



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

The Solemnity of All Saints

Called to be holy

Readings: Ap 7:2-4, 9-14, Ps 23, 1 John 3:1-3, Matthew 5:1-12

For most of my lifetime Christians in the West have been afflicted by a fear of holiness. 'I'm not one of those holy Joes', we say. 'I'm not a Bible basher – why I don't even open it'. We concur with the general repugnance of the crowd for anyone who has 'an odour of sanctity' about them – as if it were a bad smell. We are happy with the idea that we are much like the other guys – 'nothing special about us', we parrot nervously.

Then we congregate on great days like today to thank God for His Saints, for His Holy Ones, for those who heard His Word and followed it, for those who were different from the other guys, for those whose lives and deaths literally gave off the sweet fragrance of Christ.

Of course we are right to be humble about our inadequacies. We are spot on when we acknowledge our sinfulness and our falling short of the Glory of God. Remember the Saints did the same. The nearer they came to the light of Christ the more they were aware of the remaining shadows on their souls and their need for further purification.

We are being utterly realistic when we observe the gap between the sanctity of those on the calendar of saints, those who have been raised in the Church Triumphant to the dignity of the altars, and ourselves.

Where we are wrong, and badly so, is to deny the ambition to be like them. If we deny the ambition to be like them then we are saying that we do not want to be like Christ. We do not want the Holy Spirit of God to have sovereign sway in our lives. We are not interested in the ascent of the Holy Mountain and we, sure as eggs is eggs, are not going to bother anyone else with our spiritual hobby.

All of these are an option but they are not Christianity.

The glory of the saints is that are ordinary men and women, like you and me, who have heard the call of Christ and set out on the pilgrimage to the Heavenly Jerusalem. They have got much further than most of us will in this lifetime but that should not dent our ambition to follow. Indeed it should inspire us and the knowledge that, as they worship before the throne of grace, the treasury of their prayers and love is poured for us should be an enormous encouragement. Our friends in high places, sanctified and purified in Christ, cheer us on our way. Sainthood is what we aim at. Not because we are seeking to elevate ourselves but because we love Jesus, we want to be with Him and we want all men to know His saving love.

The task of a priest, amongst other things, is to sanctify himself and his people. A little co-operation here goes a long way.

When I was in my last Anglican parish one of the best events of the year was on this Feast Day. While the world and his wife were toting themselves up as

ghosties and ghoulies the children of our parish were dressing up as their favourite saint and coming to a party to celebrate the union of Heaven and Earth and leading a torchlight procession down the street with the ikons of the Holy Ones to place in the sanctuary before the altar of God. The children were never ashamed or embarrassed to identify with their heroes and heroines of the Faith. Nor should we be.

In another parish I was in, All Saints tide meant that, at the door you would have a lucky dip from a bowl held by the priest. On your piece of paper was the name of a saint, some well-known, some obscure. You had to go away, find out about your saint, buddy up with them and ask for their prayers daily during the year ahead. 'Help me follow Jesus'.

So today we should encourage one another to celebrate the gift of these great witnesses to Christ Jesus, to learn from their examples, to be encouraged by their simple commitment, to be ambitious for holiness and to rededicate ourselves to a life of love for God and the salvation of Man.

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