

The fruits of love

sacrifices offered to God, the harvest to God of all the ripe fruits brought about by God's love and grace among men...

The Christian holidays

by ENZO BIANCHI

The feast of all saints is truly a memorial of the Church's glorious autumn, the feast against solitude, against every isolation

November 1, feast of all saints

In the last few decades very many saints and blessed have been proclaimed; there has never been a time in the Church with so many canonizations, which have become a sign also of an extended "catholicity" of Christian witness. In spite of this, many persons inside the Church or interested in the Church feel that they do not know the saints as close to them, are unable to discern "God's friend" — this is the marvelous patristic definition of a saint — in a next-door neighbor, in the Christian of everyday life. Perhaps this is so because we live in a culture that sets a premium on appearances, a world in which, as someone has said, "even holiness is measured in inches": in that case many seek not the Lord's disciple, but the successful ecclesiastic, the person able to attract crowds, the opinion leader with the current jargon of sociology, politics, economics, ethics on his lips, the media star sought for a cheap word on every kind of event, which makes him appear as the most eloquent, whether or not these follow the Lord.

In this ambiguous search for sanctity around us, the feast of all saints, the celebration of the communion of saints in heaven and on earth comes to our aid. In the heart of autumn, after the reaping, the harvest of the fields and of the vineyards in our countryside, the Church asks us to contemplate the reaping of all the living sacrifices offered to God, the harvest to God of all the ripe fruits brought about by God's love and grace among men. The feast of all saints is truly a memorial of the Church's glorious autumn, the feast against solitude, against every isolation that afflicts the human heart: if there were no saints, if we did not believe "in the communion of saints" — which not by chance is part of our profession of faith — we would be shut up in a desperate and despairing solitude. On this day we ought to sing: "We are not alone, we are a living communion!" We ought to renew the Easter canticle, because, if at Easter we contemplated Christ living forever on the Father's right hand, today, thanks to the energies of the resurrection, we contemplate those who are with Christ on the Father's right hand: the saints. At Easter we sang that the vine was living, risen; today the Church invites us to sing that the branches, cleansed and pruned by the Father on the vine that is Christ, have given their fruit, have produced an abundant vintage and that these clusters, gathered and pressed together form a single wine, the wine of the Kingdom.

Today we contemplate this mystery: those who have died for Christ, with Christ, and in Christ are alive with him and, because we are members of Christ's body and they are glorious members of the Lord's glorious body, we are in communion with each other, the pilgrim Church with the heavenly Church, and together form the one and complete body of the Lord. Today the scent of incense rises from our assemblies, a sign of our bonds with the Church above, the heavenly Jerusalem, which awaits the completion of the number of its children and which is living, glorious in God's presence with Christ forever.

This is the powerful call that sounds for us today: to rediscover the saint at our side, to feel a part of the same body. Consciousness of this presence has nourished the faith and the way of holiness of many believers, from the first centuries on to our own days: men and women who were hidden, but able to live daily the conscious resistance to ever new idolatries, in a patient submission to God's will, with a wise love for every human being, image of the invisible God.

The saint then becomes an efficacious presence for the Christian and for the Church: "We are not alone, but wrapped in a great cloud of witnesses" (Heb 12:1), with them we form the body of Christ, with them we are God's children, with them we will be one with the Son. In Christ such an intimacy is established between us and the saints that it exceeds the intimacy of our relations, even the most fraternal, here on earth: they pray for us, intercede for us, are close to us as friends who never fail. Their closeness is really capable of marvels, because by now their will is assimilated to the will of God manifested in Christ, their and our sole Lord: no longer do they live, but Christ lives in them, since they have reached the fulfillment of every Christian calling, the assumption of Christ's own will. "Not mine, but your will be done, Father" (Lk 22:42). Supported by all those who have preceded us on this journey, we will discover also the saints who are still active on earth, because the seed of saints is not about to become extinct: fallen on earth, it is still ready to give

fruit today. "Behold, I make a new thing: it sprouts just now, are you not aware of it?" (Isa 43:19).

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