

November 1, 2020 | Solemnity of All Saints

[RV 7:2-4, 9-14](#)

[PS 24:1BC-2, 3-4AB, 5-6](#)

[1 JN 3:1-3](#)

[MT 5:1-12A](#)

By Fr. Francis Gargani, C.Ss.R.

On this Feast of All Saints, that conveniently falls this year on a Sunday, it feels particularly important to celebrate this vital doctrine of our Faith. Considering the serious condition of our world community reeling from a pandemic that has killed over a million people worldwide, over two-hundred thousand in our nation alone, we need to hear what God might be revealing to us at this cataclysmic time. Politically, our nation is fraught with peril, our very democratic republic under threat from within, our election in two days may be under siege.

Environmentally, with the rest of the world, climate change is wreaking havoc — whether it's the worst fires ever of incredible destructive force on our west coast, or a series of relentless hurricanes and tropical storms battering the Gulf Coastal states — forcing literally millions to flee. Though she might be laughed or cursed off the radar, where's a Julian of Norwich when we need her!?! In the midst of the plague known as "the Black Death," when between one-third and one-half of Europe's entire population was wiped out, Julian wrote her famous:

*All Shall Be Well
And All Shall Be Well
And All Manner of Things Shall Be Well.*

We need saints. Every age and epoch of history have them because, honestly, there's never been a time when it didn't seem like there wasn't much hope for our sinful, wounded, struggling world. Try as you might, there really has never been a time in our Story on this planet that humans weren't discouraged and distraught. No matter how we might wax nostalgic about an earlier period of our own short lives, when we imagine life was simpler and less complicated, plenty was happening in the world around us to drive people to want to escape! The seemingly prosperous and often idealized fifties, when "America was Great," were filled with the ever-present fear of nuclear annihilation and the revenge of one giant bug or Godzilla creature after another, created by our nuclear mistakes and nightmares that inhabited our films, comic books, and pulp fiction.

In the fifties, President Eisenhower was prescient enough to recognize the specter of the military-industrial complex which had begun during that time. It has become a relentless and consuming beast devouring the soul of this nation!

There's never been "a golden age!" There is as much reason or cause to hold out hope in this dangerous and difficult period of our human history, as in any other, because the saints are still with us, those gone before us, and those alive among us! The "forever life" in God of our heroes

and heroines which we profess in the doctrine of the “Communion of Saints” continues to impact our lives, both individually and especially, as the Community of Christ’s Disciples, the living Church. Though the criticism of making non-conformists saints to tame and control them is not without justification – Dorothy Day in her own lifetime declaring she didn’t want ever to be relegated to sainthood to be put on a shelf and made harmless (“Don’t want to be dismissed that easily” she wrote in her famous autobiography, “The Long Loneliness”) – the fact remains that we continue to “make saints” in our tradition because we need them.

Many saints challenged not only the society of their time, but also the institutional Church, “thorns in the side” of the Church, as it were, and continue to challenge us today. They not only have left us rich legacies of spirituality that continue to mold and shape us, but many of them started movements embodied in their disciples that lifted up the poor, the immigrant, the disenfranchised, and the forgotten of their time, through education, healthcare, housing, centers of rehabilitation for those suffering mentally, physically and spiritually, and countless other ways that helped people discover their dignity and inherent worth, their identity as daughters and sons of God.

If nothing else, the saints are kin-dom (kinship) builders, rejecting the status quo that keeps people and creation tyrannized and enslaved. If nothing else, the saints are living protest movements that inspire ours. Whether they stood up to racism or fascism, or any other ‘ism’ that denigrated people and creation, these prophets of hope challenge us, in the face of the darkness both within and without, to live out the power of Christ’s death and resurrection in the real world. Amen!

Fr. Francis Gargani, C.Ss.R, is a Redemptorist priest, an experienced spiritual director, retreat leader, and workshop leader. He has served in a variety of ministries as peace and justice leader, parish priest, campus minister and retreat director and is now on evangelization team for his community in Washington, D.C.