

THE SAINTS ARE PRESENT HERE AND NOW



November brings us the feast of All Saints. Although we celebrate various saints on particular days during the course of the year, we find that we cannot celebrate all of them. So Holy Mother Church, in her wisdom and love, gives us the first of November “to get them all in” and celebrate each and every one.

How wonderful it is that there are so many saints! For each saint shows us another aspect of the holiness of God. In this way, saints are like facets of a diamond, the diamond that is God.

Through the saints, we see how beautiful and attractive God is. Saints can thus draw us closer to God. But do we have eyes to see?

It is very important that we know the saints and that we know about their lives. What did they do? How did they think? What were their trials? What were their joys? How did they relate to others? How did they relate to God?

But the saints are not just people of the past, they are present in our lives here and now. They are present by their example, which helps us to live holy lives. They are also present as friends and intercessors, who assist us in times of trouble and need and even share with us in our joys.

One of the ways to help us encounter the saints here and now is the Divine Liturgy. For in the Divine Liturgy we are brought together with the saints as one big family before God, offering him the worship that is his

due. Listen attentively to the words of the Liturgy and how they speak of the saints and make them present to us. In the Divine Liturgy we on earth are joined with the saints in Heaven.

Ask yourself, “Are the saints real for me? Do they matter in my life? Do I take the time to learn more about them? Do I try to befriend them and let them befriend me? Am I open to the saints?”

I love to meet new saints. One way I do this is by reading about them. Sometimes a book will sort of fall into my lap. Not by chance, I am sure, but by divine providence. It is not just learning about someone, but it is also meeting someone. You read a life and certain things click. Maybe you see that the experiences of this saint are, in some way, like yours. Maybe they are different. But there is something there that inspires you, confirms you, or even challenges you. And through this book you sort of dialogue with the saint and you come to realize that you have found a mentor and a new friend.

Another way in which we can meet new saints is by being attentive when the Church canonizes people. For instance, this year I was especially attentive to three new saints canonized by Pope Francis: St Elizabeth of the Trinity, St Jacinta Marto, and St Francisco Marto.

The two Marto saints are siblings and two of the three seers of Fatima. Our Blessed Mother Mary appeared to them and gave them a special mission to pray (especially the Rosary) and make sacrifices. This was to be done

to console the hearts of her Son and herself, to make reparation for sin, and to convert sinners and keep them from the fires of Hell. They were also given particular intentions to pray for the end of World War I, for Russia (where Communism was about to begin), and for the Holy Father, the Pope.

Saints Jacinta and Francisco were heroically faithful to their mission. They both died very young, of the Spanish Influenza epidemic. They suffered much, but they both freely and lovingly offered their suffering to God. Read about these two holy children; It is hard not to be moved. There is a very good book by Leo Madigan, *The Children of Fatima: Blessed Francisco & Blessed Jacinta Marto*.

Saint Elizabeth of the Trinity was a Carmelite nun. Her father died when she was a child. This made it all the harder for her mother to let go of her daughter when she announced that she desired to enter Carmel. Her mother kept delaying permission. Elizabeth obeyed, but even in the context of secular life, she was determined to live prayerfully and with recollection. Photos show her dressed in all the fashions of the time, but her face is radiant with Christ. Eventually her mother gave her permission to enter Carmel. There, Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity flourished. She developed a special love for St Paul and his epistles, which fed her spiritual life. Despite her leaving the world, she retained a great love for her family and friends. Her letters to them reveal how her love for them was super-naturalized. She



Saint Elizabeth of the Trinity (+1906)

prayed for all of their needs and tried to lead them by the hand to a greater love of God and a deeper union with him in prayer. Like the Fatima children, Sister Elizabeth contracted a slowly debilitating disease. She suffered much before she finally passed to eternal life at the age of 26.

St Elizabeth of the Trinity thought that her mission on earth after her death would be to help souls to grow in prayer and recollection and union with God. Do you wish to grow closer to God? Take note and call on her intercession!

A lovely introduction to the life of Saint Elizabeth of the Trinity is the book *Light Love Light: A Look at a Face and a Heart*, edited by Conrad De Meester and the Carmel of Dijon. It is full of photographs that, of themselves, speak volumes about her life.

Looking back at these three saints, notice how other saints were their guides. With Saint Jacinta and Saint Francisco, it was the greatest of saints, the Queen of all saints: Mary the Mother of God. With Saint Elizabeth of the Trinity it was Saint Paul. Such is the communion of the saints! If saints are led by saints, why should it not be so with us?

Here is some more practical advice learned from my own experience: In the past few years, I have had to deal with some family emergencies, which meant that I needed to go home and take care of family affairs. Each time, I called on particular saints to accompany me and to help out in any and every way they could. And each time I told my family all about it, so that everyone would be in on it and attentive and open to the grace. These special saints became part of the family. And, while it is not for me to go into details, I can tell you that these saints were there for us. They were present and active. I know they helped us and they remain special friends of our family to this day.

So remember the saints! They are a great treasure. Invite them into your life. ✠



The three seers of Fatima: Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta.

We highly recommend *My Sisters the Saints* by Colleen Carroll Campbell. It is the story of one woman's experience of coming to know the powerful presence of saints in her life.