

The Rev. Daren J. Zehnle
St. Anthony of Padua Parish, Effingham, Illinois
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The Solemnity of All Saints (A)

On this Solemnity of All Saints, we "rejoice in the Lord and keep a festival in honor of all the saints," both those known to us and unknown (Introit). Today we "join the angels in joyful praise to the Son of God" as we give thanks for their heroic lives (Introit).

We know that Jesus calls each of us to follow after him. We know, too, that the demands of the Gospel are real and are difficult to follow because we are sinful. Still, though, he calls us to grow daily in holiness so that we might live with him forever and has given us the Sacraments to strengthen us in holiness.

But how do we grow in holiness? How can we come to know Jesus better? How can we better love God and those around us? We can look to the example and witness of the saints of God who gloriously followed after Christ. Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, has said of the saints:

In their lives, as if in a great picture-book, the riches of the Gospel are revealed. They are the shining path which God himself has traced throughout history and is still tracing today (Youth Vigil, 20 August 2005).

When we look at the lives of the saints we can see the many ways in which we can follow the Gospel and grow in holiness. When we

look at the lives of the great saints of God we realize that no two saints are the same. This is so because God calls each of us to holiness as we are; he calls each of us personally to follow after him. Just as God has called men and women throughout the centuries to be saints, he continues to call men and women to be saints today. He calls each and everyone one of us to be saints, and if we trust in his mercy and love and sincerely ask him for the grace to do so, we will be saints.

But we will not become saints if we focus our lives on ourselves. The saints show us how to live and they show us where to find true and lasting peace and joy. So often we try to find our happiness and satisfaction in our own desires, but the saints show us another way. Pope Benedict has said of the saints,

The saints and the blessed did not doggedly seek their own happiness, but simply wanted to give themselves, because the light of Christ had shone upon them. They show us the way to attain happiness, they show us how to be truly human (Youth Vigil, 20 August 2005).

We will never come to true happiness and fulfillment by seeking our own desires, by focusing on ourselves at all times. No, only in directing our lives toward God and our neighbor will we ever find peace. True joy is found in saying "no" to ourselves and "yes" to Christ.

There cannot be a sad saint. A saint suffers, certainly, but by uniting his suffering to Christ, the saint finds joy, a

joy that surpasses all understanding. The joy of a saint is found by directing her life and attention to the pursuit of God and holiness. "The saint is he who is so fascinated by the beauty of God and by his perfect truth to be progressively transformed by it," Pope Benedict reminded us last week. He continued,

Because of this beauty and truth, he is ready to renounce everything, even himself. The love of God is enough, which he experiences in the humble and disinterested service to the neighbor, especially to those who cannot give back in return (Homily, 23 October 2005).

St. Anthony of Padua says, "We celebrate their feasts, so as to receive from their lives a pattern of living" (Fourth Sunday After Easter, 11). Let us, then, take the saints as our models for life and know that the love of God is enough for us; we need nothing more than the love of God.

We should read and learn the lives of the saints and read what they have written for us. In learning more about the saints we cannot fail to learn more about God. And by learning the lives of the saints, we will learn how to grow in holiness and love and, with the saints, we will one day stand before the throne of God cry out with them, "Amen. Blessing and glory, wisdom and thanksgiving, honor, power, and might be to our God forever and ever. Amen" (Revelation 7:12).