

ALL SAINTS DAY - 2005
“Human at its best”

The problem with saints is that they seem to be too holy. I know that I am called to be a saint, but when I think about my patron saints, I'm defeated before I ever leave the starting blocks. Francis of Assisi, the saint I took for my confirmation, lived in poverty and had the stigmata to boot. I admire him, but I can't imitate him. "Thomas," my given name, is a saint's name, too. But I choose to follow the doubting Thomas more than the brilliant Thomas, Aquinas, that is. I have moments of doubt far more often than moments of brilliance. But Thomas the Apostle died a martyr. I don't think I have it in me. My middle name is Lyle. I've never heard of a Saint Lyle. If there is one, he probably levitated or something extraordinary like that.

You see, that's the problem. We think saints are saints because they are practically divine. The truth is, saints are saints because they are human, and human at its very best. If we are made to the image of God as human beings, then the more human we become, the more we will image God! The more saintly we will be. So the question we have to ask if we want to be saints is not how do we become almost divine, but how do we become human at its very best? While the Beatitudes describe those who have allowed the Holy Spirit to transform their lives, I want to share some quotes from the mouths of saints themselves. So, let us turn to the advice of some of our saints for clues to the answer.

- *“Know and follow the will of God.”* St. Isadore of Seville
- *“Care little about what others think of you.”* St. John Vianney
- *“Don't rely on your own merits. You don't have any.”* St. Therese of Lisieux
- *“Embrace all things as coming from the hand of God.”* St. Alphonsus

- *“Make friends with the citizens of heaven. Talk with them frequently.”* St. Francis DeSales
- *“Cast yourselves in the arms of God, certain that God will give you strength.”* St. Philip Neri
- *“Become and instrument in God’s eyes by becoming nothing in your own eyes.”* St. Angela Merici
- *“See God in everyone.”* St. Catherine Laboure

The common denominator in all of these bits of advice is that we take our eyes off of ourselves. They tell us that life is not about us, but that we are about life. We are a part of something far greater than ourselves. They invite us to surrender ourselves to God, to rely on his grace more than on our own strength without his grace. We must see the needs of others and respond with compassion, justice and love. We must give of ourselves to others in the ordinary events of life so they can live, or have a better chance at life. And that is what will make us the best human beings we can be.

If I honestly thought that life revolved around me, and that that would make me the best human being I could possibly be, then, by all means, I would have to choose to live my life for myself, and not worry too much about anyone else. But if living for myself, and relying on myself had the opposite effect, and that is my experience, why wouldn’t I consider the advice of Isadore, Alphonsus Catherine and the rest?

Think about the people represented by the pictures before us. Do you remember them as almost divine, or as being very human, and at certain graced times, humans at their very best? What do you admire most, their selfishness or their self giving?

In a few moments we will receive in our hands the greatest human being who ever lived, who invited the first Christian saints, and all who came after them, and us today, with the same words: *“Come follow me, for I am the Way.”* There is no other if we want to be saints.