



As you know, there has been a great deal of recent controversy about statues of famous figures from history and a movement to remove some these statues from their places of honor. These ideas are based on looking back on the lives of these historical people, seeing that some of their words and actions, that, by our standards and values today, are judged very harshly. Some of the founding figures of nation, including George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, have had their characters condemned because they once owned slaves. I am great admirer of Abraham Lincoln, but there are those who say he was more committed to saving the Union than in truly ending slavery. With some exceptions, I am uncomfortable with this practice since I think it unfair to judge the past by the present. No doubt these men had serious flaws and committed deeds that we now judge differently, but they were also great men who helped form our nation.

I think if we did the same things to some of our saints in the Catholic church, we would have some problems. The saints were men and women who loved God, but they also had faults and sins. One of my favorite saints, St. Therese of Lisieux had period of her life when she even questioned God. The founder of the Redemptorists, St. Alphonsus Liguori, struggled so much with scruples that there were moments when he wondered if he could be saved by God. St. Jerome, who did so much to help translate the Bible, had a fierce temper. Even our own parish patron, St. Martin of Tours, when they Church wanted to make him a bishop, hid out in barn until a quacking goose revealed his presence. I love the saints of our

Church because they were so very human and faced many of the same challenges and difficulties in life that challenge us all.

After Vatican II, there were some who began to downplay the saints and their roles in our spiritual lives. They felt some Catholics put too much emphasis on the saints and it distracted them from reverencing God. Some of our Protestant friends might even say to us that they think we worship saints. We know this is not true and I think most Catholics always knew the right role of saints in their spiritual life. Our saints are part of our families. We love them and are proud of what they did in their lives. They inspire us to help us live our own Christian lives. Many of us have our favorite saints who have become like a treasured friend. Rather than distracting us from adoring God, I believe that the saints move us toward loving God and serving him.

I lived five years in Washington DC. Oftentimes, family and friends would come to visit me, and I would show them the sights of our nation's capital. One of my favorite places to take them was to the tomb of the unknown soldier. Here, 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year, a soldier in dress uniform, solemnly marches back and forth, 21 steps, in honor of the fallen heroes who are buried in this tomb at Arlington National Cemetery. The words on the tomb read:

**HERE RESTS IN HONORED GLORY AN AMERICANSOLDIER
KNOWN BUT TO GOD.**

This moving ritual is a most well-deserved tribute to all our American military men and women. Today, on All Saints Day, we act in a similar way. Our focus is not so much on the recognized saints of the Catholic Church, but rather on the men and women, who will never be canonized by the Church, but who are known to us as men and women who loved God, were good and caring to their family and friends, and who cared and were concerned about those in need. Some of them bore illness with great courage, many of them performed thousands of loving deeds for those around them. They taught us in their kitchens and as they put us to bed, to say our prayers. They showed us love by their dedicated work to make a home and family for us. They helped nurture their parishes by their generosity and service. They sat with us in doctor's offices as we waited for

results from our biopsies. They visited us when we were sick and celebrated our birthdays, first communions, and weddings.

They are not unknown to you. They are your parents, your brothers and sisters, your neighbors, your children, your co-workers. They were your priests and nuns who taught you. They sat in these pews and prayed with you. Today, on this All Saints Day, and tomorrow on All Souls Day, we not only pray for them, but to them because in faith we know they are home with God. They are our as much part of our lives and families as those with whom with us today. We always carry them in our hearts.