



SOLEMNITY OF ALL SAINTS ALL SOULS DAY



St. Peter Catholic Church † Faith Fact † October 2019

By FATHER GEORGE W. RUTLER

The greatest saints could have been the worst people who ever lived if they had misused their native gifts.

St. Augustine's intellect could have created a convincingly false religion. St. Louis IX could have used his rank to ruin his kingdom. St. John of Capistrano could have invoked his charismatic charm to persuade the Christian soldiers to surrender Western civilization, and St. Ignatius Loyola could have used his organizational skills to destroy the Faith in foreign lands.

By the same logic, the worst villains in history could have become saints if they had used their political power, rhetorical talents, and energy to spread the Gospel. Herod the Great might have become a Christmas hero; the faithful might now be lighting candles at the tomb of Lenin as at a reliquary, and churches might have been dedicated to saints named Mao Tse-tung and Pol Pot and Adolf Hitler if . . . On that "if" hangs all human destiny. "If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3: 20).

The Feast of All Saints celebrates those who opened their doors to Christ. On All Souls Day the Church prays for those who have offered their free wills freely to the Lord and who now prepare, with the help of our suffrages, to enter into his glory. St. Paul said that God "alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see" (1 Tim. 6:16).

The same saint, who was blinded by the perceptible light of God in Christ on the Damascus road, later assured his friend Timothy: "I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. From now on the crown of righteousness awaits me, which the Lord, the just judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but to all who have longed for his appearance" (2 Tim. 4: 6-8). Last summer I ran a few miles in the Wall Street Race and at the finish line I received a T-shirt. I was not ungrateful for it, but Our Lord did not do all he did for us, showing us the face of God both battered and radiant, crucified and risen, just to give us a T-shirt.

The crown of righteousness is offered to all those who take off their masks, for we cannot see God if we are disguised by pride. A culture of death does not make the transition from All Hallows Eve to All Hallows Day. St. John never disguised his love for his Master, and he assures our confused world: "Beloved, we are God's children now; what we shall be has not been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

Catholic Education Resource Center: Father George William Rutler. "All Saints, All Souls." *From the Pastor* (October 31, 2010). <http://www.catholiceducation.org/en/culture/catholic-contributions/all-saints-all-souls.html>.