

Today's celebration, the Solemnity of All Saints usually evokes thoughts of favorite saints like St. Therese, St. Francis, St. Anthony – there are plenty of holy people who have been formally canonized by the Church as saints to pick from. But today, we are also reminded that God's saints are not limited to the canonized. They include every person whose faith in God, and good life has been a testament to Jesus' call and God's love. No doubt, we have all known saints in our own lives, good every-day people who we confidently believe now reside in the company of our compassionate God.

And in so doing, those good people have achieved the ultimate goal – everlasting salvation. It is for that purpose, and God's love that we are called to holiness – called to be saints ourselves. Everything in the Church – Scripture, sacraments, the Eucharist – everything is meant to help us and lead us to the place where we become saints. So that leads us to the questions – what is a saint? What makes a saint? The simple bottom line is that saints are people who let the light of God shine through them. You can't help but feel better around them – because their actions and presence reflect God's love so clearly. They are people who live for Christ, and also live for others.

I felt like my Dad was that kind of guy. He made his share of mistakes, and could blow his top pretty good once in a while, but as I witnessed his life (as our children for better or worse will do for all of us), I saw him trying to be a better person, to learn from his mistakes. And the love and compassion that he always showed others, especially those people who were overlooked, ignored, and in need, was so constant and obvious. In delivering his funeral eulogy, that was the part of his life that I emphasized the most. Afterwards, one of his old friends told me how much he liked it, but was a little disappointed that I didn't mention his sports achievements or other successes. I smiled to myself, knowing that at the end of the day, my Dad didn't give a darn about that stuff. What he hoped to be remembered for was being a good person, and someone who made his son proud. - And he

ached both of those goals! That's the path God calls each one of us to – that is salvation!

Today's Gospel contains the nine beatitudes that provide us with Jesus' recipe for sainthood. At the outset, we hear a couple of beatitudes that can be confusing....”Blessed are the poor in spirit” means recognizing that above all else we need God, and acknowledging that need and dependency on a daily basis. All things come through God....”Blessed are the meek” may be the most misunderstood beatitude, because being thought of as “meek” in today's society is often equated with being a doormat for others and not having courage to speak up. In Scripture, however, it means something quite different – it means being humble, gentle, patient, willing to submit to the will of God, and looking to God for strength. Make no mistake about it, the “meek” in that context are apt to stand up with courage for God and others. Other acts of love referenced by the beatitudes include doing the right thing, acting with mercy, and making peace with others, as well as the need to withstand persecution and insult in God's name. Doing the will of God doesn't mean we'll always be admired or applauded – it's quite the opposite sometimes. That is a lesson Jesus taught us through his life.

At the heart of everything is how we prioritize God and the path of love versus the strong pull of things like power, glory, success, wealth, bodily pleasure....It's easy for us to get caught up in those elements and place God on the back burner – a place where we forsake real truth for achievement that will mean nothing to us later. Every day in society, we see prejudice, power struggles, lies, and an emphasis on financial success. It's reliant on us with God's help to say “enough” - each one of us is called for something much greater!

God does not expect perfection, and loves us in spite of our shortcomings. Be assured that the saints made their share of poor moves during their lives, but what they all eventually did was keep God at the

center of their existence, grow from their mistakes, and let the love flow through them. Today is another good time for us to take stock of the priorities in our life, to rid ourselves of those attachments that are holding us back, and to always make time for God. Remember - on your journey to sainthood, Jesus looks for the best in you and never gives up on you. Let's hold that truth close to us and do the same for others.