

## **Homily: All Saints 2012: HT-W/XII-PC**

When we think about the saints, we're accustomed to think of the great things they did: martyrs who laid down their lives for Christ, dedicated pastors who spent themselves in service to their flock, laymen and women who devoted themselves w/ incredible compassion to minister to the poor and suffering, brilliant theologians whose work helped others grasp the truths of the faith. And it's understandable that these ideas come to mind when we consider the saints, for it's precisely the heroic service they rendered that gets the Church's attention and moves her to canonize someone.

Today I would like to consider another facet of the saints that gets less attention, but is quite fundamental to understanding them. This essential attribute of the saints is suggested by today's readings. I refer to the fact that the saints were united in an abiding and profound conviction of God's love for them. This is spelled out in the epistle: See what love the Father has bestowed on us, that we may be called the children of God! The saints realize that God has loved them more than the human heart can comprehend. God loves us so much that he wants us to become part of his divine family; so in Christ we become God's children by virtue of faith and baptism. It was this awareness of God's love that inflamed the hearts of the saints and inspired their service of the Lord and his people. The saints were not simply do-gooders motivated a vague affection for people. Rather, they were disciples seized w/ a profound sense of God's love for them, and they realized that it was imperative for them to respond wholeheartedly to this love. This is the sort of love that drove the apostles to abandon all, follow Christ, and carry his gospel to the ends of the earth. It is the same love that moved martyrs to lay down their lives in witness to the Lord, pastors to surrender all in service to their flocks, religious to pour out their all in service to the poor and neglected. The saints knew with all their heart that God loved them; and they knew that they had to respond in love to him and his people.

I think it imperative that we recover awareness of the key to the sanctity of the saints, namely, their faith in God's love for them. During this Year of Faith, we're meditating on the faith that tells us that we are indeed loved by God. Faith opens our hearts to welcome this divine love and respond in a life animated by love of God and neighbor. This love is received most especially in the sacraments and prayer; in sacrament and prayer, believers open their hearts to let God's love enter and empower them and make them holy. At this Eucharist we celebrate God's love for us. May our sharing in this sacred meal strengthen our faith in God's love for us and may this increase our love for Christ and for one another.