

April 9, 2022 Devotion

Pope Francis : "If one has the answers to all the questions – that is the proof that God is not with him. It means that he is a false prophet using religion for himself. The great leaders of the people of God, like Moses, have always left room for doubt. You must leave room for the Lord, not for our certainties; we must be humble."

What does it mean to have God with you? What might it mean to have all the answers to all the questions? How do we leave room for God and be humble? As a minister's wife for many years, I often found myself admiring those modest church servants whose gifts were known and appreciated by only a few. And just as often, I found that their certainty that God was with them was invisible to others as well. One special memory I have is of Betty, a truly faithful woman from the last parish my husband served. Whenever we invited Betty to our home for dinner, she would reply, "I cannot come empty-handed. Tell me what to bring." No matter how many times I urged her to "just come," she would always arrive with her hands full, carrying something she had made, usually from scratch! And that's how I still picture Betty—her precious hands always full, no matter what the occasion and no matter how much I urged not to bring anything. After her retirement from a long career at the "phone company," Betty began to occupy a tiny "closet" of an office at the church. The first to arrive each day and the last to leave, six days a week, Betty's presence at the church was a "given." A few months into my husband's tenure as pastor, various members "advised" him that Betty needed to retire. "She can't come here every day," they told him. "She is always in that office and it's filled with papers. We may need that space." Unbeknownst to them, however, my husband had already befriended the tireless Betty, recognizing that her devotion to "mission" was not only unquenchable, but quite simply, amazing. After Betty became a regular at our family gatherings, always arriving with a warm loaf of bread or a tin of her signature Scottish shortbread, I secretly wanted to shout about Betty's devotion and humility from the rooftops. Her heart and her hands were always filled with thoughts of what she could do for others. For years after we left that parish, Betty remained ensconced in her tiny, cluttered office with the sign on the door my husband had ordered for her, "Mission Secretary." Eventually, Betty's health forced her second and final retirement. After her death, many were surprised to learn that Betty had left an unexpected and unbelievable bequest to the church, earmarked solely for mission. As I read her modest obituary, I couldn't help but think that, of course, humble and dedicated and ever certain in her faith, Betty would never have entered heaven "empty-handed." She was indeed one of the unsung saints we have encountered on our faith journeys. Thinking of Betty makes me think of "all the saints," in the moving hymn written by Anglican Bishop William Walsham How. He was known as the "poor man's bishop" for his work in the area of social justice and mission:
"For All The Saints"

**For all the Saints who from their labors rest,
Who thee by faith before the world confessed,**

Thy name, O Jesus, be forever blest. Alleluia, alleluia.

Oh, may thy soldiers, faithful, true, and bold,
— Fight as the Saints who nobly fought of old,
And win with them the victor's crown of gold.

Thou art our rock, our fortress, and our might;
Thou, Lord, our captain in the well-fought fight;
Thou, in the darkness drear, our one true light.

And when the strife is fierce, the warfare long,
Steals on the ear the distant triumph song,
And hearts are brave again, and arms are strong.

From earth's wide bounds, from ocean's farthest coast,
Through gates of pearl streams in the countless host,
— Singing to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Text: William Walsham How, 1823–1897

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