

Here's The Point!

Life Lessons from Mother Lynn

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"A Recipe for Sainthood"

Originally delivered on All Saints', November 2, 2008

Matthew 5:1-12

This past May during my sabbatical, I visited my grandfather's home town, San Mango d'Aquino, in southern Italy. The town square had a beautiful statue of Padre Pio, a Roman Catholic saint, who ministered in that region until his death in 1968.

Everyone in Calabria is devoted to him. Every home I visited looked like a Padre Pio shrine, replete with posters, prayers and statues of that regional hero and mystic. Padre Pio counsels: "One thing is necessary: to be near Jesus."

Simply put: saints are folks who are near Jesus. They are people who are near Jesus in their lives through prayer, the sacraments and service.

Saints are people who - after being near Jesus in this life --- get to live forever in His heavenly presence.

Meaning - they communed with Jesus on earth - now they commune in heaven. We call those folks who are near Jesus in this life and the next -- the communion of the saints.

Every week in worship, we say we believe in the communion of the saints. So on this All Saints celebration, let's look at the communion of saints more closely.

Saints aren't made of plaster. Instead, they're people who allow God to love them in their follies and foibles and then pass that love on to others. Sainthood never happens apart from human struggle. If you read the saints, you'll discover this.

Saints get depressed, angry, do and say things they should and do regret. This is why St. Bernadette cried out: "Don't tell me their virtues -- tell me their weaknesses and how they overcame them."

Here's the point: saints - that's us -- overcome our weaknesses by being near to Jesus in prayer, the sacraments and service. That's the recipe for sainthood. It is by the way, the only recipe for sainthood.

One of the many conclusions I came to on sabbatical was how many saints this parish has. As I prayed and reviewed our ministries - the list is long and impressive - I was inspired and deeply moved by your dedication and commitment to Christ's work.

Friends, today's your day. I hope you - the saints -- celebrate it!

I'd like to make the point with our own Barbara O'Loughlin, who was honored last week by the diocese for 32 years of Altar Guild service. She spent a large portion of that time as Director of the St. John's Altar Guild, on which she still serves.

Talk about commitment of time and talent! Now mind you, Barbs had other things in her life - she wasn't eating bonbons. Barbs worked full time and then some - in addition to raising a family; but that never deterred her from doing Christ's work with unwavering commitment and reverence.

When Barbara is on Altar Guild, she understands that she's preparing the altar for God to feed us with His Body - and for us to be joined by angels and archangels and all the company of heaven.

Barbara realizes she's getting the altar ready for Jesus to be near us -- so we can be near Him. (Others on the Guild here get that, too). I hope you understand that when you come to be fed by God - this is a heavenly banquet. The body of Christ is now part of your body. Eucharist strengthens us for our life's work, which is to get closer and closer to Jesus -- until we're finally home with Him forever.

Another saint, Sister Emmanuel, a French nun who lived and worked in the slums of Cairo, Egypt died recently at 99. She said: "All of my life -- I wanted to bear witness that love is more powerful than death."

When asked her favorite word, Sister Emmanuel replied, "It's - let's go!" Hence, she had a vibrant ministry establishing schools, clinics and play areas for the children who lived in Egypt's slums. When asked her most hated word, she replied that the word she hated most was: "Stop."

Here's what you need to remember: get nearer to Jesus every day in prayer, the sacraments and service. Fully commit yourself to Jesus today in this All Saints' Commitment celebration.

Commit to His life and work here by pledging to Christ's body, the church, and by serving Christ here and in the world.

Imitate Sister Emmanuel -- get going and don't stop until you see angels and archangels and all the company of heaven.

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