

# COLUMNISTS

## Sainthood, in principle, is available to everyone

Saints are holy people. That's a safe enough statement. But what is holiness?

Holiness is what God is. To be holy is to participate in, and to be an image of, the holiness of God. "Be holy," the Scriptures declare, "for I, the Lord, your God, am holy" (Leviticus 19:2).

The biblical notion of holiness, rooted in the Old Testament, involves a "being set apart" by God from what is profane in order that we might belong to God in a new and special way.

To be set apart, or consecrated, by God is to be drawn into the kingdom of God, which is God's healing and renewing power and presence on our behalf. To the scribe who grasped the meaning of the two great commandments — love of God and love of neighbor — Jesus said: "You are not far from the kingdom of God" (Mark 12:34). For Jesus, the kingdom of God — the life of holiness — is open in principle to everyone.

This holiness is the practical equivalent of grace itself, which is God's self-gift. To be in the "state of grace" is to be permeated and transformed by the presence, or holiness, of God.

Saints are persons, therefore, in whom the grace of God, won for us by the redemptive work of Christ, has fully triumphed over sin — which is not to say



### essays in theology

BY FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

that the saints themselves were without sin. Jesus alone was sinless (John 8:46; 14:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:22; Hebrews 4:15). Only he could be called "the Holy One of God" (John 6:69).

In the Catholic tradition, there are different categories of saints. The term includes those who have been sanctified by the grace of Christ, whether living or dead, whether Christian or not. Such saints are commemorated every year on the feast of All Saints (Nov. 1).

The term "saint" can also be applied to biblical figures, like Moses and the prophets, who lived before the time of Christ but in a manner that anticipated his teachings and example.

The most common application of the word "saint" is to those whom the church, either through popular acclaim

(as in the first Christian millennium) or through formal canonization, has declared to be members of the church triumphant (i.e., those already in the company of God, the angels, and the other saints in heaven) and who are commemorated and invoked in the church's liturgy and in private prayer.

Given the broader, more "catholic" understanding of "saints," many people now acknowledge the sanctity of well-known, non-canonized Catholic figures such as Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

The sanctity of non-Catholic Christians has also been recognized and liturgically celebrated by other churches, for example, the German Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was executed by the Nazis toward the end of World War II.

The category of "saint" may also be extended to holy people outside the Christian family, such as the 20th century prophet who wrote eloquently about the prophets of old, the Hasidic rabbi Abraham Heschel, and the great Hindi holy man of India, Mohandas Gandhi.

The first Christian saints, in the most restricted sense of the word, were the martyrs who died for the faith and whose reward was believed to have been immediate transition to eternal life with

Christ.

The early Christians showed their veneration for the martyrs (called "red martyrs," because of the shedding of their blood) by visiting their graves, by encouraging pilgrimages to the site, and by adopting the martyr as the patron of their church or town. If miracles were attributed to their intercession, their remains would be transferred, with the approval of the local bishop, from their original resting place to a shrine in a church. That act (known as "translation") was tantamount to canonization.

Later, the concept of martyrdom was extended to those who suffered for the faith (by imprisonment, torture, exile or the loss of property), but without being put to death. They were called confessors, or "white martyrs."

The term "saint" was later applied as well to ascetics, wise teachers, pastoral leaders and those who cared for the sick and the poor.

A more detailed consideration of the meaning and scope of sanctity is available in my new book, *Lives of the Saints*, just published by HarperCollins in San Francisco.

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Father McBrien is a professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame.

## Resources should be used to serve God and others

18th Sunday of the Year (Aug. 5): (R3) Luke 12:13-21; (R1) Ecclesiastes 1:2, 2:21-23; (R2) Colossians 3:1-5, 9-11.

People often do funny things where money is concerned. Jesus told about such a person in the Gospel parable.

St. Paul says it is the "love of money that is the root of all evils" (1 Timothy 6:10). The "love" of money, not money!

In fact, the first foolish thing we can do with money is to deny its importance.

There are things only money can buy. Kids' braces, a good education, a dependable car, decent clothes. Without money, one can have many problems.

The man in the parable was rich. There's nothing wrong with that. To possess money is good, but to let money possess one's heart is bad. The rich man was foolish, not because he had money, but because of what he let money do to him.

So the second foolish thing one can do with money is to keep it to oneself. The rich man in the parable was going to hoard his riches. Then he planned to take life easy. Sounded pretty good, but it was all wrong.

He made the same mistake many of us make. He assumed that all he needed for a contented life was a lot of nice things, all that money could buy. Things can't



### a word for sunday

BY FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

make one happy. Some of the richest persons in the world committed suicide, like George Eastman, the founder of Kodak.

Happiness comes from relationships — from reaching out to God and to others. Most parents know there is more joy in giving to their children than in hoarding for their own pleasure. Then joy will go even further when they give to people in need and to worthwhile causes.

Wealth is for sharing. Nothing can give such satisfaction and joy as giving to others for the love of God.

Finally, the most foolish thing anyone can do with money is to allow it to become one's god.

Henry Ford once asked an associate

about his life goals. The man replied that his goal was to make a million dollars. A few days later Ford gave the man a pair of glasses made out of two silver dollars. He told the man to put them on and asked what he could see. "Nothing," the man said. "The dollars are in the way." Ford told him if his only goal was dollars, he would miss a host of greater opportunities. He should invest himself in serving others.

Money is a means by which we reach higher goals. It should be used to serve God and others. God says to the rich man, "You fool! This very night your life shall be required of you. To whom will all this piled up wealth of yours go?"

Early in this century a man gave \$100,000 to build a college in Liberia. By the 1940s thousands of young Africans had been educated there. On an anniversary of the college's founding, the administration decided to say "Thank you" to its benefactor. The man had lost everything in the crash of 1929 and was living in a little house on the south side of Chicago. The representatives from the college tracked him down and flew him to Africa for a celebration. As he looked over the campus filled with hundreds of students, he whispered to the college

president, "The only thing I have kept is what I gave away." Wise man! Only what we give away in the name of Christ is what we keep forever.

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Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming.

### Daily Readings

Monday, August 6

Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14; Psalms 97:1-2, 5-6, 9; 2 Peter 1:16-19; Luke 9:28B-36

Tuesday, August 7

Numbers 12:1-13; Psalms 51:3-7, 12-13; Matthew 14:22-36

Wednesday, August 8

Numbers 13:1-2, 25-14:1, 26-29, 34-35; Psalms 106:6-7A, 13-14, 21-23; Matthew 15:21-28

Thursday, August 9

Numbers 20:1-13; Psalms 95:1-2, 6-9; Matthew 16:13-23

Friday, August 10

2 Corinthians 9:6-10; Psalms 112:1-2, 5-9; John 12:24-26

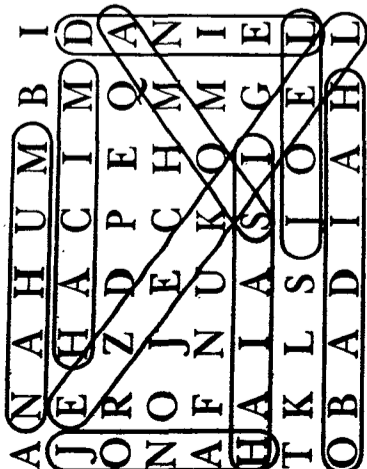
Saturday, August 11

Deuteronomy 6:4-13; Psalms 18:2-4, 47, 51AB; Matthew 17:14-20

### Kids' Chronicle answers

from page 12:

Hidden prophet: Daniel



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