

Solemnity of All Saints

Ave Maria Church, November 1st, 2023. Fr. David M Vidal

Today, the Church celebrates the Solemnity of All Saints. Tertullian tells us that *“A saint is a summary of the gospel; his good example makes others love virtue and leads them to practice it. Each of his actions condemns evil and sin.”* That is why Tertullian teaches that the mere presence of holy people silences all the vices.

A saint is the instrument of God’s goodness and mercy, a canal through which God lets his graces flow to us, a major means of salvation for an entire people. It often takes only one saint to sanctify a family, a parish, a province, or a whole country. We can see this in the lives of St. Vincent Ferrer, who brought Spain and France back to God; in St. Francis Xavier, who conquered whole kingdoms for Jesus Christ; and in St. Teresa of Jesus, who reformed an entire congregation.

The saints were people like us in the sense that they had a nature wounded by original sin. All of them (with the exception of our Blessed Mother who was conceived without original sin), were born with that original wound. Like us, they had to struggle against the same enemies we do: the flesh, the world, the devil and sin. They were weak like us, they encountered obstacles, dangers, and difficulties as they strove to keep themselves in God’s grace and in doing good. Virtue was not easy and yet, they faithfully cooperated with God’s grace.

Now, the fundamental question is: can we be saints?

Saint Marceline Champagnat once asked a brother: *“Do you know what a saint is? I don’t mean a saint in Paradise, but a saint on earth. Let’s see if you can tell me what a saint is who’s still living on this earth.”*

The brother answered: *“Father, a saint on earth is one who works miracles.”*

Marceline Champagnat answered: *“A man who works miracles! In that case, St. John the Baptist, your glorious patron, wasn’t a saint because he didn’t perform any during his entire life. If the only saints in heaven were the ones who worked miracles when they lived on earth, there would be very few of them. So, your answer is absolutely worthless.”*

Many Christians do not know what sanctity is, and they look for it in extraordinary things, or in works that God does not require of us. What does it truly mean to love Christ, or what does it mean to be a saint here on earth?

Saint Marceline Champagnat summarizes sanctity in these brief five points:

1. **A saint is someone who fears sin more than all the evils in the world** and runs away from it as he would run from death. Because he knows that without grace, it is impossible to be a friend of Christ, and it is impossible to enjoy everlasting life. A saint cannot endure the agony of having sin on his soul; if he commits some fault out of weakness, he immediately feels sorry for that. Sin weighs on him like a mountain; he is not at ease; he knows no peace until he has confessed it. His motto is: “Hatred for sin! No more sin!”

2. **A saint is someone who is truly pious**, someone deeply convinced that prayer is as necessary for his soul as food is for his body; someone for whom prayer is a necessity and a consolation, and who consequently remains steadfast in prayer and who neglects nothing to pray the best he can. He knows that prayer is a holy conversation with God, and if this holy conversation is not present, friendship is not present.

3. **A saint is an obedient person** who has total confidence in God and his Church. He knows that the Church was built on Peter, the rock. And it was the will of Christ, *“You are Peter, and upon this rock, I will build my Church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it,”* (Matthew 16: 18).

4. **A saint is a humble person** who constantly fights pride because God does not build on another’s property. The rule is not his will but the will of God. Pride works against true faith. It indeed was the origin of many separate churches.

5. **A saint is a person of sacrifice** who faces suffering, temptations, and trials of any kind with confidence in God. There is no path towards heaven but the one Jesus revealed. And He told us to take our daily crosses and follow him. “Without trials, temptations, and contradictions,” says St. John Chrysostom, “there can be no victory because there is no struggle; there can be no crown because there is no virtue.” A person without temptations and trials is not a saint.

Consequently, a saint is someone who loves Jesus and therefore fears sin, prays, is obedient and humble, and faces difficulties and trials.

Let us ask for the grace of holiness. This is our vocation. We have already started on this path towards holiness. When? How? The day we were baptized. In our baptism, we were incorporated into Christ. It was the day God’s holiness began to dwell in us.

Through the intercession of our Blessed Mother, the Queen of all the Saints, let us ask for the grace to love God here on earth and then enjoy God’s love for all eternity. Amen.