

Catholic 101 – October 31 – the Saints

In the days of first and second generation Christianity, it was common to call all of the believers “saints” or “holy ones.” In those early days, the community (even St. Paul) had an expectation that Jesus’ return in glory was coming soon, even before the current generation started to die.

The Catechism (CCC) teaches us that “all are called to holiness.” In this, we are responding in faith to Jesus’ command that we be “perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect.” That’s a tall order. “The way of perfection passes by way of the Cross. There is no holiness without renunciation and spiritual battle.” (CCC #2015)

Men and women throughout the Christian era have been given special graces, and in them God “manifests his holiness and continues the work of salvation.” (CCC#688). These are our examples in faith, some great and recognized by the universal Church through the process of canonization, and some known only to a few.

“By *canonizing* some of the faithful, i.e., by solemnly proclaiming that they practiced heroic virtue and lived in fidelity to God’s grace, the Church recognizes the power of the Spirit of holiness within her and sustains the hope of believers by proposing the saints to them as models and intercessors.” (CCC#828)

The Church is, indeed, an assembly of the saints. All of the faithful of every age, all who have ever lived or will live, form one community called the Communion of the Saints. One of our ancient Roman catechisms reminds us that the good of each is communicated to all the others. This firm belief is reflected in our ancient practice of praying for the dead, and our prayers for the intercession of those who already stand before God’s throne in heaven.

There are saints all around us. We need to open our eyes to their example of service, while offering that same example to others. Our sacred tradition of naming our children after holy men and women at Baptism, and choosing the name of a saint at Confirmation presents us with a model of charity and assures us of the saint’s intercession before God.

St. Dominic, who’s vision of Mary gave us the rosary, spoke to his brothers at the time of his death: “Do not weep, for I shall be more useful to you after my death and I shall help you then more effectively than during my life.” St. Thérèse of Lisieux said in her writings, “I want to spend my heaven in doing good on earth.”