

ENCOURAGEMENT

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Called to be Saints... and Holy?

The idea of holiness is almost outdated. We have almost relegated it to the sphere of rather odd and somewhat strange people who have mystical and supernatural experiences and perform great penances but not for us. They can be left to old tomes on dusty shelves, not to be copied or compared with. In an age where we are encouraged to do our 'own thing' regardless of an objective standard or moral precepts we are further encouraged to side-line holiness. The month of August see the commemoration of many great saints of various centuries. People such as St John Vianney, St Dominic, St Mary MacKillop, Teresa Benedicta of the Cross usually known as Edith Stein, St Clare, two Popes, Pontius and Pius X, St Stephen, John Eudes, Rose of Lima, St Louis, Dominic Barberi, St Paul Lewis, St Ninian, Sts. Monica and Augustine. They are just names perhaps to many people or what they or stood for, but only a fraction of those now enjoying eternal bliss in the Communion of Saints. One cannot fail to see the diverse people that are remembered for their holiness for that is what being called 'a saint' means.



The Church recalls their special qualities to encourage us that holiness is possible and attainable. They have been chosen out of countless holy and blessed people to reemphasise a special quality needed at a particular time. But they are not born like that but strive in order to, with God's grace to become a mirror image of the qualities of Jesus. From the list above we can see many walks of life. We have Popes of different centuries and have we not recently been given two more Sts. John XXIII, and John Paul II. We have two married women, one, St Monica who struggled with a difficult marriage and had a rebellious son who was brought to 'heal' through her prayer and also became holy.. And Margaret Clitheroe a butchers wife who was executed while pregnant. We have a carer for the marginalised. Founder of a major religious family and promoter of the Rosary, St Dominic, and St Clare co-Founder of the Franciscan family, and St Dominic Barberi an Evangelist so crucial post catholic emancipation times.

How can one forget St Maximilian Kolbe Priest, founder and martyr who was killed in 1941.

Many of these found themselves in foreign land. Some were converts like Edith Stein from Judaism who died in a Nazi concentration camp and last but not least a holy Priest the Curé of Ars, who could barely pass his exams, struggled with homilies and spoke mainly of Saints to encourage his Flock but whose dedication and love brought many a sinner to confession and his love of the Eucharist to Mass. So all are very different, all living out their special calling and striving to be Gospel led people.. None of these found it easy. Many had interior struggles and practical one. All felt that at one point that they had failed, and had much suffering to endure. Indeed there can be not true holiness without it. St Monica used to weep for her son, Edith Stein felt the distance from her family deeply painful,, St Rose of Lima was often considered mad because of her prayerfulness. There have been those that walked crooked paths before their conversion like St Augustine or the satanist St Bartholomeo Longo who then served the poor in reparation for his life.

The essence of holiness is true conversion or change of heart. As St. Teresa of Avila said, 'a saint is a sinner who just kept on trying.' All the above just kept on trying and never gave up on their path to Holiness.

Let us examine what it is to be holy. Sainly people are those recognised as such for there are many, many holy people. It is difficult at times to define holiness and we often use the measure of being religious and prayerful. Now clearly without prayer we can do nothing for it is the grace of God that allows us to persevere and act with wisdom and charity in what might be a troubled path. In the everyday event of our lives grace given allows us to make the choices that shape our future and allow us to stand back from what would take us away from the love of God and the love of neighbour. These after all are the main requests of Jesus Himself, to become holy these two commandments are the key.

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'Sanctify yourself and you will sanctify society'.

St Francis of Assisi

In everybody's life they will be acted out differently. One cannot exist without the other. If we love the God who made us and sent His Son to console and save us, how can we not understand that He loved us so much that it is vital for us to love Him back and in loving Him we are drawn into the mystery of loving those who share our earthly existence and that does mean ***ALL, our families, friends neighbours, foreigners those with different opinions, and those who cause us distress and even those who think and do us harm.***

It is this quality of being able to love and forgive that marks out a holy people. It is not great deeds, or foundations, even martyrdom which after all is a sign of great love of God and Man, but everyday acts which put others first and ourselves last. Holy people have as a priority the good of others and live this out in the practical. Husbands, wives, children, parents, single selfless people who do not give up when the going gets rough but live selflessly in order to serve others.

Love, service, perseverance and courage are key to becoming holy as is a true appreciation of our worth in God's eyes. We are deeply loved and being loved we want to share this 'loveness' with others. The greater the struggle and surrender the greater the virtue again a word not often heard today. At the end of time Jesus said that 'the virtuous would shine like the sun'. There are other attributes too like Faith, Hope and Charity (The Theological virtues) and Cardinal, key virtues, of Prudence, Temperance, Fortitude (courage) and Justice. Big words indeed but they speak of simple things such as moderation, being fair, wise and thoughtful.

We are bidden thus to love and serve. We are also given a blue print to point us to how to do this both in the gospels if we have ears to hear, and in teaching. Do we ever consider how many 'corporal' or 'helping the bodily need of others' we perform...or do we consider the ***Spiritual*** works of mercy. These are so vital to true evangelisation -

- Convert the Sinner,**
- Instruct the Ignorant,**
- Counsel the Doubtful,**
- Comfort the Sorrowful,**
- Bear wrongs Patiently,**
- Forgive Injuries,**
- Pray for the living and the dead.**

What a fantastic blueprint for holiness. Do I hear 'we can't do all of that' or 'we can't all do these things.?' Well Jesus should encourage us as He said 'if you do this to the least of my little ones you do it to me'. Even a cup of water?? We each have moments in our lives

that require generosity, maybe private moments that no one knows about but it is in these that we become holy. We are not all called to serve in the same way. We cannot all set up charitable project or go to other countries But in our everyday lives we are called to carry out the works of mercy which will lead us to holiness. There are so many ways of doing this... We can assist in a water project in a poor country... 'a cup of water'...with funds. We can donate food or take it to someone who needs it,' feeding the hungry'. We can visit someone in Hospital or a care home or who is lonely. As for faith do we share our faith with others who may be longing to hear the truth. Do we try not to retaliate when a wrong is done to us? Or pray for the living and dead, perhaps the most frequently acted upon work of mercy? There are many holy people among us, unsung heroes and heroines. Should you be one of them? Surely yes, if you are a Christian and not in name only...so be holy and you will be blessed. H.H.

Pope Francis I... Holiness!

"Do not be afraid of holiness, do not be afraid to aim high, to be loved and purified by God, do not be afraid to let yourself be guided by the Holy Spirit, The Church is holy because it proceeds from God who is holy," urged the Pope, "It is not holy by our merits; we are not able to make her holy. It is God, the Holy Spirit, who in his Love makes the Church holy.

Do not to be afraid to be holy or to have high aspirations when you feel weak, frail and sinful.

"Holiness does not consist in doing extraordinary things," he said, but in leaving it to God, stressing that "the meeting of our weakness with the strength of his grace, is to have confidence in his active service to others."

Pope Francis quoted 19th century French novelist and convert Leon Bloy in saying that "there is only one sadness in life; that of not being saints."

"Do not lose hope in holiness. We all travel this way; Do we want to be holy? The Lord awaits us all with open arms to join in this path of holiness." Rome 2013.



Feasts In August.. Adding to the above mentioned there are two major feasts of the Church.

The Transfiguration: 6th...

The Assumption of The Blessed Virgin Mary 15th
A Holy Day of obligation !!

Other important saints this month... St Alphonsus Liguori 1st, St Jane Francis Chantal 12th, St Bernard 20th.

General Papal Intention: Refugees That refugee, forced by violence to abandon their home find a generous welcome and the protection of their rights.

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