

ENCOURAGEMENT ENCOURAGEMENT

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The Host Apostolate

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Saints to Be...

Do you want to become a Saint? If you think that this is not really a right question then read on. We are all called to be Saints. Indeed there are many times that we are referred to as such in the letters of Saint Paul. By implication Jesus calls us to be Saints when He asks us to be perfect. Is this easy? Of course not. Will we fail? Of course we will but we can keep taking small steps to try to become holy. Sanctity is gained by small everyday endeavours rarely by big things (though this too can be asked of us).

To be a Saint or sanctified is to respond to all the graces that are freely available for us, in order for our lives to be purified. We all have a unique value and all of us have a very different journey to make in order to become holy.

To be holy is not just to keep all the commandments, which of course we must try to do, but to live our lives in total love of God and Man. This requires us to be people who **serve** and **love** and have this as a total preoccupation. If we want to reject this idea and say that this is not for us but for those whose name is prefixed by 'Saint' and not for us ordinary people then think again. No canonised Saint has become one overnight. No Saint has become one without struggle and determination. No Saint has not had to face the everyday issues that nearly all of us have had to face with family, friends, work, riches, poverty, weaknesses and strengths. In other words Saints are like us



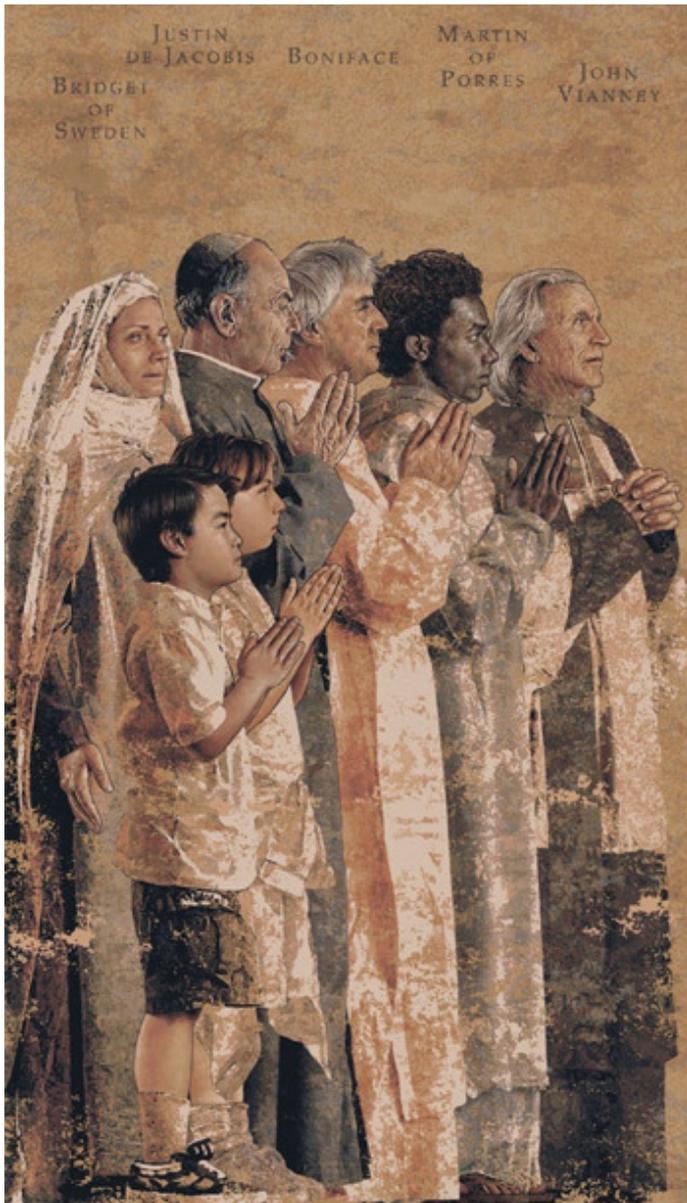
except as St Teresa of Avila said, they just kept on trying; every time they failed they started again. But they wanted to succeed.

How often do people say 'I will be quite happy if I get to Purgatory'? 'I will never make Heaven'. How sad this is, for the Lord wishes to claim us as His own. He does not want us to suffer after we have died but to rejoice with us. Many people compromise on holiness as they do not think that they can merit Heaven. Yet Jesus' answer to this is simply to follow Him. He told the rich young man to sell what he had and follow Him. He called the Apostle to leave all and follow Him. He told the dying thief on the cross that he would be with Him in paradise... today. Of course this all requires commitment and many sacrifices but it is not an unattainable goal. We may never have our name up in light but we will become filled with light and carry this to others.

What about those that have been especially singled out as good examples of holiness. The Saints that we pray through in the Communion of Saints are those that have had something very special to impart to us. Each Saint that carries this title has had a unique journey that the Church wishes to bring to our attention as a good guide as to how to live holiness in the 'every day'. That is why we have Saints who are single and married Religious men and women, Priests, Bishops and Popes. Every one has added to our understanding of holiness and service. Have you ever thought of looking

for a Saint that has had a life that is not dissimilar to your own... and yes there most surely will be one, even those who perhaps have had a very rocky if not sinful start to their journey? Maybe this would be a good way to pray though November. Have you got a favourite Saint? How much do you really know of their life?

In November we also have the feast of the Holy Souls. The Church asks us to pray for them as they experience the purifying of their souls. They are of course 'holy souls' but not yet perfected. As St Paul says 'for now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then (after death) face to face.' After death, the truth of the state of our souls will be radiantly clear to us. We will see ourselves and those around us as God sees us. It is always hard for us to see ourselves as we truly are and these holy souls have now perhaps to face the consequences of things done or not done during their lives.



St Alphonsus DeLigouri, in his work the 'Great Means of Salvation' states, 'So the souls in purgatory, being beloved by God and confirmed in grace, have absolutely no impediment to prevent them from praying for us. Still the Church does not invoke them or implore their intercession, because ordinarily they have no cognizance of our prayers. But we may piously believe that God makes our prayers known to them'

We Catholics believe that the souls in purgatory are not separated from the Church, and that the love which is the bond of union between the Church's members should embrace those who have departed this life in God's Grace.

However we must most certainly pray for these souls who are going through purgation (from the Latin 'purgare' to clean or purify). They most certainly cannot pray for themselves and rely on us to intercede for them. However, how wondrous it must be for them that they know that they will one day be with God for all eternity as God gathers His own. Furthermore, once in Heaven they can intercede for us and will most certainly be pleased to do so especially with gratitude for our love and prayer.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, I would like today to speak of the holiness to which each Christian is called. Holiness is the fullness of the Christian life, a life in Christ; it consists in our being united to Christ, making our own his thoughts and actions, and conforming our lives to his. As such, it is chiefly the work of the Holy Spirit who is poured forth into our hearts through Baptism, making us sharers in the paschal mystery and enabling us to live a new life in union with the Risen Christ. Christian holiness is nothing other than the virtue of charity lived to its fullest. In the pursuit of holiness, we allow the seed of God's life and love to be cultivated by hearing his word and putting it into practice, by prayer and the celebration of the sacraments, by sacrifice and service of our brothers and sisters. The lives of the Saints encourage us along this great path leading to the fullness of eternal life.

Pope Benedict XVI April 13th 2011