

“Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.”

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Once upon a time, novelist Graham Greene describes a priest in his book, **“The Power and the Glory,”** who ministered to his people in an era of fierce, religious persecution in Mexico.

The danger of being caught by the ‘policia’ & the exhausting work of serving people under such unusual circumstances finally took their toll. The priest turned to drink & became an alcoholic. Consequently, he was eventually caught, sentenced to die, & put in prison to await execution.

I now quote from the book:

“When he awoke on the morning of his scheduled death, he had an empty flask of brandy in his hand. He tried to say an act of contrition, but was too confused to remember the words.

Then he caught the sight of his own shadow on the prison wall. He just sat there, staring at it. As he did, he realized it was foolish of him to think he was strong enough to remain behind & serve his people. He should have fled. It was stupid to stay behind. It was a terrible mistake.”

Tears began to form in his eyes and roll down his cheeks. He was not crying because he was afraid of dying. He was crying because he had to go to God ...so-o empty-handed.

Greene continues:

“It seemed to him, at that moment, that it would have been easy to have been a saint. He would only have needed a little restraint and a little courage. He felt like someone who had missed happiness by seconds at an appointed place. He knew now that, in the end, there was only one thing that counted – to be a saint.”

That last line of this scene bears repeating:

“He knew now that, in the end, there was only one thing that counted –to be a saint.”

*I share this story with you, and especially that last line, for it sums up what today’s Feast of All Saints is all about. The feast reminds us that, when all is said and done, there is only **one thing that counts**, and that is, to get our immortal soul to heaven; in other words –to be a saint.*

*Being a saint may be a bit intimidating at first glance. **But**, and there’s that proverbial **BUT** in life, upon further introspection, maybe it’s not so. I mean, being a saint, doesn’t necessarily mean we are to imitate someone who was martyred centuries ago.*

On the contrary, being a saint may mean imitating ordinary people, who lived in ordinary times, much like our own. It means imitating people who laughed and cried, just as we do. It means imitating people who sinned and used the Sacrament of Reconciliation, just as we do. It means imitating people who tried again --and sometimes sinned again ...just as we do.

It means imitating good, ‘salt of the earth-people,’ perhaps like our parents, an aunt or uncle, perhaps a grandparent. If such people had anything extraordinary about them, perhaps it was that they never stopped trying to live, each day, according to the “call” they perceived that was for them...they never gave up at the job God had called them to perform.

Today’s feast is about honoring the great saints of the past and, in the course of honoring them, we are reminded of our own calling... to be saints. We are reminded that we have seen and lived with saints all around us. Such saints will never be ‘canonized,’ but we model our lives after them, just the same. In our hearts, we know they ‘made it.’ And that’s why we follow their way.

I close with this oft-used prayer of mine:

“To everyone there opens a way—a high way and a low way. The high souls take the high way; the low souls take the low way. And in between, on the misty flats, the rest drift... to and fro. But, to everyone, there opens a high way and a low way. And everyone decides ...the way ...his soul ...shall go.”

May Almighty God, our Abba, bless you—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.