

4th Sunday of Easter

Acts 13:14,43-52; 1 Rev 7-9,14b-17; John 10:27-30

There is a story told about a fellow who finds himself in front of the Pearly Gates. St. Peter checks his name and begins to shake his head. “Ahh, Mr. Smith, I don’t see too many positive things here about you. You didn’t pray, didn’t attend church, and you weren’t very religious were you?”

“No,” admits the man, “I wasn’t.”

“Well, were you generous? Did you give money to the poor? Any Charities?” asks St. Peter.

“No,” admits the man, “I didn’t.”

“Well, did you do any good deeds? Help your neighbor? Anything?” asks St. Peter.

“No,” admits the man, “I didn’t.”

Exasperated, St. Peter says, "Look, everybody does something nice sometime. Work with me, here, I'm trying to help. Now think!"

The man says, "Well, there was this old lady outside of the grocery

store. She was surrounded by a dozen Hell's Angels. They had taken her purse and were shoving her around, taunting and frightening her.

I got mad, fought through the crowd, and got her purse back. I then helped her to her feet. I then went up to the biggest, baddest biker and told him to pick on someone his own size.”

"Wow", said St. Peter, "That's impressive. When did this happen"?

"I think about 10 minutes ago", replied the man.

Do you think that Mr. Smith qualified for Sainthood?

Just what is a Saint, anyway?

My favorite definition comes from Fr. Carges, the former pastor of Holy Cross and St. Anthony, who once said, “A Saint is a Sinner who keeps on trying”.

Another definition can be found in our second reading today.

They are “a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue.” These are the Saints,

and according to St. Paul (in his 1st Letter to the Corinthians), any follower of Jesus is a saint.

Lumen Gentium, a document from Vatican II states :

“It is therefore quite clear that all Christians in any state or walk of life are called to fullness of Christian life and the perfection of love, and by this holiness a more human manner of life is fostered also in earthly society”.

So, we are all saints and called to live a life devoted to the glory of God and the service of our neighbor. The end result of all this is clear, as Jesus says in our Gospel reading today: “My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish. No one can take them out of my hand.”

So, the Church believes that all of those who have died and gone to heaven are saints, but we don't know who goes to heaven. That is determined by God. The Gospels tell us that, if you believe in Jesus, even if you die, you will have eternal life, but Jesus, also,

tells us that many may claim to be **his** followers, but if they do not help the least of God's people, they will not inherit the kingdom. Now, in the early Church, many were proclaimed by the people to be saints. If these were martyrs, it was generally assumed that they were indeed with **Christ** in Heaven (like the ones in our second reading today who were washed clean in the blood of the lamb), but for those who died natural deaths, the possibility existed that they may not be in heaven. Thus, the Church instituted the process of canonization to determine if we should honor a person and look to their example to help us in living our lives.

The process begins with an intense examination into the life of a perspective saint. Once a person is found to have lived a holy life, a sign is needed to show that this person is in heaven. What the Church looks for are two documented miracles that cannot be scientifically explained and can be attributed to the intercession of this person by prayer.

In his book, "My Cousin, the Saint", Justin Catanoso, an American reporter who was a fallen-away Catholic, describes how he

discovered a Saint in his own family and how he learned of what it means to be a Saint.

The Saint in question is his Grandfather's cousin, an Italian priest named Padre Gaetano Catanoso. Justin learned that this holy man lived a simple life dedicated to others, helping the poor, standing up to evil and trying to bring comfort to the suffering. But more than that Padre Gaetano set an example of a Christian life for his family, friends, parishioners and for other priests. Justin learned all this when he connected to his extended family in Italy and began his own investigation into this saint who had the same last name as his. Ultimately, Justin's own faith was revived, but it wasn't an easy journey for him. Just as it is not an easy journey for us. Justin questioned why the need for saints. Why do people pray to them? Does God really answer prayers? If Padre Gaetano could perform miracles, why did Justin's brother die of cancer while others were miraculously healed by the intervention of Padre Gaetano. These are the same sort of questions that concern us in our spiritual and material lives.

So, what do the saints teach us. They teach us that our lives do not end with our deaths. We keep on living in eternal life with Christ and acting for him and with him. Padre Gaetano lived his faith radically, consistently and joyfully amidst many difficulties. He conveyed the presence of God to all that he met. His lived an active life dedicated to God and to others. This is the example set before us by the Saints. We are called to follow their example which can be difficult in our cynical world, but their example shows us, that while life can be hard, the love of God is always there to help us. We may struggle on our way, but that's OK. The saints weren't perfect in this world, and we neither are we. After all, the Saints are Sinners who keep on trying".