

Bishop's Reflection – All Saints

Saints are far from perfect. Each one of them had a mountain of faults to overcome. "Heroic virtue", that's what the Church is looking for, the ability to persevere or show great generosity, forgiveness, charity or self-sacrifice in the midst of adversity; a heroic virtue we may well have seen in an aunt/uncle or from a saintly person who lives down the street. The Church might not necessarily recognize them all - those who truly possess heroic virtue often prefer it that way, but it is nice that we take the time to recognize in others and to strive, as best as we can, to cultivate it in our lives too.

Today's Gospel speaks of a mountain -- the one Jesus climbed when he saw the crowds, inviting those, whom he called, to climb after him. Day by day, he invites us and, day by day, we respond by taking another step to pray, by giving ourselves to our calling and to live in communion with one another.

Sometimes, on our way up the mountain, we stumble and fall; at other times we want to give up or turn back. There are times we look back on the path we have trod; while, yet other times, we grow tired and begin to doubt.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit" and "Blessed are the meek". Notice that the path to sainthood is usually not trod by the big and strong, those who are sure of foot and full of themselves, but by the ones who leave room for God, knowing that without Him, they can do little by themselves. God will not let them down. In their journey up the mountain, God will lift them up.

The saints are the ones who cry and sigh in union with God. They are able to mourn for sin, their own and that of others. They are aware of their own unworthiness, mindful of their failings, but, seeing God's great love for them, they carry on, consoled.

The saints are those who hunger and thirst, not for the things of this world, but for what is right. Painfully moved by injustice, the plight of the poor and the neglect of the vulnerable, their hunger translates into a desire to help and a willingness to sacrifice on behalf of others.

The saints place greater value on mercy, purity of heart and the things that make for lasting peace than any earthly treasure or accolades. Despite the struggle they may have to endure, sometimes in fighting their own willful nature, they don't give up. "Blessed are you," Jesus sums up, "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven."

Jesus' Beatitudes addresses the Church's understanding of "heroic virtue". Far from something people possess from birth, "heroic virtue" is both given and tested in the midst of the battle. Though saints may stumble and fall they are measured by the times they get up and turn their hearts to God.

Each of us is called to be a saint, each in their own individual circumstances. If the struggle seems too great and the circumstances seem less than ideal, know that this is the crucible in which God works. God continues to raise up saints in every age, every place and every circumstance of life.

As for the Saints, who from their labours rest, we salute them. We thank them for the perseverance they have shown us, both in life and in death, and call on their example and prayers to lead us onwards, evermore.