

REFLECTION

The Saints Are Not Sad!

By Guillermo de Carndonagh

St. Francis de Sales tells us "A sad saint would be a sorry saint." A recent experience drove home to me how important it is for a community to be joyful in the Lord, lest we undermine the faith of our brothers and sisters.

A lady friend of mine was having car trouble and asked me if I would give her a ride to services a few Sundays ago. On the way she related that it was getting harder and harder for her work up the energy to go each Sunday. She is a life member of this smallish Protestant congregation and so I was quite surprised to hear this. The problem is not one of ill health or even the diminished spirits of old age. This is a very active and energetic woman. No, the problem is in the doleful spirit of the community.

I returned to take her home during the coffee hour and got a chance to see the problem at first hand. I didn't follow all of the conversations but the tenor was clear. The regional leaders were fools or perhaps heretics. These comments were accompanied by graphic tales about this or that deviation committed by ministers at congregations hither and yon. And the international body why it's in a state of imminent collapse. All this was related with sour face and acid tongue. If one had been really drawn into to this morass of doom and gloom, the revelation that the four horsemen of the apocalypse were out in the parking lot would not have been a surprise.

Simultaneously some men were carrying on political monologues and God help the dissenter. If you did not support their agenda or their choice of candidates why you weren't Christian!

No one was talking about their joy in the faith or projects to build up the community just complaints about others, church gossip and ridged secular politics. And so the life long faith of my friend is being undermined by the narrowness of mind and soul exhibited by her fellow church members.

Let us all pray that we do not fall into the traps that these poor people have let themselves be caught in. Let us follow the examples of Sts. Philip Neri and John Bosco and embrace the joy of living the life of the Lord in prayer and good works. Let us avoid gossiping about this or that problem in the church and rather concentrate on building up the faith of our people. Let there be laughter and happiness at our social gatherings not doom and gloom. And God forbid that there be even the hint of a secular political test to be considered a good Catholic.

From the Roman Office: Lord you called John Bosco to be a teacher and father to the young. Fill us with love like his: may we give ourselves completely to your service and the salvation of mankind. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Ghost, one God, forever and ever.