

All Saints Day – 2017

One of my mother's interests – along with crossword puzzles, knitting, and caring for her remarkably wonderful children – was genealogy. She had a love for local history and the everyday lives of people who made it. This hobby also put her in touch with people across the country in search of common ancestors. She had one correspondent in Wisconsin who was certain that they were related to the Polish royal family ... because if that L was a T and that M was an N and that O was a P ... well, then it was the same name, almost! My mother was never convinced by that argument, but she DID have a firm belief in another kind of royal family ... the saints. I remember her as having a great devotion to Mary, to St. Therese, and to St. Dymphna. The saints, of whatever place, age, or background, are the sisters and brothers of Christ the King ... and therefore our royal family as well.

Like the ancestors in our family tree from distant decades, some names will be just names to us. But *over time, you begin to piece together a puzzle and learn about the times they lived in and the challenges they faced.* Genealogy helps to personalize the past, and you realize how the broad strokes of history books and headlines can obscure the fact that it was people just like us who made that history.

Beginning with Jesus Christ, the Head of the Body, reflecting on the lives of the saints helps to personalize the progress of the Gospel down the years, and across places and cultures, as the steady and enduring backdrop to all the change in the world's course. While the saints include literal worldly royalty, some kings and queens, princes and princesses, and many people who were famous in their day, they also include husbands and wives, children and young people, slaves and peasants, so many names lost to history because they prayed and served and worked in obscurity. They too might seem like just names at first glance. But when we realize that they were people just like us, they give a human face to the Church's life and history, and reveal the steady and unfailing legacy of Christ the King in our world ... Jesus, the King Who came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life away for others. In a time

when our nation and world face such upheaval in virtually every aspect of our lives, it is consoling to have these witnesses who not only inspire us by their example, but also pray for us in our need.

The saints we remember today ... and the many more unknown to US but fully known by God ... are truly our brothers and sisters in the one royal family of God ... ***born of the same Baptismal font and faith; instructed by the same Word and nourished by the same Eucharist.*** Walking the path ahead of us, they prove that the Gospel is not merely a theory or philosophy, but a way of life; that faith is not merely a matter of ideas and concepts, but a trust in God that changes everything we experience. The ***world's*** heroes are often exceptional people, those with special talents or opportunities in a particular skill that most people will never have. Every year, All Saints reminds us that holiness is different – not an impossible goal, attainable only by a few. It is the call given to each of us, and ALL of us; and we CAN follow that way, just as they did.

We are invited to this great reunion with the whole royal family of God, the perfect Communion of life and love that is already anticipated in the Eucharist. Every day, it grows closer, and that can renew our hope each day. God's Word in that second reading ... "What we shall be" ... points us to that future – a future that belongs not to science or technology, not to celebrities and athletes, not to politicians or armies, ***but to the saints.*** They are not just names, but our sisters and brothers who love us and wait for us. ***They have been where we are; we hope to know, with them, what we shall be.***