

When Jesus gathered his disciples around him just before he ascended back to the Father, he challenged them to; 'Go and teach all nations.'

¹⁶ Meanwhile the eleven disciples set out for Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had arranged to meet them.

¹⁷ When they saw him they fell down before him, though some hesitated.

¹⁸ Jesus came up and spoke to them. He said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

¹⁹ Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

²⁰ and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And look, I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.' (Matthew 28:16-20)

Initially this challenge frightened the life out of them. They went back and locked themselves up in a room and hid. It was only when they received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost that they began the business of spreading the gospel with energy and enthusiasm.

Future generations of Christians suffered huge hardships in their desire to preach the gospel after the example of these first disciples. You just have to look at Acts of the Apostles and the accounts of the suffering of the Martyrs to see the kind of things that they went through. And we need to remember that their times were harder times than our pain-free, world. Punishment then was ultra-violent, painful, and bloody. They went into it with their eyes open; Jesus did ask "Can you drink the cup I'm about to drink?" (Matt 20:22) Jesus also reminded these followers of his that they would have to cope with obstacles and they would have to run the gauntlet of opposition.

³³ I have told you all this so that you may find peace in me. In the world you will have hardship, but be courageous: I have conquered the world. (John 16:33)

The thing is, for Christians today, as in the time of Jesus and his first followers, there is a real need to remember that it's not just merely about what goes on in this world, and the struggles of this world. We are asked to keep an eye on the next world too. And our world doesn't understand this. Or it is made out to be a Disneyland kind of thing.

Down through the ages, heroic women and men passed on the message of Jesus Christ to the next generation and many of them suffered for it. They also travelled from place to place and even to other countries to do this despite dangers and other hardships.

The Saint we celebrate today, Archbishop Laurence O'Toole, was called in his time to preach the gospel in the farms and fields that have been replaced today with streets, roads and

buildings on the banks of the river Liffey. He was Abbott of Glendalough, one of St. Kevin's successors and after the death of his predecessor in Dublin, Archbishop Gregory; he succeeded him as Archbishop of Dublin in 1162. He initiated numerous reforms in Dublin including the introduction of religious orders from the continent. He led the six Irish Bishops to the Third Lateran Council in Rome in 1179. He got permission to summon a council of the Irish Church and later he travelled on a mission of Mediation to Europe and died there at Eu on November 14th 1180. He was canonized a saint by Pope Honorius III in 1226 the same year as St. Francis of Assisi died.

When I celebrate funeral liturgies, and in one of the oldest parishes in Dublin, we have more than our fair share, I am always moved by the simple faith of people, especially our older parishioners. There is so much solidarity and support among families for the bereaved and in respect of the dead. They must have got this from somewhere. As I say, our parents and their parents passed it on to us. We first hear of Jesus Christ in the cradle, in the pram, by the fire-side. Our mams and dads, our nanas and granddads that have passed on the faith to us are heroic. Thanks be to God for parents. We take them for granted at times but we are blessed because they were granted to us.

Faith is passed on, freely received, freely given. It is not possible to buy faith as a commodity obviously. It is free and it's available to all. It grows up in us as a seed which needs to be nourished and cultivated all through life so it doesn't end till we are called home to God. And then there's the flowering. From the day we're baptized we are strengthened for our faith-journey through life with one another. And the waters of baptism and the sacrament of confirmation sanctify us for our life with God in heaven.

In this month of November, we remember our mams and dads and all belonged to us who have completed their faith-journey and have returned to God. This is a sad time of the year because even though we are people of the resurrection and hope in Christ's promise of a place in the next world, humanly speaking, loss can take our energy and our joy. And this needs to be attended to and acknowledged. We need to reach out and not to be alone in the pain of loss, be it due to someone who has died, or a separation, or any way a relationship ends. I heard this recently, I believe it was said by a priest at a funeral; "Do not be afraid of your tears, your tears are the most beautiful holy water you can get." That man was inspired.

So, we have been reflecting on the heroes of our Church, of our Catholic Christian way of life. Let us be unafraid to acknowledge there was and is a dark side too. And this darkness has caused so much pain and wreaked havoc on our Church. Cardinal Dolan of New York Tweeted about this when he said this has brought the church to its knees, but on its knees is where the church ought to be. Our own Archbishop Martin works hard every day and has suffered much in his proactive response to this. Let us continue to offer our prayers for him and all in leadership in the diocese of Laurence O'Toole and Kevin of Glendalough. But, again, Jesus Christ calls us, calls you young people to bring light out of darkness.

Take a look around this church tonight. There are several statues with candles lighting under them. St. Therese the Little Flower, St. Joseph, St. Anthony of Padua. Each of us has a particular favourite. Can you imagine what it might be like if someone, somewhere came to

light a candle and say a prayer under a statue or an image of you someday? Can you imagine someone praying to God through the intercession of you? Why not? We're all called to be saints. Our late Holy Father, Blessed John Paul the Great canonised and beatified more saints (and was criticized for it – downgrading Sanctity etc) Well I don't agree, because maybe there's a chance for me. Why not?

Saints are not just the preserve of medieval monks or far-away friars. Sanctity isn't only for martyrs and enclosed nuns. John Paul II beatified mothers and fathers, factory workers and doctors, nurses and children, people working for social justice, priests and those who died for their faith. It's all part of the universal call to holiness. It means you and me are called to sanctity and not merely to be good Christians.

Saints move in and out of our lives each day. They grew up in families and lived in neighbourhoods just like you and me. My nana met a saint in the late 1980s on Donore Avenue in Dublin 8. Mother Teresa was coming out of Mass in St. Teresa's Church there with some of her sisters near their convent on the South Circular road. Many of us saw a saint on Thomas Street on September 30th 1979. Pope John Paul II was being driven through the streets of Dublin on his way to Aras an Uachtarán. People I know and friars I've lived with met St. Padre Pio in person. He was recorded in film, in audio, and photographed. He only died 44 years ago so that was more or less in our time

So it means the person at the check-out queue could be a saint. It could be that the woman having a coffee at the table next to you could be a saint. The guy having a beer down the bar form you could be a saint. You could be someone, somebody else calls a saint but you'd say yeah, right, but then again, the saints said the same thing.

Saints in our day after the example of Laurence's charity include people who work for justice and those who have their eyes and hearts open to the poor. I am thinking this evening of the work of

- the Vincent DePaul
- the Twitter Christmas Single choir – people drawn together using modern social media tools and the inspiration of Brenda Drumm and Ian Callanan
- Br. Kevin of our own Capuchin Community in Church Street who with the help of his staff and volunteers, provides food, medical and counselling care and support to over five hundred individuals, everyday.

And now the story of Cappuccino Coffee! It is said that Friar Marco d'Aviano, back in the 1600s, played a crucial role in the bringing about peace at the Battle of Vienna. While caring for the soldiers of the defeated Ottoman Turks, Friar Marco asked that the coffee in the camp be brewed for the men, but he considered it too strong so he added honey and boiled milk and thus invented the beverage we know as Cappuccino. So the next time you are enjoying a cup of Cappuccino, please say a prayer for all the members of the Capuchin Order throughout the world.

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