

Mother Teresa of Calcutta is so well known for her service to the poorest of the poor that people commonly refer to her as a living saint. Once a reporter asked her how it feels to be called a saint. She responded that personally she felt undeserving of that title, but she had another reason not to call her a saint. She said it was too easy for people to point to a faraway country and say, "There, that is holiness, now we know what it looks like," and in doing so, people remove themselves from the call to holiness. We make sainthood such an extreme form of life that it tempts us to give up striving for it. And yet we know, God wants each of us to live as a saint, God wants each of us to look beyond the values of this world and let the values of God's Kingdom shape our lives. We are called to holiness, not just Mother Teresa.

St. Regis Parish brims over with saints. So many people give their talents to help us serve. So many people give freely their time, their money, expecting so little in return. We know the joy of receiving new members to the parish, we know the sorrow of seeing other friends suffer. God calls us together into this parish family, and it is here that he invites us to grow in holiness, just like saints.

I took a survey earlier this year. Now I admit I know pitifully little about taking surveys. Still, in my own non-professional way, I deepened my respect for people who come to church. I asked a group of school teachers this question: "When you go to church on Sunday, where do you sit and why?" Priests wonder about strange things. I learned an astonishing thing from my survey--some people like to sit in the back, some like to sit in the middle, and some like to sit in the front. Isn't that amazing? But I was most curious why people sat where they did. I knew already that at funerals, people leave the first few pews empty, and for weddings they sit near the center aisle. I can often tell what kind of service is going on in a church just by the way the congregation shapes itself. Now when I give you the results of this survey, I don't mean to imply that everyone chooses a pew for these reasons, I'm sure these are just some of the reasons.

Some people sat in the back. In this group, they said they did this because they had children with them and they didn't want to cause a disturbance for the rest of the congregation. Some sat in the middle. In this group, they said they just wanted to blend in with everyone else. And some like the front. Now in this group the front-of-the-church sitters were also divided into two groups. Some said they liked the front so they could hear and see, others said they like the front so they could participate better. Do you hear the difference there? One group liked to observe, the other wanted a piece of the action.

In every congregation, we have saints who care for kids, we have saints who are tired and need help to pray, we have saints in the forefront during the week who want to blend in on Sunday, we have saints active here in the parish. Your role in the church may not seem as dramatic as Mother Teresa's, but you inspire more people than you know by your presence, by your participation, in the life of St. Regis Parish.