

Connecting With the Sunday Readings

All Saints Day

One of the oldest and most personal Traditions in the Church is the veneration and acknowledgment of saints. Saints are holy people who have died and live now in heaven. The saints we are most familiar with are the ones we name our parishes and our children after, or the ones we pray to for special intentions, such as Saint Anthony to help us find something, or Saint Joseph for a happy death. We believe that saints intercede for us before God.

Some saints appear as slightly eccentric and spirited individuals who allow God's Spirit to move them to deeds that express deep holiness and courageous resolve while doing God's work. Many gave their lives for the faith. Some left their homes and families to bring the Gospel message and God's care to distant lands. But many saints never make it on the official Church list of saints. They are not officially recognized (canonized) by the Church and remain anonymous. They are people who led faithful and quiet lives of love and service to God and others. We believe they are in heaven. These are the saints we recognize today. Some of the saints we celebrate on this All Saints Day are people we have known in our lifetime who have gone before us to heaven. We look forward to the day when we will have one glorious reunion with them in heaven.

A Gospel Word for the Home Matthew 5:1-12a

Some like to call the Beatitudes the Ten Commandments of the New Testament. They are not moral laws but rather descriptions of what it's like to live the life of the Kingdom of God here on Earth. They have both prescriptive and descriptive functions. That means that they both invite a response and they describe what it will be like when we actually do respond. Take the first one: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

When we are poor in spirit, it means, among other things, that we are fully dependent on God. We rely not on our possessions or ourselves. We seek to be poor especially in the sense of renouncing personal power. That's the prescriptive part. But we are also freed to live a new kind of life, the kind of life that is available to us in God's Kingdom. When we live in attitudes of poverty of spirit, or peacemaking, or any of the other Beatitudes, we are already living within the Kingdom. That's the descriptive part. In a sense, we have already arrived. We experience that wondrous freedom that leads to sanctity.

Thought for the Week

One of the greatest obstacles to thinking of ourselves as holy is that we imagine that saintly people are all quite extraordinary. Some clearly are, but most are very ordinary people simply trying to do God's will each day. That's one of the reasons for All Saints Day. On this day the Church spreads her arms out wide to embrace a much greater number of saints than are included in the official registry of saints.

Sanctity is not a matter of trying very hard to be holy. It's actually the work of God's Spirit among us. It's as if God is the artist and we are the medium through which God creates. Because God's Spirit is at work in all places, some of the "art" will be mostly unseen. It's hidden from public view. It's quiet, humble, and reserved. Nevertheless, it is holy in a deep, fully authentic way. Most of the ordinary work of being a good spouse or parent is virtually hidden. In no way does that minimize its value or importance in the eyes of God.

—by David Thomas, PhD, Co-Director, The Bethany Family Institute

Parent Survival

While there are relatively few canonized saints who were parents, there are probably millions who are celebrating this feast today in heaven. They are the many men and women who through the ages lived quiet lives of faith and discipleship. These are the parents who taught their children to pray, practiced patience, prayed themselves, reached out to neighbors, friends, and extended family in service, even when it was a personal sacrifice. True sanctity is about having a relationship with God, living out the values of the Gospel, and serving others.

Genuine saints, canonized or not, are generally not interested in become saints. Many would be surprised to think of themselves as saints. Most of the people we celebrate today were too busy just doing their job, loving and caring for those close to them, and too tired at the end of the day to think about divine matters. In fact, a lot like most of us.

Car or Meal Talk

Ask your children if they have any favorite saints.

One-Line Prayer

God the Father, bless our family and those of our family who now are with you in heaven. Amen.