

# HAPPY FEAST DAY!

How many saints do you know? Maybe it's a lot more than you realize. Pope Francis reminds us that *saints are not "supermen" who are "born perfect," but rather are ordinary people who followed God "with all their heart."*

I think of my Italian Nona whose life revolved around prayer, service to her family, simple living—and her daily soap opera. She buried her oldest daughter shortly after her First Communion following a bout with scarlet fever, became a widow at an early age, and even though she was the youngest of 10 children, cared for many of her siblings as they grew older. My mom, her daughter, had a great devotion to Mary and made saying rosaries for her friends and family a part of her daily routine. We recently buried a senior parishioner who shared what she had with others even when she was struggling herself. She loved and forgave because that's what Jesus said to do.

*"Saints are like us," the pope said. "They are like each of us, they are people who lived a normal life, with joys and grief, struggles and hopes. They spent their lives in the service of others, they endured suffering and adversity without hatred and responded to evil with good, spreading joy and peace"*

An African refugee parishioner, the father of eight, who had recently lost his job, told me that he is "not rich nor poor. God gives me everything I need." The following Sunday he handed me a handful of cash to put in the collection. I probably would have saved it for groceries. He trusted God instead. When I asked another African parishioner whose oldest daughter died of a painful disease after the family came to the US, whether she wanted a boy or girl when she was pregnant she said "If it is a girl, I will say thank you God. If it is a boy, I will say thank you God." As the grandmother of four boys, I would have likely said that I'd prefer a girl—but I'd still love it if it were a boy.

*"Sanctity is beautiful! It is a beautiful way!" Pope Francis stressed. "The saints give us a message. They tell us: be faithful to the Lord, because the Lord does not disappoint! He does not disappoint ever, and he is a good friend always at our side."*

When I talked to an immigrant possibly facing deportation, I asked if he was worried about that possibility "Just a little," they tell me. "God will take care of me and I can serve him whether I am here or someplace else. Another parishioner, the mother of eight, agreed to take in an infant whose parents couldn't care for him and she's loving and nurturing him as her own.

*"To be a saint is not a privilege of a few. All of us in baptism have the inheritance of being able to become saints. Sanctity is a vocation for everyone," the pope said. "All of us are called to walk in the way of sanctity, and this way has a name, a face: the face of Jesus Christ."*

Many times we find the face of Christ in unexpected places that are often at the margins of society. I once heard the voice of

Christ from a man living in public housing who was bemoaning the recent shooting in his neighborhood. "All this for a pair of shoes," he told me. "We need to love each other." He wasn't a friend of the one who was shot but he had entered into the societal suffering of his community and recognized that love was the only way to end senseless violence.

A neighborhood eccentric who was known for his variety of hats, coats, and wigs embraced life with curiosity and joy and spoke to everyone about staying fit doesn't, on the surface, seem a candidate for sanctity but those at his funeral spoke of positive impact he had on their lives. God doesn't judge as we do. There's a woman in my neighborhood who picks up trash on her daily walks—no fanfare or desire for recognition, or judgment about what was left behind or who left it—just a desire to keep things nice for those who live around her, it's her humble, quiet way to be a good neighbor.

*The Kingdom of Heaven is for those who trust in the love of God and do not put their security in material things. It is for those with humility and a "simple heart" who do not judge others. The Kingdom of Heaven is for "those who suffer with the one who suffers and rejoice with the one who rejoices."*

How many saints do you know? Maybe they're praying with you in church, cooking dinner at home, waiting for the bus to support their family, welcoming a new neighbor, or helping out in the community. And maybe, just maybe there's one looking back at you in the mirror.

~ Angela Anno



## SAINTS FUN FACTS

by John Sheppard

St. Leo the Great was born in Tuscany and was Pope between 440 and 461. He is well known for his great eloquence and writing skills. During the 5th century barbarian invasion, he even persuaded Attila the Hun to turn back at the gates of Rome.

