

## The Church and Sainthood

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

A little while ago I decided to check out *Formed* online (FORMED.com) to see resources they had. I was simply amazed! There was so much that the website had to offer. I encourage everyone to consider looking into it. The login information for the parish is nr3434 (all lower case). One of the things that should strike us when logging into the website is how truly incredible and unique the Catholic Church is.

What I mean is that the Church in its essence is not a club or an organization within the greater scheme of the world. It is not the "nation" (like the US or the UK) that is the norm and that there are groups inside it, of which the Catholic Church is one. Rather, what should be understood is that the Catholic Church is about showing people the way to eternal life. No other group that in any nation can show us the way to Heaven except THE institution that was started by Christ Himself. Look at the lives of the saints and consider how different each of their stories are, and yet each one recognized the primacy of Christ and His Church over everything else. Each one of us is also called to this same understanding, each of us are called to sainthood. But sainthood is not within our power to possess.

Often when we look at the saints and we see the suffering of the martyrs, or the works of people like St. Teresa of Calcutta, or the prayers of mystics like St. Teresa of Avila, we can begin to think that there is no way we can do that. The logic is that these people were somehow special, that they were different in some way that we are unable to imitate. St. Paul however, in the second reading for Sunday, says to the Romans, "The Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes with inexpressible groanings" (8:26). It is quite true that we do not know how to be saints, but God knows. If we are surrendering our lives to Christ, He can lead us to sainthood. Indeed, everyone who is reading this is called to sainthood. Sainthood is possible for every parishioner at St. Patrick's, if they practice surrendering through daily prayer, frequent reception of the Sacraments, and daily death to self (recall Catholic Trench Warfare).

Going back to the beginning where I mentioned *Formed*, there is truly a lot to learn from what they have to offer. There are stories on the lives of the saints, prayer, the Sacraments and their meaning, and more. What does this have to do with surrendering our lives to Christ? Well, surrendering to Christ starts with the recognition that we do not know everything (remember pride was the first sin), and that we are in need of help. Indeed, this is what the Church is here to do. St. Paul wrote to the Hebrews, "Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith" (13:7). These men and women who we call saints are our "leaders", they are the ones that we should imitate. The outcome of their lives is the eternal glory of the Father.

One other benefit that spending time with good Catholic resources is we will learn to stop being ashamed of being Catholic. I am not sure about you, but I can say from personal experience that there is often a feeling from social media and the world in general that being Catholic is something outdated, shameful, or trite. We should stand with our backs straight and tell the world clearly, "We are Catholic, we belong to Jesus Christ!" The Church has fostered the arts and sciences (St. Albert the Great, Michelangelo, Fr. George Lemaitre, and many others). It is the largest charitable organization in the world. It is extremely diverse, and formed the higher learning institutions. More importantly though, it was universally accepted by the saints as the one true Church, with all others paling in comparison. They accepted it as THE way to sainthood, for this is the Church that Jesus instituted. Bl. Paul VI once wrote, "Love her [the Church] even with her limitations and her defects. Not, of course, because of her limitations and defects or perhaps even of her guilt; but because only by loving her can we heal her and reveal clearly her shining beauty as the Spouse of Christ. It is the Church which will save the world, that Church which is the same today as she was yesterday and as she will be tomorrow, that Church which, guided by the Spirit and helped by all her children, always discovers the means of renewing herself, of growing young again, and of giving a new answer to ever renewed demands."

It is time to take away the world's negative images of the Church, and give it more saints. Where do we start? Start by learning about the Church that showed the saints how to become saints. Learn about the faith, and the wonderful things that God has given us through His Church. While you are doing that, let us together get on our knees a little more often. Pray for each other and the gifts of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Viva Cristo Rey!

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