

When the Saints Go Marching In 5 Epiphany C

Today is a very special day to both the people that live in Indianapolis and New Orleans. If you're a priest preaching today and you're in Louisiana you got only one viable sermon option. And it is: "When the Saints Go Marching In."

The New Orleans Saints have never won a Super Bowl, so this is even more of a big deal given what Hurricane Katrina did to the city of New Orleans and all the Gulf States in 2006. Remember how the New Orleans stadium was used as temporary shelter? What a year that was! And what a year this is as the Saints Go Marching In! However, no one can predict how the Saints will go marching out! Both teams will be playing their hearts out for sure.

What does it mean to be a saint? St. Therese once wrote: "You cannot be half a saint; you must be a whole saint or no saint at all."

Doing anything by half is by no means worthwhile. A winning team gives their all to march into glory. The saints of the Bible march into glory land after their coach Jesus Christ. The New Testament is full of references to saints, from Romans clear through to Revelation. Saints are holy ones; "set apart" ones. Saints are the righteous ones, a sort of pass receiver who caught the righteousness from Jesus the righteous one.

The apostle Paul wrote that he had received the message of Christ's death for our sins, His burial and rising again on the third day according to the scriptures. Then like a good team player he handed off that message to the saints in Corinth. Now they too could become winners just like Paul.

Like the Saints in the Superdome, the saints of the church need to wear the right kind of clothing so they know the team they are playing for. We put on the uniform of Christ through baptism and then we live out the plays that he calls as we move closer to the goal.

To be a saint is to feel the fresh breeze of the Holy Spirit, moving like a mighty wind. Once, the New Orleans team could be called the Aints because they rarely won. Then a mighty Breeze moved into their stadium named Katrina — and the Aint's began to feel the love, feel the power. Like Isaiah in our first lesson, once we get cleansed, motivated and dedicated, we are filled with God's spirit and we want to give of ourselves. "Here I am," Isaiah says excitedly, "Send me!"

Paul the apostle wrote, "I am what I am by the grace of God." And it is this goodness of God that led him not to be a halfway saint – one that only runs to the fifty yard line. No, the apostle worked harder than anyone to take the message of Jesus Christ to others that needed to hear it.

You wanna be a Saint or an Aint? Yes, like the team from New Orleans, we in the church want to go all the way into glory. We want to be in that number when the saints go marchin' in!