

A View from the Pew

by Deacon Greg Kandra

Running for Sainthood

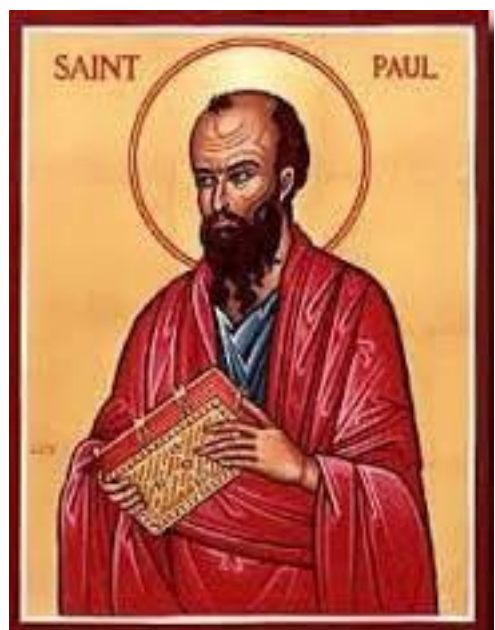
We are surrounded by saints. Just take a look around the church. There they are, in stone and glass: mute reminders of those who have gone before us, “marked with the sign of faith.” They have familiar names: Joseph, Therèsè, Anthony, Jude. They are silent sermons to the high ideal to which all of us aspire—and to which so many of us fall short.

I’m speaking, of course, of sainthood.

Not long after his baptism, Thomas Merton was walking home with a friend (who happened to be Jewish). The friend asked him what he hoped to achieve by his conversion. “Why, to be a good Catholic, of course,” Merton replied. His friend stopped him. “That’s not enough,” he countered. “You should want to be a saint.”

You should want to be a saint. I read that and I think: Yes, how obvious. And how true. Why would we want anything less? Why would we try not to be the very model of Jesus Christ? Why would we strive not to be as fearless as Paul, as modest as Therèsè, as quietly dutiful as Joseph?

One answer, of course, is that it’s easier *not* to be those things.



To strive for sainthood is like running a marathon. You get sidelined by sprains or breaks. But you get back on course, eventually. It’s work—hard work. But then, what worthwhile pursuit isn’t?

In trying to live a holy life, we encounter our own spiritual puddles and challenging weather patterns—it isn’t always cloudless and clear. The dangers on the route we Christians run are perilous. Paul wrote poignantly near the end of his life, at the brink of a bloody death, that he had finished his course. He had completed the race. He knew, better than anyone, that what he had run wasn’t a sprint.

I think all the saints know that. Nobody finds a life devoted to sacrifice, prayers, and charity easy. What did saints do to successfully complete the race? How did they train? What was their secret?

We celebrate Feast of All Saints on November 1 each year. Take a moment when you are in church to look up. Look into the faces, etched in glass, carved in wood. Consider the lives they lived. Ask them for guidance. Listen. You may be surprised what you hear.

