

# CATHOLIC EXPERIENCE: -

## To Be A Saint

It is safe to say that only saints will enter heaven. It is also safe to say that we all would like to be saints in order to achieve heaven. So we look at the saints. We read their lives and we try to come to an understanding of what it was that made them saints. The lives of the saints, as a rule, present nothing remarkable in the way of external spiritual achievement. Many of us, when comparing our lives with the lives of many of the saints we know, may easily find that we have been called upon to face greater trials, accomplish harder work, and all the rest. The lives of many of the saints were outwardly very ordinary, frequently much more ordinary than our own. And yet, when we read the stories of these saints we quickly realize with profound sadness of heart that they really were different from us.

There remains an emptiness in our lives when we contemplate the lives of saints. We know that we live reasonably good lives. We try! But we are not exceptionally good as the saints we have read about. We know that the saints must be "exceptional" and we leave them to live their exceptional way. We keep them apart from us. And as we keep ourselves separated from the saints and their exceptional qualities, is this not a vain subterfuge of our self-love? And do we not argue in favor of our ordinary good qualities and consider them to be, after all is said and done, acceptable to God? Our self-love prevents us from examining ourselves as we ought, and it stops us short of looking at the ROOT CAUSE of our good but mediocre existence. It frightens us to think on what really constitutes the difference between the saints and ourselves. We shut down our understanding, and our knowledge remains foggy about what sets saints apart from us and the ordinary throng of good souls. We shy away from making God the pivot on which our whole existence on earth revolves. The more we make God the pivot, it is inevitable that we must become less and less the pivot in our own lives, and this hurts. Our importance is diminished. The saints never identify themselves with their own good lives or their own lives' good works. They never think of themselves.

On our part, and on the part of the throng of good souls, we continue to think of ourselves, and we let sanctity remain an exercise of the mind and not of the heart. Like it or not, such souls are not saints, regardless of their good lives. But a tiny voice continues to cry out to us: "only saints can enter heaven".

As long as we are mentally aware that we are acting charitably, and as long as charity is the forced result of an exercise of the mind, the act is weak and without merit, even though it is a good act. As long as we think we are acting humbly, our humility continues to reside only in the mind. As long as we have to remind ourselves to yield, yielding is not really a part of us, and since it is an operation of the mind, the mind can, from time to time, work us up into asserting ourselves. As long as we are mentally aware that our actions are kind, or genuine, or pure or humble, we are not yet really kind or genuine or pure or humble. As long as we continue to feel that we are acting with a pure love for God, the effort remains no more than an exercise of the mind, it has not yet become part of our being. Our tasks and our sufferings – all