

# Pastor's letter

November 01, 2009

Dear parishioner,

When I finished reading and meditating on this Sunday's Gospel I smiled, because I thought about all those that have their own beatitudes: "Blessed are those that don't have any worries." "Blessed are those that don't have debts to pay." "Blessed are those that have a big pension." "Blessed are those that have a Ferrari car." "Blessed are my friends that go shopping every day."

Today is the feast of all saints, all of them, those well known and those that are less popular.

Have you ever entered a church where there are exposed statues and pictures representing the saints? In Italy there are many. In some churches it is difficult to distinguish who is more important, God or some particular Saint. We notice this by the flow of people that stop and pray in front of a statue of the Saint, but who don't stop to pray in front of the Holy Sacrament.

Sometimes I wonder why for some people it is important to have a particular devotion to some Saint, even if Jesus tells us that God is with whoever invokes Him. Would God not listen to our prayer directly without having to ask help of the Saint? Sounds a little bit strange to have a contact with the Saints if we desire to have a connection with God, doesn't it? It almost seems to point to a hierarchy, similar to our human hierarchy, where human beings recognize the importance of specific people. God doesn't need to belong to any hierarchy. God is God.

Our Church gives us the Saints as people to imitate for their way of life, for having made radical choices and following the teachings of Jesus, but not to replace God. Another aspect that hinders our spiritual health is that we consider the Saints too far above us, and consequently consider ourselves as bad sinners without any chance of reaching holiness.

Even with these observations, I don't wish to take away from the importance of the Saints, absolutely not. Personally I have a particular devotion for three Saints: Saint John Bosco, Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Therese of the Child Jesus; still, in my opinion, there exists the risk that some people might consider a certain Saint more important than God.

All of us know that Jesus, the Son of God, became Man and came down to earth from His Trinitarian position and lived as a human being. *"Who, being in the form of God, did not count equality with God something to be*

*grasped. But he emptied himself taking the form of a slave, becoming as human beings are; and being in every way like a human being, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross.”* (Philippians 2, 6-8)

God came down from His Kingdom to be near to every human being, without needing anybody between Him and us. Therefore what is the role of the big characters of our Christian faith we call Saints?

I think, that Saints, even before they are considered saints, are people who listen to our prayers and bring them to God. They are an aid to our faith and an example of how to live the message of Jesus, as stated in the Gospels. Therein, in my opinion, lies the sense of their holiness.

The Saints are those people that show us that what Jesus said and done is not impossible to do.

There are passages in the Gospel such as those called the Beatitudes that are very puzzling. How can we say, “*Blessed are the poor*” with the economic crisis that kill the poorest families while the great industrialists and political sustain things are going well. How can we say, “*Blessed are the peacemakers*” while presently the world events seem to go in the opposite direction of peace? How can we say, “*Blessed are the merciful*” when the good and those who forgive lose, while winners appear to be those who are cunning and quick to deceive others? ... The list of the “impossible” things in the Gospel is endless.

The Saints tell us that everything that is narrated in the Gospel is possible to live. Our Church has not proclaimed the Saints because they must remain confined inside of the church with us watching them from our miserable position as we think to ourselves, “I will never become one like them!” No! It is not true. The Saints are those people that have lived and keep on living in our world with our problems and worries. The Saints tell us that we can live now what Jesus Christ has taught us without seeing holiness as a goal achieved only by some.

Even if they live in times and places distant from us, Saints remain human beings, always. It would not be proper to intercede Saints for graces, like employees in an office. If we were to do that it would make the Saints look as if they were better than us. A good way to get to know the Saints and ask them to help would be to learn about their lives and see if their way of living the Gospel encourages and thrills our life. Only this way can Saints become a sure way that brings us closer to God and make us feel that God is at our side every day.

Peace, Father Luciano