



MISSIONARIES IN ACTION

DOMINICAN MISSION FOUNDATION

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It's Not Easy Being Good



Dear Mission Friends:

Recently a non-Catholic friend asked me what makes a saint. For someone who still has her dog-eared copy of *The Lives of the Saints* from grammar school, I'm embarrassed that I really had to dig deep to try to remember the criteria for sainthood. One had to be genuinely caring and selfless and devout, I told her, and there was something about performing miracles. (I used to skip over the disturbing martyrs' stories so I had forgotten about that qualifier.)

With the approach of All Saints Day on November 1, the day when we remember our sisters and brothers whose lives in this world were dedicated to the love of God and neighbor, and who now intercede with Our Lord on our behalf, I thought it would be a good time to refresh my memory and be able to give my friend a more official answer.

Saints are persons in heaven, canonized or not, who lived heroically virtuous lives worthy of imitation; who offered their lives for others; or who were martyred for their faith. In official Church procedure, the first step toward declaring someone a saint is taken by the person's local bishop, at least five years after their death.

He investigates their life by gathering evidence and witnesses of their actions, deeds, and words, and if he finds them to be worthy of sainthood, he submits the information to the Vatican's Congregation for the Causes of Saints. If they accept the bishop's application, they embark upon their own investigation, and if they determine that the person did indeed live a life of heroic virtue, the candidate is deemed "Venerable."

Upon continued study, if it's found that either a miracle came about due to the candidate's intercession in answering someone's prayers, proving that they are in heaven*; they voluntarily died before their time in place of another; or they had been martyred, dying for their faith rather than compromising the truth—then they are recognized as beatified and called "Blessed."

Finally, to be canonized and called a "Saint," a second miracle after beatification—or one miracle in the case of voluntary death or martyrdom—must be confirmed.

My goodness! (Pardon the pun.) It's a miracle that there are so many saints! I would wager, though, that as our world has developed socially, economically, and technologically,

*The miracle is very often a healing that has taken place through the candidate's intercession from heaven—the healing must be instantaneous, permanent, and inexplicable, with the pope having final approval after the scrutiny of panels of doctors, scientists, and theologians.

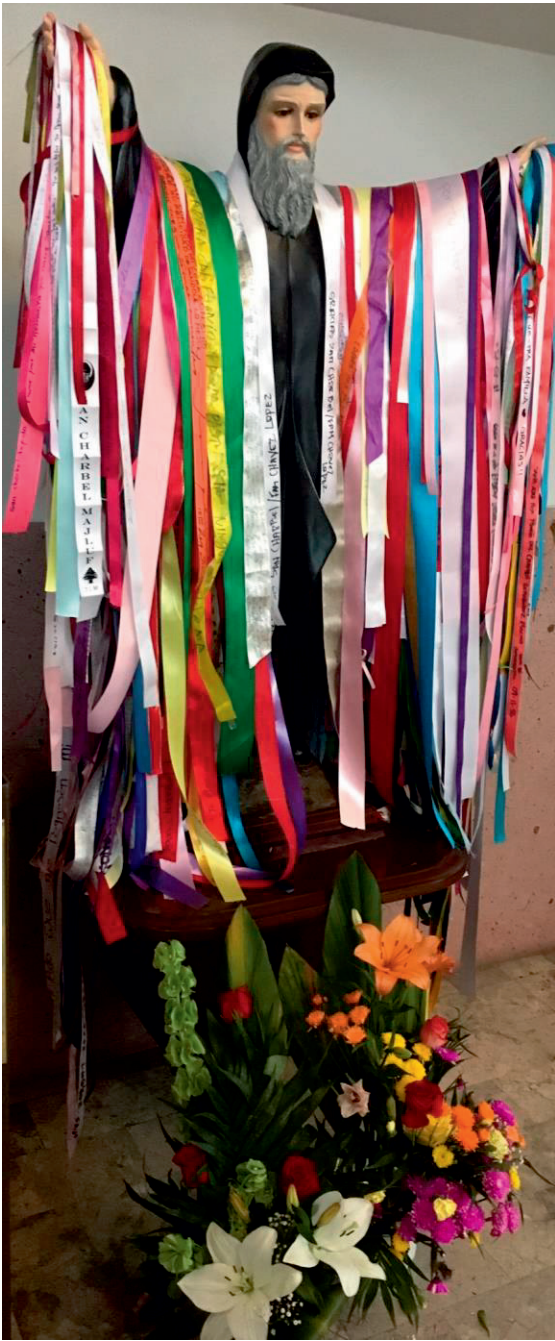
the number of disqualifying factors has risen and so the number of potential saints has fallen. Just take social media and its increasingly sophisticated and invasive vetting capabilities, for example. Who among us would pass even the first step of living a heroically virtuous life? It is true that Pope Francis has canonized twice as many saints as Pope John Paul II, but that is because most of Francis's were a single group of Italian martyrs who were killed in the 13th century for refusing to convert to Islam.

All Souls' Day Remembrance

November is the month for us to pray especially for our loved ones who have gone before us. You are invited to list the names of your departed family members and friends on the enclosed slip and send it in to be placed on the altar at St. Dominic's Church in San Francisco. Your loved ones will be remembered at daily Mass throughout the month.

St. Martin de Porres Feast Day Triduum

In honor of the November 3rd feast day of St. Martin de Porres, the patron of our missions, Masses will be offered at St. Dominic's Church in San Francisco on November 1, 2, and 3. We invite you to fill in and return the enclosed list of petitions to him which will be placed on the altar and remembered each day. And please join us in praying the Triduum in his honor (p.4).



A statue of Lebonese monk St. Charbel in a Mexicali church. In a tradition unique to Mexico, who adopted the saint as their own, his devotees hang colored ribbons inscribed with their petitions from his outstretched arms.

I actually prayed to become a saint, but when I received one of my first favorite books, *Little Sister*, for my First Holy Communion, about the life of Blessed Imelda Lambertini, I adjusted my nightly request from sainthood to beatification. I'd still be considered holy, but now there was a lot less pressure.

Imagine the virtue signaling I'd be subject to if it were today! It goes without saying that, *unlike* the 8-year-old me, one who is truly living a heroically virtuous life is generally not aware of it, never thinking of—and certainly never motivated by—the fact that they could one day be canonized! That would pretty much disqualify them right there. Indeed, I think for most, the glitch in the process would be in their motive.

What is “heroically virtuous” and how does one live such a life for the right reasons? Is that even possible? St. Peter seemed to offer his definition of heroic virtues when he said, “All of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love of brethren, a tender heart and a humble mind” (*1Peter 3:8*). But then he spoiled that by adding, “He that would love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking guile” (*1Peter 3:10-11*). If we are good, he said, we will have a happy life. That sounds fine, but it's basically self-centered. St. Paul also tempts us to be good for selfish reasons: “Show yourself in all respects a model of good deeds, and in your teaching show integrity, gravity, and sound speech that cannot be censured, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say of you” (*Titus 2:7-8*).

With raw honesty, the late Fr. Paul Scanlon, O.P., one of our long-time missionaries, wrote of his struggles to be good for the right reasons: “I took such pride in accomplishments and so little time simply to be...” He prayed to become pure of heart, to give of himself for no other reason than love, but in his humility felt that there was “too much in [him] yet of the ‘false self,’ the need for approval, the desire for success, the craving to look good in the eyes of others...”

Actually though, because we are human and imperfect, such a struggle is inevitable and probably a prerequisite to being pure of heart, or heroically virtuous. Seemingly in answer to Fr. Scanlon's struggle, Fr. Anthony Hofstee, O.P., another of our missionaries, once said from his chosen home in the Tala Leper Colony in the Philippines, **“It doesn't matter how great you are, but how good you are.”** To my mind, our Dominican missionaries come as close to being heroically virtuous as anyone, proving themselves over the decades to be unobtrusive, respectful, good, and true.

The Dominicans are an Order of Preachers, and what informs their preaching is time spent in contemplation. They reflect and ponder and reason, coming up with original thoughts or new ways of saying outmoded ones. Of missionary work, Fr. Kieran Healy, O.P. wrote from Kenya, “The missionary experience... identifies and strengthens the spark of God's presence in the soul of every human being who happens to come his way, each with his or her own unique set of needs and gifts. What an honor it is to share the generous mystery of God's love and be witness to his presence in every human heart!”

Our one-time mission director, Fr. Donald Bramble, O.P. wrote, “When one goes on mission, one looks for the presence of Jesus already there! That calls for tremendous respect for the people we are going to serve. We must listen to their needs, their culture, their world, and find Jesus already present. Through such humility, we are learning the riches and depth of Christ in those people—even when [they] have not yet encountered Jesus explicitly!”

Our tireless missionary in Guatemala, Fr. Timothy Conlan, O.P., wrote, “Because poverty and corruption go hand in hand,



A painting of 24 Dominican saints and blessed by Bernadette Carstensen, commissioned by St. Joseph Province for the Order's 800th Jubilee.

missionaries generally find themselves serving amid violence and conflict. We strive to improve the quality of life—spiritual and physical—of those we serve, but progress is hard-going, slow, and often illusory. I am at times reminded of the legendary man of La Mancha, Don Quixote, who sees windmills as hulking giants to be battled in order to defend the honor of his idealized Lady Dulcinea. Indeed, if there is a secret ingredient to improving the quality of life of the poor and repressed here in Rabinal, it is Love. Lest you think I myself am jousting with windmills, the recent messages of Pope Francis seem to validate this theory, and he offers tangible ways to live a life of love, beginning with strengthening the family unit. There is no shortage of efforts to promote various individual causes and rights, but if we raise our children as members of a loving group first, each working for the good of the other, and they do the same with their children, that selflessness will spread to increasingly larger groups within one's community, and individual rights will come to be freely enjoyed rather than begrudgingly legislated for the wrong reasons."

Throughout the lives of all these missionaries, and that of anyone seeking to be good and heroically virtuous, love, in its pure form, is a constant—and a constant struggle. For others however, one all-too-common motive that is not pure is that of feeling sorry for, and thus, I believe, better than, others whose life circumstances differ from theirs.

In an article from *In Communion*, Fr. John D. Jones wrote, "Compassion is quite different from pity, from feeling sorry for others, or even feeling empathy for others. We can have all of these feelings and remain unmoved to connect with others or do anything for them. **We can feel pity for people and feel quite superior to them.**" USF professor Bruce Wydick wrote in a book review in *Christianity Today*, "**Potentially helpful attempts to love our neighbor can degenerate into a paternalism that undermines the dignity of those we seek to help. It inadvertently teaches them that they are incapable of helping themselves.**"

Again, our missionaries seem to instinctively be on the right side of the fence regarding the purity of compassion vs. the arrogance of pity. Br. Daniel Thomas, O.P. wrote from Kenya, "Don't be the wise-guy from the West—the *mzungu*—coming over here with your brilliant ideas to cram down the throats of these people who [you think] so desperately need you to set them straight." Rather, we must "relate to people through the universal language of concern, care, and respect."

While at our mission in Mexicali, Fr. Scanlon wrote that it was "the poor and humble class ... that gifted [him] with their wisdom that one need not be a bishop or governor to be beloved by God, for these men who sold tacos on the street and the women who worked picking lettuce under a broiling sun were as Christ-like as anyone I ever met in the sacred halls of the Vatican. I am greatly indebted to these humble people so rich in faith and generously accepting in their love." In Chiapas he also wrote of the wonderful people he met: "Our industrial technology, agricultural science, and medical wisdom can be shared with them to ease their lives.

This can be our gift. But when you walk through their forests and their fields and no one passes by without saluting you as 'brother' and stopping to chat, you know they have a respect for life, a concern for one another, and an awareness of God that is missing in our comfort-laden, but lonely, society. We ought not pity them; rather we ought to learn from them, and then share our knowledge and love in return."

Today's world could surely use more love, more compassion, more truth—and more heroic virtue. It's quite a challenge just to be good and do good for goodness's sake, and sometimes we'll get discouraged and feel like we're just "jousting with windmills," but we mustn't give up the struggle. Here St. Paul has some helpful and more transparent suggestions:

I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace...Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body...Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen...Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you (Ephesians 4: 1-3, 25, 29, 31-32).

Fr. Hofstee, known for his simplicity of living and speaking, distilled Paul's list into four words:

"Be compassionate; forget yourself."

Finally, from our current director, Fr. Martin de Porres Walsh, O.P., "Please know how much good work has been achieved through your selfless giving and prayers! While the needs in all of our mission areas often seem never-

ending and overwhelming, while suffering is still very present in so many parts of the world, I wish to spread the word to all of you, our Mission Friends, that countless lives are a little better, a little easier, and a little more love-filled, thanks to you."

In peace,
Lesley Warnshuis

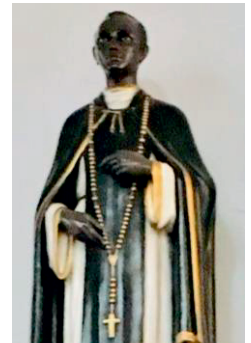
St. Martin de Porres Triduum

November 1, 2, and 3

First Day:

St. Martin, you always had sympathy for the poor and those who were suffering. I need your help and now ask for it with great confidence in your goodness and power. Please remember me, as you adore God. Amen.

(Your petitions, followed by Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be and Closing Prayer.)



Closing Prayer: *Dear St. Martin, I turn to you in my sorrow and anxiety to seek your friendly protection. Please intercede for me with our merciful Father in heaven so that I may be truly sorry for all my sins and be freed from the evils that shackle me. Ask that I might have something of your spirit of love and self-sacrifice, and so be at all times reconciled to God's holy will. Oh heavenly Father, in the name of your Son and of His blessed Mother, and by the merits of your faithful servant Martin, help me in my trouble and do not forsake me. Amen.*

Second Day: *St. Martin, we praise God for the manifestation of His love. The favors you received from God encourage us now to seek your intercession and help. We ask you most humbly to befriend and assist us from your place in heaven; but most of all, we beg you to commend us to our beloved Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

(Your petitions, followed by Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be and Closing Prayer.)

Third Day: *Brother Martin, when you were here on earth, you spent your life loving God and your neighbor. This we know from the testimony of your own Dominican brethren. Now that you live in the presence of God in paradise, intercede for those who stand so much in need of the healing help of God and beg the Divine Physician to give us health of the soul and body. Amen.*

(Your petitions, followed by Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be and Closing Prayer.)