

## TOGETHER WITH ALL THE SAINTS

### A Prayer for the Ephesians (Ephesians 3:14-21)

<sup>14</sup> For this reason I kneel before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. <sup>16</sup> I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup> may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, <sup>19</sup> and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

<sup>20</sup> Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, <sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

All Saints' Day. For Protestants a saint is anyone who believes in Jesus Christ.

That's a shocker, isn't it? We tend to think of saints as perfect people. Think of the difference between the way you live your life and the way Mother Teresa (for instance) lived hers. She's a tough act to live up to but that's the kind of person we think of when we think of the saints.

Fortunately, you are also in the same group with some other people: St. Peter, for instance. You remember Peter -- Jesus favorite disciple. He was the rock upon which Jesus would build His Church. You remember what the Gospels say about Peter. The gospels really say a good bit that is negative about him: his impetuosity, his desire to be "first", particularly his behavior around the crucifixion.

You are in the company of Mother Teresa, Peter and everybody in between simply because you believe in Jesus Christ.

Of course, sainthood has some responsibilities attached to it. Sainthood, whether from the Roman Catholic or the Protestant perspective has always involved doing something. Mother Teresa will become a Roman Catholic saint because of her unselfish work in Calcutta while every one of us Protestant Saints has something to do, as well. You and I have a task to do just as surely as Peter and Mother Teresa.

Our task? It is simply enough put: to live as God calls us to live in this world. Though simply stated it is, at best, a very difficult task.

Many years ago, a friend of mine gave me a quote from some magazine or newspaper -- I do not know from what source the quote came, but it has successfully spoken to me through the years. Its language is dated in places but here it is anyway:

Yes, religion is cornball. It pushes squaresville ideas like love, understanding, patience, charity, kindness, moderation, joy, justice, peace, reconciliation, beauty, life's sacredness, honor, serenity, brotherhood and who needs stuff like that, when we have LSD, amphetamines, alcohol, war, nudies, agonized cities, the H-bomb, heroine, poverty, inhumanity? So, for heaven's sake, don't get caught in your church or synagogue, or you might start wanting to change the world around.

This old quote gets at the essence of sainthood. You and I are called to live out our faith in the world, sometimes against the world. It is tough to be one of Christ's Saints. If we take our faith seriously enough and try to live it, our lifestyle is likely to be contrary to that of the rest of the world. That lifestyle may cause us to be ridiculed at times by those around us. A teenager who refuses to take drugs in the midst of peer pressure because of their sense of right and wrong is likely to be ridiculed unmercifully. If you don't believe it is tough to be a Christian in a situation like that, ask a teenager who's been there.

Of course, as Saints who are on God's side, it doesn't really matter what others think. On the Reformation monument in Geneva is a quote from John Knox: "A man with God is always in the majority."

We Christian Saints are called to live our lives a little differently than the world around us.

We are to hold on to the upright ideals of our faith -- indeed, we are to hold them up -- not so much to be proud of them, but rather to show others by way of example the right way to live.

As you Christian Saints live your lives trying to live out your Christian ideals, I would like to leave you with the words of John Knox who, with John Calvin is the founder of Presbyterianism: "A man with God is always in the majority."

Saints, take heart. Amen.