

St. Francis de Sales Parish

All glory comes from daring to begin.

St. Francis de Sales



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BY REV. ROY ROBERTS

IN THE creed we profess the belief in the communion of the saints. The extent to which that is knitted into the fabric of a Catholic spirituality is massive. In fact, Catholic spirituality throughout the ages has been hugely influenced by our identity. Some of the hagiography (the official word for the writing and critical study of the saints) has been so fantastical in terms of the lives that it borders on the mythological.

A catholic culture is imbued with various superstitions and practices, whether it is draping a rosary over the clothesline to have a sunny day for a wedding, to invoking good ol' St. Anthony for lost items. Which one of the several St. Anthony's you might ask? The one from Padua (but born in Portugal).

My elementary school was named after St. Charles Borromeo, but we just called it St. Charles because no one could pronounce his last name. When it seemed like a hopeless cause, (like a Stanley Cup in Toronto) it was time to invoke the petitioning power of St. Jude. Mom would always call on the triple threat force of Jesus, Mary and Joseph when we were going out on dates. She made us say, "Jesus, Mary and Joseph, keep me pure", and just to punctuate their intercessory efforts, she always laced the dinner with loads of garlic.

St. Sebastian is the patron saint of athletes, and I was sure that he was going to oversee my javelin efforts all the way to the Olympics. I guess he was busy with Jan Zelezny, the Czech sensation and world record holder.

As a priest being moved from parish to parish, you kind of hope to get a cool saint, not one of those questionable, mythological or uninteresting saints like St. Bernadette or St. Isaac's, and no one wants a parish named after an action or a title, like Holy Redeemer.

Well, upon the news of my first appointment to St. Francis de Sales, my first question was "Who was he?" It was a fair question, after all, he is overshadowed by a couple of other St. Francis, the sissy one from Assisi, or the missionary one, St. Francis Xavier after whom we have a Canadian university named.

As I have discovered more about the life and times of our venerable patron, I believe him to be a hidden gem in our Catholic culture. St. Francis was a priest for the people – someone who recognized the wonderful sacredness in the everyday lives of everyday people. I think he is the type of person we all would love to just hang with.

Happy Feast Day and kudos on 150 years of faithfulness!

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