

We Are Called to Be Saints

Rev. 7: 2-4, 9-14, 1 Jn. 3: 1-3; Matt. 5: 1-12a

At first glance, the Gospel for this Sunday appears to have nothing to do with the Feast of All Saints but, after some reflection, we find that the Beatitudes have everything to do with the saints. The Gospel tells us: ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit...blessed are those who mourn...blessed are the meek...blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness...blessed are the merciful...blessed are the pure in heart...blessed are the peacemakers...blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake...blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad for your reward is great in heaven.’

We know many of the saints that are included in the canon of the Catholic Church are blessed in heaven because their lives reflected the Beatitudes in some way. We think of the great saints like St. Augustine, St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross and many others, all of them Doctors of the Church. We think of some of the lesser known saints such as: St. Andre Bessette, St. Kateri Tekakwitha, and St. Cecilia as well as the obscure saints whose feast days are no longer celebrated in the Church. Many of the saints were meek, poor in spirit, or mourning and did not appear to be saintly material. However imperfect they may have been, these people shared a strong, unwavering devotion to Jesus in the Holy Eucharist and to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The saints have given us wonderful examples of how to live our lives so that we too may be counted among the communion of saints. We are all called to be saints. Through our Baptism, we have become children of God and, therefore, we are called to holiness. Our lives are meant to reflect the holiness of God, thereby, witnessing to the presence of God among us.

But many of us don’t feel holy. We laugh when someone calls us holy. Many of us think that holiness is beyond us; that we are not meant to be holy. And this is what Matthew Kelly, the noted Catholic apologist, calls the Biggest Lie in the History of Christianity (see his book by this title). We have been conditioned to believe that holiness is not possible for us.

Holiness and sainthood are not lofty goals reserved for the few. The First Reading tells us that in heaven ‘there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb’. Saints come from everywhere and from every walk of life, from the nobility and from the poor, from the educated and from the illiterate. If we believe that we cannot become saints, then we are discounting the limitless work of the Holy Spirit who is constantly working to perfect us and to elevate us to sainthood.

Consider the case of Carlo Acutis who was born in London in 1991 and died of acute leukaemia in Milan in October of 2006 at the age of 15. At an early age, Carlo showed a profound love for the Holy Eucharist. Even though his parents were not religious, he attended Mass and received Jesus in the Holy Eucharist daily after his First Communion at the age of 7. He loved computer programming and, before he died, he catalogued as many Eucharistic miracles as he could find and developed an exhibition as well as a web site to promote them. He was beatified on October 10, 2020. Although, he has not been recognized as a saint in the Church yet, he is well on the way, having already had one miracle attributed to his intercession.

Let us set, as our personal mission, a goal to become a saint. Let us use the month of November to reflect on the lives of the saints and take away something from each of them to help us achieve that goal.