

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Next week we will have a quiz to review before Christmas break. **Do not stress out** about this, but be sure to review the taking it home sheets. They can be found online at stbonaventureym.com/igniteparents

Taking it Home #9: Your Siblings, the Saints!

What’s up, everyone?!,

 I hope you all had a wonderful Halloween last Wednesday! Fun fact for you all: even though here in America we primarily celebrate Halloween, or All Hallow’s Eve; in the Catholic Church we have an even bigger holiday which follows on Nov. 1! In some places, the day was referred to Hallowmas, the day of holy men and women. Today, we call this day All Saints Day! Back when I made the schedule for our nights, I had no idea that our night on the saints would fall on the Sunday after this holiday. I thought that was pretty cool!

 As you are well aware by now, each week I write a little bit about two of my favorite saints and put their stories on the backs of these “Taking It Home” sheets. One of the things I am trying to help teach you is that by fully participating in the Catholic faith, you are entering into God’s very life. We’ve talked a lot about how the Church is kind of like God’s Kingdom here on Earth over the past few weeks. Jesus is our King and Mary is our queen, but in a very real way the Church is so much more than a Kingdom: it’s a family.

 One of the many great things about being Catholic is that you are never alone. Not only do we always have God by our side, but we also have an army of our “older brothers and sisters” who have gone before us. These “older siblings” are the saints! It is so cool to look back on the lives of the saints and see how we are similar in different ways. Most of them started off as just an every day person who responded to God’s grace. They said yes to God’s plan for their lives and as a result the world was changed. Some of them even lived their lives completely in sin, rebelling against God and the Church, then through a moment and then a lifetime of deeper conversion they became the men and women we know as saints. Get to know them! Find saints that you think you would have gotten along with in real life. Get to know their lives and pray to them, asking them to lead you closer to Jesus. It’s true that you can speak directly to God, but one of the great things about being Catholic is that we see all of these people who have gone before us as our family. They are there to pray for you to God.

 Think about it like this. Someday, when you die, you will be with God face to face. Don’t you think when that happens you’ll pray for all of your family and friends on Earth? That’s what the saints do for you and for me!

 As a final note, remember this: “The world offers you comfort, but you were not made for comfort. You were made for greatness.” (Pope Benedict XVI) Not only should we get to *know* the saints; we are called to *become saints ourselves*. That may seem impossible at times, but “nothing is impossible for God”. You are called to be a saint and change the lives of the people around you, maybe even to change the world. I know of a million different ways you can be of a huge service to the Church. You are called to be the light of the world! Do not be afraid to go out and make a difference. As always, your small group leaders and I are here for you to answer any questions you might have and help you grow closer to Jesus and get involved in the Church.

 Things to Remember:

* There are like, a bazillion saints! Get to know them!
* The saints are seeing God face to face and praying to him constantly for the people on Earth.
* You could go directly to God with your prayers, but God wants you to feel like part of the family, and one way He does that is by showing us the lives of the holy people before us.
* Becoming a saint is becoming the best version of yourself. This is what God wants for each one of us.
* Strive for holiness. You are capable of it.

Challenge of the Week:

Do some research for a “patron saint” that you would like to know better and have intercede for you. Write them down in your prayer journals and take time getting to know about their lives. These challenges are important. If people blow them off I will start assigning homework. This is because I care about you guys and want what we teach to take root not only in your minds, but in your hearts. God bless you all, I am praying for each and every one of you.

 Jonah

Saints of the Week!

Mary, the Mother of Jesus

 We dedicated all of last week to talking about Mary, but she is important enough where I think it is fitting to feature her in her very own “Saint of the Week” paragraph. Mary is the greatest of all the saints. Throughout the years, people have accused the Church of being “anti-woman”, yet this could not be further from the truth. Aside from Jesus (who was God), the Church teaches that the single greatest person who ever lived was the Blessed Virgin Mary. Though she doesn’t pop up in too many places in the Gospels, it is the moments she appears that show how truly important she is. Scripture itself says that “all generations shall call her blessed”. She played a crucial role in our salvation by saying “yes” to God’s plan.

 During Ignite last week, we talked a lot about Mary’s role and the love she has for us as our spiritual mother and as Queen of the Church, but I want to take a moment to talk about something else really cool about our faith and our mother. At different points in history, Mary has actually appeared to people and given messages from Heaven. She comes as our mother to teach us about Jesus and the love that God has for each and every single one of us. In most of these “Marian Apparitions”, she appears to children, and the children are able to pass on deep messages that they would have never been able to come up with on their own. Many of these apparitions were also accompanied by incredible miracles, such as what took place with the roses and the tilma of Guadalupe, or the miracle of the sun that took place in Fatima, which was witnessed by 70,000 people. (Seriously, Google “Marian Apparitions” and see all the incredible stuff that happened!)

 The Church teaches there are four dogmas, or things we hold as true, about Mary. 1) Mary is the mother of God. Mary is the mother of Jesus, and Jesus is God. Therefore, we call Mary the “mother of God”. 2) Mary was perpetually a virgin. Jesus’ conception and birth was a miracle that took place by the power of the Holy Spirit. We may see the word “brothers” in Scripture, but the original language makes it clear that it can refer to cousins, distant relatives, or even simply fellow townspeople or childhood friends. 3) Mary was conceived without sin. This means Mary never had original sin. She also never committed a sin. She was perfect in every way, as perfect as a human being can be. 4) Mary was “assumed” into Heaven, *body and soul* to be with God fully. We have relics (the bodies/remains) of pretty much every saint, including all of the Apostle’s and St. Joseph, but we don’t have any relics of Jesus or Mary. Why? Because their bodies are in heaven, not just their souls.

 Mary has a great love for you and wants nothing more than to make you a saint. Let her!

P.S. The image to the top right is the image of the “Black Madonna” in Poland that Fr. Miro was talking about last week. It is said that St. Luke (the Gospel writer, who knew Mary personally) painted the image on a table that Jesus himself built as a carpenter. Cool stuff!

St. Joseph

 Mary is considered the greatest of the saints, right behind her is St. Joseph! St. Joseph was the foster father of Jesus and Mary’s husband. Like Mary, we don’t get too much of St. Joseph in the Gospels. We know that he died sometime in the thirty years Jesus was alive before he began his public ministry. We do know from the Gospel that Joseph was a great man of faith. He was a direct descendant of King David, and since he was the legal father of Jesus, Jesus too could be called “son of David”.

 St. Joseph was a carpenter, and the family didn’t have a whole lot of money. He did, however, have great trust in God. When Joseph discovered Mary was pregnant, he knew that she could be stoned to death if people thought she had committed adultery, so he decided to divorce her quietly so as not to bring shame upon her. But when the angel appeared to him and told him of God’s plan, Joseph immediately followed. He took Mary as his wife and became the head of the Holy Family. From then on, God communicates with Joseph through the angel to guide the family. At one point, Joseph is told they must flee to Egypt, because King Herod had heard that the Messiah was born and wanted to put him to death (for fear that the Messiah would take his crown). Joseph waited in Egypt patiently until the angel told him it was safe to return with the family.

 Can you imagine the pressure that St. Joseph must have felt? God entrusted him with the protection of Jesus, and right from day one there was a whole king and country trying to kill him. Joseph took on this responsibility with faith in God and helped raise Jesus. He taught him all about the Jewish faith, how to be a carpenter, and how to be a man. What an incredible privilege. St. Joseph is considered a father of the Church because he was the earthly father for Jesus. Because we are united to Jesus, he is like a father to us as well. Like Mary, he has appeared at different points in history to teach us about Jesus. Pray to St. Joseph! He is always praying for us.

“Go, then to Joseph, and do all that he shall say to you; Go to Joseph, and obey him as Jesus and Mary obeyed him;

Go to Joseph, and speak to him as they spoke to him; Go to Joseph, and consult him as they consulted him;

Go to Joseph, and honor him as they honored him; Go to Joseph, and be grateful to him as they were grateful to him;

Go to Joseph, and love him, as they love him still.” - St. Alphonsus Liguori