

Let the light of Christ shine through you

By Father Joseph Breighner

A young boy was once asked what a saint was. The only saints he had ever seen were the saints in the stained glass windows in Church. So he replied very simply: "A saint is someone who lets the light shine through!"

I believe that is still the simplest definition of a saint. We all have the light of Christ within us. We just have to let it shine!

Most of us think of saints as people from "somewhere else" or "somebody else." What if someone who actually lived in Baltimore was declared a saint? Someone just might be. I'm speaking of Monsignor Aloysius Schwartz! (I love that name. It goes from A to Z!)

St. Al was born in 1930. At the age of 14 he entered St. Charles College in Catonsville, the minor seminary. (I was there from 1959 to 1965.) Today it is known as Charlestown! If you live there, you might be walking in the footsteps of a saint.

There's a wonderful book about Monsignor Schwartz written by his sister, Dolores Vita. She currently lives in Annapolis. Her book is titled: "My Brother's Witness, Monsignor Aloysius Schwartz."

I don't think my sister, Helen, will write any books about me. I don't think she thinks I'm on the way to canonization. Father Al is. He has been declared a Servant of God, the first step toward canonization.

Let me allow his sister to sum up much of his life: "This is the story of a missionary priest, raised in a poor neighborhood in Washington, D.C. , who literally saved the lives of thousands of Korean orphans in the early 1960's by providing food, clothing, shelter and his own fully accredited school program. He simultaneously opened

clinics, dispensaries and two hospitals offering free services to the poor. He founded two religious congregations to help bring his programs to thousands. He then established similar programs in the Philippines and Mexico just before his early death from a debilitating disease, Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis. His programs continue to flourish.”

Father Al was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize twice – in 1984 and again in 1992. To get a copy of this marvelous book you can call Infinity Publishing at 877-BUY-BOOK. Or the local number at 610-941-9999. Or you can go on line at Info@buybooksontheweb.com.

Since I’ve only begun to read the book I won’t make this a book review. Hopefully, that will come at a later date.

What’s important is that we not simply admire him. We want to imitate him. And by imitating him I don’t mean necessarily do what he has done. You might indeed want to contribute to his ongoing work. What I mean is that each of us experiences and shares God in our own way and in our own time. When Dolores sent me a copy of her book, she referred to my health issues (strokes in the eyes; blood clots, etc.) and added: “Isn’t God wonderful to use us with our limitations and He makes up the difference.”

Letting the light shine through us is to recognize that the power we have, and the good we do, does not come from our personal egos, but from the personal presence of Christ within us. “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Those are pretty profound words from St. Paul. They are the essence of sanctity.

In my own life I know only too well how exhausted I often feel. I over-book my schedule and stress myself. That’s not sanctity! That’s me not loving myself.

I was conditioned by my 12 years in the seminary to identify with self-sacrifice. I missed the larger message of Christ. Christ told us to “die” to ourselves, not to kill ourselves. When we die to the “little self” and live with the Higher Self that is Christ, miracles happen. I’m not the one doing it. I’m allowing Christ to do it through me.

The feast of All Saints reminds us that we can all indeed be saints. We celebrate the

anonymous billions who lived before us, and who now rejoice in Christ's presence forever. The saints are meant to inspire us. But each of us, in our own place and in our own way, must allow the light of Christ to shine through us. It's God's work and God's Kingdom, not human egos.

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