

For All The Saints

November begins with the celebration of All Saints' Day, our Patronal Festival. We all have an idea of what a saint might be, but do we always get it right?

Have you ever visited the shrine of a recognized saint? While many exist across Europe, closer to home, shrines like those of St. Bede and St. Aidan can be found in Durham Cathedral. If you've ever walked through the cathedral, you may have noticed how the stones of the shrines and the floor around them gleam - polished by centuries of pilgrims seeking solace, offering prayers, and reaching out in devotion.

When we think of saints, especially those canonized by the church, it's easy to imagine their lives as distant and unattainable, full of blissful holiness. Their shining example can feel beyond our reach, like they were somehow different from us—untouched by the harshness of reality. This image can mislead us into believing that sainthood is reserved for the extraordinary, making our own lives seem too ordinary in comparison.

However, the Bible offers a different perspective. It's not

the shine of superficial happiness that marks a saint's life, but their rootedness in reality. Saints were people who lived through suffering, persecution, and the raw struggles of life. What makes them remarkable isn't an absence of hardship, but how they cultivated a deep relationship with God in the midst of those trials. They encountered a God who is present in the very ordinariness and pain of life - a God who works to overcome adversity, not avoid it.

Jesus reminds us that holiness is not about aspiring to an unreachable ideal seen in others. Instead, it's about reaching into our own lives, just as the saints did, and finding Christ there. Sainthood is not about perfection; it's about persistence in the small, often unnoticed acts of mercy, peace, purity, and simplicity. It's in these daily efforts that we are being shaped - worn and polished, like the stones around those shrines, into something that reflects God's presence in the world.

Jesus encourages us to trust that we are "good enough," even as we are becoming more. The world may be full of struggles, but God is continuously transforming it, and us, into something more radiant, much like the saints who have gone before.

Revd Jonathan Brennan