

NOVEMBER – THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

By virtue of baptism and the sacramental graces of marriage, the Christian family is built into a communion of saints. Holiness is a gift given to every baptized Christian that becomes a joyful task for the whole of life.

Breaking Open the Theme

Like the Church herself, the domestic church is called to be a communion of saints. Our response to the call to holiness is important if we are to become the family God wants us to be. We may think of saints as people who lived long ago or are far removed from our everyday experiences. But the saints are close at hand, and God wants to make each of us a saint. Each member of the family has the task of helping the others to grow in holiness through faith, hope and love.

There are many examples of canonized saints and beatified blessed who can inspire families today. One example of a modern-day saint is Blessed Chiara Luce Badano, who was born in 1971. At the age of 17, she was diagnosed with a serious and painful illness. Faced with this cross, Chiara prayed and found the courage to accept this as part of God's loving plan for her. During the whole time of her illness, she turned everything into an opportunity to love. As she lay dying at the age of 18, she said to her mother, "Oh Mamma. ... You see I can't run anymore, but how I would like to pass on to them [young people] the torch [of faith], like in the Olympics! Young people have only one life and it's worthwhile to spend it well."⁸⁷

Becoming a saint is like running a race.⁸⁸ The family is the training ground for this race, where the virtues are taught and character is formed. Through the family, God provides what we need to run it well. To become a saint is simply to cooperate with God and allow him to mold us into the person that he had in mind when he created us. It is his plan to bring us fully to life.

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Meditation

From Pope Benedict XVI's General Audience, April 13, 2011

Holiness, the fullness of Christian life, does not consist in carrying out extraordinary enterprises but in being united with Christ, in living his mysteries, in making our own his example, his thoughts, his behavior. The measure of holiness stems from the stature that Christ achieves in us, in as much as with the power of the Holy Spirit, we model our whole life on his. ...

What is the soul of holiness? ... What is the essential? The essential means never leaving a Sunday without an encounter with the Risen Christ in the Eucharist; this is not an additional burden but is light for the whole week. It means never beginning and never ending a day without at least a brief contact with God. And, on the path of our life it means following the “signposts” that God has communicated to us in the Ten Commandments, interpreted with Christ, which are merely the explanation of what love is in specific situations. ...

We might ask ourselves: can we, with our limitations, with our weaknesses, aim so high? During the Liturgical Year, the Church invites us to commemorate a host of saints, the ones, that is, who lived charity to the full, who knew how to love and follow Christ in their daily lives. They tell us that it is possible for everyone to take this road. ...

I would like to ask all to open themselves to the action of the Holy Spirit, who transforms our life, to be, we too, as small pieces in the great mosaic of holiness that God continues to create in history, so that the face of Christ may shine out in the fullness of its splendor. Let us not be afraid to aim high, for God's heights.⁸⁹

1. What is holiness?
2. How can we live holiness in the family? How do we love God in the ordinary circumstances of life?
3. How do the saints help us live out holiness?

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Scripture Reading — Psalm 98:1-6

A prayer to welcome God's rule over the earth

Sing a new song to the LORD,
for he has done marvelous deeds.
His right hand and holy arm
have won the victory.
The LORD has made his victory known;
has revealed his triumph in the sight of the nations,
He has remembered his mercy and faithfulness
toward the house of Israel.
All the ends of the earth have seen
the victory of our God.
Shout with joy to the LORD, all the earth;
break into song; sing praise.
Sing praise to the LORD with the lyre,
with the lyre and melodious song.

Family Project

Select a few saints and learn about their time period and culture and why they are invoked for specific causes or intentions. Include a dish from their culture during one of your meals. Also, consider making a pilgrimage to a sacred place dedicated to a saint.