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by Pat Marrin

[View Author Profile](#)
patrickjmarrin@gmail.com.

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“We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:3).

The Feast of All Saints invites us to reflect on the meaning of holiness as the goal of our earthly lives. How do we become holy? Is it something we accomplish by keeping all the rules or by developing habits of virtue that enable us to perform good deeds that are counted up to make us worthy of heaven?

There are many theologies and spiritualities of holiness, from the one described above to more nuanced ones that integrate ideas about human maturity and wholeness as the natural basis for a full life here and now. St. Irenaeus' famous phrase, "A human being fully alive is the glory of God" conveys how using all our gifts to the full and enlarging our lives in the service of others reveals the image of God in us. This is why God created us.

As Christians we believe that Jesus is the model of human fullness, and that to keep our "eyes on the prize" is to uncover an even deeper mystery that unites us to his divinity. The short prayer the priest says at every Mass at the offertory expresses this: "By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity."

Holiness is the wholeness of both humanity and divinity. This is offered to us in relationship with Christ. What is celebrated at our baptism is accessed at deeper and deeper levels as we mature humanly and enter more fully into relationship with him and other members of the body of Christ. St. Paul says, "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me." We live the pattern of his death by emptying ourselves for others, and this opens us to be filled with his risen life, both here and now and in anticipation of eternal life.

St. John, whose Gospel and Letters flow from a mystical intensity because of his encounter with the crucified and risen Jesus, says that holiness is a process of becoming like him because we see him as he is. To see - to believe in -- Jesus is to also see what we are becoming through him. As today's responsorial Psalm 24 says, "Lord, we are the people that longs to see your face." To see Jesus is to see God, and also to see ourselves united with God. This is the meaning of Glory. Yet, Glory is revealed gradually because it is the culmination of the process of becoming holy.

Today's Gospel for the Feast of All Saints presents the Beatitudes from Matthew. These blessings remind us that our journey to Glory happens in being part of the community of the Blessed and by sharing their commitment to poverty of spirit, meekness (nonviolence), justice, mercy, purity of heart, the pursuit of peace and the acceptance of suffering to advance God's reign on earth. Holiness is a verb. Sanctity is visible only in relationship with others acting together in Christ as he redeems the world. This places us among the Saints, and this is the joy of the Gospel.

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