

Saints Are With Us - by Sr. Margaret Dorgan, DCM

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SAINTS ARE WITH US

November opens with the feast of All Saints. That day calls forth thanksgiving for our brothers and sisters who have entered into eternal glory. A few weeks later, we celebrate Thanksgiving Day, so the beginning and near-end of November arouse gratitude in us.

The saints we honor are not a remote gathering high in the sky-- far, far way from where we are on earth. No, they are very close to us, aware of our needs and longings—compassionate about our afflictions which they experienced in their own journey through time. We ask their help and are sure they will answer our pleas.

The Communion of Saints unites us to all who have moved onward to their eternal home. They are companions for us, who are still on our way. As November opens, we honor God's wondrous work in human creatures. Jesus took on our mortal nature in order to give us a participation in His divine nature. We--like those who have preceded us--are called to holiness, which transforms our very being and gives us already a taste of the everlasting .

The lives of the blessed compel us to pause as we look at ourselves and see the opportunities Jesus gives us each instant to draw closer to Him. Mother Aloysius of Concord Carmel, who was my novice mistress, said, "It is God's desire to manifest Himself to us, but He wills to take created forms for this manifestation—forms of persons, events, circumstances, which call for faith if we are to recognize Him, a faith that can discern the divine through and in the human." (*Fragrance from Alabaster* , p. 28). She made it clear to her novices that the saints were not given more than we are offered. What lies before every one of us contains God's design to sanctify us by way of the seemingly unimportant happenings the hours bring forth. We who are enclosed in time-- whoever we are, wherever we are-- are called to holiness. It's not an impossible goal but one worked out in all that affects our daily living. "For each one of us, the star is shining in the heaven of our souls, pointing out to us the place where we shall find Jesus. It is the star of grace contained in the Will of God of every moment, that Will which leads us to God" (*ibid*).

You may have a favorite saint, whom you invoke in times of stress. You establish a special bonding with this heavenly brother or sister. It might be someone beatified or canonized. But it could also be a cherished relative, friend, or mentor who had a special effect on your life—a relationship you counted on. It did not end with the departure of that person in death.

God unites our hearts to each other and guarantees that union of hearts will be lasting. Jesus' Sacred Heart has experienced our human emotions. He nods His head

in sympathy as we express our grief when we have to let go of someone we hold dear. Our mourning is rooted in our limited sight. The loved one is still present to us but in a different way. Actually the affection of days past is now more powerfully expressed in our behalf. We try to open our eyes in the darkness and find the light to embrace again our beloved.

Those who have gone ahead, leaving this world of change, urge us to be faithful disciples of Jesus. Today when our Catholic Church has weathered destructive storms, the call to personal holiness is especially urgent. The media will always emphasize human failing with graphic headlines. The sanctity we recognize in so many who follow Christ too rarely invites publicity. God blesses our world with saints today.

When we lament failures, let us ask our Redeemer to make our own lives more holy and radiant with the life of grace in us. The first epistle of Peter advises us, "Do not be perturbed. Remain calm so that you will be able to pray. Above all, let your love for one another be constant" (1 Pt 4:7). We don't walk away from a suffering Church which needs us especially in times of trial. The saints in heaven remind us of their own years of struggle in this world. They tell us to have confidence in the promises of Jesus.

Let us join the voices of generations of believers who experienced Christ's power at work among us. "**The Lord is my stronghold, and my God the rock of my refuge**" (Ps 94:22).

Sister Margaret Dorgan, DCM