

FR HUGH'S HOMILY FOR ALL SAINTS DAY

What makes a saint? There are and have been many saints among us, but what makes people ask the Church to consider declaring someone a saint?

Last night we confirmed three young people at Kirkby Lonsdale and each chose a confirmation name. Lorenzo Luiz, Teresa of Calcutta, Brigid of Kildare.

Lorenzo Luiz is from the Philippines. Born in 1594 and dies in 1637. His family is devotedly Catholic. He is an altar boy. Taught by the Dominicans and joins the Confraternity of the Rosary. He marries and has three children.

So, nothing unusual so far. But suddenly he is wrongly accused of killing a Spaniard who controlled the Philippines at that time.

He has to run for his life. He takes a boat with four Dominicans to Japan in the hope of escaping unjust punishment. When they arrive, they discover that the Shogun has just started to persecute Christians. Lorenzo is arrested and with the four Dominicans and threatened with death. Put to horrible torture he is asked to give up his faith and with great courage he refuses and is executed. Why does he stand out? Because he followed the call of Christ and refused to deny him. What gives him the strength? His courage through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Teresa. Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Many of you know her story. Her call came earlier. Born in what was then the Ottoman Empire she felt the call from age 8. At 18 she left for Ireland, a country she did not know, to join the Sisters of Loretto. Goes to India and then in 1950 begins the Sisters of Charity, dedicated to working with the poor and those diseased including lepers and then later those with Aids/ HIV and more. Setting up convents across the world. Why a saint? Again, the courage given by the Holy Spirit. Facing many challenges to do what she had to do. And a powerful speaker as well as worker. An inspiration to so many.

And Brigid. Lost in time in some ways. But goes from having a slave mother to challenging Kings to give her land to build convents. "No, you can have no land for your monastery, the King says. But my Lord! Well, as much as your cloak will cover. As her sisters took her cloak and ran with it in different directions, the cloak grew in size." But her miracles were also for the poor, and the sick. She is known as a great healer. Now patroness of Ireland. One to whom so many pray find inspiration. Who leads others to find the Holy Spirit. Again, a woman of courage.

What is special about these people? Simply that they trusted in those gifts we receive at Confirmation. Each of them needed the Holy Spirit at different times in their lives. They understood the needs of those around them. They had the wisdom to see how to help. They had the courage to act. And they trusted in the awesome power of God to help. For each one the Holy Spirit was essential.

So today let us recall our own Confirmation and renewing our trust in the Holy Spirit, have the courage to follow Christ and the courage to be his witnesses as we see the needs of those around us.