

Reflections

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Followers and Admirers of Christ

What is the importance of the Saints? They are our intercessors at the throne of God. But also and above all, they are the great models for our own lives. They want to be our guides on the way to God the Father.

Now then, where did the Saints get the strength to live their lives in an exemplary way? What is the mystery of their lives?

The mystery of their lives is named Jesus Christ. The mystery of their lives is: to follow Christ in all his ways. From the time they were called by the Lord, they followed Him generously and faithfully, fulfilling their mission. Many even went to foreign and unknown countries to announce the message of their Master.

To follow Christ is and should be the mystery of life for each Christian, and also for each one of us because all of Jesus' preaching is an invitation to follow Him and is directed – as we know – to each human being.

Also we, in our Baptism, were called for the first time to the imitation of Christ. And since then, God repeated and renewed this invitation many times and in many ways. Also today, God continues to call us in different ways.

We can distinguish two classes of Christians: **the followers and the admirers of Christ**. The admirer does not commit his/her person: he/she admires, looks from the outside and makes no effort to be like what he/she admires. The follower, on the other hand, is or tries to be what he/she admires.

Jesus himself always insists that it is necessary to follow Him. He never says that He seeks admirers. He makes it very clear that His own must follow Him in their lives and not only accept his doctrine because faith which is not translated into life, is worth nothing and does not save you from eternal damnation.

How can we follow Jesus? The fundamental condition for the invitation from the Lord is the personal encounter with Him. To be able and to want to follow Christ, we have to know Him, looking at his life and listening to his teachings. If we do not know Him.....if we know nothing about his generosity, nor about the unselfish giving of Himself, nor of his over-abundant love for us.....we will never truly feel like following Him.

We do not have the good fortune of the apostles to have been born in the times of Jesus. Nevertheless, many ways exist, many places for encountering Christ if we seek Him sincerely.

For example, He is there **in the Eucharist** which we celebrate together. **In the Gospel**, Jesus speaks personally to each one of us. And **in Holy Communion**, He himself invites us to eat his Body and drink his Blood, thus entering into the most profound communion with Him.

To follow Christ is to penetrate the way of love. But he/she who begins to love, begins to suffer and Jesus never hid the fact that following Him was difficult. He offers risk and not security. He does not offer the way to triumph but the failure on the Cross because whoever follows Him also accepts the fate of his Master: suffering and the Cross.

The lives of our Saints also did not lack pain and suffering. They accepted it for love of Christ, and they followed their Master to the final surrender: their lives were crowned by martyrdom.

Following Christ includes suffering and cross, but it also fills us with deep joy and permanent peace. And at the end of the road awaiting us – in communion with all the saints – is the happiness of Christ forever

Questions for reflection

1. Do I have love for the Cross of Christ?
2. Am I more an admirer or more a follower?
3. What is Christ for me?

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