

ALL SAINTS DAY

Ferntree Gully Newsletter 2020

On the first day of November, the Church says we should turn our minds to the millions of men and women who have lived exemplary lives on earth, fulfilled the demands of the Gospel, walked the narrow path, shunned the world and its pleasures, some of them married, some virgins, some religious, some priests even bishops and popes, some doctors, nurses, accountants, engineers, farmers, school teachers, professors, some even traditional rulers, selfless warriors. The list is just endless...

November first Church celebrates All Saints Day. We honour all the saints who form “so great a cloud of witnesses” (Hebrews 12:1) for us and for the whole Church. We acknowledge the countless men and women who are in heaven and who saw the higher objective and purpose of their lives when they were on earth. Now that they have attained their eternal reward, they take on another objective and purpose but it is no more for themselves. They want us to join them in heaven and they are praying for us as we journey on earth with all our challenges and difficulties. Those saints are people just like us and they have gone through what we are going through – worries and anxieties, doubts and failures, desires and sinfulness. So, if we going through a difficult time with a wayward spouse and children who have fallen away from the faith and from the path of life, know that we are not alone.

Jesus said in the Gospel, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven...blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.” When we look at whom Jesus chose to be his apostles and disciples, we realize that he chose disciples who had flaws. Jesus preferred the lowly, those who recognized their poverty and powerlessness. Just as a doctor comes to treat the sick, Jesus ministered to sinners such as the adulterous woman, a cheating tax collector, the good thief, and even us. He used parables of the lost coin, the search for stray sheep, and the prodigal son to reveal his mercy. We can be at our worst, yet Jesus regards such sinners like us with tender care. He lavishes his love and forgiveness on those who feel that they have failed God and others. His forgiveness wipes away our guilt and sets us on a new path of holiness.

St. Augustine of Hippo, one of the greatest saints in the Church said, “There is no saint without a past; and there is no sinner without a future.” St. Augustine experienced Jesus’ tender love and mercy, and he was transformed. St. Augustine is a great example of how Jesus does not look at our past, but rather opens us to a new future. St. Therese of Lisieux once said, “How happy I am to find myself imperfect and so much in need of the good Gods mercy at my time of death.”

What is our obstacle to becoming a saint? Our lack of trust in God. St. Monica prayed and sacrificed for her son St. Augustine for over 30 year hoping that God’s grace would touch her son and transform him. Our transformation is not overnight; rather it takes a lifetime. Therefore, hope and patience are virtues that we need to have on this journey of becoming a saint. Another virtue we need is our desire to know Him, love Him, and serve Him. For a long time, St. Augustine believed that the restless desires he felt inside was for the beautiful things of the world. The pivotal moment came when he realized that the restless desire within him, we really for God. St. Augustine said, “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.” Do we feel a restless desire within?

So today as the Church celebrates All Saints Day, there is an outpouring of prayers from heaven for us. The saints in heaven are asking God to grant us His blessings so that we can live our lives in the spirit of the Beatitudes that we read in the gospel. Beatitudes is not about attitudes.

Beatitudes means blessings so that in gentle and merciful, in being pure of heart and poor in spirit, in being peacemakers and in doing what is right and just, we become a blessing for others. The contribution of the saints is their prayers for us and for the Church. Our lives of holiness will be our contribution to the world as we bring about God's blessings to our world. Our journey to sainthood is unique, therefore, we should respect and reverence where each person is in their own journey. Just as we should be hopeful and patient with ourselves, we need to do the same for others.

Mother Teresa said to her sisters, "Keep in mind that our community is not composed of those who are already saints, but of those who are trying to become saints. "Let us emulate the saints and strive to be sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father. The Beatitudes are blessings that God gives us to help us on our journey to heaven and that we live our lives according to God's ways and not to the ways of the world. So, let us continue to believe that there is a heaven, that God is calling us to be with Him in heaven, and also that all the Saints in heaven are praying for us, so that one day we will join them in heaven to praise God forever.