

Commentary to the 31 Sunday in Ordinary Time - All Saints Day



“This saint is my hero”, we could say. The operative word to define a Greek hero would be courage. Did they have the courage to complete their mission in life? There are also heroes in the first part of the Bible, the Old Testament. Abraham and Samson and David and Deborah and Ruth were all heroes because against seemingly impossible odds, they still allowed God's plan to work through them. They had the courage to stand by God's plan and to bring that plan to completion.

The scriptures lead up to the greatest of all heroes, Jesus Christ. The first reading is taken from the Book of Revelation in the section called the Seven Seals.

This section begins with the Book of God's Plan for Mankind being brought forward. It is sealed with seven seals because God's plan had been disrupted by man's infidelity. "Who is worthy to open the book?" an angel calls out. Then the Lamb comes forward. Only the Lamb that was slain can open the Book. By sacrificing himself totally to God's will, Jesus Christ has restored God's reign among his people. He is the ultimate hero. He transformed the world with the Love of God. And He calls us to do the same.

On the Mountain of the Beatitudes, today's Gospel, he calls us away from being self centered to being Theocentric or God centered. He calls us to be poor in Spirit. Whether we are rich or poor or somewhere in between, the center of our lives must be God, not money. He tells us that we can't close our eyes to the atrocities of the world. "Blessed are those who mourn." The Lord wept over Jerusalem because it refused to recognize the presence of God in its midst. We weep over our society that allows children to be exploited by drugs, sex and crass commercialism. We mourn over a society that allows a million and a half abortions a year. The meek who inherit the earth are those who are not going to allow hatred to dominate their lives.

They will fight for what is right, but they will be merciful, they will be sincere, they will be peacemakers for the sake of the Lord. Finally the beatitudes speak about those who are willing to suffer the mockery of the world, those who would rather be in the minority who choose God rather than be in the majority of those who go along with the pagan materialism of society. The saints whom we honor today give us an example of people emptying themselves to allow God's plan to work in them, people who have the courage to be genuine heroes. They are not plaster or plastic statues of unreal people in pietistic poses. They are real people from every walk of life who met the challenge of Christianity and conquered. They are priests and nuns, like Francis of Assisi and Catherine of Siena, married people and single people, like Thomas More and Rose of Lima, very old and very young, like Theresa of Avila and Theresa of Lisieux, They are the wealthy, like Thomas Beckett, the middle class, like Ignatius Loyola, and poor like Martin de Porres.

They were geniuses, like Thomas Aquinas, and people of simple intelligence but vast wisdom, like John Vianney. All of these and all whom I could not possibly name accepted the challenge of Christianity and had the courage to wash their baptismal robes in the Blood of the Lamb, as Revelation says. They had the courage to live the sacrifice of Christ in their lives. They had the courage to make the love of God real in the world. The Book of Revelations says that there is a throng of people before the throne of the lamb, people from every race and nation, a number too numerous for anyone to count. These are those who have gone before us, who live now and who will live in the future who are willing to sacrifice everything for the Kingdom of God. These are the true heroes following the proto hero, the greatest of all heroes, Jesus Christ. Will I be among that number? Will you be standing there proclaiming God's love with your life? Well, that is why we are here today. We pray for the courage to follow the Lord. We pray for the courage to put God first in our lives. May the Lord help us to stand for Him and with Him in our lives. Today we pray for the courage to be genuine heroes.

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