

LISTENING TO GOD

By: Joe Tremblay

Many assume that the Life of Christ ended when he ascended into heaven. Catholics understand, on the other hand, that the Eucharist is the extension his life on earth. But in addition to his Eucharistic life, the life of our Lord continues in another form: through his Saints. And when we read about them, we begin to hear the Lord in a new way.



Although God's public revelation is contained within the canon of the Old and New Testament writings, his wisdom continues through the teachings of his Saints. The wealth of Christ's life overflows through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in souls of his followers. And as for those who lived the Life of Christ to the full- and did well -the Catholic Church holds them up as models to be imitated.

To better understand this life we possess in Christ and to better to live it out, reading Scripture is essential. But a fine supplement to Scripture, indeed an essential supplement, is the writings of the Saints. It is there that the general principles and virtues in Scripture are translated into specific and practical ways to be holy.

In fact, if there were any spiritual exercises the Saints recommended, it was spiritual reading. Just as our way of speaking to God is through vocal prayer, his way of speaking to us is through spiritual reading. We are counseled by the Saints not to do all the talking; listen to the voice of God. It is in this spiritual exercise where we find concrete ways of living out the life of Christ. With this, deception and error are greatly minimized. Truth and moral goodness come to fore. Indeed, the Lord can better teach us how to see the world and our day-to-day relationships as they really exist.

Take for example the subject of humility: Our Lord taught and demonstrated in the Gospel that the first will be last and the leader of all should be the servant of all. But he left it up to the Saints to give practical lessons and examples of how this might be carried out. St. Francis of Assisi, for instance, does just that. He says that being silent amid criticism (i.e. biting your tongue) is worth more to God than ten days of fasting. Like St. Paul, St. Francis was known for blessing those who persecuted and maligned him.

This counsel not only leads to sanctity but it goes a long way in improving relationships; particularly marriages.

Lost opportunities! There are many times husbands and wives could have abated an argument or prevented a display of anger in front of the kids by just peacefully accepting criticism. If, indeed, a correction needs to be issued to the critical spouse, then it is best to do so when the anger has subsided. In any case, to be a peace-maker in these situations, especially when the temptation to defend and justify yourself is strong, is a most pleasing spiritual sacrifice to the Lord; one that will be rewarded.

What is more, when married couples engage in spiritual reading and share what they have learned with one another, they better fulfill their vocation in getting their spouses to heaven. As such, both the husband and the wife can grow in virtue and in grace.

So, go out and buy a book about or by a Saint. In learning their ways you will come to understand Christ in a deeper way. Without a doubt, you find that this kind of spiritual reading is an excellent