

SOLEMNITY OF ALL SAINTS—November 1, 2020

01. St. John of the Cross often **suffered from long bouts of spiritual dryness and desolation in prayer.** St. Francis Xavier was **prone to being easily discouraged and pessimistic.** St. Camillus De Lellis was a **lazy professional soldier who was often ill-tempered—and who was addicted to gambling.** St. Augustine of Hippo was a **reckless, pleasure seeking individual who used and objectified those of the opposite sex.** St. Mother Teresa **suffered intense spiritual desolation and serious doubts about God’s love for her.** And St. Teresa of Avila, when having a bad day, once said to Our Lord: ***if this is how you treat your friends, no wonder you have so few of them.***
02. Most of what I have just mentioned are excerpts from a book called ***Saints for Sinners.*** And what I like about this book (AND THE IDEA BEHIND IT) is that it shows us that saints are **NOT people who were necessarily free from sin—and that, IN FACT, many of them were people who REALLY struggled with sin—as well as all kinds of emotional and spiritual problems.**
03. What I **ALSO like about this book** is that it reminds us of something I once heard that has really stayed with me—and that is: ***the Church is not a museum of Saints but a hospital for sinners.*** So if you’re a sinner, like me, and you’re here—you’re in the right place.
04. Because the Church exists to heal us of our sinfulness—and to help us on the road to sainthood — **not by using our sins to shame us—** but by encouraging us **to acknowledge and to OWN our sinfulness** — because acknowledging our sins **is the first and most important step in overcoming them—and in becoming a saint.**
05. And so, those who are truly in touch with their sinfulness and their spiritual poverty—**those who can truly face their weaknesses honestly and own up to them—**are well on the way to conquering them—and well on the way to sainthood.

06. Because, AGAIN, sainthood is not just about **being free from sin**—it's about being very much in touch with our sinfulness—**about being faithful to God even in the midst of our struggle with sin**—about NOT allowing sin to discourage us and lead us FARTHER AWAY FROM GOD.
07. The saints I mentioned **suffered from ALL SORTS of spiritual afflictions and temptations on the road to sainthood**—but they did not allow these struggles with sin and temptation to lead them farther away from God—rather it was the opposite — their struggles with sin lead them **closer to God—and into the very Heart of the Father's loving Embrace** — because like the prodigal son, these Saints allowed the Father to love them and embrace them in **their spiritual poverty, their depravity, and their sinfulness**—relying on the GRACE OF GOD, and not their own will-power, to be faithful to Him DESPITE their tendencies towards sin.
08. For this reason, the saints are **a beautiful and powerful witness to the love and mercy of God**—inspiring us to NOT let our sinfulness discourage us on the road to sainthood — because, like many of them—we TOO **are sinners struggling to become saints**.
09. And this is why one of the Beatitudes: being **poor in spirit is a sign of sainthood**—because, AGAIN, those who have no illusions about **their depravity, their weaknesses, and their sinfulness** — and those who do not allow their sinfulness to lead them farther away from God—are **well on their way to being victorious over their sinfulness**.
10. Because it is entirely possible to be a sinner and a saint at the same time—in fact, as strange as this may sound—**being a sinner is often a prerequisite for being a saint**. For as the old saying goes: *every saint has a past—every sinner has a future*.
11. And so, looking to the Saints as examples is **not meant to DISCOURAGE us because we feel we can never live up to the standard they have set** — looking to the Saints as examples is meant

to help us embrace **OUR weaknesses**—allowing God to **embrace us in them**. Because God’s glory is manifested best **in the midst of human weakness**.

12. In fact, **all the sins we struggle with in this life**—all the weaknesses that brought us much shame here on earth—**will be the VERY THINGS that bring us much honour in Heaven** — because (in Heaven) our sinfulness will bear witness to the **SAVING POWER OF GOD** — and (in Heaven) it will be abundantly clear how **we were ultimately victorious over our sins**—by allowing the love and mercy of God to triumph over them **in us and through us**. For this reason, **what has been our shame in this life—will be our glory in the next**.
13. And so, on this great Feast of All Saints, let us remember that the Saints who have gone on before us—are helping us and guiding us on the road to sainthood — because they **TOO** have struggled **with weaknesses, with temptations, and with sin**—and they too have overcome them — not by denying them or hiding them from God and from others — but by **acknowledging them, owning them, and even embracing them** — because the very things that **caused them shame in this life**—are now the **VERY THINGS** that have helped to make **them Saints in the next. AMEN.**