For Personal Reflection

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1. Who is your favorite saint? Who is your favorite saint?
2. Why do you admire him or her?
3. Why does he or she stand out in your mind, heart or imagination among so many others saints?
4. How do they bring out he best in themselves?
5. How do they bring out the best in others? How might they bring out the best in you?
6. Do you believe that you have ever met or encountered a real saint, whether or not recognized by others as such?
7. In what ways are you striving to be a saint? In what ways—with God's grace and the help of others—to bring out the best in yourself and others?

Further Reading

Spiritual Conferences. St. Francis de Sales. Translated under the supervision under the Abbot Gasquet and the late Canon Dom Mackey, O.S.B. The Newman Press: Westminster Maryland, 1962.

Introduction to the Devout Life. St. Francis de Sales. Translated by John K. Ryan. Image Books, Doubleday. 1989. Part III, Chapter 3.

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Great Saints

SALESIAN PERSPECTIVES

Known and Unknown

The saints are heroes. They are people we look up to. They are men, women—in some cases, even children—who managed, with God's help, to bring out the best in themselves...and in many cases, who likewise brought out the best in others.

Who is your favorite saint? Why do you admire him or her? Why does he or she stand out in your mind, heart or imagination among so many others saints? And Lord knows, there are many well-known saints from which to choose!

"How many saints have lived in caves, in shops or in factories, in good homes and religious communities, who died unknown? But they are at this moment far higher in glory than those who were well known and honored on earth."

But there are many, many more saints who courageously lived a life of virtue whose names are known only to the Lord.

In a sermon preached on the Feast of All Saints in 1621 at the Cathedral of Annecy, Francis de Sales said: "When the Church thinks of the saints and honors them individually—observing the fervor or martyrs, the love of the apostles, the purity of virgins—it says in imitation of the Creator that it is good. But when the Church gathers all the saints together in one great festival—reflecting on the crowns, palms, victories and triumphs of all the saints, it experiences supreme satisfaction and exclaims: 'How good it is; indeed, it is very good!'"

While he acknowledges that there are a number of reasons why the Church instituted the Feast of All (the) Saints, the "Gentleman Saint" draws our attention to one important dimension.

"The feast of All Saints was instituted to honor many holy people of both sexes, now in heaven, whose individual feasts cannot be observed by the Church because their names are unknown to us here on earth. Don't imagine for a moment that the blessed in heaven became saints through working miracles or following lofty callings. A vast multitude were unrecognized in this life: they never worked any miracles, and so we never hear much about them. Yet, they are highly honored in God's Church."

"The saints are heroes. They are people we look up to. They are men, women—in some cases, even children—who managed, with God's help, to bring out the best in themselves...and in many cases, who likewise brought out the best in others."

In the following point Francis de Sales not only shows himself to be a man of his time but it also demonstrates how—in least in spirit—how he is also a man of our time. "How many saints have lived in caves, in shops or in factories, in good homes and religious communities, who died unknown. But they are at this moment far higher in glory than those who were well known and honored on earth. That is why the Church, in view of the feast celebrated in heaven, holds this one on earth to sing the praises of those with whom it is familiar and of those also whose names and lives were never known to it."

"Who is your favorite saint? Why do you admire him or her? Why does he or she stand out in your mind, heart or imagination among so many others saints? And Lord knows, there are many well-known saints from which to choose!"

We hear a similar sentiment from the lips of Jesus himself in Matthew's Gospel (11:11) when he holds up a well-known saint—his cousin and great herald, John the Baptizer—as a model of greatness: "I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptizer; yet, *the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he*." (Editor's emphasis.)

So, we ask you again: Who is your favorite saint? Why do you admire him or her? Why does he or she stand out in your mind, heart or imagination among so many others saints?

Perhaps your favorite saint is your mother, or father. Maybe a grandparent. Perhaps a cousin or colleague. Possibly your grocer or letter carrier.

Why are they saints? How do they bring out he best in themselves? How do they bring out the best in others? How might they bring out the best in you? The truth is that the world is filled with saints. Whether in "caves, in shops or in factories, in good homes and religious communities" or wherever else, chances are we are surrounded by saints whom we do not recognize...perhaps even ourselves.