

From the Pastor's Desk

Solemnity of All Saints

November 1, 2020

This year we have the rare opportunity to celebrate the Solemnity of All Saints on a Sunday. Every Sunday is a solemnity, the highest category of feast in the liturgical calendar. Each Sunday is a type of Easter, a rejoicing in the Resurrection of Jesus, who opens for us the way to eternal life. This remembrance trumps any other celebration but a rare few, including the memorials of individual saints. However, the Solemnity of All Saints takes precedence today.

In my experience, very Roman Catholic things like this tend to irk our Protestant brothers and sisters. This might stir up some questions in our own minds and hearts. Why don't Catholics just "go to Jesus"? Why all these saints? Why the statues, and medals, and novena prayers? In the estimation of our fellow Christians, these practices are at best a distraction and, at worst, idolatry. To tackle this more modern challenge to our traditional devotion having Apostolic and Biblical foundations, let's first look at a question and answer about saints, by a saint, from the perspective of the saints themselves!

"Why should our praise and glorification, or even the celebration of this Solemnity, mean anything to the Saints? A famous homily of Saint Bernard for All Saints' Day begins with this question. It could equally well be asked today. And the response the Saint offers us is also timely: 'The Saints,' he says, 'have no need of honor from us; neither does our devotion add the slightest thing to what is theirs.... But I tell you, when I think of them, I feel myself inflamed by a tremendous yearning'" (Disc. 2, Opera Omnia Cisterc. 5, 364ff.). This, then, is the meaning of today's Solemnity: looking at the shining example of the Saints to reawaken within us the great longing to be like them; happy to live near God, in his light, in the great family of God's friends." (Homily, Pope Benedict XVI, Vatican Basilica, 1 November 2006).

The Christian life is about communion, to abide in the love of God through His Church, the mystical body of believers that He draws to Himself by the work of His grace. Since God is a communion of persons, the Blessed Trinity creates human beings in this image and likeness to be destined for happiness in the sharing of love forever. Sometimes this seems impossible, or at least unlikely, given our experience of strife and discord in the world: disintegrating families, devastating wars, crushing poverty, cacophonous cable news, polarized politics, and now an isolating pandemic. All of this on top of our own wounded hearts and hurting humanity pulled toward unhealthy habits into sinful vices. It's just too much.

And yet, in every age God raises up saints! From the persecution of the early Christians, through the bubonic plague, to the Crusades, the blight of world wars, the Holocaust, the threat of nuclear Armageddon, post-modern moral relativism, and post-Christian indifference toward human dignity, in the face of death itself, people of all ages, in all states of life, from various professions, in all manner of worldly circumstances become saints. Ordinary people are transformed by grace into extraordinary witnesses to the love of God through the Cross of Jesus. It's always possible to be holy. The saints give us hope!

All the saints show us that holiness, to abide in love, to overcome sin, to be freed from fear, even the fear of death itself, all of this is always possible. Blessedness can happen for anyone regardless of social status, intelligence, career, gender, race or nationality. Saints have been paupers and princes. They've come from every continent and spoken every language. Men and women, young girls and boys, have lived under the varied shadows of human suffering yet still radiated Christ. The Lord is risen and is raising up saints here and now, too. Be hopeful, follow Jesus, become a saint.



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**Feeding the
Community**

*For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink,
I was a stranger and you invited me in.*

~ Matthew 25:35

Send to the parish or school office, marked St. Ann's "Feed the Need"
Questions: Eleanor Rutishauser ekrutishauser@gmail.com

Through January 3, 2021