

Be saints for the twenty-first century

During his recent visit to Britain, Pope Benedict XVI reminded us that an experience of God's intrinsic goodness is the key to our growing in virtue. Speaking to pupils from all over the United Kingdom, the Pope expressed the hope that some of them would be among the future saints of the twenty-first century.



Pope Benedict asked the young people to consider the qualities they saw in others that they would most like to see in themselves. Conscious of the tendency to model ourselves on the rich and the famous, the entertainer and the sportsman, the Pope asked his audience not to be short-sighted in the setting and pursuit of their goals.

Instead,

Pope Benedict invited the young to become saints; he asked them not to be content with second best (or) to pursue one limited goal. Having money, the Pope said, “makes it possible to be generous and to do good in the world, but on its own, it is not enough to make us happy. Being highly skilled in some activity or profession is good, but it will not satisfy us unless we aim for something greater still. It might make us famous, but it will not make us happy.”

For the Pope, one of the greatest tragedies is our tendency to search for happiness in the wrong places. True happiness, he insisted, is to be found in God, saying: “We need to have the courage to place our deepest hopes in God alone, not in money, in a career, in worldly success, or in our relationships with others, but in God. Only he can satisfy the deepest needs of our hearts.”

Implicit in all that the Pope had to say is a direct link between the holiness we associate with saintliness and our being happy. They are, as it were, two sides of the same coin. As Pope Benedict puts it, God loves us more than we could ever begin to imagine, and he wants the very best for us. The best thing for us, he said, is to grow in holiness. It is for this reason that God, in the Pope's words, wants our friendship – wants to discover in us a way of life that is attractive to him and transforming for us.

In his encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* (“God is Love”), Pope Benedict reminded us all that learning to love is a matter of getting on with it. Practice makes perfect, he said – and, as we come to know God better, we find we want to reflect something of his infinite goodness. We begin to see greed and selfishness

and all sins for what they really are and we want to avoid falling into that trap ourselves. We begin to feel compassion for people in difficulties, eager to do something to help them. We want to come to the aid of the poor and the hungry, to be kind and generous. And, once these things begin to matter to us, we are well on the way to becoming saints.

Ask yourself this Lent where you have experienced God's goodness. Ask yourself if you truly desire to imitate God's goodness. You might begin by considering the qualities you see in others – and then ask yourself which of those qualities you would most like to see in yourself.

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Diana Klein - The Tablet