randy have to die?
      To complete the redemption cycle.
   Why couldn’t we wait for summer to get the body out?
Is Mag’s relationship with her father fixed because Ruth dies in the river?

Motifs: drowning; kayaking; water things: rapids; hydraulic; wading; diving; dam; baptism of Randy as a child;
Author’s Craft: How does an author create suspense?: Flashbacks help create suspense by controlling the revelation of information, thereby keeping the reader reading to find out why things happen.

Giving the hero a “devil and the deep blue sea” choice to make (“stuck between a rock and a hard place”). Think Spiderman / Superman / Batman—When they choose between saving their love or a bus full of kids.

Significance of title:
what’s a saint? A Christian believer
Why are there saints at the river? Baptism
Baptism is a physical symbol of the inner cleansing via the acceptance of God’s Grace.
Why does everyone need grace? Original sin
Through Eve’s (Adam’s) sin, man and nature both were introduced to what? Death
What is the character flaw (tragic flaw) that causes Eve’s downfall? Curiosity—wanting to “be in two states at the same time” Ruth/SC & GA; physical and spiritual/Eve/innocence & experience

Significance of the structure of the book?
Textual observation:
Two parts; both have special pages in the beg. dealing with a girl engaging in a crisis that deals with water and curiosity

Interpretation:
Old and New Testaments; female dealing with curiosity that leads to death (Eve/Ruth/Maggie & Ben)

How do we regain what we have lost?
By making peace with?
We accept Christ’s sacrifice; He dies as punishment for man’s sins thereby redeeming that relationship.

The purpose of Rash’s use of Biblical allusion is not evangelistic in nature. He is writing about App. people for App. people and so capitalizes upon allusions that they would be familiar with; like St. Patrick did when he attempted to explain the concept of the Trinity to a pantheistic society by using their three-leaved clover, and the concept of gaining eternal life via the Crucifixion by superimposing a pagan symbol for eternity, a circle, onto a Cross—thus creating the Celtic cross. This analogy between St. Patrick and Rash’s use of symbolism is especially apt due to the fact that both were dealing with descendants of Celts: the Gaels of ancient Ireland and the Appalachian Scots-Irish.

The reason Rash employs allusions to the Crucifixion is to forward his theme of redemption. Only Rash is emphasizing the redemption of human relationships and the redemption of the self rather than the reconciliation of God and man. Rash equates the redemption of human relationships, including man’s relationship to nature and the redemption of the self, to God’s redemption of His relationship to man to show the magnitude of relationships and the individual, which connects to the Romantic’s view of the essential interconnectedness of the universe and the value of the individual.

An in-progress revision of the above:
- The purpose of Rash’s use of Biblical allusion is not evangelistic in nature. He is writing about App. people for App. people and so capitalizes upon allusions that they would be familiar with; like St. Patrick did when he attempted to explain the concept of the Trinity to a pantheistic society by using their three-leaved clover, and the concept of gaining eternal life via the Crucifixion by superimposing a pagan symbol for eternity, a circle, onto a Cross—thus creating the Celtic cross. This analogy between St. Patrick and Rash’s use of symbolism is especially apt
due to the fact that both were dealing with descendants of Celts: the Gaels of ancient Ireland and the Appalachian Scots-Irish.

The reason Rash employs allusions to the Crucifixion is to forward his theme of redemption. Only instead of emphasizing the reconciliation of God and man, Rash emphasizes the redemption of human relationships, including man’s relationship to nature, and the redemption of the self. Rash implies the sacredness of such redemptions to illustrate the importance of relationships and the individual, which connects to the Romantic’s view of the essential interconnectedness of the universe and the value of the individual.