



August 16, 2020

Dear friends of God,

I did not realize how much I have appreciated saints in our Catholic Tradition until the last few years. I always knew about the saints, of course. Moreover, there have always been saints that have touched my heart even when I did not fully recognize their impact upon me. A good example would be St. Lawrence. That was the patronal feast for the mother church in the area where I grew up in Utica, Michigan. My parish began as a mission of St. Lawrence Parish, and when we couldn't make Mass at our normal time at our parish, we would attend St. Lawrence. I remember attending Mass there once on the feast of St. Lawrence, August 10. I was struck by the martyrdom of St. Lawrence and what it means to be a follower of Jesus. I appreciate the following reflection on the martyr Lawrence from the author Kathleen Norris. It is a reminder that the road to sanctity is one of love of God and love of neighbor. For Christians, there is no other way.

I like to think we remember and honor St. Lawrence not only for his defiance of unjust authority, but most especially for his deep understanding of the love of Christ. It is said that when a Roman official intent on material gain demanded that Lawrence hand over the treasury of his church, Lawrence begged for a little time. Then he gathered the neediest people of the congregation, the impoverished, the widowed and abandoned, the disabled and sick. He presented them to the official, saying, "Here are the treasures of the church." Lawrence paid for this with his life, but he made his point.

The saints are people of faith that have put their lives on the line in a variety of ways. We can forget that the saints were men and women like us, desiring to follow the Lord in their own time and place. We can get stuck in thinking that they are superheroes. We can get trapped in the miraculous with the saints as miracle workers when they can be better understood as men and women fully alive in

Jesus Christ. St. Irenaeus reminds us "The Glory of God is a human being fully alive." The saints glorified God by their lives. We are to glorify God as well in our lives of discipleship. That is challenging since so many Christians come across as the walking dead rather than fully alive. The saints, by their prayers and example, challenge us to allow God's Spirit to breathe true life within us. The saints are those disciples of Jesus who have gone before us and laid the foundations for our lives of faith in the modern world. These holy women and men lived their lives in such a way that through their own individuality they understood in a mature way what it meant to love God and neighbor. The saints knew intuitively what it meant to take up their own cross as they followed Jesus. They could look deeply into their own time and place and see that there are consequences for following the path of Jesus Christ. And they chose the way of our God of Radical Mercy, embodied in Jesus. Continuing with what I talked about in my homily last weekend; saints were not perfect people. They were conditioned by their own culture and world, again they weren't superheroes and they weren't looking up to heaven without any concern for the earth and their brothers and sisters in the world. Saints are people who are attempting to live lives of faith in Jesus Christ in the present moment with compassion and love and solidarity for their brothers and sisters in the world. We are called by God to become saints in the same way in our own time. We are not perfect and we often stumble in our attempts to live the message and mission of Jesus Christ. We are to embody God's love and compassion in this place and in this time, this is our call to sanctity. Let us walk this path together.

Much love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "F. Ken". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.