ALL SAINTS - 2026

Appoc 7:2-4, 9-14; Ps 23, 1 John 3:1-3; Matt 5:1-12

The Beatitudes are a form of living before God. They are not commandments: pray 10 times a day, always say thank you, never say a cross word. All of these might be good, but it is not what Jesus is saying in the Beatitudes. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit,' is not a command to be humble, but rather humility – poverty in spirit' - is the result of an overflow of love of God, as are the other Beatitudes. If you love God, it will look like this, rather than if you do this you will love God.

Aunt Jessica used to sit 4 pews from the back, on the left hand side of the church. She was as dependable as the pew she sat on. At the age of nearly 90 she came into the church at least half an hour before Mass, and she was never in a hurry to leave once it was concluded. Throughout the rest of the week I would often find her in her chosen place, praying her rosary, and gazing at the tabernacle in which Jesus was resting. One morning I came in and I sat next to her. I asked her, 'Who is your favourite Saint'. Still gazing at the Tabernacle, she simply replied: '*Oh Father, I love them all*'. I sat beside her for another moment, gave her a hug and then left her to continue her prayer.

There can be a tendency to see the Saints as people that have simply fallen from heaven. They don't have much relevance to the world we live in. They inhabit another place. I am not saying that we ignore them, but we regulate them to the desires we hand them. We pray to St Anthony when we have lost something or St Bernadette when we seek delivery from an illness. We pray to St Monica when a child has left the practice of the life-giving faith, and to St Jude when we feel we have tried all other paths. We might ask for a Saint pray for us because in their life, they appeared to have had a special relationship with God: St Faustina, St Theresa, St Carlos Acutis, St Fulton Sheen, the list is pretty much endless. We want them to contribute to our lives.

This said, the living often do not seem to contribute very much to the Saints' success while they are still here on earth. We don't see it as our role to make saints within the Church. If everyone, especially the people holding some office, - church, political, legal - were more aware of how much they were not only permitted, but <u>supposed to</u> participate in the saints' mission, then I think that they would engage in their offices more vigorously and more seriously.[1]

There is more. People can become preoccupied with the authenticity or inauthenticity of visions; this or that experience; with the accuracy or the inaccuracy of prophecies, but they do not keep watch over what is most important, namely, their interaction with God in their day to day lives. Really, we need to take a more earnest look into whether there is a conversation between God and ourselves and ask what qualities it has. It is in prayer and witness that we see the deepest relationship that God has with the Saints who intercede for us. It is in our listening, responsive relationship with the saints that the quality of our own life can be evaluated.

Now I diverge, I have mentioned what I am going to relay previously, but it seems to warrant a repetition. You can either get outraged over it or to dismiss as 'fake news'. Or you could just listen and understand. I have investigated it a little, and the story seems credible.

[1] Von Speyr, Adrienne, Book of All Saints, p413, 414. I have drawn long sections from her book, but changed some language for clarity or emphasis.

A few years ago devout Irish family were on holiday in Italy and went to Mass on Sunday. Their 13 year old daughter went up to receive Holy Communion and knelt to receive Jesus on the tongue. The priest kept gesturing for her to stand up, and tried to prise her hands apart, which she would not, so he finally gave up and gave her communion on the tongue. However, he was so riled that when she did stand he gave her a tap on her cheek.[2] According to her father the slap was hard enough to leave a red mark.[3] In addition, the Blessed Sacrament - the Body of Jesus - fell out of her mouth and onto the ground, causing the girl to cry.

Leave aside the outrage of the actual act of a priest slapping a young girl and the anger that may make you feel. Think about the difference in the attitude of being before the Lord. Think about the difference in the response towards the call become a Saint, in the one called to give Jesus and the one called to receive Jesus. I am pretty certain I know who was closer to Jesus at that moment: The one who wept because Jesus had fallen to the ground. There all the beatitudes are present and integrated.

How you think the Saints received Jesus in the Sacraments? How they prayed to Him? How they went back to their place and what they prayed when they had received Him? How they spoke of him to others? Is it something we could learn from them and share alongside them while still in this world?

This is what I mean when I say that we need to participate in the Saints' mission. We must not hinder it. We must learn from them, not just watch them, both the dead and the living saints. I kneel with them, I receive Jesus with them, I listen to them in their praise of Him: their continuous conversation in the presence of God drawing me heavenwards. When I realise this, how can my relationship with the Saints be distant? And I love them all, and that little girl, in their overflow of love for God.

[2] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Q2AVk7WQzk accessed 31 Oct 2023

[3] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FRdysVXV3n0 accessed 31 Oct 2023