

Bishop Michael Marshall
13 August 2006

SAINTS ALIVE!

During the coming 'silly season' of summer, I thought that it might be a good idea each Sunday in the weekly bulletin to take one of the Saints (with a capital S), whose saint's day occurs during August and write a short piece about that particular saint as well as printing the prayer for that particular saint's day at the conclusion of the article.

In many ways it is a tragedy that we do not know more about the saints and martyr throughout the centuries, because it is in the 'communion' and fellowship of the saints that we seek to live out our discipleship in our own day and in our own culture. I like to think of the saints as being to Christ the light of the world what the spectrum is to the light of this world. They show us in differing shades and colouring something of the greater glory of God. One of the lovely things about the saints is that they are not cloned – they represent a huge variety of characteristics and personalities and all together reflecting something of the light of that infinity which is invisible to our limited sight.

Get to know the saints for what they are and not for what they are not! They are not superstars, superhuman nor even heroes. They have feet of clay and they know it, and don't need any investigative reporter to reveal it! They are gloriously flawed human beings, who have found the gift of God's amazing grace to be sufficient to redeem their weaknesses and to turn them into strengths. They are not ashamed of their wounds, - indeed their wounds are the marks which authenticate their love and their 'profession' as the wounded healers of the world.

They do not seek to impress, precisely because they are too busy trying to express something of the love of God that has made them what they are. So they do not point us to themselves or seek to draw attention to themselves: rather they point us to Jesus, 'the Author and Perfecter of their faith and ours. We don't so much pray to the saints so much as we ask the saints to pray to God for us, as we frequently ask our friends on earth to pray for us – only they do it from the nearer Presence.

ST CLARE OF ASSISI : 11TH AUGUST

Born in 1193 in Assisi of a wealthy family, Clare caught the joy of a new vision of the gospel in simplicity of life from the preaching of St. Francis of Assisi – also born of a wealthy family, yet paradoxically choosing to follow the way of poverty and simplicity of life. She escaped from her home and her wealthy family, first to join the Benedictines, but later moved on, choosing a contemplative way of life, and founding her own community, which lived in corporate extreme poverty, - poverty understood as a total dependence upon God to provide all things necessary, and lived out in community life.

Clare became the first woman to write a religious Rule of life for her community and in it showed great liberty of spirit in dealing with earlier, rather more strict and legalistic rules of life.

During the long years after the death of St. Francis (she lived until she was sixty, which in those days was regarded as a long life – she supported his earlier companions in their desire to remain faithful to the vision of St. Francis for poverty and simplicity of life together with service to others. Some of her last words were quite simply: ‘Blessed be God, for having created me.’ Clare became for women’s orders what St. Francis was and is for men’s

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*God of peace,
in the poverty of blessed Clare
you gave us a clear light to shine in the darkness of this world:
Give us grace so to follow in her footsteps
that we may, at the last, rejoice with her in your eternal glory
;through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
One God, now and for ever. Amen*