



Praying with the Saints
by Bob Burnham

It's really November and a time to remember that we all have our favorite saints that the church reminds us to especially remember this month. I'm from Pennsylvania originally near Loretto the home of St. Francis College, run by the Third Order Franciscans, so naturally, St. Francis and St. Clare are among my favorite saints, and I've spent a lot of time getting to know them. I have also taken the time to get to know St. Ignatius of Loyola and St. Peter Faber, among many others.

Getting to know the saints—or letting them get to know us better—involves more than learning facts about them. We want to develop a relationship with them. Just as being a good neighbor requires that we know more than a neighbor's address, developing a relationship with a saint means more than knowing the saint's name, date of birth, feast day, what he or she is the patron of, and other biographical details.

Perhaps the best way to get to know a saint is to pray with her or him. I offer the following meditation to guide you in praying with the saints this special month of November.

Before you get started, bring to mind a particular saint. You may already have a patron saint (for whom you have been named) or another saint to whom you feel close. If that's not the case, that's OK; there's nothing wrong with picking a saint at random or praying with the saint of the day. (They're all good; they're saints, after all.)

Once you have a saint in mind, you will need some reading material related to the saint. If you have access to the actual writing of the saint, perfect! If not, having brief biographical information about the saint will work well too. You don't need much material; just a few paragraphs will do. We have such data in our library or can lead you to resources if you stop by the Faith Formation Office and let the staff help you!

The meditation that follows has five steps: *Center*, *Read*, *Share*, *Rest*, and *Imitate*. Before starting, find a prayerful space where you can be alone with the Lord.

Center. Rest in the quiet of your prayer space. Ponder the following Scripture verse until you feel calm, free, and at peace: "May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from His glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light" (Colossians 1:11–12). Spend a moment giving thanks for one or two things for which you are grateful.

Read. Invite your chosen saint to pray with you by reading some of that saint's writings or by reading a brief biography or story about her or him. Read slowly. You are not reading for comprehension; rather, you are waiting to hear from the Holy Spirit about what you can learn from this saint of God.

Share. What stands out to you from what you've read? Maybe it's just a word, or maybe it's a phrase or sentence. Imagine that you are sitting with the saint, talking to each other as two close friends. What does this word, phrase, or sentence mean to your saint? What does she or he tell you about following Christ?

Rest. Sit in the silence with this word, phrase, or sentence. If your mind wanders, that's OK; gently return your focus to the word, phrase, or sentence that grabbed your attention.

Imitate. What wisdom from this saint helps you understand your own unique call to be a disciple of Jesus? Share any insights with the Lord. How will you be Christ to the people you encounter today? Ask the Lord for any grace you might need to follow His call, and give thanks to the Lord for spending time with you and your chosen saint.

You may like to close the time with the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, the Glory Be, or one of your saint's favorite prayers.

You can use this meditation with any saint. Over time, you may find that meditating on a specific saint will lead to feelings of consolation. If this is the case, consider that an invitation to learn more about the saint and her or his charism and special gifts from God. You might even be receiving a call to follow this saint more closely in living your own life.

The saints are more than the heroes of our faith or role models for holy living. They are people who care for and love us, who actively lead us to follow Christ. When we take the time to get to know them, we are learning about our own unique call to do what they did: live as if the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand – for it is!