

Sunday, November 1, 2009

It's rather unusual for us to skip a Sunday Feast to celebrate the Saints. And yet just maybe someone juggled with the calendar so as to get us to think some little bit anyway about holiness – because that's what Saints are all about.

And yet holiness is one of those words that can mean almost anything – And, besides / it sounds like something from la-la land where those other worldly saints, those “holy ones” dwell.

More than one observer has commented that in our day and time there is a hidden conspiracy against “holiness” altogether; that a number of happenstances are joining together and creating a climate which makes it difficult not just to think about God – or; to pray – but simply to have any inner resources whatsoever.

So, we finally have to admit that the air we breathe today is generally not on our side when it comes to holiness.

One among the many things that work against us is this heavy – heavy concern about what we call My world, My career, My wants, My needs and My happiness. You may be able to find 2 or 3 TV stations that don't push it but then, you may have given up trying to find those 2 or 3.

Then today, we don't just do one thing anymore: we multi-task. On our way to work in the car we drink coffee, listen to the news, talk on the cell phone – and floss! Speed doesn't allow time for holiness or to smell the roses unless you order them by wire or ship them overnight. And combinations of these and a few others together account for the fact that we rarely find time and space to be in touch with the deepest values inside of and around us – because all the “busy”:-ness exhausts our energy.

And that's the word that zeros in on what we're talking about here.

If there's one thing you can say about holiness/ is that it's all about energy – this DESIRE – the HUNGER – the ache at the center of our very lives. And it's not about prayer or time or what I want or need or expect. It's all about God that we discover in all that.

In a word: **WHAT WE DO WITH OUR ENERGY – OR DESIRE – OR LONGING** – that makes for holiness. Its how we decide what is not just better for us but what's the **BEST!**

It's the way we want food, but struggle not to hoard when our neighbor is in want.

It's the way we all crave to be recognized and accepted, but struggle not to sell our souls for 15 minutes of fame.

St. Francis left behind his drive to have material possessions of which he was quite fond, and walked away to share Brother Sun and Sister Moon with the rest of the world.

Being a saint doesn't strip us of our earthly life blood!

When Jesus saw the crowds – he saw more than Crowds. He saw holiness – and who were they? these holy ones ? these blessed ones?

He saw shepherds, fishermen, tax collectors, prostitutes, the sick, the lame, the blind, the lepers and the possessed.

These were people who would never get on the list for Canonization.

It was bad enough that they had terrible reputations, but they also suffered the humiliation of believing that their suffering could be God's punishment for sin. That's what others thought of them.

But Jesus stripped away that kind of faith that was filled with fear and a sense that God was so far out beyond outer-space – and he did that with one word –

He called them blessed – “holy”, all of them saints.

All of those high-powered words are reduced to a simple story that our youngest easily understand.

Long ago, in the Far North, where it is very cold, there was only ONE FIRE. A hunter and his little son took care and kept it burning day and night. They knew that if the fire went out the people would freeze and the Great White Bear would have the Northland all to himself. One day the hunter became ill and his son had to do all the work. For many days and nights he bravely cared for his father and kept the fire burning.

The Great White Bear was always hiding near, watching the fire. He longed to put out – but dared not / for fear of the hunter's arrows.

When he saw how tired and sleepy the boy had become, he came closer to the fire and as the poor boy grew so tired he could keep awake no longer – he fell fast asleep. Then the Great White Bear leaped upon the fire with his wet feet and rolled over it until he thought it was completely out. Then he trotted happily away to his cave among the icebergs.

A little gray robin had been flying near and had seen what had happened.

Greatly worried when she thought that the fire might be out, - tiny as she was she waited until the bear was out of sight. Then she started swiftly to search until she found one tiny coal – this she fanned with her wings for a long, long, long time.

In doing so her tiny breast was scorched red and hurt terribly – but she did not stop until a fine red flame blazed up from the ashes.

The she flew away to every hut in the Northland – and whenever she touched the ground a fire began to burn.

This is the reason that the people in the North Country love the robin, and never tire of telling their children how the breast of a robin became red.

For we adults – that little bird, like all of us, had a passion to live. Holiness is what it did with its passion.

Of course there is always the parting word.

The red breast reminds us that when we spend our lives for good –

**WE DO TEND TO GET BLOODIED IN THE PROCESS. BUT THAT'S HOLINESS FOR THE ASKING!**

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