

Homily for All Saints

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of All Saints. As we gather, we might ask ourselves, “What good does it do to honour the saints?” That is the wrong question, because the saints don’t need anything from us. They are with God, enjoying the fullness of life in God’s presence.

A better question is, “What’s in it for us to honour the saints?” In many ways that is the more natural question because we are generally more self-centred and we tend to look out for ourselves.

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul states: “You are God’s chosen race, his saints and God loves you.” Another translation calls us God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved.

If I were to ask you now how many of you are saints, how many would raise your hands? Deep down, we don’t really believe we are saints, but honouring the saints today can help us to believe that we are God’s saints and that God loves us.

Today, we pause to remember the saints – to remember their stories, to ask their intercession and to try to imitate their spiritual success.

Let’s look at some of the great saints:

Remember Peter, the leader of the apostles – perhaps one of our greatest saints and one we think of automatically when we think of saints. Remember Peter denied Jesus three times publically, he rebuked Jesus for his faithfulness to God’s will, he rejected the idea that Jesus would be willing to die for what he believed. Peter is one of the saints we honour today.

How about Joseph? When faced with Mary’s pregnancy his first reaction was to save face, to save his reputation and divorce Mary informally. Oh, he was generous and did not want her to be stoned, but he certainly wasn’t willing to put up with the gossip and accusations that he had been impure! He is one of the greats, and is patron of the Church, of families, of Canada, and the list goes on.

Then we have St. Augustine – great teacher, doctor of the Church, bishop, model Christian. Remember his story, how he lived a life of excess and lust, had at least one illegitimate child, broke his mother’s heart and rejected the faith his mother tried to share with him.

St. John of the Cross, one of the great mystics of the middle ages was prey to depression and despair, doubting God’s love and presence in his life. Or his contemporary, St. Theresa of Avila, who was known and feared at times for her impatience and temper. This is the woman who, having fallen off her horse into a puddle rebuked God, saying: “If this is how you treat your friends, its no wonder you have so few!”

We can also look at other people we know who went before us and whom we consider saints: parents, grandparents, friends, family members, community leaders. We know them, we know their stories, and we believe that they are with God.

The list can go on, but what we begin to see is that the saints we honour today were ordinary women and men who struggled to be faithful to God, who often sinned in many different ways but who tried to live God’s word in their daily lives. They trusted in God’s love, asked God’s forgiveness for their failings,

used the gifts that God gave them, relied on the support of their faith community, friends and family and became saints.

WE are God's saints ... and we are sent to become SAINTS!