

Homily – All Saints Day; Sunday—2015

On reflecting on what I wanted to say today, on the feast of all Saints, I was reminded of a verse from a John Denver song, named *Matthew*.

It's a song about a boy who forms a special bond with his uncle who comes to live with his family on their farm.

And as the boy comes to know his uncle Matthew, he comes to love and appreciate him as he learns more about his past.

“Well I guess there were some hard times, and I'm told some years were lean.

Had a storm in 47. A twister came and stripped him clean.

He lost the farm, and he lost his family. Lost the wheat and lost his home.

But he found the family Bible; his faith a solid as a stone.”

So what is a saint? Many people have all kinds of conceptions of what a saint is.

Saints are people who were murdered for their faith in Jesus Christ.

They endured great suffering with faith, either through torture, or the discomfort of terrible diseases. Yes, some of them did for sure, but not all of them.

Many saints died at home in their beds.

Well, you have to be poor to be a saint. Not true. Some saints were wealthy.

Heck, some even belonged to the nobility; King Wenselaus, Queen Elizabeth of Portugal.

Saint Stephen of Hungary.

Well, unless you were nobility, you can't be a saint unless you're a priest or a nun. Nope.

Saint Margaret Clitharough was the wife of a butcher and a humble housewife.

Saint Isadore was a farmer. Well the saints were all great intellectuals.

They all had a great grasp of theology, like Saint Anselm, Saint Augustine, Saint Thomas Aquinas, and Saint Catherine of Sienna. Not entirely true either.

Saint Bernadette of Lourdes almost flunked out of Catholic school.

Saint John Vianney, the Cure of Ars, the patron saint of parish priests, almost flunked out of seminary.

The little Franciscan monk, Saint Joseph Cupertino, didn't understand theology at all, but loved Christ and the Blessed Mother so much, whenever he heard the angelus being sung, he levitated off the ground.

Well saints were people who worked for social justice, and defended the rights of the poor all their lives, like Saint Francis of Assisi, and Mother Theresa of Calcutta. Not all of them. Saint Theresa of Liseaux wanted to be a missionary all her life. She was admitted to the Carmelites at a very young age, and her job was to answer the door and do the laundry. Not a very romantic or exciting career to be sure. And yet when she was canonized, Pope Pius XI declared her the patron saint of missionaries, and said that Saint Theresa of Liseaux did more to advance the spread of the gospel than any of her contemporaries. Now how could Pope Pius make such a statement when her job was to answer the door and do the laundry?

Because Saint Theresa discovered through her “little way” to become a saint, that she did the jobs she was assigned with great love and devotion and offered up her labors for missionaries around the world, spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But physically, Saint Theresa never left her convent, and never did any work beside answering the door, and doing the laundry.

There’s really no set pattern for a saint. They range from great Popes and theologians, to simple nuns and house wives.

Some rich, some poor, some educated, some blue collar workers, some touched many people in their lives, some touched only one life.

So what is a saint then? A saint is someone who can see the grace of God working in their life during the good times and the bad, and respond to it.

The Church has always conceded that we only know about a fraction of the people who are actually saints in heaven.

There are more saints we do not know than we do know.

We can spot the obvious ones; the John Paul’s, the Mother Theresa’s.

But so many saints around us never get recognized and probably never will.

Living saints, ordinary people just like you and me, who respond in an extraordinary way to the Grace of God.

Sometimes I think I’ll freak out if I hear one more person say, “all you need to do to go to heaven is believe in God.”

The DEVIL believes in God!!! He'd be an idiot not to!

Salvation is more than believing; it's being, and doing, and thinking, and praying.

Salvation isn't about keeping a vague notion of God tucked in our heads.

Salvation is a response to an invitation. Being a saint does not mean we never sin.

Being a saint does not mean we'll never struggle with temptation.

Being a saint does not mean that we walk around in pietistic demeanor, or in a semi conscience cloud of bliss.

Being a saint means responding to God's grace, for God's grace.

Very simply put, a saint is simply a sinner who never gave up trying.

It is my prayer for all of us today that we all respond to what we are called to be, living saints.