



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

All Saints November 1<sup>st</sup> 2022

***Readings: Apocalypse 7: 2-4 9-14, Psalm 23, 1 John 3: 1-3,  
Matthew 5: 1-12***

I was recently involved in a three way conversation with a cradle Catholic and a fellow convert. The topic switched, I can't recall how, to Saints. The 'cradle' had recently had a chat with the local vicar – a pleasant and keen young evangelical. During the course of this encounter it had become apparent that 'Saints' were definitely not on the vicar's agenda – or ever likely to be.

The 'cradle' was deeply puzzled. The convert tried to explain in simple terms that 'Protestants don't do Saints.' I intervened to marginally correct the sweeping but not wholly inaccurate generalisation. 'A few protestants do Saints but in a rather ambivalent way and certainly not as Catholics would understand it.' 'Why would you not?', the cradle asked. Well, it's complicated but, put as simply as possible, the Protestant world view is that there have been many good men and women who lived holy lives. Saints, if you like. But they are now dead and have no further say in the matters of Faith. They certainly have no relationship with the living and wait, with all the rest of the dead for Resurrection and Judgement. They, other than their example, have no further part to

play in the history of salvation. Now I know a few Protestant friends , who would misleadingly call themselves 'Catholics' – as I did for many years – would argue with that but that is because they do not subscribe to baseline Protestant teaching and should get sorted and come and join us. The 'cradle' was mystified. Protestantism cuts the ties that bind us together. It denies the continuity of the Faith.

It breaks the relationship of the Christian Family.

It denies that, as Jesus says, God is the God of Abraham , Isaac and Jacob – the God of the living not of the dead.

It diminishes our prayer resources to a massive degree.

It reduces the Faith and the Communion of the Church to the here and now- to the present moment alone.

It therefore makes itself open to the tyranny of the zeitgeist – the spirit of the age rather than the Holy Spirit. Because it has no sheet anchor, it drifts with the tide and continually breaks apart as different parts of it respond in different ways to the pressures of the age. Its failure to venerate the Saints or ask for their prayers is at the heart of the central driving force of Protestantism – schism. For Catholics, cradle and convert, the Communion of Saints is a vital and integral part of our lives, our faith, our prayers and our hope in Christ. In Christ, Crucified, Risen, Ascended , Glorified, we are united with those who have gone before us because we are in Christ. We can pray for the Holy Souls in Purgatory. We can ask for the prayers of those who have been purified and are 'Sanctus' – Holy and dwell in the Eternal Presence.

We are one family, one pilgrim people, praying for one another.

The Saints reach down from Heaven to cheer us on our way.

They anchor us in the Apostolic Faith, the Traditio of the Church of Jesus Christ.

To quote G K Chesterton

“Tradition is only democracy extended through time.... Tradition means giving votes to the most obscure of all classes, our ancestors. It is the democracy of the dead. Tradition refuses to submit to the small and arrogant oligarchy of those who merely happen to be walking about. All democrats object to men being disqualified by the accident of birth; tradition objects to their being disqualified by the accident of death.’

The Saints are supremely qualified to keep us in the right way, to care for the next generation of pilgrims. As we venerate them and come to love the Christ manifest in them, so they cheer us on our way and encourage our feeble efforts and inspire our learning and make fearful hearts bold and accompany us in our suffering and lovingly pray us homeward.

Aren't you glad you're a Catholic?