

A watch is an intricate piece of machinery, interlocking gears moving in a seamless motion. At the heart of these gears, however, is a winding stem or now a battery that provides the motivation for those gears to move. All Saints Day is surely a day of remembrance but as we think especially about those saints who were part of our life, the question to be asked is what drove them to being saints, the motivating power that made them live life as they did?

St. John would suggest the answer lies in the heart of the gospel itself. Writing to new Christians toward the end of the first century, John emphatically declares them to be “Children of God” and more than that “**Beloved Children of God**”. Being a child implies two things; 1) you accept that you live in a big world which you don’t control and 2) you are willing to trust someone else to lead and protect you. Being a Child of God means knowing that don’t control life but trusting in a God who does have control.

Think of the saints who were part of your life. Few if any of them will wind up pictured in stained glass windows or having their likeness carved in marble. Few, if any of them, thought of themselves as saints or leading pure lives. They were for the most part unlikely saints, who appeared to be truly ordinary. Their words and actions, however, caught your heart; how they thought, how they lived, how they reacted to whatever script life gave them to live.

What drove them to live like that was not some inherent moral character or that God had given them more Holy Spirit than anyone else. What drove them was a sense of identity. They were willing to see themselves as Children of God, humbly accepting their powerlessness over life and gratefully trusting God’s presence and direction.

For them, God was real and God's participation in their life was real too. The best way of remembering and honoring them on this All Saints Day is learning to live as they did, seeing ourselves as Beloved Children of God, and learning to let God lead accordingly.

The meaning of the word trust in 1200AD was "confidence". When you walk across a bridge or drive on Route 1, you have to trust! Trust, however, is a hard sell living in a world driven by reason and logic. If we can't find it or prove it on the internet it isn't true. I passed by a new and very large billboard with large letters speaking of life in eternity and how you have to clean up your act to get there. It is supposed to catch people's attention but I think its message may not be what is really on people's minds and hearts.

Most people are concerned about life **now**, understanding why things happen as they do and finding certainty in an as yet unknown future. We don't live in a trusting world right now. People are more cautious than confident, more suspicious than secure. If we don't trust our politicians, employers, employees, friends or family than how do we begin to trust God? We worship a God we cannot see and whose actions in our life we don't understand. People around us want to believe but just can't. They can't get beyond the logic and reason they approach everything else with in life. Saying "Just have faith" isn't enough for them.

The 1st century Christians to whom John wrote struggled with this too. They wanted to believe but Rome was so relentlessly powerful and Jesus hadn't shown up yet. Their lives were not any easier or materially better because they were Christians.

Their friends and families ridiculed them. Their government would in time persecute them. How could they trust?

John reminded them of the gospel hope; not wishful thinking but lively expectation. The only thing that can tilt our heart is what God has already done, God's gracious act in allowing Christ to be here among us and for us that changed everything. For John this was proof of God's intentions towards us. Through Christ and the cross, the heart of God has been opened to us. We can trust in this God, trust in where we are and where we are going. We can live with the certainty of a grateful heart even if we don't always have the answers.

The people who change lives are those whose hearts are driven by more than what is obvious. They overcome instead of being overwhelmed. Their heart is open to the needs of others before it tries to satisfy itself. Their words are used to bless more than curse, to lift up instead of tear down. They live with a sense of humility, rejoicing in who God has made them be without insisting the rest of the world has to praise them for it. These are true saints, for the most part unknown and unrecognized during their life, preferring the shadows instead of the spotlight. They see themselves as Beloved Children of God and live life in response to that.

This is All Saints Day, a day to honor the lives of those who have gone before and a day to consider how we are living life now. This day also calls us to celebrate the promise of a new and better life waiting for us, because in Christ we are "Beloved Children of God".

+ Deo gracia +