

November 1, 2009

This Sunday, November 1, we celebrate the Feast of All Saints. During the Preface of the Mass, we pray: “Their glory fills us with joy, and their communion with us in your Church gives us inspiration and strength as we hasten on our pilgrimage of faith, eager to meet them.”

On this past June 29, Pope Benedict XVI issued an important new encyclical, “Charity in Truth.” In several contexts, the pope writes about our solidarity with one another. No person is an island unto himself. We are all members of one human family. Jesus taught us to call God “Our Father.”

Together, we belong to the Body of Christ. In God’s design, we must all be concerned about each other and our common good. The pope writes: “Solidarity is first and foremost a sense of responsibility on the part of everyone with regard to everyone” (no. 38).

In no. 53, Pope Benedict writes: “The development of peoples depends, above all, on a recognition that the human race is a single family working together in true communion, not simply a group of subjects who happen to live side-by-side.”

The Feast of All Saints reminds us that we not only share communion with our fellow pilgrims on this earth, but also with those who have gone before us and now enjoy eternal blessedness in heaven. This feast gives concrete expression to what we profess in the Apostles’ Creed when we say we believe in “the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints...”

We rejoice with the saints, find inspiration in their example of fidelity to Jesus and His Gospel, seek their intercession, and keep our eyes fixed on the goal of our earthly pilgrimage.

Last week, I wrote about the inspiring life of St. Damien of Molokai. There are many books dedicated to the lives of the saints. Whatever our vocation in life, we can find saints to inspire us: saints who died early such as St. Maria Goretti, or those who have lived a long life such as Pope John Paul II (not yet beatified) or Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta. There are saints who were priests and bishops such as the Cure of Ars and St. Augustine, and saints who were women religious such as St. Theresa the Little Flower or St. Theodora Guerin of our own State of Indiana. There are saints who were married and parents such as Saints Anne and Joachim or St. Margaret of Scotland.

We are given a saint as our patron at Baptism and choose a patron saint at Confirmation. It is easy to find some aspects of their life which would inspire us to be the best persons God calls us to be in our own circumstances. We seek their intercession to help us use our gifts and talents in accordance with God's will that we grow in the love of God and in the love of others.

I have a priest friend who will give me the same answer each time I put this question to him, "Where are you going?" He always responds, "To heaven, I hope." The saints help us appreciate that no matter how long we live, our life on this earth is brief. We are but pilgrims with a destiny far greater than anything we can possibly imagine on this earth. Our destiny, like theirs, is life everlasting, eternal peace and blessedness with God and with our brothers and sisters who have remained faithful to God's enduring love.

Sunday's celebration of All Saints is a wonderful occasion for us to renew our acquaintance with our baptismal and Confirmation saints and other saints who have inspired us at different points in our life. Pick up a book describing the life of a saint or of several saints. Find strength and perseverance in their inspiration and seek their intercession in your own struggles to be faithful to your

**own vocation. May we come one day to share with the saints in all the joys of our  
Father's house!**